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Week 38: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Sheila Walsh

"All Rise"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I was thinking the other day about the very first time I saw the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. There had been so much publicity about it. It wasn't going to be showing in the little town in Scotland where I was born, and I was so disappointed. But my mom found out that it was going to be shown in a big movie theater in Edinburgh.

Now back then, we didn't have a car. It was two train rides, but to me, that made it even more exciting. I remember my sister and my mom and I -- I think my brother was too little; he was probably home with my grandmother. We got on a train, and we got the train to Glasgow, and then we got on the train from Glasgow to Edinburgh. And then we set off for this amazing adventure to see this movie that so many people were talking about, *The Wizard of Oz*.

If you remember watching it fairly recently, it starts, and it's very dull, dark where Dorothy is in Kansas. And then suddenly, she lands in Oz, and it's this brilliant technicolor world. I was literally on the edge of my seat. And then, of course, there is the wicked witch and those flying monkeys, and I was terrified. I said to my mom, "I can't watch it anymore. I have to go. I have to go home."

I remember my mom taking my hand, and she said, "No, no. Hold on, Sheila. I've read the story. It ends well."

And that's what's on my heart for you today. I know things are a little crazy out there in the world right now, and sometimes you just think, you know what? I can't do this anymore; I want to let go. Everything is changing so quickly. I don't know what's going to happen with my finances,

with my job, with my children; what's going on in our nation, what's going on around the world. I just want, in Jesus' name, to reach out, grab you by the hand, and say, I've read the story. Hold on! This ends well. I think we need to do that in these days. I think we need to remember that no matter what might be true for a moment, we have an eternity with Christ that no one can touch.

Toward the end of this program, I'm going to share a few verses from the book of Revelation that, honestly, when I'm feeling a little down, or I'm feeling tired or weary, I go and I read those out loud. And I'm going to read them to you in a little while. But I just want you to remember, hold on to Jesus. He is holding on to you.

Some time ago, I had the privilege of filming a series of teaching tapes from a book of mine called *Praying Women*. It's "How to pray when you don't know what to say." I discovered I wasn't the only one who was struggling with prayer. And so I wrote that book. I want to share some things with you, and then I'll come back and read some verses that I believe will just cause you to want to rise up in your spirit. So would you watch this?

Begin video clip:

Praying Women

Session eight: All rise!

Our prayer to God: "You have won!"

SHEILA: Welcome to this final session. I love this because we're going to be able to declare one thing that we know, and that is we can say to the Lord, "You have won!"

Let me take you back a couple of years. It was going to be 70 degrees on Christmas day in Dallas. But we weren't in Dallas -- we were in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in search of a white Christmas.

I'd heard that this was a beautiful spot, but honestly, nothing prepared me for the grandeur of the

snow-covered Grand Tetons as we circled to land in Jackson Hole. Our son Christian had just graduated from college and had been accepted into graduate school, so this trip was kind of a family celebration as well.

We spent the first couple of days relaxing and sightseeing, but by day three, Christian was ready to ski. He is a very accomplished double black diamond skier, but Barry and I are, let's just say, severely challenged on the slopes; and the only person I know who fell off the little conveyor belt that takes you to the top of the bunny slope.

So I had made peace with the fact that my skiing days were probably over, but I still wanted to go to the top of the mountain. So I piled in with 99 skiers into the mountaintop gondola that would take us to over 10,000 feet. In just nine minutes we were in, it was like another world -- pristine, sparkling snow and breathtaking scenery. It was noisy as all the skiers piled out of the gondola and headed down the mountain. But then, silence. I was the only one left on top of the mountain until the next gondola arrived.

It was magnificent! Far, far below, I could see cars, but they looked like toys moving through the slushy snow on the street. But from where I stood, as I looked out, all I could see is perfect beauty, peaceful, flawless. The scripture came to mind from Isaiah chapter one, verse 18: *"Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow."* Tears ran down my cheeks, and I raised my hands in worship as I thought of all that Christ has done to make you and I as white as snow.

It's so easy to get bogged down in all the daily-ness of life and all its challenges and problems. But I don't want you to lose sight of the picture from a higher vantage point. Lift your eyes and your heart and remember this, because of Jesus, we win! Not only do we win, but our enemy will be defeated forever.

Paul wrote with absolute confidence to the house churches in Rome when he said, *"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."*

Paul is so certain of the enemy's ultimate demise, so convinced that in the end, God's victory is sure that he speaks of Satan's eminent crushing with an almost flippant tone. God's victory, according to Paul's way of thinking, it's a given, *a certainty, a coming event that cannot be stopped, indisputable, undeniable, the absolute, rock-solid truth.*

Live your life in light of this truth. It is as if Paul is saying, stay the course of faithfulness because the one to whom you're faithful has already secured the victory. Don't give satisfaction to a losing opponent. Choose to keep the main thing the main thing.

