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Week 22: Spring Mission Feeding

Sheila Walsh

When everything is shifting

SHEILA: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. Thanks so much for joining us. I'm so encouraged by the number of you who will take the time to send a letter, or you'll send an email and let us know the way God is touching your life through the program. We don't take that for granted. We're so grateful! And we're so, so grateful for the times that you step up with our different mission emphases and make such a difference in the world.

Somebody asked me the other day, I was speaking at a conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, and they were saying, "What do you still know for sure because it seems like everything in the world is shifting?"

So I looked at this sweet girl and I said, "Listen. Here's what I know for sure. When everything around you is shifting, God's Word remains steadfast."

You know there are probably I think over 80 references in the Bible about God being a God who intervenes, who rescues, who is active in the life of his children, but specifically, in times and terms of God being a God who rescues. In times of trouble we're often, I don't know about you, but I often turn to Psalm 91; it is called "the hiding Psalm" for good reason. Bible scholars, they're not 100 percent sure who wrote it; many believe it was probably written by Moses before his death as a follow-up to his great prayer over the children of Israel who had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. He reminded them of this: *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.* We find that in Deuteronomy. But even though they had rebelled and disobeyed, Moses wrote, "The eternal God remains a refuge." We fail God does not.

As I've been studying Psalm 91, it's hard not to think of all that the people of Ukraine have faced in '22. So I was finding myself asking, what does it look like to be rescued when your nation is being bombed and you're being forced to leave your country? What does it look like to be rescued when evil appears to be triumphing?

To me, I understand it to mean that we are standing firm on the truth of God's promises no matter what. I love studying the John Phillips commentary on the Psalms; it is a two-volume set. And he makes an interesting comment in his study on Psalm 91. He talks about the fact that Satan is a greater student of God's Word than many believers. You might remember in Luke, chapter four when Christ is tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Satan quotes from God's word; he quotes from Psalm 91. We need to know the Word of God, not just read it, but know how to apply it to our lives so that no matter what is going on in or around us, we stand on the truth that our God is a God who rescues. Sometimes - sometimes he rescues us out of a situation. And sometimes, he is in the shalom; he is the peace of God in the midst of a situation. Ultimately, our rescuer is Jesus.

I want to read a little to you from a study guide that I wrote to accompany my book, *Holding On When You Want to Let Go*. It's a part that if you did this study, you might be tempted to skip over because it relates to a war story. But it is so powerful I don't want you to miss it.

This is what it says:

"Almost 80 years later, it's still considered one of the most daring and heroic rescues in recorded history. World War II neared its end, and only 510 American prisoners of war had survived the brutal Bataan Death March and transferred to an internment camp in the Philippines. Inhumane treatment at the hands of their captors, merciless tropical conditions, disease, and punishing forced labor had claimed the lives of thousands.

Because intelligence reports identified close to 7,000 enemy troops in the area, attempting to save these POW's amounted to a suicide mission. But the Army Rangers went anyway. They refused to give up.

Disheartening news came from the captain of guerilla forces; 'Only a few of these 510 POW's can walk. They'll have to be carried if you're going to take them out.'

The rangers refused to give up. After overwhelming guards, the Rangers began liberating their incarcerated brothers, many of whom were so sick and disorientated, and suspicious, they initially refused to come out of hiding. But the Rangers refused to give up. Defying all odds, they rescued all 510 prisoners of war. Historians celebrate this daring rescue mission, known as "The Great Raid," as one of the bravest of all time in human history.

Though separated by decades and circumstances, you and I have something in common with the American POW's liberated at the end of World War II. According to the Word of God, we too were held captive by an enemy. In bondage to inhumane forces whose orders included massacre and devastation. We too desperately needed rescue. And thanks be to God, our Deliverer not only came, but also persisted despite our confusion, disorientation, and even rejection of the invitation to be rescued!

Here's the part I want you to listen to:

Army Rangers knew they might die. In order to rescue us, Jesus knew he would die a cruel death, a wicked death, during which all the sins of all humanity would be laid upon his shoulders. He came anyway. He refused to give up on even one of his beloved children."

That is quite a rescue mission. So there is kind of three truths I want us to look at today.

Number one: When everything around you is shifting, God's Word remains steadfast.
Number two: God is committed to your rescue. It is a promise. And number three: God can be trusted 100 percent of the time. Your life is not out of control.

So let's look at this truth number one; when everything around you is shifting, God's Word remains steadfast. Remember how Jesus unpacked that truth for us in Matthew, chapter 7, verses 24-27?

Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise, and the winds beat against that house it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.

I love the way that Eugene Petersen translates this passage in the Message Bible. He said this:

These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you're like a smart carpenter who builds his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you're like a stupid carpenter who builds his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.

