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Week 37: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Sheila Walsh

Suiting up

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm so glad you're with us. I was reading an article the other day in the local newspaper, and it was another story of someone who is well-known as a believer who has fallen away and had to leave their church.

I don't know about you, but whenever I read something like that, it really grieves me. It grieves me for the impact on the church. It grieves me for the impact on the community. And honestly, it grieves me for the person. Because I don't think anyone who claims the name of Christ, who gives their life to Christ, ever thinks at some point, I'm going to really blow it.

Do you ever wonder, Lord, how can I make sure that I'm going to stay faithful until the end? That I'm going to keep walking this road no matter how difficult it is. The great news is, we have not been left ill-equipped. Scripture talks clearly; in fact, in the book of Ephesians, Paul lays out a battle plan for you and me to make sure that we are protected against the attacks of the enemy. We know we have an enemy.

I don't know about you, but to me, it seems like our world gets crazier every day. You wonder, is that true? Is that true? Here's what's true: The Word of God. You can stake your life on it. But also, there is a battle plan, and I pray that every part of this will make you stronger.

Begin video clip:

Praying Women

Session seven: Suiting Up

Our prayer to God: "You Are My Protection."

SHEILA: Welcome to session seven. We're going to look at what it looks like, what it means to suit up in the full armor of God.

Sometimes, storms come just out of nowhere. We experienced that recently in Dallas. Barry and I were watching a Dallas Cowboys football game, and during a commercial break, we changed the channel to catch local news, only to be informed that a tornado had been sighted in our area. The storm seemed to come out of nowhere and quickly gained strength. A few moments later, an F3 tornado touched down just half a mile from our house, devastating homes, and schools and knocking the power out for tens of thousands of people. The instructions on the screen were clear: Go to a safe place. Watch out. Be on guard.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. Because we have an enemy, we've been instructed to stay alert. That can feel overwhelming. We know that the battle is real, but we're not sure what that actually means for our everyday lives?

In First Peter chapter 5, we're given insight regarding how to deal with the forces of evil we encounter in this life: *Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him and be strong in your faith.*

We're to stay spiritually on guard in life, knowing as we grow in faith and in our sold-out commitment to Christ, we're more vulnerable to Satan's attacks. He's looking, as First Peter five attests, for someone to devour. *In Greek that means: To swallow up, to drink*

down, to literally consume.

While Satan's power on earth is temporary, it is real. For this reason, we're told in scripture to suit up with spiritual armor to protect ourselves from attack. In Ephesians 6:10-18, the Apostle Paul concludes his letter: *A final word: Be strong in the Lord and 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. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in a time of evil. Then after the battle, you will still 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. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

That might seem like a great deal of preparation, but every single piece of the armor has a special purpose. God has given us everything we need to be able to stand strong when we are facing spiritual warfare. The enemy might be powerful, but he is no match for our God. And when we daily put our armor on, we're protected from the devil's fiery darts.

You might be able to think of times in your life when you felt strong spiritually, but then something happened, and life kicked in, problems came, and suiting up in the armor of God felt like just one more thing on your to-do list. So you let it go for a while.

Here's the good news. It's never too late to start again. *It is never too late to start again!* If you have a pulse, if there is no white chalk mark around your body, it is not too late to start again. The goal for every believer is to continue in strength over months and years

and decades. This, Paul said, is the benefit of spiritual armor. With it, we may continue to stand firm. The Greek words used here mean: To continue in surefootedness and strength.

So let me ask you this. What exactly do we need to stand firm against? Scripture tells us many things about our enemy. He is a liar, a deceiver, and an accuser. That's why it is so important that we suit up every single day in the full armor of God. We can't stand on our own against the evil powers of the enemy, so we must rely on the Lord's strength and power. That's why prayer is so vital and why Paul ends his admonition to suit up with this: *Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion.*

We often miss this truth. Prayer is not an add-on at the end of the day. It is the whole battle plan. In verse ten, Paul is crystal clear: *Be strong in the Lord and his mighty power.* We're not asked to be strong in ourselves. We can't do that against such a treacherous enemy. Our strength -- 100 percent -- is in the Lord and his power.

The Greek word used for "whole armor" refers to the complete equipment for a fully armed soldier. No soldier would go into battle half prepared. If he did, he wouldn't be protected and would be very easily taken out. Instead, God wants us to be fully prepared for what might lie ahead. That's why each individual piece of armor matters.

So what are they? Well, Paul lists them for us: The belt of truth, the body armor of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Let's look at the first piece, the belt of truth. A belt might not sound like the first piece of armor you would reach for, but there is much more here than what we understand at first read. A Roman soldier's belt was a thick piece of leather encircling his waist. His scabbard that held his sword was attached to it. And if it was crooked or not attached properly, it would cost him too much time to reach for his sword.

