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Week 21: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

"Spiritual Warfare in Prayer"

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. Thanks so much for joining me here today. I've been thinking a lot in the last few weeks and months about the power of prayer, and the conclusions that we come to when we pray, and something doesn't happen the way we hope it would. Have you ever prayed and prayed and then felt as if God didn't answer? Sometimes then we question things like is God good? Did he hear my prayer? Does he really love me? And does God see what's going on here right now in my life? If we're not careful that's when doubt can creep in.

But I think sometimes that's because of a wrong understanding of scripture. We'll take one verse, like for example, many of us have as a favorite verse, in fact it was my mom's favorite, Jeremiah 29:11. You probably could quote it with me at home. "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They're plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Well, it is easy to take one verse and view our whole life around the understanding of that one verse and what we believe that verse should look like in our lives. But as I've probably said 100 times, we need context. We need to understand, why was this being said? When was it being said? And what else was being said around that verse?

This one verse is part of a letter that the prophet Jeremiah wrote from Jerusalem to the elders, the priests, the prophets and all the people who had been exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Now there are differing schools of thought as to how many were

exiled at this time, but it would have been thousands. Almost everyone in Jerusalem and some from other parts of Judah.

But before we get to that favorite verse let me read you from Jeremiah 29:4-7. It reads as follows: This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare."

Now pause for a moment and try to imagine that. They have been carried away from their own country where they worshipped Jehovah God, God of the people of Israel, and they've been taken to a foreign land where many gods are worshipped, and they don't even speak the language.

Now I don't know if you ever do this but when I read things in the Word of God I want to know, well, how long did it take to get from there to there? What would that have been like? Well, let me just give you a bird's eye overview. They've been taken from Jerusalem all the way up through Syria and into what we know as modern day Iraq. This would be terrifying. But God is telling his people through Jeremiah's letter, "I'm in control. I know what's happening."

But even more than that, I think it is interesting that God says to them, "Work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile."

If you're in a difficult place right now, if you watch the news and you think our country, our world is in a difficult place right now, I want to remind you of something that will never change. I don't care who is in the White House, who is in government across the world, God is on the throne. God is sovereign.

So for the children of Israel it must have seemed as if this foreign king came in and dragged them all away to a country where they didn't speak the language, they didn't know what to do. But how kind of God through the prophet Jeremiah to send them a letter and say, "No, hey! It's okay. This is my purpose." This was God's doing for a divine purpose. So even when it looks to you and me as if the enemy is winning, God is in control.

Why don't we just pause for a minute and just let that truth kind of sink it. Think of everything that feels out of control in your life at the moment. Whatever it is, just bring that to your mind and then speak over your situation, "I believe God is in control."

The whole of God's word tells the same message, God is still on the throne no matter how things appear. We hear that all the way from Genesis to Revelation. One of the best-known verse is, of course, Romans 8:28: And we know that in all things God work for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Do you find yourself in a place right now that's just hard to understand? Does it feel as if God has forgotten you? God has not promised us an easy life. Remember Christ's words on the very night he was betrayed. We read it in John Chapter 16, verse 33: Jesus said, "I have told you these things." And the things he told them were very difficult things. "I've told you these things, so that in me you may have peace."

Jesus didn't tell them all these hard things that were going to happen to get them all prepared, to get them worried, to give them something to be anxious about. No! "I told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world."

So let's get back to Jeremiah's letter. We're very familiar with 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."

But let's read the verse that comes right before that, Jeremiah 29:10. This is what the Lord says: "When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place."

Wow! 70 years! When we read a verse like this, we want the answer to be now or next Tuesday at the latest. It's who we are. It is human nature. How many times have you quoted that over your own life? "I know that the plans I have for you, plans for good, not for evil." And you want God to show up in that moment and do something so that you know he is listening to your prayer. But God's timing is perfect, and it is not always what you and I want. But God is faithful to his word, not always to our understanding or interpretation of his word. But I promise you, you can stake your life on every single promise in God's word.

So they're being told "70 years." So let's move forward 70 years and see what happened. For that we need to turn to the book of Daniel. Now Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they're just teenagers when they're carried off to Babylon from Jerusalem. We know some of the earlier years of Daniel's life, we know that he refused to bow down to a golden statue and was thrown in a pit with lions, a favorite form of torture in those days. Absolute agony. When they came to check on Daniel the next day, they fully expected there to be just a pile of bones. He would have been torn apart. But God sent an angel to close the mouths of the lion.

But I want us to look at what was happening in Daniel's life 70 years after the captivity. So to show you I'm good at math, he's now 85. And we read in Daniel ten that he's been in mourning for 21 days.

