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Week 13: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

"Pray with Your Armor On"

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I remember when my son Christian was about five years old and we were sitting down for dinner and I said to him, "Christian, would you like to pray today?" He thought about it for a minute and he said, "No. Don't really feel like it."

Have you ever had times like that? Where you made a commitment in your life, you want to be a praying woman, you want to be somebody who prays, you want to be a father who prays over his children, but your feelings get in the way.

One of the most tempting distractions to overcome is depending on how we feel when we pray. Our feelings are never an indication of the power of our prayers but often if we feel heard we're tempted to quit, and the enemy would love nothing more than that.

In his marvelous little book, *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis addresses this matter. If you've never read it, the book consists of 31 letters written by a senior devil named Screwtape to his young nephew, Wormwood instructing him on how to attack the faith of the man that he is personally assigned to torment. One of his greatest strategies is to attack how the man prays.

This is what he says: "The simplest is to turn their gaze away from him, the Lord, toward themselves. Keep them watching their own minds and trying to produce feelings there by the action of their own wills. When they meant to ask him for charity, let them, instead, start trying to manufacture charitable feelings for themselves and not notice that this is what they're doing.

When they meant to pray for courage, let them really be trying to feel brave. When they say they are praying for forgiveness, let them be trying to feel forgiven. Teach them to estimate the value of each prayer by their success in producing the desired feeling."

Well, honestly, as a young believer it was easy to fall into that trap. When I didn't feel as if my prayers went higher than the bedroom ceiling I would get discouraged often and just quit. Not anymore! There is a spiritual battle raging all around us every day and you and I, we're going to learn how to do battle in Jesus' name. Together we're going to move beyond our feelings. Jesus is worth so much more and we want our lives to count. We want to know how to pray. We want to know what to say, and we want to pray with power and authority.

So let's look at what the word says about spiritual warfare.

"A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 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."

So it's time to suit up. Preparing for spiritual battle is critical. We don't engage with the enemy when we are unprepared. I'm sure like me you've heard your fair share of messages on the full armor of God. But my question is do you do it? Do you suit up every day? I don't always remember to honestly. But I'm changing that.

I know you know this, but our world is getting increasingly evil. Our Christian faith is going to be under attack in more and more arenas. But prayer and the Word of God are our weapons. This is what we read: "God's word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out." That's how *The Message* translates Ephesians six.

Before we look at the specific pieces of spiritual armor and what they mean, I just want to remind you of two things the enemy is and two really important things that he is not. "Satan is a

roaring lion," we read. "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."

Peter makes it clear that the enemy's mission is to take out as many believers as possible, so we need to stay alert. Honestly, that's why it is so important to be in community with other believers, to be part of a local church. When you're on your own it is much easier to drift away and just get picked off, discouraged and even pulled away from our faith. I've talked to many young women who say they are disillusioned with the church and they think they don't need it.

Now I understand that we are an imperfect body but as the writer to the Hebrews said, "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."

Now if the day of Christ's return was close when this letter was written, it's much closer now. There are many Saturday nights or early Sunday mornings when I get home for speaking somewhere and honestly, all I want to do is crawl into bed and watch "Say Yes to the Dress." But when I drag my weary self to church and we begin to raise our voices and worship together, something inside me shifts. I remember the goodness of God and how worthy he is to be praised when we're fresh and when we're frazzled. It's much easier for the enemy to pick us off when we decide we'll just love Jesus on our own. I understand that temptation, but it is not wisdom, it is not scriptural. We need each other.

This is another thing we know. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Jesus, talking to the crowds one day described Satan like this, "He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies."

You can go right back to Chapter 3 of Genesis and see the way Satan lied to Adam and Eve causing them to doubt the goodness of God. In Chapter 2 God warned them what would happen if they ate from one tree in the garden. But the Lord God warned them, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its

fruit, you're sure to die."

When Satan stepped in, he directly contradicted the Word of God. "You won't die," the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it. And you will be like God knowing both good and evil."

Here's the truth. Adam and Eve were never supposed to die at all but live with God in paradise eating from the tree of life forever -- as you and I were. But once they sinned, God had to put them out of the garden. They were now broken and full of shame. If they had been allowed to stay in the garden and eat of the tree of life they would have lived forever -- but forever broken. God loved them and us too much for that.

So Satan was a liar then and he is a liar now. So when you hear that old familiar voice and I don't know what the tapes in your head say, oh you'll never change. God doesn't love you. No one is listening to your prayers. Recognize who it is. It is not God. It is the enemy.

We've been promised no condemnation. Remember? Romans 8:1, "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus." That verse reminds us because we've placed our trust and our faith in Christ that we will no longer... Now we'll face conviction, that's different. Conviction pulls us closer to God; condemnation does not. All condemnation comes from the liar. He has some power, but it is very limited. And what matters most, the two things he is, let me remind you of what he is not. Satan is not omnipresent; that's a big word. God is omnipresent which means he is here right now with me in the studio and he's right there with you wherever you are. In Psalm 139 David made it clear there is nowhere we can go from God's spirit. You are never alone. God is always with you.

