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Week Eight: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Broken but Held Close

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I don't know your favorite kind of music you like to listen to. My husband really likes listening to country music, but it always seems to me it's about your pickup truck breaking down and your dog running away.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes in the Psalms, there's a little thing that's written to let you know what was going on at the time? I can't imagine actually writing this. This is Psalm 34, and it says at the top: "A Psalm of David regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech who sent him away." That's quite an intro.

Well, it happens to be one of my favorite Psalms that I often turn to. I think it is because it is a Psalm that offers comfort and offers hope when life is at its hardest. You might be familiar with that Psalm. There is a couple of verses that are often quoted. For example, verses four and five: *I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.*

That's beautiful! If you think about it, this is God's antidote to shame. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy. No shadow of shame will touch their faces. I don't know what you think about when you hear the word *shame*, but shame is one of the most powerful emotions that can keep us from receiving the love and the grace of God. I really think it is one of the enemy's greatest weapons. But here, David gives us God's prescription to deal with it. So when you feel shame beginning to creep over you, why

don't you like be aware of it and just stop and don't let it settle in. Lift your heart and your face toward your Father and let him take that shame away. Let him love you. He took our shame on himself so that we could be free.

I think one of the verses that perhaps is even better known is verse 18. I love this verse!
The Lord is close to it brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

I love this verse, and I love this promise. I can't tell you how often I've personally found comfort and strength in those words. So sometimes, if you walk through a hard situation like if your heart is broken, you might be tempted to ask, Lord, where are you? Do you see what's happening to me? But here, David makes it crystal clear. If you're in a hard place right now, he's right beside you. God is close. That is the promise. We might be broken, we might feel broken, but we're held close.

So much of the teaching in the past stated if we loved Jesus, then everything will be victorious, every prayer answered as we want it to, every sickness healed the moment we ask in the way we expect. I think that's been really damaging. Because if you embrace that teaching, and then you face a heartbreaking, crushing situation, what do you do? It throws the responsibility back onto you. What did I do wrong? Don't I have enough faith?

I'm so grateful that the Word of God makes it clear that struggle and heartache are real. In fact, in Jesus' words, remember in John's gospel, chapter 16, verse 33, he said clearly, *"Here on earth you will have,"* not you might, *"you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world."*

In this Psalm, in Psalm 34, David speaks to us from his own life about what he is experiencing of the love, the grace, and the mercy of God. Let me ask you this. Do you ever wonder what was going on in David's life when he wrote every single one of these Psalms? For example, when he wrote Psalm 34, did he write it on a beautiful day in the palace where everything was going right in his world? Well, no. If you do a little research, far from it. David wrote this at one of the lowest, shame-filled moments in his

life.

Let me give you a little background if you're not familiar with it. You can read the whole back story to this moment in David's life in First Samuel, chapter 21. Let me just give you the CliffsNotes, the abbreviated version. You may remember that when David was still just a shepherd boy, he took on Goliath, the giant who had been threatening all of Israel. Goliath was from the city of Gath, which is important to remember. It was one of five Philistine cities. Well, the Philistines were the sworn enemies of Israel. Neither Saul, who was the king at that time nor any of his men were willing to face Goliath. And you know, it's not surprising. He was a pretty terrifying sight. He was about ten and a half feet tall. But David, a shepherd boy with no armor on, picked up a few stones from a brook, and with his slingshot, he brought Goliath to the ground, and then he cut off his head with Goliath's own sword.

Well, this is important to know. It caused three things to happen. One, he was immediately a hero to the people of Israel. Two, he was now seen as a threat by King Saul because of his newfound popularity. And number three, he was a wanted man in Gath.

As David's popularity grew, Saul's rage and jealousy did as well. He tried on various occasions to kill David or to have him killed. David was constantly on the run. But then, one day, probably because he was exhausted, he made a terrible decision that would cost the lives of many, many innocent godly people. He decided to run.

He went to the High Priest, and he lied to him; so out of character for David. He told him that he was on a special covert mission from King Saul. He told him that he needed to take the bread reserved for the priests alone, and he needed a sword. And the only one there was Goliath's sword. So the High Priest, he didn't for a moment think that David might be lying to him. He saw him as King Saul's right-hand man, and he trusted him. So he gave David what he asked for. He had no idea that being obedient to David's request would cause so much tragedy. Because when Saul heard that the priest gave those things

to David, he was so furious that he had all 85 priests and their families executed.

Saul was beginning to lose his mind. He was beginning to fall apart. When your trust is no longer in God alone, you seek conspiracies where there are none. You probably know this; you've seen this in yourself or in friends; insecurity and jealousy can make us do things that are outrageous, things that are out of character.