We read Daniel ten verses two and three: At that time, I Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

Now you've probably worked out that's where we get the Daniel Fast from. I don't know

if you or your church have done that, but I know that lots of people have written on the Daniel Fast.

But why was Daniel in mourning? Well, we have to kind of flit around a little in the Old Testament, but the previous year 50,000 Jews had been allowed to go back to Jerusalem and begin to rebuild the temple.

Now being part of the royal court, because Daniel didn't go with them, Daniel would get regular updates and he knew that things were not going well. The foundations of the temple had been laid but there had been so much opposition. If you want to check that out, read Ezra Chapter 4. There had been so much opposition that everything had now stopped, and Daniel was grieved that the work of rebuilding the temple had stopped. It made no sense to him. Where was God? Why wasn't he answering?

So on the 23rd of Daniel's 85th year, if you read it in your translation it might say the 24th day of the first month of the ancient Hebrew lunar calendar, but that's April 23rd. So Daniel is standing on the banks of the Tigris River and something amazing is about to happen.

Here's what we read: I looked up and I saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shown like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people. Only I, Daniel saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing; but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide. So I was left there all alone to see this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale and I felt very weak. Then I heard the man speak, and when I heard the sound of his voice, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

Now think about that! Daniel has been thrown into a pit with lions and an angel came and shut the lion's mouth. But the sight of this angel was so spectacular that Daniel fainted and lay on the ground.

We continue reading: Just then a hand touched me, and I lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. And the man said to me, "Daniel, you are very precious to God, so listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling. Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for 21 days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. If you want to read that for yourself again, it's Daniel 10, verses 5-13.

This is such a key passage for the days that we are living in. There are several things first. First of all, at the sound of Gabriel's voice Daniel fainted. Can you imagine what it is going to be like when you and I get home? If he fainted at the sight and the sound of Gabriel, can you imagine what it's going to be like when you and I finally get to see Jesus face to face?

Second thing I love, I love that the angel says to Daniel, "You are very precious to God."

Wow! Why do you think Daniel is so precious to God? Because he was 15, he's a boy when he is dragged off to a foreign land, but he never once bowed the knee to anyone but our God. He never stopped praying to anyone but our God.

Interestingly, the day that God dispatched an angel to answer Daniel's prayer, Satan did too. Don't forget, a third of when Lucifer rebelled, a third -- a full third of the angels fell with him. And so the minute God sent out an angel to Daniel, Satan sent out an emissary too and there was a royal battle for 21 days. I don't have the imagination to think what it must be like when there is this battle going on with this magnificent Gabriel and one of Lucifer's angels, but it lasted for 21 full days. But here's what I think is just amazing! God sent -- who did he send? To hold back the spirit prince of Persia? God sent the archangel Michael. The one who will announce the return of Christ. A third of the angels fell with

Lucifer and it seems when you read that passage and two or three more passages, they have been assigned geographical areas to rule over in our world. It's interesting, when I fly into different cities, like if I fly into Washington, D.C., there is a very different spirit there. If I fly into Los Angeles, there is a very different spirit there. I mean Satan has assigned his angels, spirit princes over certain areas.

But my bottom line in all of this is this: God is in control no matter how things appear. We know this. We do not fight against flesh and blood. We were told that, Ephesians six: Our battle is not against flesh and blood. But here's the other thing I love. Prayer activates the power and the resources of God.

So I don't know what you're facing right now. You may have been praying and praying and praying and it seems like God is not answering. Remember there's battles going on around us that you and I can't see. But God is able to dispatch his angels. And yes, there may be spirits over your city, but God's angels are warriors sent out to help the saints' work out their salvation. So do not give up hope! Don't stop praying. Ask God to give you wisdom to see beyond what you can see to what's actually going on in the spirit realm.

I think one of the most beautiful things, when we finally get home, can you imagine what it will be like just for God to look at you, and maybe you'll get the message through one of the angels and says, "You -- *you* are very precious to God." Not because we get it all right. Not because we live perfect lives. But because we don't lose hope. Because we refuse to bow the knee to anyone but our Jesus and we never ever, ever stop praying.

One of our commitments here at *LIFE* is to hear the cries that go directly to the throne room of God from people who are suffering and struggling all around the world. And those cries ascend into heaven and God sends out his messengers. And you and I have the privilege of being able to be an answer to the prayers that we don't hear down here, but God hears them, and we get to be the solution. Would you watch this with me?

On the mission field:

Announcer: In the Kikra village of South Sudan hope is hard to find. The harsh conditions mean food sources are extremely scarce. And despite their best efforts the people are unable to gather the resources necessary to sustain their families.