For us as believers, Christ is truth. He tells us that he is the way, the truth, and the life. It

is the truth of God's Word that protects us from the lies of the enemy. But if we don't have a firm grasp on truth, we're more likely to be taken out by Satan's lies. The belt held everything else together just as Christ and the power of his Word hold us together.

The second piece is the body armor of righteousness. For a soldier, the breastplate or body armor protected his heart and all his vital organs. Interestingly, it was held in place by his belt. Without it, a death blow could be delivered right to his heart. The same is true for you and I. It is the truth of God's word that protects our hearts. Proverbs 4:23 tells us this: *Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.*

For the believer, our breastplate is the righteousness of Christ. If we are tempted for a moment to think we stand in our own right against the enemy, we'll fall every single time. It is the righteousness of Christ that covers us. Christ lived a life we could not live, and he paid the price we could not pay. So what is our part in this? It is our daily devotion, with the Holy Spirit's help, to become more like Christ, to guard our hearts.

The shoes of peace. A Roman soldier's shoes were designed specifically for battle. They were made for walking long distances. They also had spikes on the bottom to hold fast on rough terrain. Paul writes about the shoes of peace that come from the good news of the gospel that holds us fast and enables us to keep walking for the long haul. That means we don't have to be afraid of what the enemy might throw at us. Because of Jesus, we win. Roman soldiers marched together, as do we. Together, as sons and daughters of the King of kings, we will march forward surefooted in Christ until he takes us all the way home.

The shield of faith: Roman shields were impressive-looking pieces of armor, often as big as a door. This piece of his armor, if you think about it, is a little bit different than the rest. When a soldier goes into battle, he already had his belt, his body armor, and his shoes in place. But the shield has to be picked up. So, too, we pick up the shield of faith when the enemy comes against us. Not only that, we push back against the enemy with our shield of faith, just as Jesus did when he was tempted by Satan. Remember? We looked at that, the son of God used the Word of God to push back the enemy of God? Let

me just say that again. *The son of God used the Word of God to push back the enemy of God.* And so do you and me.

The helmet of salvation: For a soldier, his helmet was a vital piece of armor. It protected him. Without it, a blow to his head would mean instant death. And for you and me, for us as believers, we put on Christ. When we come to faith in Jesus, we are saved. He is the one who saved us from death. The head in God's word means, in effect, the whole person. Think about this. Hands would be placed on the head for a blessing just as a curse would be pronounced on someone's head. When you think about it, where do most of our issues come from? Where do most of our struggles begin? If you're like me, right between your ears -- our mind. How do we put on this helmet of salvation? Through daily prayer and study of God's word. That's where our hope comes from. That's what protects our minds.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; understanding this one verse, literally has changed my life. The Greek word used for *sword* here in this passage is not the word that's used for a traditional long sword, a two-edged sword. It is a word that would be used for a dagger, something that would be used in up-close contact. But what I want you to see is the word that is used for Word of God. You can check it out in your own Bible; it is not capitalized as it is in much of the rest of scripture. The Greek word used here is Rhema, not logos, which would be the word most commonly used in scripture. Logos means all of the scripture, but Rhema means sayings of God or a particular passage or verse.

What this means for you and I is that we get to choose our own weapons and get them ready. Find the verses that speak to the areas where the enemy loves to attack you and have them ready. They are your spiritual daggers. Think of 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?*

Find the scripture verses that speak to the areas where the enemy comes up against you, and then you will be ready. This is our daily joy, not a chore, to faithfully put on the

spiritual armor of God every day to protect ourselves from Satan's attacks. But we recognize it's God who has gone before us and who fights our every battle in the end. We determine to be led by truth. We pursue righteousness at any cost. We march on in the shoes of peace. We hold up the shield of faith. We soak our minds in the truth of God's word. We look to God's word for our daggers of faith. And yet -- and yet, it is God who oversees our comings and goings. It is God who is sovereign in our lives. It is God's protection that truly defends us. It is God's work that leads to the win.

And remember: *Ephesians 6:18, Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

So can I pray for you? Father God, how I thank you that you have not left us ill-equipped in this world to stand against the enemy. Thank you for the clear instruction in your word as to how we suit up and are ready for battle; and the promise that when we daily put on each piece of the armor, that when the battle is over, we will still be standing.

Thank you for the gift of your son. Thank you for the gift of your Spirit. Thank you for the gift of your word. Thank you for the truth that lets us know the battle belongs to the Lord; in Jesus' name. Amen!

In the studio:

SHEILA: I love that scripture that says, "We pray at all times in all places for all people." I don't know whether it was Corrie ten Boom who said, "Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" Is it the thing that directs your life every day, or is it what you turn to when there is an accident, or your tire goes flat?