In Revelation 21, John gives us a picture of the new reality that will unfold, one completely devoid of the enemy's presence, persistence, and his power will all be gone. Don't miss this! This is our great hope. This is why we keep on walking by faith every single day.

This is what he wrote: *Then I (John) saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."*

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega -- the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty, I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children."

Did you notice that John mentioned four absences in our eternal reality?

1. *The absence of death.*
2. *The absence of sorrow.*
3. *The absence of crying.*

4. *The absence of pain.*

Just pause for a moment and think about these things. This is not wishful thinking. This is a you-can-stake-your-life-on-it promise from God for our future. All the pain, the suffering, the struggle will be gone forever!

So how should we then live? How do we live in this moment? In James five, we find helpful ways to bridge the two realities of life. The one in which no suffering exists and the painful one we find ourselves in still today.

Here's what we read: *Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord.*

Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

So let's look at these tools we've been given to live in this present world until we step into eternal glory.

1. *Are you suffering hardships? Pray.*
2. *Are you happy? Sing praises.*
3. *Are you sick? Call for the elders to anoint you with oil and pray for you.*
4. *Confess your sins to one another and be healed.*

That might sound simple, but if it is what scripture tells us to do, I'm all in. We pray about everything. We worship. We ask for prayer, and we're quick to confess our sins to one another. Then, we read, *"And the Lord will make you well."*

The Greek word used for *well* is: To be made well. And here's what that word means. It's an interesting thing. *It means: To waken; to rouse from sleep, from disease, from death; or figuratively, to rouse from inactivity, from ruins, from nonexistence; to awake; to lift; to raise again; to rear up; to take up.*

Oh! That we would live as though Satan's defeat is a given, an immanent turn of events, a certainty in our lives, and that we would be aware of his losing ways, his schemes that are destined to fail.

My prayer is that we would stay plugged in to the power of God through his Holy Spirit, knowing that our victory has already been won.

In Ephesians 1:19-22, we read that the same power that raised Christ is available to us here and now. To the church in Ephesus, Paul wrote: *I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else -- not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.*

Wherever you need God's life-giving power today, God is eager to supply it for you. Go boldly before his throne now, believing that in his strength, as Philippians 4:13 asserts: *You really can do all things through Christ.*

Over the last couple of years, it's just been one thing burning in me, heart and soul -- a call to prayer. This call has not been for me alone. It is a call for all of God's daughters, for God's sons, to pick up one of the most powerful weapons we have, prayer! So often, we turn to prayer as a last resort after we've done everything that we can. But I believe it should be the first place we turn. This is what I believe. When God's children go down on their knees, the battle is not over. The battle is just beginning.

Moses told his brother Aaron to pray this blessing over the people. May I pray this over you?
The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: I love that promise. I love the promise of the peace of Christ. I've been reading through the gospels a lot recently, really studying the red-letter words of Jesus. I love to hear his voice speak through the ages to you and to me. And he speaks so much about the peace that's available right now.

In that very last conversation that John records for us in his gospel, Jesus spends so much time unpacking things for his closest friends and preparing them for what's about to come. They know they're celebrating Passover, but they have no idea that the Passover Lamb is about to be slaughtered on our behalf. But Christ talks, even though he is about to face the most violent night of his life, Christ talks about peace. He says, *"My peace I leave you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let your hearts not be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*

I love the Word. I love to do word studies and see what in the original language the word meant. And often, it is so much richer than you and I understand. It is talking about a perfect storm. As if Christ is saying, "In this world, you will go through a perfect storm but take heart because I have overcome the world."

I told you about some verses from the book of Revelation that I just love. I could camp here for a week easily. But I just want to read them to you. This amazing revelation that was given to John on the Isle of Patmos speaks to where we are right now but encourages us to lift our eyes up.

This is from chapter 21: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I*

heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God is now among men, and he will dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be among them."

Listen to these beautiful words from verse four: *"...and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no longer any death; there will be no longer any mourning or crying or pain; for all those things are gone forever."*

That is a promise, and that's why we hold on to Jesus even in the midst of very difficult times because he is holding on to us. And I have seen the ending of our story, and we win!

But in the meantime, you and I have a job to do. I want to show you an incredible mission that we get to be part of. Would you watch this?

On the mission field:

ANNOUNCER: Every year in developing countries around the world, more than 170,000 children are born with a cleft lip or cleft palate. Without surgical repair, a cleft lip or palate could be deadly for a child.

