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Week 23: Spring Mission Feeding: Last week

Sheila Walsh

"How Do We Live in Difficult Days"

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. One of the things I've been thinking about just as I've been scrolling through social media, and I try not to do it as much as I was doing because honestly, I was finding it really discouraging. Facebook doesn't seem to be as bad but Twitter drives me bonkers honestly. What I really, really find hard is the way that Christians are ripping into Christians. I just don't even understand that. How we could think that that in any way reflects the love of God is a mystery to me. I mean, if you have something to say to a member of the family, you say it to the member of the family. You don't go on social media.

But Jesus told us in the last days things are going to shift. That's my question for us to look at today: How do we live in difficult days?

It's an interesting passage Matthew 24, I think it is verses three through eight where Jesus was talking with his disciples about what the signs of his return would be. So let me read that to you.

It says: Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?"

Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and

threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come."

But then in verse ten Jesus says this, "And many will turn away from me, and betray and hate each other."

Now I kind of underlined that in my Bible and I just sat with it for a while. I thought, but why would that be, Lord? I think it's easy to be a follower of Christ when everything is going well, when you can pay all your bills on time, when there is peace all around. But what happens when life falls apart? How do you and I make sure that we're going to stand firm in difficult days?

Well, recently I've been studying the book of Daniel. Now you could honestly teach on Daniel and his prophetic visions for a year but today I just want us to look at one story that has profoundly impacted me and I pray it will speak to you as well.

When Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were carried off into captivity, they are just teenagers, they're just boys. Now you're probably more familiar with names they were given by King Nebuchadnezzar's chief of staff. He renamed them Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

They were given a place of high honor in the palace because we read in Daniel 1:17 that God had given them an unusual aptitude to be able to learn the language very quickly and understand the literature of the culture. So these three men were put in charge of all Babylon. Things were about to take a very, very nasty turn.

So let's read from Daniel Chapter 3, verses one through six: King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue 90 feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors,

advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up.

So all these officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald shouted out, "People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

Now this king, Nebuchadnezzar, he rules over a vast population. He has brought into captivity people from all sorts of nations. And what he is actually trying to set up is a one-world religion.

Now some of the people who were in power before these three young Jewish men, they would stop at nothing to try and get rid of them. So I want you to picture this: A vast crowd, hundreds of thousands of people. And I'm sure because of their position, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in a prominent place. So imagine everyone at the sound of those musical instruments, they all fall to their faces and there is three men still standing, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It doesn't actually say in that passage whether Daniel was there, but if Daniel was there, there would have been four men standing. So some of those who feel like they've been bumped out of position by these men decide to go to the king. So some of the astrologers told the king what was happening. And the king was furious.

We read in verses 13 through 18 of Daniel three, this is what we read: Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I've made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able

to rescue you from my power?"

I love this! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we're thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

"Even if he doesn't." I remember as a young girl in a Bible study class in my church in Scotland, I remember I was going through this passage and we even had a song, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And I remember reading that verse as a teenager and my interpretation in those days were that well, maybe they weren't sure if God could do that. It was like, well, if you throw us into the furnace, God is great but I'm not sure God is going to physically get us out of there. But I was so wrong. What they were saying, these were godly men. They were saying this, "We believe he can. We know he can. But whether he does or not, he is still God and we will still love and trust him with our literal dying breath."

So what happened? Because it was unusual that the king gave them a second chance. It shows that he actually was very fond of them. I mean they were brilliant men. They were probably in their 20s by this point and they were the sharpest guys he had in his kingdom. So the fact that he was going to give them a second chance kind of went against his edict. But he wanted to do it.

But after they stood before him and actually said to his face... and notice how respectful they were, "Your Majesty, we just need you to know this. No matter what happens, we will never bow to anyone but God."

So what happened? Let's read on: Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants,

turbans, robes and other garments. And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames actually killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.

Let me pause at that passage there for just a second. It is so interesting. The king is so furious. In those days when men were going to be executed, part of the humiliation was that they would be stripped of all their nice clothes, maybe just left with some garments, some simple garment and then they would be thrown into this furnace. The king had ordered the furnace be turned up to way beyond what it normally be. So much so that even though he chose three of the strongest men in his army to bind them up and to toss them in, even just getting close enough to that furnace to be able to throw the men in, they all immediately died.

So what happened to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Let's read on.

But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?"

"Yes, your majesty, we certainly did," they replied.

"Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!" Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. Then the high officers, officials, governors and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!

Did you realize in that passage that the only thing that burned were the ropes that had been tied around them? Because there was another in the fire. I can't even imagine what that was like. These young men, they must know the minute that they're bound up that unless God chooses to intervene that they don't have hope of breathing another breath. But as they're thrown into the fire who do they come face to face with? Jesus Christ himself! It's what we call a theophany or a Christophany. That's why Nebuchadnezzar not really understanding thinks he looks like a god, just doesn't know he is God. He is the only God. And he is walking with these three men around in this scorching furnace and talking to them. Don't you wish you knew what they said, what Jesus said to them? We don't get to hear that. But they didn't even smell of smoke.

Whatever you are going through right now I want to remind you there's another in the fire. You are not alone. When I talked at the top of the show about how do we live in these difficult days? We live with absolute confidence in the goodness of God. *But* we also live bowing our hearts, our wills to the will of God.

Let me just quickly go to Luke's gospel. This is Luke Chapter 22. It is when Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane. He, Jesus, walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.

Just as these three young, godly Jewish men were determined that even though they were in a foreign land, even though they risked their lives if they didn't bow to a god who was no god, they wanted the will of God more than they wanted their own survival. It would be easy to say, "Well, Lord, I think we just need to do this so that we can survive. And then we'll be able to tell other people about you."

