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Week 30: Summer WFL

Sheila Walsh

"Christ in the Storms"

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm so glad that you could join us.

The other day I was sitting at my desk and I'm finishing work on a book and my phone made a ping and I knew I had a text. And it was from my friend, Kay Warren saying that she and Rick were on vacation in Scotland. They were on the Isle of Skye -- such a beautiful, beautiful place! So I talked back and forth and I said, "Make sure you get fish and chips!"

She said, "Oh yeah! We've already done that."

It was just so nice to think of my friends being in my homeland.

I was born on the West Coast of Scotland, which is the same side as Skye, and one of my favorite things to do was to walk along the beach on one of our wild and windy days. Our coastline in Scotland is very different than what you'd see like for example in Florida or even in California. The Scottish coastline is rugged and it is wild.

When I was a child, I used to go down to the beach with my grandma after a storm and see what the ocean had thrown up onto the sand. It is fascinating but things that had been buried in the water would suddenly be tossed up onto the shore and she and I would go on off on a treasure hunt. We found all sorts of things. We'd find pieces of colored glass that had been rubbed smooth by the sand, and unusual shells. Once I even found a

diamond ring!

So the ocean gave up things that nobody knew were hidden there. I think that's true in life as well. When you and I walk through a storm it brings what we really believe to the surface. We say I believe God is good until prayer after prayer seems to go unanswered. I believe God is kind until you have to do what one of my friends had to do recently, the unthinkable -- and bury a child. I believe that God sees me until you can't get a job or you still can't find a husband or you can't pay your bills. Or like a letter I got last night from a viewer, "I can't shake this addiction." Devastating storms reveal what we really believe rather than what we think we believe or even what we hope we wished that we could believe.

Some of the emotions that get tossed up onto the shoreline of our hearts, things like anger that you didn't know was there, regret, disappointment, fear, insecurity, shame, unforgiveness, which sometimes takes us by surprise. We think, I know I forgave that person. And then something triggers it and wow, it is right there again. Heartache, sometimes even bitterness.

So here's my question for us today. How do you and I stand strong in Christ when everything around us is shaken to its core?

God's word tell us this. I love this scripture! The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

One of my favorite verses: The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.

Do you remember the scene in the movie, *The Wizard of Oz* where Dorothy is looking out on a bleak landscape and she sings that well-loved song, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"? Well, Dorothy may have been hoping for a rainbow, she had no idea it was

actually a tornado that was headed right for her. When that kind of storm hits your life it changes everything. It changes the landscape. You didn't sign up for it. No warning. Devastating.

It might be that suddenly, you went to the doctor and you got a diagnosis you didn't see coming. Nobody warned you. Or your husband or wife that you've loved for years suddenly looks you in the eye and said, "I don't love you anymore." Those kind of emotional storms are devastating.

But I actually got to see a picture of what that looks like in a physical way in Oklahoma just a few years ago. You may remember this. On May the 20th, 2013 an F-5 tornado touched down in Moore, Oklahoma. It was almost a mile wide and stayed on the ground for -- this is pretty unprecedented, 39 minutes on the ground! Twenty-three people died that day; seven of them were eight-year old children from the same class.

Well as dawn broke the following morning, the scene was almost indescribable. Entire streets had been simply wiped off the map. Well, Samaritan's Purse contacted local churches and Christian groups to help with the cleanup. So I went with six of my friends. We met in the parking lot of a church early in the morning and prayed before the day began. Then we were driven into the worst hit area. Honestly, I've never seen anything like it in my life. You can watch it on television and think you've got a picture of it but to actually be there, to walk where people used to live and all their homes were gone -- everything was flattened.

Well, I was assigned to what was left of one particular home. It literally was just a foundation. Everything else was rubble. And the man whose house it was, came by while we were cleaning up and all he wanted was one thing, "Can you help me find my son's medals?" He had lost his son in battle and this was what he had left. I'm happy to tell you that after some digging through piles we found them.

