

7/28/21

Week 31: WFL

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Believing the Unbelievable

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm so glad you've joined us. I was reading the three chapters of John's gospel that talk about Christ's final conversation with his best friends on the night he was betrayed. There is so much that John remembered and put in. But one of the verses that arrested me is actually 16:33, I believe, where Jesus said, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." If you go to the original Greek language, the word there for "trouble" that's used is the word *etaraxan*. It actually can mean it can be translated as "the perfect storm." In this world, you're going to face the perfect storm.

When you think about healing and being prayed for, you feel you need healing, so often, we think simply of physical healing. I have a friend right now whose mom is in hospital, and we are praying earnestly for her mother's healing. But sometimes, we need healing in other areas. We need healing sometimes, from something that has happened in our past that's clouding our present. Sometimes we need healing in relationships. There are so many different areas where we long for the Lord's touch.

So that's one of the things I want us to look at today. It's something that I addressed in my book, *Praying Women*: "How to pray when you don't know what to say." So today I want us to look at that area, and what happens when a situation goes on and on and on, and you long for healing. Watch this.

Session Three: Believing the Unbelievable. Our prayer to God: Heal me!

Begin video clip:

SHEILA: In the last session, we looked at the importance of persisting in prayer. But if that

particular situation you're praying about is resolved, then that's one thing that just falls off of your list. There is no reason to keep praying about it when you've received God's answer.

But here's what I want to ask you. What if that doesn't happen? What if the unanswered prayer persists? Then you need to keep praying, praying, praying, over and over every day. The situation has become chronic, as if you have a chronic illness--literally, the long-term state of being out of sorts, of being ill at ease. Sometimes we need healing in our bodies, but sometimes we need healing in other areas.

While it's true that a chronic disease might show up as a recurring cancer scare, or another physical infirmity, it can as easily be a fractured relationship that refuses reconciliation, or a financial crisis with no end in sight, joblessness that goes on month after month, or an emotional or mental challenge that makes daily life like a mountain that is just too exhausting, too high to climb. These are all places where we long to find healing.

Jesus was brutally honest about the challenges that we will face in life. In John 16:33, he said, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows." He didn't say that we *might* face trials and sorrows. He said that we *would*. But he also said that we should take heart because he has overcome the world. The reason there are so many exhortations in scripture to fear not, and worry not, and have faith and trust in God is that it is so very tempting to be afraid and to worry non-stop and to let doubts run wild in our hearts. In short, we need reminders to persist because persistence is required. And honestly, persistence isn't always the natural response to the challenges that we face.

One of the greatest comforts given to us on this earth is the Word of God. And the greatest gift of all is when that Word became flesh. When Christ took on human flesh as a tiny baby in Bethlehem, he walked where you and I walked. He experienced the heartache and betrayal that we experience. Therefore, he understands our suffering.

Hebrews 4:15 assures us that: *This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.*

Jesus relates to the suffering that you face today. He empathizes with your situation, and because he persisted, but without sinning, we have a perfect example of how to keep walking by faith.

In Mark 14, verse 34, a hard passage to read, we find Jesus suffering sorrow, his soul crushed with grief to the point of death. At the beginning of the chapter, it is two days until Passover. The religious elite is trying to capture Jesus to kill Jesus, to silence his voice forever. But one of Jesus' very own, Judas Iscariot, is the one who betrays him. He gives up the perfect, sinless Lamb of God to the religious authorities for a bag of silver.

It is an interesting gospel, Mark. The pace of Mark 14 picks up as we move to Jesus' final evening in that upper room. At the last meal, Jesus shares with his disciples. He foretells his death and resurrection as he passes the bread and the cup. As the disciples recline and eat, they have no idea of the drama that will unfold that night. After the meal, Jesus goes with his disciples to the olive grove called Gethsemane.

Mark 14:32 reports where Jesus tells his disciples to wait while he goes further into the garden to pray. Let's turn to scripture for the rest of this story. *He (Jesus) took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."*

He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." Then he returned and found the disciples asleep.

He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? Keep watch and pray so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before. When he returned to them

again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open. And they didn't know what to say. When he returned to them the third time, he said, "Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But no--the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Up, let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!"