I want that to be our life. I want you and I to stand strong knowing who we are, that we can resist the enemy. But the other thing I love, it says we don't just pray, but we put our prayers into action because it is at all times in all places for all people. I think some of the

things we forget at times is that we're not just saved so that we have an eternal destiny with Christ. We are on this earth; you and I are on this earth at this moment by God's design. So this means to me, if there are areas in the world where there is need, where there is hurt, now that can be in your own backyard, that can be in your own neighborhood, in your own street, and wherever God directs you to reach out a hand, do it with love.

But I want to share with you something we're very committed to here at *LIFE Outreach International*; to put shoes onto the feet of little ones and to give them a smile they've never had before. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Announcer: Mountain villages like this in Southeast Asia are home to many poverty stricken families who struggle with the usual obstacles of life. And it is here that the ministry partners of *LIFE Outreach* are able to help some of these families who face a unique challenge.

This is Seuanine. He was born with a cleft lip and cleft palate. He struggles just to swallow milk and oftentimes, his lungs will fill with fluid putting him in grave danger. But Seuanine's life would soon change.

After learning of his condition, *LIFE's* mission partners moved into action. These dedicated missionaries arranged for the long drive into the city and provided the corrective surgery that could save Seuanine's life.

Tony: You know we were able to say yes to that distraught mother and help Seuanine only because of the *LIFE Outreach family*. It was *LIFE Outreach's* prayer and financial support that saved that little boy.

Seuanine's disfigurement became a beautiful smile matched only by the smile of his

loving mother. With tears in her eyes she says, "Thank you for helping my son."

A big thank you to the *LIFE Outreach* family and to you, Sheila and Randy. It is a privilege to serve with you as we share the gospel of Christ and as we provide life-changing cleft palate surgeries in our part of the world.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: That is awesome! We see a little boy like that, Seuanine; his life would have been so different if it wasn't for the partners of *LIFE Outreach International*; if it wasn't for so many of you. You do know that in our time of doing this particular mission that 2,000 of these surgeries have now taken place. And little ones like Seuanine can smile big; they can eat, they can drink, they can grow strong. And who knows what that boy will become in the kingdom of God when he grows up knowing I look like this because people who love Jesus reached out.

So I'm asking you, do you realize that for \$500, we can provide surgery for a child like that? That would cost thousands of dollars in any other country. But because we have these amazing doctors that we work with, they're willing to do it for \$500. What a privilege! Can you imagine that \$500 could literally change a life of a child? And not only that but the family. If you were that mom, if you were Seuanine's mom and you saw that, the fact that people who loved Jesus would have done that would have blown you away. So that's one part of this project.

But the other one is that we have made a commitment to be able to put the first pair of shoes ever onto the feet of 150,000 children. There are lots of entry levels for \$36; that will provide shoes for ten children. Can you imagine? \$36, shoes for ten children. If you're able to give more, \$180 will give shoes to 50 children. And if somehow God has blessed you financially, and you think, you know what? I could commit \$1,000. Do you know that that will either do 275 pairs of shoes or two surgeries?

What a joy! We always look at Thanksgiving through Christmas as a time of celebration and giving, but I don't know about you, but I find the greatest joy when I'm able to give and see the difference in somebody else's life. Jesus said, "When you clothe others, you clothe me." What a wonderful time of year to do that.

For any gift at all, we will send you my book, *Praying Women*. If you're able to give \$100, you will get our beautiful, new, little box of four shoes. And this is something we've never done before. I've just found out about it, and I'm so excited. When you get your little box of four shoes, you'll notice that each little ribbon has the name of one of our ministries. So you'll have one shoe on your tree for Mission Feeding, one for Water for LIFE, one for Rescue Life, and one for Christmas Shoes and Smiles. What a beautiful way to remember.

And I would encourage you that after you've given and you receive your gifts, let's make that point of praying for the feet of the child who's wearing them -- praying for their destiny. Our heart at *LIFE* isn't just to feed children, to provide clean water, to rescue them, to put shoes on their feet, or a smile on their face. Our heart is that every one of these children would come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. All of this will impact their life here on earth. We want to impact their life eternally. But sometimes, it begins with something as simple as you giving a gift in Jesus' name.

So please, would you go to your phone? Will you give the very best gift you can? Thank you.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Poverty is a killer, and because of it, children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted -- like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty

have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk with life-threatening infections and diseases that could lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today, you will help secure and make ready 150,000 Christmas shoes to be shipped and delivered to children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20 pairs, and a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted, green crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may also request this keepsake boxed set of all four shoe ornaments celebrating the various outreaches of LIFE.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft lip or palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "Divine Servant" bronze scripture.

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

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: This is the little shoe for this year. It's got 2021 written on it. I've gotten so many of these shoes on my tree it looks like a shoe store. But what a joy! It's just great. Please, let's all do something. Let's make a difference. We're getting it all in now so we can make sure that we get everything to them before Christmas. And what a joyful Christmas it will be for them and for us because it is such a blessing to give. So for James, for Betty, for all of us here at *LIFE Today*, thank you, and God bless you!