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Week 12: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

Pray from a Place of Victory

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. My name is Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad you joined me.

Do you ever feel as if life is just one thing after another after another after another? So let me ask you when it feels like everything is a struggle, how do you pray through to get to a place of victory? I like this question because victory is a big word. It's hard to see going from struggle to hope. So let me ask you this. Do you have what I call a fighting verse? I do! This is mine. You'll find it in Psalm 27: I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. It is the last two verses of Psalm 27.

But honestly, that didn't always feel true to me. I didn't know that I would ever see the goodness of the Lord again in the land of the living. Now I knew I would see the goodness of the Lord when my life down here was over but when I was in the middle of the darkest struggle of my life I thought, how will I ever get through this struggle now?

If you or anyone in your family has ever experienced severe depression, you'll understand the desperate hopelessness and the darkness. It is as if your soul is trapped in a perpetual winter. Although I didn't feel that those verses, the words of those verses in Psalm 27 were true I declared them to be true. So many nights I would get out of bed and put my feet on the ground, and I would declare those out loud.

So let me ask, is there a scripture that you hold onto that you declare over your life when everything around you seems to be falling apart? That is a great starting place to move forward in prayer. Now if you don't have one or maybe you never even thought of having a fighting verse, here is just a few of my favorites.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The godly run to him and are safe. You'll find that in Proverbs 18:10.

Or one of my most favorite ones: Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the Lord, he alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God and I trust him. You might want to write those down. That's Psalm 91.

What about this from a book you maybe haven't read in a while, Nahum. Nahum 1:7 says: The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him.

Another one about the Lord being a tower of strength is this: But you are a tower of refuge to the poor, O Lord, a tower of refuge to the needy in distress. You are a refuge from the storm and a shelter from the heat.

We can declare and rest in these verses. We can declare them out loud with absolute confidence because for one simple reason, these are from the Word of God! We don't just hope they're true, we know they're true. The great thing is the smallest, weakest one who places her trust in Christ against all odds makes the demons in hell tremble.

For the past two years I think I've mentioned that I've thrown myself into studying what God's word says about prayer. And one of the things that became crystal clear was this: Prayer was Christ's weapon of choice. Have you ever noticed how many times in the gospels we read that Christ withdrew to pray?

We read in Matthew Chapter 14: After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray.

We read this in Mark Chapter 1: Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.

We read this in Luke, Luke Chapter 6 says: One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night.

Now there is many more references to Christ's praying all night long, before daybreak, in Gethsemane before he faced the greatest battle of all, prayer was Christ's weapon of choice on this earth.

But did you know that it's been his weapon ever since? We read this: There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood forever. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. But listen to this! He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. (Hebrews Chapter 7)

Just pause from a moment and let that sink in. Christ the spotless Lamb of God, the one whose words brought our world into being, the one who holds the stars and the planets in place, the one who was betrayed, beaten, tortured and crucified, the one who rose from the dead is praying for you right now! In that previous text the writer to the Hebrews talks about the old system where there would be a high priest who once a year entered the holy of holies to make a sacrifice to cover the sins of the people. But it was an imperfect system because the priests after all were human and they would die and then a replacement priest had to be found. But our high priest is Jesus who died once and rose again. There will never be an interruption in his prayers for you.

Well, not only is prayer Christ's weapon of choice, do you know that it is God's chosen fragrance in heaven? Our son Christian was a student at Texas A&M in College Station.

He is now in grad school at Houston Baptist. But when he left for college, we sold our house and we downsized. We used to live in Frisco, Texas but now we're in Dallas, 30 minutes closer to where he was in College Station. And so far, he doesn't seem to have noticed that we're gradually inching toward him.

Now when he visited him when he was there there's a hotel that we love to stay in for a few reasons. The hotel has a train theme. College Station was named because it used to be the stop where students would get off the train to go to college. Now in the elevator in this hotel you don't press a button for your floor, but for your platform. The hotel's mascot is a sheep and they have a life-sized flock scattered around the hotel.

Now the first time we stayed there Barry thought it would be funny to fetch one of these big sheep from the lobby once I was asleep and put it at my side of the bed. Now if you happen to be staying there at that time, I would like to apologize if you woke to a blood-curdling scream.

But honestly the main reason we love this hotel is that the moment you walk through the doors, that signature fragrance greets you. It's not like anything I've smelled before. I asked at the front desk and they said it is oak and ember. And its light fragrance is everywhere, in the lobby, in the elevator, in the rooms. I once asked one of the staff why they chose that fragrance. He said that it represents a woodsy smell reminiscent of Texas nights. It was specifically chosen to be used in that one hotel alone.