Well, in attempting to find a place where Saul can't reach him, David makes his next wrong choice. I know this is true for my own life, and maybe you've noticed it. When you make one bad choice, the next one comes so much easier, which is what happened to David. He decided that he would seek out political asylum in of all places Gath, Goliath's hometown.

Remember, this was before Twitter and Facebook, so they didn't immediately realize who David was. They had never seen his photo or caught the story on the local news. But once the people worked out who he was, this is the man who slew our hero. He was immediately arrested. You want to see the back story on that, you can read Psalm 56.

David is now terrified of what this foreign king will do to him that he does the unthinkable. That's what we read at the beginning of the Psalm. He actually pretends to be insane. Can you imagine this one who had been anointed by Samuel told that he is the rightful king of Israel and at God's perfect timing, he will ascend the throne? But now, he is crawling across the floor, scratching on doors, howling, and drooling on himself. Apparently, he was pretty good at it and pretty convincing as the king had him released and kicked out of the land.

Once David was safely back in Israel, he hid out in the Cave of Adullam. This is where he wrote Psalm 34. I think it's interesting that David, who had fought lions and bears as a shepherd, who had killed Goliath, was now afraid of a mere king. I think the difference was he knew he had stepped outside the will of God. He had taken things into his own hands. He had stopped trusting God to deliver him, and he moved out from underneath

God's protection. He could face anything when he was trusting God but left on his own; he was terrified.

Well, in the quiet of that cave, David remembered who he was and who God was. So he wrote in verse two, *"I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart."*

When we find ourselves in a situation where we try to grab control of a situation where we know we've stepped outside of God's will, it's good to do as David did. It's good to find a quiet place and remember -- remember who we are and who God is. David writes, *"In my desperation, I prayed, and the Lord listened; he saved me from all my troubles. For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him."*

That phrase "the angel of the Lord" refers to a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. David only used that phrase twice in the Psalms: Psalm 34 and Psalm 35. That's how he describes the Lord as a guard; one who surrounds those who fear him. Remember, this is after he has messed up so badly.

I think that's what I wanted to say to you. Don't ever feel that you have fallen too far to cry out to the Lord. You are never -- never too broken to be held.

I wish I'd understood that when I was a student. I wish I'd understood that even when we are broken, we have a God who holds us close. I wonder, have you ever heard of a store called Harrods Department Store? It's in London. It was founded as a small London shop with only two employees; that's how it began. It began as a vendor of fruits, vegetables, perfume, and medicine. Well, now more than a century and a half later, Harrods continues to top lists of the most famous department stores in the entire world.

If you'd been with me when I was a student in London, you would have perhaps taken a walk with me just a few doors down from Harrods. You would have entered the reject china store, a small store that carried the slightly imperfect items, the things that did not quite meet Harrods' standards.

One day I spent hours there, sure I could find a beautiful china cup that had slipped through quality control. So I looked. So many of them were obviously chipped or had little cracks. Then I found one that looked absolutely perfect. And holding it up to the light, I couldn't see any flaw. So I took it back to my apartment. I was so excited. Put on the kettle and made myself a cup of tea. I couldn't believe it! As soon as the boiling water filled my teacup, the china cracked from top to bottom. The water's heat had exposed the flaw, and it was imperceptible to the human eye, but there it was, my cup cracked under the pressure.

In many ways, I felt the same way about my life that I felt about that china cup. On the outside, I presented a Harrods standard front. But when life got too hot, when the pressures mounted, I feared that I would crack all the way through. I was sure I was the reject cup, not the perfect one. That sense of not good-enoughness can be overwhelming. And those lies -- that maybe you deal with, you're not good enough, they can poison and paralyze us. It was only when my life fell apart, and like David in the quiet of his cave, I sat in the quiet of a psychiatric hospital room, and I remembered who I am, and I remembered who God is. I felt the presence of the angel the Lord hold me. I wrote in my journal that night: "I never knew you lived so close to the floor."

Let me read you a few verses from Psalm 34: *"I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces. In my desperation, I prayed, and the Lord listened; he saved me from all my troubles. For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him."*

Later in the Psalm, he says this: *"The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles."* -- The ones that came their way and the ones they caused.

And then this promise: *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose*

spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time."

Let me just ask you, how are you doing? You know you might find yourself in a situation where you think you know, I feel like I've messed up too badly. You can't mess up too badly for God. And sometimes, we will say something that's not true, and then it will lead to something else, and you feel like you're caught in this trap. But we're given such a gift through the honest life of David. He was called "a man after God's own heart," yet he made so many mistakes.

I am discovering the joy of quick repentance. You should find yourself in a place today where you think I know my attitude is wrong or something I did wrong, or I'm getting into something way over my head. Just stop! Find your Bible. Maybe you've got it on your phone. Read Psalm 34 and remember what David said at a time when he had been shamed. "Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will touch their faces."