Satan, the fallen angel is not. He can only be in one place at a time, but he has his demons. As we read, "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."

We know from the book of Job, and also from the Christ being led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil that Satan has to get permission from God before he's allowed to mess with God's children. He has power but it is limited.

Somebody made a statement to me the other day that Satan is the opposite of God. That is not true. Satan is a creature. He was created by God as were all the angels. He doesn't hold a candle to the power of our Father.

Not only is God omnipresent and Satan is not, God is omniscient, he knows everything. But all the enemy can do is guess. Satan is clueless. That is a huge truth that we sometimes forget, yes, he can lie to us but here's the deal. He has no idea whether you're going to believe the lie or not. He'll throw things at you hoping that you'll believe them, but he doesn't know whether we will.

Let me give you just like an illustration of what that might look like. Imagine yourself standing at the top of a staircase looking down into a cellar and you wake up one morning and you're feeling down and Satan throws the first lie, "Your life will never be any better than it is right now." Now if you believe that, you're one step down. Then the next, "It doesn't seem as if God is listening to your prayers; does it?" Buy into that lie and you're one step further down. He's throwing these things at you hoping you'll believe him. "God doesn't love you as much as he loves your friend." If you receive his lies, before you know it, you're at the bottom of the cellar steps.

We have to combat his lies with God's truth. Remember Jeremiah 29:11? "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." When we combat every one of his lies with the truth of God's word he has to leave.

Now the whole armor of God that we find in the letter to the Ephesians was actually written when Paul was imprisoned in Rome. It is one of the four letters called "The Prison Epistles." The others are Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. As he wrote, he was literally chained to a Roman soldier. In the first chapter of Philippians he talks about the way God is using his imprisonment to impact the palace guards.

Well, from that place, from that visual beside him every day, he writes about the whole armor of God. Remember what he says? "Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the good news so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God."

There is a powerful promise within those instructions. When we suit up every day in the full armor of God, we will be able to resist the enemy. And after the battles we face we'll still be standing. And that's a promise from God's word.

The instructions are clear to this. We must put on the whole armor of God's, not just one or two of our favorite pieces. The more committed we are to become praying people, the more we'll realize we're in a battle. When you don't pay much attention to prayer or to the Word of God, the enemy won't pay that much attention to you. But when you have decided that you are all in the war is on.

Now the belt of truth. On a Roman's soldier's uniform the belt was a key piece of armor. It held the breastplate on and protected a soldier's most vulnerable area beneath his chest, his stomach and groin area. The girdle or waist belt also held his sword to his side. Without this part of the armor the soldier could not hold on his breastplate or his sword. Paul was telling us that without the truth of God's word we are vulnerable to attack. It is only God's truth that can defeat the enemy's lies.

The breastplate of righteousness, the breastplate of a soldier covers his heart. We are covered by the righteousness of Christ. When the enemy wants to attack us and accuse us, we remember whose we are. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." It is hard to let that truth settle in. We know our failures and the number of times we fall down but because of the finished work of Christ when God looks at you,

he sees Jesus. We're covered by the blood of Christ, so we protect our hearts knowing what it cost Christ to save us. That love makes us want to live in a way that would honor him.

You know Paul would look down at the shoes the Roman soldiers wore to keep them steady in battle and he encourages us to be steady, the shoes of peace, because of the peace we have in Christ. When we stand steady in Christ, we can take the good news of Jesus to a world that has lost its footing. When we exhibit peace in the midst of difficult circumstances others want to know who is this one who helps you? And we'll tell them his name is Jesus.

The shield a Roman soldier used in battle was an impressive sight. It was a large and oval. It was like a door, four feet long by two and a half feet wide. It let nothing through. This is what we're called to hold up when life is hard. We stand strong and say, "I believe!" Hebrews 11, the great faith chapter of the New Testament begins this way: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for, and assurance about what we do not see."

You know the helmet of salvation covers our mind. When we're attacked by the lies of the enemy, when he wants to attack our thoughts, we have the helmet of salvation. But one of the most interesting things about that whole passage, the last thing when Paul says, "the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God," the word used in the Greek there is not the word that's used for a typical Roman sword. It is the word used for a dagger, close combat. And the word that's used for Word of God, it is not a capital W., if you look through your Bible many times when it talks about Christ as the word or the Word of God it is a capital W and that means the Greek word used there is *logos*, that means the whole Word of God. What is used in this, in Ephesians six is the word *Rhema*, and what that means is particular scriptures.

What Paul is saying is get your weapon ready. However the enemy loves to attack you, have the one -- if you deal with fear, Psalm 27 verse one, "The Lord is my light and my salvation -- whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life -- of whom shall I be afraid?"