But do you know that God has specifically chosen one fragrance for heaven? And it is the prayers of his people. In the revelation that was given to John on the Island of Patmos, speaking of Jesus, he wrote this down: He stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne. And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

Again, in Revelation he writes: Then another angel with a gold incense burner came and

stood at the altar. And a great amount of incense was given to him to mix with the prayers of God's people as an offering on the gold altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, mixed with the prayers of God's holy people, ascended up to God from the altar where the angel had poured them out.

The Psalmist David even knew that our prayers are like a fragrant offering to God. This is what he wrote, "Accept my prayer as incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering.

You might remember that two of the gifts brought to Christ as a child from the three kings were frankincense and myrrh. Now in the Old Testament it was made clear that the only time frankincense could be used was in the holy of holies to offer up to God alone. The gift from that king said that now God had come to live with us. The myrrh, used to anoint bodies for burial, said that this king would indeed die for us.

Now think about it. God could have chosen anything as the fragrance of heaven. He could have chosen church attendance or tithing or good behavior. God chose prayer. When this present life is over and we're finally entering into heaven there it will be, that familiar fragrance -- the prayers of God's people. Sometimes our prayers are offerings of worship, sometimes of petition, but there are times when our prayers need to be prayers of authority, boldly prayed in the name of Jesus.

On June the 6th, 2019 the world paused to honor a significant date. It was 75 years since D day. On that day which began the end of the Second World War British, American, and Canadian forces invaded Northern France by means of beach landings in Normandy. Their steely commitment was to push back Hitler's Nazi war machine. I'm remembering as a child asking my mom what she remembered about the war. She told me about the evening a young German paratrooper who had missed his landing spot came down in my grandparents' backyard. Well, my grandfather called for the home guard to come and take him away but before they arrived mom slipped out to take a look at this "enemy soldier." "He was just a boy," she said. "How could this be an enemy?"

There is a war however where the enemy is very clear. There can be no missing his motives or evil intent. No negotiating, no possibility of a peace treaty because he is pure evil. Now when you and I move into praying with authority, it is important to notice where we are sitting. That begins by understanding where Christ is sitting right now.

This is what we read, "I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else -- not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church." We read that in Ephesians one.

That's where Jesus is -- seated at God's right hand.

But Paul goes on to explain that because of where Jesus is, well, you and I have been given a significant upgrade in where we are. This is what he writes: But God is so rich in mercy and he loved us so much that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. It is only by God's grace that you've been saved. For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

Now if we're being honest, frankly, that's a little bit hard to understand. What does it mean that we've been seated in heavenly realms? Right now as far as I'm can see, I'm seated in the studio here in Texas. So what is Paul saying? Well, he is saying a few things. One thing for sure. Just as death and judgment are behind Christ, they are behind us too. Death has zero power over the believer. We don't ever have to be afraid. We go straight from this life to be with Jesus. Also, we'll never face God's judgment at the great white throne. That's only for those who have never accepted Christ's sacrifice for their sins. But I don't know if you remember this, you and I, every believer will stand before

Christ to be judged.

This is what we read: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body whether good or bad. (Second Corinthians five)

Now that judgment, you'll notice, is not about punishment, it is about rewards. Don't think for a moment that God missed everything you do to serve him. Whether anyone else sees it or not, God does. Whatever you do for God might not get the applause you wished for down here, but just you wait until you get home. Just you wait!

So death and judgment are behind us. But what else is Paul saying? We get a little more clarity when we read this: Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When God looks at you and me he sees us seated with Christ already. It's a done deal. Paul's encouragement to the Colossians is helping them to see yes, you may be here for a while longer but this is not your real home and it is not our real home either. He is encouraging us to set our hearts and our minds on what's going to last forever. You and I, we are children of the king of all kings. We're not invited into his presence for a passing moment. You and I, we get to stay forever.

Honestly, that makes me want to live differently now. I pray it does for you too. I'm asking God that you will be able to hold your head up high no matter what no matter who has tried to diminish you, to silence you, to disrespect you, to leave you. Let me tell you, those things have a shelf life, a "sell by" date. You have a future in heaven that no one can touch. You are a loved child of God. You're victorious because of Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.

I know life can be discouraging down here. Perhaps you serve God faithfully over and over. You're always the one that shows up early for things or maybe you're the last one to leave. Sometimes you think, I don't think anybody ever notices this. Let me tell you, God doesn't miss a thing. And on that day when you and I stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the passage goes on to say clearly that for some everything will just burn up at their feet like wood and hay and stubble because yeah, they're saved, so their name's in the Lamb's Book of Life, they're going into eternity but they have nothing to offer back to the Lord. But for you who have faithfully served, you will discover that you will have jewels, a crown to throw back at the feet of Christ.

One of the ways you have done that and can continue to do that is the way that you have supported the ministries here at *LIFE Today*. I love mission feeding! I love being able to see Water for LIFE. But one of the ministries that's closest to my heart is what I want to show you right now. There are some people who feel there is no hope, but we can bring hope in the name of Jesus. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

Announcer: The bonds of family are among the most powerful in human kind. In areas stricken by poverty young children willingly seek jobs to support their households.