Open Captions:

>> Life is very hard here. The hunger never leaves. We look for food day after day, but there is never enough to feed the children.

Announcer: Villagers like Kohli are struggling to survive, using what little strength they have to search for their next meal. The physical exhaustion is dangerous causing even the strongest of adults to eventually buckle under its weight. But the children fall much faster. A reality Kohli came face to face with as she watched the life begin to leave one of our twin sons.

Open Captions:

>> My baby suffered from the lack of food. He lost so much weight and got weaker and weaker. He was wasting away. And then one day, he wouldn't wake up. He had died in his sleep.

Announcer: Kohli is still numb from the pain of being unable to wake her baby. And her perspective as a mother is forever changed. As her remaining child grows, so does her fear of facing yet another tragedy and she clings to the only hope that remains.

Open Captions:

>> Hunger killed one of my children. I fear it may take my other son. There is nothing left that I can do. It is only God who is protecting his life now. It is only God who can provide.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Did you see the faith in what that woman just said? It's only God who can provide. Even though she has lost a child, lost one of her precious twins, she is still believing that God can provide.

I remember when our son Christian was born, and I was kind of a nutty mother for the first few weeks. I would get up in the middle of the night and hold a mirror over his nose to make sure he was still breathing. I can't imagine what it must be like to know that your children are getting weaker and weaker every day and there is nothing you can do. As you can see from those pictures, they're having to just kind of scrape at the ground to see if they can find anything at all.

But to lay your little ones down and then in the morning to try and wake them up and one of them won't wake up. There is -- I don't think there is a greater heartache on the planet. And having walked in these areas in Africa, having met so many of these mothers, if you got to know them, you would love them. They are some of the most beautiful, loving, caring women. We get to pray with them and weep with them. And they want to embrace us. It is just -- sometimes I wish I could take you with me and you could actually see for yourself. Because once you see how outrageous the need is and how they're doing everything they can, so many of these mothers get up way before dawn to see if they can find anything and work so hard. And they're getting weaker and they're watching their children get weaker.

That's why we at life have made a commitment that we will be an answer to the prayer. She said there, "God is the only one who can provide." Well, we are the hands and feet of Jesus on the earth at this moment. We've committed to be able to help 350,000 children this year. If we all do something! \$30 will feed three children for three months. \$50 will feed five. \$100 will feed ten children. Some of you may be in a place where you think, well, you know what? I could do more. Do you know that \$1,000 could feed 100 children for three months?

There are so many moms and dads and grandparents right at this moment, as you're watching this program who are asking God, please send help." Let's hear that. Let's be the answer to those prayers. Would you go to your phone? Just call that number on your screen. Make the very best gift you can or go online. If you're writing a check, give us a call and say, "This is what I'm sending." But let's be an answer to those mothers' prayers.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Mission feeding began with a promise to be there in times of crisis for thousands of hurting and hungry children in their time of need. Now more than ever we need your help to save lives by feeding and caring for children across the continent of Africa.

With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing severe famine, we urgently need to replenish our supplies to reach the 350,000 children who are counting on us.

Your gift of love can be the miracle answer to a desperate mother's prayer. Call now with your life saving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 that will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. With your gift we'll send you the *Global Impact of Life Journal*. This softcover journal includes pictures from the mission field and inspiring scriptures as a reminder of your impact in giving to bless lives around the world.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the *Global Impact Bible*. This English Standard Version presents a fascinating guide to the impact of the bestselling book of all time filled with quotes from well-known figures, photographs and reproductions of fine art. It highlights the many surprising ways scripture has shaped civilization.

Finally with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children be sure to

request our commemorative bronze sculpture, "A Mother's Strength."

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

On the mission field

Sheila: Can you hear them coughing? Can you hear that deep chest cough? Because their resistance is so low that the least little thing becomes a serious life or death issue for these children.

I don't know if you realize that every time you pick up the phone and call, or every time you go online, these are the people whose lives you are changing. Our prayer is that we can save this little one. But my prayer is that we can save hundreds of other children before they get to this stage. No child should ever get to this stage. No mom should ever have to watch this.

So if we do something now, we can stop this from happening.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! I know so many of you have done this over and over again, but the need is greater, so we all want to respond. If you would like a copy of my book, *Praying Women: How to pray when you don't know what to say*. We would be glad to send that to you. Also for a gift of \$100, we have this fantastic *Global Impact Bible*. All the quotes in there, they're not all necessarily from believers but it shows the impact the Word of God has had on our whole world. But please, if the lines were busy, just keep calling. Let's be determined to be an answer and let's do that in Jesus' name. So I'm Sheila Walsh. From all of us here at *LIFE*, we'll see you next time.