DR. HODGES: As a child grows with a cleft palate, they will not be able to breastfeed and that can cause real problems for nutrition. And it can also cause them to have more commonly, chest infections, and that could even lead to death.

ANNOUNCER: Beyond just the physical dangers, the cleft lip or palate can cause lasting emotional and psychological damage to a child.

DR. HODGES: Then, as they start to talk, they will not be able to be understood. Cleft palate makes their speech very, very difficult to understand. And so combining the appearance and also the speech will have a huge impact on how that child feels about themselves as they grow up.

ANNOUNCER: Fortunately, a cleft lip or a cleft palate can be repaired fairly easily with corrective surgery. But a child living in poverty has very little hope and even fewer options for this type of surgery.

That's why *LIFE Outreach* and its partners have already provided more than 2,000 life-changing surgeries at no cost to the families. And this year, we will continue to do as many surgical cleft repairs as possible around the world.

DR. HODGES: Thanks to partners like *LIFE Outreach International*, we're able to make lasting changes in children's lives through corrective surgery. Just to give an example from the clinic this week, I saw several children that we've operated on their lips and their palates, very young, and the children are healthy, they look normal, and I know that they will now be able to speak normally as well.

But there is so much more work to be done. Literally, thousands of families are waiting for help, but we can only do it with your continuing support. God bless you.

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: That is the body of Christ in action. I had the privilege of being with CURE in one of the cities where they were working. You know the thing that's amazing to me? This is James and Betty's heart. They don't see tremendous need somewhere in the world and think we will just go in and fix it. They say, God, who are you using in this nation? Who are your servants who are already there? We will underwrite that work.

The thing that I loved about that particular trip where I got to watch some surgeries that were taking place, was before the surgery even began, there was a time of praise and worship where the doctors and the nurses came together and basically said, you have given us these hands, and we offer them up to you.

They're on the ground waiting right now. What a difference that makes in the life of a little boy or girl. Can you imagine if the first time after your baby is born, you realize that there is a problem with cleft lip or cleft palate? We live in a nation where we're easily able to have that fixed. But in these countries where there is abject poverty, that child is absolutely doomed unless you and I move in Jesus' name.

There is a lot of superstition that goes around, too, thinking that this child is cursed by God. But we know that God so loved the world that he sent Jesus. That he would take the curse for us so we could be free to love him and to serve him.

The great thing about these doctors that we work with is they're committed to the Lord. But it is when you're able to move in and do something practical in Jesus' name that you've earned the right to share about the one who sent us.

So our commitment is to be able to continue to do it. A surgery costs \$500. Wouldn't it be great to think as a family, maybe as a Sunday School class, that you could do that? \$1,000 would do two surgeries.

But we're also, one of the things we care about here at LIFE is to protect children in every way we can. That's why we have Christmas Shoes and Smiles. We want to put shoes just like this one, on the feet of children who have never worn a pair of shoes in their life. Our commitment is to provide 150,000 pairs of shoes. I know it's a little early to be talking about Christmas, but that's why we're doing it. It's very intentional. We want to get them there for Christmas.

So we could all join in this. We could all do something. \$36 will provide shoes for ten children. \$180, shoes for 50 children. \$500 for a life-changing surgery that will open up the world to a child. I'm just asking, would you do what you can? Would you call that number on your screen? Would you give the very best gift you can? And let's bring hope and light and the love of Christ to those who are longing for help. Please call now.

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**On the mission field:**

JAMES: We literally stopped by the road where I say we knew we would bring them shoes. And I'm confident that we will because children like these need shoes all over the world.

It's amazing. You may say, why would they stop and let you take a picture with them? Well, the truth is they stopped because I just got out and sat down here on the road and smiled at them. And they came over and started sitting down by me. Then we explained to the parents through our missionary interpreter that our plan was to come back to this area, this village, and bring shoes. And so that is our intention. But it is going to take you making that possible.

I'm asking you to give as many pairs of shoes as you can to put on these beautiful, beautiful feet of these beautiful children. Thank you! Thank you for your help!

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thank you so much. If the line is busy, keep calling. Let's make this the best Christmas ever for children who are struggling, for mothers who want the best for their families. Let's do this in Jesus' name.

And for any gift at all, you can request my book, *Praying Women*: "How to pray when you don't know what to say." It is not just for women; men need to pray too.

But just remember, at *LIFE* here, we care about you. That's why we're here. If you need our help, just know that there is a praying family here who will pray for you.

So until the next time, I'm Sheila Walsh saying goodbye, and God bless you.