>> My family owes people a lot of money due to sicknesses that we've had. So I asked for help from a friend to look for a job. It was going to be a good job serving food. But when I got there I was trapped and forced to have sex with men. This first happened when I was 13 years old. I'm 15 now.

Announcer: After being tricked and kidnapped at the age of 13, Savanshanda was raped for a month to break her psychologically. Her captors also beat her and threatened her if

she tried to escape, and their methods were effective. Sitting here with Savanshanda today, we asked her why she did not escape at this moment. And this was her answer.

>> My biggest fear is not just for me. If I disobey, they will harm my younger sister, too.

Sheila: What we're dealing with here, it is a very intentional evil. I cannot unsee or unhear the voices of these little girls. Southeast Asia is so organized with their sex trafficking. It has become a multi-million-dollar business if not a billion-dollar business. So we have to be so intentional to say, no! We're going to stop this.

End of video

Sheila: Let me read you something from Ephesians chapter 6. This is verse 12: For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

I have never felt that as much as I did walking those streets in Southeast Asia. There is so much palpable evil from the pit of hell. The young girl at the beginning there, she said, "My family owed money." You think, well, what were they doing? It was simply because so many of the areas that we work in, the families are desperately poor. And when someone in the family gets sick, they have to borrow money from a money lender to be able to get the help they need. And then when the money lender wants the money back, he has raised the interest over and over and over until there is no way that a poor family can pay that back. So that's how so many of these young girls get tricked and trapped into trafficking. She thought she was going to be serving food in a restaurant. Instead they serve her up on a plate. This is wrong! In Jesus' name, this is so wrong!

We have the most amazing partners who are boots on the ground in Southeast Asia in so many places. They have learned because just as these traffickers are organized, we, as the body of Christ have to be even more organized and intentional. They're in it for the

money, we're in it for the kingdom of God, and we need your help. We have some friends who are particularly moved by some stuff they saw recently on our Rescue Life mission and they have put up \$250,000 as a matching gift. Which means they will match you dollar for dollar.

When we begin this process of reaching into the villages and warning children before they ever come close to being trafficked. Then when it is too late, when we don't get to girls in time and they're trapped, we've seen the SWAT teams go in at midnight, kick down the doors and pull these young girls out. Then we have a beautiful place where they can go and begin the journey of restoration.

That whole process to get that going in the life of one child costs \$128. But because of the matching gift, if you're able to give \$128 that will now be two girls pulled from this hellish place. If you're able to give \$64 they will match it and now one girl will begin that journey of going from utter darkness into the light of the love of Christ. We need your help to do it! They will reach, rescue, and restore as many girls as we can give them help.

So please, would you go to your phone? Would you dial that number on your screen? Would you go online? Will you give the best gift possible? Let's reach them! Let's rescue them! Let's restore them in the name of Jesus.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Behind the bright lights there is a darkness where a world of innocence is lost and abuse runs rampant scarring the souls of children with no one and nowhere to turn for help. With bodies broken and hopes crushed, these young victims are trapped in a never-ending nightmare.

Today you can shine the light of God's love in this dark world to reach, rescue, and

restore these young ones to the life God designed for them to live. With a generous \$250,000 matching gift, now your gift of \$128 to reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help *two* children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we'll send you this beautiful "Freedom" bracelet handcrafted by survivors of human trafficking who want to say thank you for helping those still trapped. Wear it as a wonderful reminder to pray for the outreach.

With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive the "Freedom" tote. This quality canvas tote bag is made by trafficked survivors who are now learning a new trade and includes spiritual life resources such as books, devotionals, CD's, or DVD's.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our beautiful new bronze sculpture, "A Mother's Strength." Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

Sheila: Vulnerable little children need three things. They need to be reached, we need to continue going into the villages, going into the places where children are vulnerable and warning them, educating them. They need rescued.

We have talked with some of the most amazing SWAT teams who are going in and rescuing these little girls and seeing traffickers go to prison. But then the most beautiful part of this is this restore -- reach, rescue, restore. We have seen where these girls are taken, and they're loved. Is our work here over? Absolutely not! I think it's never been more urgent. But we need you to continue this work. God is moving in the darkness and saving lives one life at a time.

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much. Please keep calling. For any gift at all, there is a beautiful bracelet made by the girls who get rescued. It's a way of being able to help restore them, to get a job. They want you to have it as a thank you. So for any gift at all, we will send you the bracelet.

If you can give more, if you can give \$128, we have this beautiful tote that also is made by the girls and we will put some of our gifts from *LIFE Outreach* here in that bag for you.

If you're able to give \$1280, do you know that that will actually rescue and restore, reach, 20 girls? And we will send you a beautiful bronze.

So I'm Sheila Walsh. For all of us here at *LIFE Today*, thanks for being with us. God bless you!