Jesus knew what awaited him: The humiliation, the agony, the abandonment by his Father. It's no wonder his soul was crushed with grief to the point of death. In the New King James Version, the phrase is "exceedingly sorrowful." In the Greek, the meaning is: Grieved all around; exceedingly sorrowful; aware of certain peril, perilous; having grief surround you from all sides.

That's how Jesus felt that day. As you revisit this story of Jesus facing such unspeakable agony of body and soul in the garden, what thoughts come to your mind? It's possible that the reading of his Gethsemane experience brings you right back to your very own Gethsemane experience, a time when you, unlike Jesus, were sure, convinced that no good could come from the circumstances you faced. When you were sure that the situation would be the end of you in some form; the end of your dream, the end of a key relationship, the end of your integrity, the end of a season that you had prized.

I find it comforting to note they were not alone in our tendency to be overwhelmed by despair in devastating situations. Jesus modeled for us in the garden that we are allowed to be fully human, to tell God the whole truth, to cry out in our despair. Although his absolute trust remained in his Father, Jesus was crushed with grief.

In the face of sickness, we need a healer.

In the face of disease, we need a comforter.

In the face of weakness, we need God's strength.

And yet, so often, we rush past this assistance as if there is no help to be found. But there is help. God never leaves us alone. In Hebrews 4:16, we read this: *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

In this promise, we find the faith and help we need in the face of a seemingly immovable obstacle. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see an important example of how to pray when we are honestly just torn apart. Christ modeled for us his humanity and his submission to the Father's will. Yes, Jesus' first prayer request was that God would remove the suffering. We're all too familiar with this prayer.

God, take away this cancer.

God, bring my prodigal child home.

God, help me stop fighting with my husband.

God, help me get rid of this debt before it suffocates me.

God, take this suffering.

And yet, Jesus' prayer didn't end there because his heart was fully surrendered to his Father. "Take my suffering" became "Take my will." Don't miss this! This is life changing.

1. You lead, Father, and I will follow.

2. You direct me, and I will go.

3. You speak, and I will listen.

4. Not my will, but yours.

He (Jesus) humbled himself in obedience to God, Philippians 2:8 says, and died a criminal's death on a cross.

But you know as well as I do, the story did not end there. Jesus was able to stand up in the garden and face the oncoming agony because he knew that he'd been heard by his Father. My prayer for you is that you will be able to stand up in faith, knowing without a shadow of a doubt that you have been heard.

Because of what Jesus went on to face following his time in the Garden of Gethsemane, brutal death on a Roman cross, burial as a common criminal, beautiful resurrection three days later, we

can declare ease over all disease today. Perhaps not the ease we long for, but the ease of laying down our heavy burden and picking up Jesus' burden instead. A burden he says is light: *"For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*

So often, when he speaks about healing, we automatically think of physical healing. But I believe the greatest healing work that the Holy Spirit does in the lives of believers is when by God's grace we totally surrender. When we can pray with Christ, not my will, but your will be done. So let me pray for you.

Father, thank you so much for sending your Son to a world where he would be misunderstood and abused and eventually executed. The only innocent man who has ever walked on this earth.

And Jesus, thank you that you were willing not just to show us your divinity as you rose from the dead, but your humanity as you knelt in the garden. So give us, by your spirit, the grace to be able to pray, first of all, to pour out all that's true, to make space for grace. And then to be able to pray, not my will but yours be done, in Jesus' name. Amen.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: And amen! It's an amazing prayer. I'm just so grateful that Christ modeled for us what it looks like when you find yourself in a situation where you do not know what to do. I'm sure you've found yourself there in the last year—a situation where you want the Lord to remove it. You want him to fix it.

I've often wondered that in my own life when I'm going through something that feels so dark. You just kind of want an immediate answer. But what Christ has shown us, in the way he prayed in the garden, is two things. One, you get to tell God the truth. When Christ knelt in that garden, when he was so distressed that literally, drops of blood fell from his body, he was showing us it's okay to be honest and to be real. Sometimes, we think as believers we're supposed to do "the right thing" and say "the right thing." You do not need to wear a mask in the presence of God. If

you're in pain right now, tell the Lord, pour it all out. And what I believe is, when we pour out everything that's inside, then we've actually made space for grace. Because it's grace that enables you and I to pray as Jesus prayed, "Yet, not my will but your will be done."