It would be so easy to justify living in a different way. But they didn't do it. Their thing was, whatever happens, my life is in the hands of God. God is in control. King Nebuchadnezzar thinks he is in control, he is not in control. God is the one who determines my destiny. And for Christ in that garden, he modeled for us how you live in difficult days.

That day was one of the blackest days in human history and of course, the day that followed when Christ would be marched up that hill of Golgotha and then nailed to a tree. Don't you think any moment Jesus could have said, "It's too hard!" And angels could have been dispatched in a moment to rescue him. But no. That prayer on Christ's lips was, "Not my will but your will be done."

We've walked through and continue to walk through unprecedented days. We've walked through very hard things. And I think as the church, we have to decide, how then will we live? Perhaps God uses disastrous situations to shake us to our core. And that has been my prayer even in these days, "Lord, shake me until all that is left is what is of you. Help me to see beyond what I think I need to make me comfortable. I want my life to bring glory to you."

And I think back to the night I gave my life to Christ in my bedroom in a little home in Scotland being led to Christ by my mother. I was 11 years old and I sit here today and I'm 63 years old and I have to tell you, there's never been a point in my life when I want the will of God to be done in my life more -- more than my comfort, more than my understanding. I want to say, Lord, have your way in my life. And I pray that for you too.

I don't know whether you're 21 and just setting off on a whole new adventure or whether you sit in some of the latter years of your life. It is never too soon, it's never too late to say, "Lord, I want your will for me in these days. I want your will to be done."

One of the things that is very, very clear from scripture is that when we reach out to the

least of these, when we care for those who are crying out to God right now, we are doing the will of God. I want to show you how you can help us meet some very real needs and do it all in the name of Jesus. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Announcer: *LIFE Outreach International* teams, along with our mission partners travel the world documenting the needs of families who lack the very basics of life. Without a doubt, Africa's children always tear at the heart of our teams when they see them struggling in extreme circumstances.

Sheila: I cannot imagine what it would be like to be a mother like this and want desperately to help your child. This is the hospital that some of these moms had to walk 10-15 kilometers with a seriously malnourished baby just to try and get some help. And if they can get here in time, then there is some hope. But time is everything here as you can see.

>> I remember when my brother died. We were hungry and he was so thin. My mom took him to a clinic that was very far away, and he died on the way there.

Announcer: It is now up to us to do something to help relieve the plight of these little ones. A bowl of food a day provided through our mission feeding program can make the difference between life and death for young children.

Sheila: 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 video

In the studio:

Sheila: Where do you think Christ's heart is as he looks at our earth? Don't you think he is listening to every single cry from every child who is hungry? From every mother who is, her feet are bleeding because she has had to walk so far. Because if you think about it, if something happens to one of our children we can at least get to a drop-in clinic or there is something we can do immediately.

In so many of the villages where we are present and where we want to help, there is nothing close by. So the mothers will do everything they can to try and get even the least bit of food into their children. But when they realize that their children are losing every single day and getting weaker, then they will walk -- they will walk as far as they can to get to a clinic. But so often, by the time they get there, it's too late. I can't tell you of the stories we've heard of mothers and fathers taking a child in but by the time they're halfway to the clinic the child has died.

And sitting in those malnutrition clinics, listening to the cries; the strangest thing for me was sitting on one bed and listening to the labored breathing of a little one. He couldn't even cry. He didn't have enough energy left to cry. He was using every single moment he had left on this earth to take one more breath.

But here's the deal! We can change this. This is not something... you might look at things, watch programs and think, well, that's the other side of the world. I can't help! We're bringing the other side of the world right to you and I want you to know, we can help. Our partners on the ground are so strategic. And what we want is we want to set up feeding programs in villages so that those children never end up in a malnutrition clinic.

Now this is our last week. This is our last week of mission feeding and we've made a commitment to feed 350,000 children. We've told our partners on the ground, we will be back with help. You need it now. We can't let them down.

So will you help us? Even \$30, if you could even just commit \$30 that will feed three children for three whole months. You know, \$1,000 which is a lot for many but doable for some, that will feed 100 children for three months. When they're able to get that bowl of food that you saw James and Betty handing out there, that turns the cycle from death to life and they begin to gather strength.

So please! As I've said, this is the last week of mission feeding. So please call that number on your screen. Go online. It doesn't matter if you don't have a ton, just give the best gift you have. Let's meet these needs in Jesus' name.

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."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

On the mission field:

Sheila: I've seen in ways I've never imagined. I've seen what death looks like in a child's eyes. And now what I see, I see life in every bowl. If you want to be a part of this and like why wouldn't you want to be a part of this? Then just go to your phone right now and say, "Hey, I want to keep..." There you go, darling. I want to be a part. I want to keep this going. I want to make sure that not just in this village but in every other village where children are starving that we're able to simply give them one bowl of food.

I mean I've seen what happens when this is not available and I've seen what happens when it is available. This works! This literally changes lives one life at a time, one bowl at a time and we can't stop now.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Remember this is the last week of mission feeding -- 350,000 children! We've made a commitment to be there for them. So don't think your gift is too little. \$30 will feed three.

For any gift at all we'll send you the *Global Impact of Life Journal*, which will show you what we're doing around the world. I know you don't do it for the gifts. It's just our way

of saying thank you. If you're able to give \$1,000 we will send you the beautiful "Mother's Strength" bronze. Something we see all the time is mothers carrying water on their heads, carrying -- but let's not let these people down.

So please, make your best gift! And thank you for what you've already done. For James and Betty and for all of us here at *LIFE*, thank you so much!