So what Paul is saying is when we put on every piece of the armor of God what we have in our pockets ready to come against the enemy when he comes against us are those particular verses.

Put them on a sticky note. Stick them on your bathroom mirror, in your car. Have those verses ready. If you struggle with anxiety Isaiah 26:3: "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!"

We have not been left unprepared in this battle. Yes, we have an enemy, but he can only do so much. But what I'd love to ask you to do, would you be willing to get involved in a battle with me now? Watch this and I'll tell you how we're going to fight.

On the mission field:

Sheila: James and Betty, this is the hardest trip I have been on with *LIFE*. We have been out on the streets at night and we've seen these little girls being forced into sex trafficking.

Announcer: Human trafficking is one of the darkest evils in this world. The depravity it takes to kidnap, to sell, and to rape a child is matched only by the virtue and strength needed to oppose it. Fighting such systemic evil requires a prayerful strategy. Our teams on the ground work alongside local law enforcement to rescue girls who have been trafficked into the sex trade by conducting raids and arresting the criminals involved.

Survivors of sex trafficking have often spent years in captivity and their minds and personalities have been altered. To restore these girls we provide them with shelter and offer them the hope and healing only found in Christ's love. It's been said an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Sheila: As I watched these kids today, I thought, this actually could be the most important day in their life. This could be the day they learn what human trafficking is all about.

Announcer: In another part of the world there is a girl entirely unaware she is about to be kidnapped and sold. But if we can reach her before the predators, we'll save her from a horrific future. Reach. Rescue. Restore. More than words, this is a fight against hell itself.

Sheila: God is moving in the darkness and saving lives. Please keep helping us. It is changing the world.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: It really is. There are times when I watch some of our footage and I just want to groan from the deepest place inside of me. Then there are times when I get to see the difference it is making, and I just don't know how many hallelujahs I can get out in two minutes.

Honestly, one of the parts of the ministry that is the most important to me is this whole idea of reach. When I went on one of my first trips in Southeast Asia and we drove way up into the mountains to some of the villages where these children are kidnapped from, and I watched our team, our people on the ground talk to them about what trafficking looks like and what happens, initially, I was actually kind of horrified because these are little girls and you're tell them some pretty dark stuff. But Janice, who travels with me, who is our photographer, she said, "that might be the most important thing they've ever heard in their life. That might be one of the most important things that's ever been spoken to them."

Because honestly, I know you're like me, I want to reach them before any of these evil people get a hold of them. So we tell these girls what to do if some guy shows up in a van and tells you, "Oh, we've got great work for you." Yell as loudly as you can and run! We teach them to not go off by themselves. To make sure they're in twos or threes.

But then for those who do get taken, I was blown away by our teams in Southeast Asia by how organized they are. How they work out where these girls are and they literally break in. I mean they kick doors down in Jesus' name and they take these girls. You might have been surprised to see a woman getting handcuffed, because sometimes we think well, it is men who do this. So often, these traffickers use a woman as a front person because the girls are more likely to trust a woman, and then they discover what they've been trapped into.

When we're able to get these girls who have had so much inside of them broken, we can take them to this place where they can be brought back to life, loved back to life. To see so many of these girls being introduced to Jesus, to literally watch the countenance on their faces changing from shame to shining. It's like the Psalm, "Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy, no shadow of shame will touch their faces."

Let's do this. Let's do it in Jesus' name. We have some friends who put up a \$250,000 matching gift because they get how important this is. It used to be that for \$128, actually still is, we begin that process of reaching a girl, of rescuing her, of restoring her. But because they've put up a matching offer, if you can give \$128 that will actually begin that process for *two* girls. If you're only able to give \$64 they'll match it and one girl will begin her journey into freedom.

So please, go to your phone, make the very best gift possible. Go online! Let's answer their prayers in Jesus' name.

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

In the studio:

Ralph: If I could turn to you right now and just remind all of us of the devastation that we've heard of, the hopelessness that these girls end up in, just being abused and just many times tortured and even murdered, trapped against their will in human trafficking. They're just going across these borders by the thousands every day. But we have partners here who can help, who can intercept them. In a moment's notice. They know what to look for.

So please give. Go online, go to the phone number you see on the screen. Whatever allows you to give that generous gift today that we can rescue more girls who desperately need our help and are crying for hope every day.

Sheila: Thank you. If the lines are busy, please keep calling. For any gift at all, I'd love to send you this little bracelet. These are actually made by the girls once they're rescued. It gives them a job. And also, when you wear it, I've got mine on, it helps you remember to pray for those girls. Also, if you'd like my book on prayer, we'd love to send that to you for any gift at all.

But remember today, if you give \$128 it's matched and two girls will begin their journey from

the darkest night into the arms of a Savior would loves them. Thank you so much for being with us today. From all of us here at *LIFE Outreach* God bless you and we'll see you next time!