Well, the next day I was working on a different unit and the elderly man whose home this

had been was standing there in tears. I stood beside him for a while just holding his hand, neither of us saying a word. When he was able to speak he told me the only thing he wanted to find was his wife's wedding ring. She had passed a couple of years earlier. And honestly, I looked out at the massive pile of rubble; some from his house and some from other homes that had landed on his. And I wondered, how on earth are we going to find a simple gold band in the middle of all this mess? I seriously prayed about it. I said, "Lord, please help us. This is all he wants. Please help us find his wife's ring. Send your angels. You've got to know where it is."

Well, we searched for hours. I refused to leave that place. Finally, as the sun was beginning to go down and we were about to have to leave because there was no electricity, I climbed over part of the rubble to where there was a Christmas tree lying on top of a pile of wood and there, hanging on one of the branches like a Christmas ornament was his wife's wedding band. It was just a beautiful moment. His tears were for a different reason then.

Well, we all finished the day in prayer, tears running down our dirty faces and at each place, each unit where we'd been able to clear everything off, Samaritan's Purse had provided a Bible. I got the privilege of giving it to the older gentleman. He took the Bible in his hands and he said, "You know what? This is a good place to start again."

The truth is heartbreaking storms hit us all. "My husband has left me and our three children for another woman. What do I tell them? They're heartbroken." I got that letter last week.

Another post on my Facebook page, "I raised my son in church. Now he has walked away. He's on drugs. I don't know where he is. My heart is breaking."

Someone else: "My daughter's cancer is back. Why would God allow this?"

To be honest, I think as the church we don't always do a great job at walking with those

who are grieving deeply. We kind of want people to get over things. And sometimes we use the Word of God more as a weapon than as a healing ornament.

My friend, my dear friend I've worked with for years, Barbara Johnson, she used to say, "When pain is the freshest, words should be the fewest."

It's interesting, right in the middle of the book of Psalms we read Psalm 88. It is one of the most heart-wrenching Psalms. Many of David's Psalms start with pain or trouble but they end up with David remembering the goodness of God. Telling himself, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." But not Psalm 88. It begins like this: "Lord, you're the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you. May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death."

The Psalm continues: "But I cry to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you. Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?"

Now this is how this Psalm ends: "You have taken from me friend and neighbor -- darkness is my closest friend."

I would imagine you probably haven't heard a bunch of sermons on that Psalm. But it made me want to ask, Lord, why is that there? Why, right in the middle of the Psalms, would you include a Psalm that honestly offers little hope? I believe it is there because there are seasons when that is all that seems to be true. God is acknowledging that there are times when we feel as if the darkness will never lift and he is giving us words for those times.

One of the greatest unanswered questions on this earth is why? I remember talking to a woman after a conference and her thing was, we prayed for years to be able to have a child and eventually I got pregnant; and that little one only lived for nine months. Then after maybe two or three years of agony and tears and healing, she was able to get pregnant again and that little one lived for six months.

How do you reconcile those things with a God of love? That may be one of the greatest challenges to your faith. I don't know what's going on in your life or what your history has been like or what your present is like right now but sometimes when we look at our circumstances and we try and reconcile those with our belief in a God of love, a God who is powerful and good, we think, Lord, why? We don't understand.

In one of the darkest nights of my life when I literally didn't know if I would live to see morning, I prayed the simple, the most guttural prayer I've ever prayed. I had tried for so many years to be the perfect Christian, to get it all right, to do all the right things thinking that would make God happy with me. And when I eventually ended up in a psychiatric ward, the only prayer I had left was one word. I remember laying on the floor of my room literally just praying out the name, "Jesus!" I had nothing else -- "Jesus!" Well, I want you to know when you call on the name of the Lord, he is right there with you.

I told you at the beginning I've always loved Psalm 34: The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are literally crushed in spirit. But I discovered that to be true that night. I actually wrote in my journal, "I never knew you lived so close to the floor."

I'm used to... I've been in church since I was just a baby of worshipping and singing how majestic is God, as we should because he is. He is good. But what I've discovered is if you're in a place where those words are gone from your lips and you're literally on the floor, Jesus is so close to you.