There is something about that burden being lifted off you, and it's as if the Lord washes your eyes again, and suddenly you see things you would have missed. That's really part of our heart here at *Life Today*, as you probably know. We want our eyes to be opened, to see people who are struggling right now, thinking, how on earth can I possibly get out of this situation?

Well, the great news is, you and I get to be the answer to some pretty desperate prayers. So I want you to watch something with me, and then I'm going to tell you how you and I get the privilege of joining our hearts and our hands with the Lord and being part of an amazing answer. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: Children, they are gifts of hope, of dreams. They are the future. It seems this

would be a universal reality. But in places like this, all that they are, their very future wavers in uncertainty.

The very substance needed to sustain their lives is the very thing trying to take it, their water filled with bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Whereas many adults might have the immune system to fight off these attacks, young children do not. It's not an issue of awareness. The people in this village know their water is the cause.

Open Captions

>> Unclean water is killing the people of our village.

>> The children say they are concerned about the dirty water. But they have no choice.

>> Families are dying because of this unclean water. People are disappearing. Many homes are closing.

Announcer: With no choice of clean water, no ability to change the situation, helplessness sets in and begins to drain all hope. But the reality is there is hope, for this isn't a problem without a solution. The power and simplicity of clean water lying beneath their feet changes everything. That water is out of *their* reach, but it is not out of yours. For when you join hands with ours you become the solution.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: It's really hard to imagine what that situation is like until you have the privilege of being there. I remember on one of my first trips for Water for LIFE, we had to travel quite some distance to come to some of these villages. They're so remote. And talking with some of these moms and asking them, "Where do you get your water?" And one mother offering to take me.

So we walk down with her and her children. When I saw what their water source was, I mean it was overwhelming. When you saw that little one bending down and scooping up water that looked so filthy, it kind of takes everything in you not to say, no, no, don't! But they have no choice.

As a mom, I can't imagine what that would be like. It's no good saying, can't they just walk on somewhere until there is a well? No. In so many of these areas, the only thing available for hundreds of miles is a hand-dug well. They only go down about six feet, and the water is filthy -- it is contaminated. When it's a brook or a stream or a little river like that, the same animals that are walking around in the water, that's the water the children are drinking.

I remember talking to one little boy and him saying how afraid he was because he had lost a sibling. I thought, how terrible that is that a child would be afraid of reaching for the one thing that we just take for granted. We just take it for granted that if you want a glass of water, you sit down in a restaurant, and it's the first thing they bring you, a glass of water. That's like gold to families there.

But for me, the great hope is we've seen what the solution is. And so here at *LIFE*, we have determined that this year we will drill 350 wells in over 20 nations. Now, you can drill a whole well for about \$4800, and that well will usually provide enough water for the whole village, about a thousand people, and it will last usually about 70 years. So that's why we call it Water for LIFE because for the life of that village there will be clean water.

Some of you can do that, but for others, that is too much. But could you give \$48? Do you know that if you were able today to call, to call that number on your screen and say, yeah, I want to be part of the solution, your \$48 will provide clean water for ten people for their life! \$144 will give clean water to 30 people!

I would love to send you a book I wrote called *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*. I

would love to send that to you, but I know you don't do it for the gifts, but I just want you to know the need is there. It's there now. The need is urgent. If we all do something, we can provide clean water in Jesus' name. So please -- please call now and just do whatever you can do. Thank you!

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 *Bible Promises For Life*, the ultimate handbook to everything God guarantees you in his word. A powerful resource that will give you the confidence to face life's troubles. With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "I Will Give You Rest" throw. It is a reminder of our Savior's promise of rest to those who trust in His grace and love.

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. You may request our new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field

Sheila: This is only our second day here in Zambia and already I've heard so many heartbreaking stories like this mom's, Alice. She has lost two children. And honestly, the circumstances she describes are horrifying.

I've always known that these wells, those hand-dug wells that the water is not clean. They dig these wells, and it takes a week. They're doing everything they can. There is nothing more they can do and that's where you and I come in. When we can drill a well because down deep we can access this fresh water. We seal it; no contaminants get in. And the new normal is that for the first time in their life these children drink fresh clean water. Will you help us?

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, keep calling. Please call and do the best you can. Every time you sit down to pour yourself a glass of water or reach for a bottle of water from your refrigerator, would you also pause to pray for these people that we care about so much? Our commitment here at LIFE is to drill 350 new wells in over 20 nations. Seems like a lot, but we can do it. We can do it in Jesus' name.

So thank you so much for being with us. We'll see you next time on *Life Today*!