Until you tell God the whole truth, I don't think you've put yourself in a place where you're ready to receive His grace. And His grace changes everything! And it opens our eyes to those who have some very real needs, and I would like you to meet them.

On the mission field:

ANNOUNCER: Mothers in rural Africa face harsh living conditions as they try and keep their families alive and healthy. Waterborne diseases pose one of the greatest challenges for these mothers because they have no other choice but to collect their water from sources that can cause sickness and death.

Open Captions:

>> The water causes diarrhea, cholera, and parasites, and it makes us all very sick.

RALPH: We've heard this story so many times of desperate mothers trying to raise a family and water sources like these. This is their drinking water. The stories are a little different sometimes, but there is a common thread. It is a brokenhearted mother who is trying to raise her children, but yet, she is watching them die.

Open Captions:

>> My daughter came home from school with diarrhea and vomiting. We had to wait a day to get the money to take her to the hospital, but she died as we were leaving.

RALPH: God just put on my heart today that we have this opportunity to change that cycle, to give these children an opportunity to one day, they can bring their children to a water source--but not this one. They can bring their children to a fresh drilled well that brings clean water up, gives

it to the whole family, the entire village. Not just for a day or a couple of weeks, but for a lifetime!

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I'll never forget the first time that I walked with a mother and her children to her water source. We had to walk quite a way. They were carrying buckets, which eventually would be filled with contaminated water that they would carry on their heads.

But the thing that shocked me, and I guess I was just naive, was that even as they were drawing this water out, there were animals in the water. They do everything because that's their only water source. So they washed their clothes in it. The animals are in it. It is just filthy!

The thing is, with little ones, they've got no resistance. They've got no immunity built up to disease. And when one of these little ones gets diarrhea or begins to vomit, it's literally days that they have left to live. And as a mom, everything in me just wanted to say, oh gosh, I wish I could take you all home with me--which is ridiculous. Of course, we can't do that. So we have decided to take home, to take what we take for granted to them.

We have made a commitment here at *LIFE Outreach International* to drill 350 wells in over 20 nations. I went from one day being in a village where the mothers get up at 4:00 in the morning and walk for miles to bring back this filthy water that they know, if their children drink it, they may well die, but they have no other choice.

And then we got in our Jeep and over these crazy roads we drove for hours and came to a place where on the edge of this well it said, "Put in by partners of *LIFE Outreach International*." I watched as they pumped this crystal-clear water. I thought that's the answer. But we need that over there. So that's what we're going to do this year, but we need your help. For \$48, now that's not much. You can't do a bunch with \$48. \$48 will give clean water for ten children for their life.

\$144 will give clean water to 30 children. And I got the sweetest letter the other day from a lady, and she said, "I'm 82, and I'm putting in a whole well." Isn't that amazing? What a legacy to leave behind that even as she walks into the presence of Jesus; that on this earth, there will be a well that will give clean water to a thousand children, a thousand families for their whole life.

Each one of us can do something. Now I would love to send you a copy of my book, *Praying Women*. I poured my heart into this for a couple of years because prayer changes everything. So I would love to send you a copy of the book.

But would you please call now? Would you give the best gift that you can and let's put those laughing, dancing children in every village when they see for the first time in their life clean water.

Begin video clip:

ANNOUNCER: Waterborne illness is a killer that strikes the most vulnerable. For many impoverished families, the death of a child is the tragic result of having no choice but to drink contaminated water. But with your help, they won't have to make this choice ever again.

Mission: Water for LIFE provides clean, fresh drinking water for thousands of children and their families giving them a life free from the fear of death.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 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 provide for 15, and \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift, we'll send you James Robison's book *Living Amazed* full of inspirational true stories. You'll learn how divine encounters can change your life. In addition you'll also receive Randy Robison's brand-new devotional, *Upgrade*: "Seven moves in seven weeks to a better life."

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the N.I.V. Thinline Bible with easy-to-read large print. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you so much! Remember, when you call in with your gift, request a copy of *Praying Women*. I would love to send that to you. But please, if you haven't called yet, would you call? If every single one of us who owns the name of Jesus and is owned by him, if we all do a part, what a difference we can make in this world. Remember, \$48, clean water for ten children! They're not asking for a new iPhone, just for a cup of water that would bring them life. So please call.

So for all of us here at *LIFE Outreach International*, we love you, we're grateful for you, and we'll see you next time.