I love Romans 8:28. We all know that scripture so well, where it talks about all things working together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose. But sometimes we don't read the verses before that where it talks about when you're in a place where you don't even have the words to pray that the Holy Spirit intercedes for you on your behalf. He knows the will of the Father and he can pray for you.

If you find yourself in a place like that, I ask you this, are you able to just hold on to a little hope? Are you able even to just pray out the name of the Lord? There is power in the name of Jesus. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted. The Lord will save you when you're crushed in spirit.

I've discovered a few things that kind of help me stay on track when I'm really struggling. The first is simply that: Call on his name. His name alone is a powerful prayer. If you find yourself in an emergency room or the family member struggling or something happens and it is immediate, you don't have time to come out with great long prayers. But you can pray the name of Jesus.

One of the other things that really is helpful to me is to speak out your pain. So often we think, well, I don't want to do that because that seems so disrespectful or I can't say that to God. But that's why Psalm 88 is in there to let you know you get to tell God the whole truth. You don't have to come with the perfect words. God is not looking for perfect words. He is looking for your heart. And if you're able, in the midst of your pain to pray through that pain and tell him exactly -- if you're angry, be angry but be angry in the company of the one who loves you.

You might want to copy a few powerful scriptures and just have them with you. Here's a couple of the ones I love. I love this: The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love.

Now listen to this: He will exult over you with loud singing. Isn't that amazing? God is singing over you. I love that!

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Scripture doesn't deny our pain. It's why I'm learning to pray out the Psalms. I believe

that God gave us the Psalms, gave us his word so we can pray the Word of God back to our Father. You know what you'll discover? Whatever you're facing there is a Psalm that will put words to it. If you're in a wonderful place you will find plenty of Psalms that will help you express your praise.

But if you're in a dark season, you're struggling, you'll find in the Psalms, words for what's going on in your heart. Storms are unpredictable. But the amazing thing is the storms that hit our lives, they take us by surprise but they don't take God by surprise. He never takes his eyes off you. He sees what's going on in your life and he loves you so very much. I think the temptation when a storm hits you didn't see coming is to think, God are you not listening to my prayers?

Sometimes you have to keep praying through your pain. Sometimes you have to keep praying when it seems as if heaven is silent. I want you to remember, in fact, why don't you just kind of jot down Romans 8:26, 27, and 28 so that the next time when you feel as if your prayers are not going any higher than the ceiling, you'll remember that you have an advocate in heaven who is praying for you.

Now I have the privilege, when we go on our mission trips, I have the privilege of meeting so many godly women but many of them are in very difficult places and it is not necessarily because a storm has hit their life. Sometimes it's the very lack of a storm. You know, when there's been no rain in an area for month after month after month. When there is no clean drinking water, life becomes devastating. But you and I, we get the joy of doing something about that. Would you watch this with me?

On the mission field:

Isak: I'm here in the Pebow area of South Sudan. And you can see just by looking behind me just how dry and arid this area is. There hasn't been rain here for -- kind of forever.

If you stop and think about it, other than oxygen, the most critical thing that we need as human beings is water. We can't go on more than a few days without any water otherwise our lives are at risk. And yet, for so many here in Africa that is the reality.

Many of these villages were actually telling us how they have traveled ten miles, just relocated their families. They literally have had to take up their whole home, their whole family and they're moving to a new area where they're a little bit closer to a water source or where they found a bit of water that they can use during the dry season. Their families just literally live under trees.

There are little bits of water that they can dig for, etc. They end up with highly contaminated water. So many of their children get diarrhea, get cholera; a lot of child deaths as a result of contaminated water in this area. And yet, we're able to really change that so easily. You see you have it in your hands and I'm hoping that you've got it in your hearts to bring a water well to this village or villages like this and provide them with fresh life-giving water -- water that will save their lives and transform their lives for a lifetime.

Please partner with us today. Provide a water well to villages like this. Bring life-giving water today. I'm asking you please, open your hearts, give the gift of water. Give the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Such a startling picture to watch these mothers with just little ones having to walk so many miles just to try and find any water -- and the water they find potentially could kill their children.

In this day and age, doesn't that seem ridiculous to you? When you think of our own

lives here and how much we waste. We'll sometimes -- like I notice my husband do it. He'll turn on the shower and then go do something and wait for it to heat up. The water is just running away. We don't think about it. But for so many people in the world that is just not even a dream, they couldn't even imagine that.

I personally believe as long as the body of Christ is on this planet that should not be happening. So here at *LIFE* we have made a commitment to our partners on the ground in Africa. What our goal is for this year is 400 new wells in 15 nations. Now that might seem like a huge task but let me tell you how you and I together can do it. Do you know if you give \$48 that will give ten people Water for LIFE! What can you buy for \$48 these days? And to think you'd provide clean water for ten people, not for three months, for the rest of their lives! \$144 will give clean water to 30 people.

Now some of you God has blessed and we celebrate that with you but you may be able to say, you know what? Make that 399 wells because I'm going to give one. \$4800 will put a well in a village that will provide water for a thousand people in that village for their lifetime.

These wells are amazing. Steel-cased, they last for about 70 years. They don't need electricity, they can be hand pumped. It's one of the most amazing sights when you see a well go into a village. And so many of the children, they don't even know what to do. They've never seen water that was clear before. For the mothers, it is such an answer to their prayers.

So would you help us do that? For any gift at all we have a beautiful calendar we want to send you. It is a beautiful calendar with different things from James, from Betty, from myself, just that you can read every day. I know you don't do it for that but we'd love to be able to give you a little gift just to say thank you. But let's not turn away from this. Let's determine that you and I together, this year, we will see 400 wells put into villages in 15 nations.

So would you please give your best gift possible? Go to your phone and just make the best gift. Whatever you have is awesome. If we all do what we can we can change the face of this earth and then I believe when we reach out practically and help them, then we can tell them about Jesus who is the water of life.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today, a mother living in extreme poverty will do the unthinkable, give her children dirty, diseased-filled water that she knows could kill them. With no other choice what else can she do?

With your help, clean water is on the way. Mission: Water for LIFE provides a way for parents to save the lives of their children to offer them a bright future free from the fear of death.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 400 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will be provided for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift, we'll send you the "New Mercies Each Day" desk calendar. This 17-month calendar will not only help you keep track of important dates but also remind you of the Father's love and goodness with scripture quotes and encouragement from all the hosts on *LIFE Today*.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "Fruit of the Spirit" bowl. This beautiful and decorative ceramic bowl features scripture revealing the "Fruit of the Spirit," a lovely addition to your table or home.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provided water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request our "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field

Tammy: This is one of those very exciting days for me when I get to be in the presence of -- happy children and fresh clean water. It wasn't that long ago when we came into this village and they had no clean water at all. Nothing! Children were dying. Talked to some moms that have lost husbands, lost children -- it was really, really heartbreaking.

What an exciting day for me to travel back here today and just see the fruit of what we have given together. When you partner with *LIFE Outreach* it is wells like this that make it possible to give them fresh clean water.

Will you please consider partnering with us today? Go online or call the number at the bottom of your screen and give the best gift that you can give. I know that together we can make a difference not just in this village but hundreds of village all around the world. Let's make a difference and let's change it today!

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the phone lines are busy, which I hope they are, please persevere. "New Mercies Each Day," 17-month desk calendar from us for any gift at all. But for a gift of \$100 or more we have this gorgeous fruit bowl and it is all the "Fruit of the Spirit" around it. It's just something you would see in your kitchen every day as a reminder that in Jesus' name you reached out and made a difference.

So please, if you couldn't get through the first time, persevere, call again. Let's make this the best year we've ever had at life. Wouldn't that be a challenge? If we could say together we have made such a significant impact in the world in Jesus' name.

So thank you so much. I'm Sheila Walsh and I'll see you next time!