Wow! That's quite a picture. Foundational words -- not something we add to our life, foundational words. Words to build your life on. Life changed for a moment -- in a moment for the people of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022. We don't know when something devastating could happen to us here in America. But Jesus has told us what to

do: Build our lives on Christ the solid rock.

I read that many pastors in the Ukraine turned their sanctuaries into bomb shelters, places of refuge. That seems pretty appropriate. Pastor Valerii Antoniuk, president of the Ukrainian Baptist Union said in a video address that all God's people around the world should remain in prayer because that is our weapon in times of war.

So how do we know if we have and are building our lives on the solid rock? I believe that our brothers and sisters in this war-torn land are being a light in the darkness. The Ukraine Evangelical Theological Seminary told their students that this attack, and I'm quoting from something I read, is not a reason to panic but to remember how many times God says in His Word "don't be afraid."

Fear paralyzes but prayer, trust in God, and caring for our neighbor gives us strength. These words speak to each one of us whatever you are facing right now, whatever! We pray, we trust God, and as we care for those around us, God will give us strength.

So truth number two: God has committed to your rescue. It's a promise. I love this scripture: *The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*

If you've known me for more than ten minutes, you know how much I love Psalm 34. Three words can be translated as "rescued" in scripture. We're most familiar with the first one, the verb *sozo*, which kind of speaks of salvation, being made whole. But one of the other words *rhumi* has the idea of the rescuer drawing the one in trouble to himself and holding them close. We're not just rescued and then left to fend for ourselves. We are rescued and held.

In his powerful book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis quotes Dr. Samuel Johnson, "People need to be reminded more than they need to be instructed." So let's remind one another,

as often as we can, of the life-saving truth of God's Word more often than we say, "Did you hear what was on the news?"

So truth number three: God can be trusted 100 percent of the time and your life is *not* out of control. One of our greatest temptations is to try and control what's going on around us. We are not in control, but God is--100 percent of the time! The prophet Isaiah wrote this:

"The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to. And it will prosper everywhere I send it."

That's a promise! God's Word always produces fruit. It never fails. You can trust God. You can trust God 100 percent, 100 percent of the time.

I was looking through an old hymn book of my mom's the other day and I loved the lyrics of this particular hymn. I don't know if you grew up with this hymn or not but it is called "How Firm a Foundation." Let me remind you of some of the lyrics:

How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent word! What more can he say than to you he has said, to you who to Jesus for refuge have fled? Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dismayed, for I am your God and will still give you aid; I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand, upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

I love this last verse:

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes. That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no

never forsake!

What a promise! When we think of rescue, we tend to think of it now, in a situation that we're experiencing at the moment. But as followers of Christ, we're not promised that we'll be able to escape every hard place. But what we are promised is that we are being held by God. That he is in control and our ultimate rescue is secure. And no one, no one can touch that.

When Paul wrote to the church in Colossae he reminded them of this:

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgives our sins.

I was at a conference recently and someone was doing a presentation. They were talking about the fact that during the pandemic a lot of people kind of stopped going to church and maybe stopped reading their Bible as much as they had before. It just kind of settled into this kind of new normal. What they were saying was that if you have got out of the habit of reading God's Word, one of the ways that you can change that is if you read God's Word for one day, there is not necessarily too much change in your habits or patterns -- two days, three days. But what they said was if you read God's Word for four days you have begun to establish a new habit and a new pattern.

So I want to encourage you. If you don't have a Bible, get a hold of a Bible. If you have one and you used to be a faithful Bible student, but you've stopped maybe reading it so much, I encourage you to pick your Bible up every day. I do it in the morning because I just know that when the rest of the day kicks in there are so many different demands on our time and attention. But when I get up in the morning, I let our dogs out. I make

myself a cup of coffee and I'll grab my Bible and I'll go downstairs, and I'll sit outside. And I'll open up the Word of God and I'll just allow the Word of God to speak to me.

No matter what you're going through, no matter how many questions you have, you will find answers in God's Word. And then maybe take a journal out too. That's one of the things I like to do is I'll read God's Word and then I'll just be quiet in his presence. You've probably noticed the world is noisy. It just seems to be getting noisier and noisier every day. And so to be still, remember Psalm 46, verse ten? We were told: *"Be still and know that I am God."* I'm sure you live a busy life like most of us do, but I ask you in the name of the Lord, to carve out a little time in every day to just be still in the Lord's presence, to make the Word of God your best friend, and to walk with Jesus; not just to kind of pop in every now and again with a prayer request, but to let him be the one who walks with you through every single day, through every situation.

One of the situations here at *LIFE* we're very committed to is having God's ears for those who are hurting and are crying out for help. So I want to show you something and then I'll tell you how you and I can be an answer to their prayers.

On the mission field

OPEN CAPTIONS

>> The highest rates of child mortality are in Sub-Saharan Africa. A leading cause of these deaths is malnutrition. Angola is no exception.

ANNOUNCER: Death due to malnutrition is why so many of these small graves are dug daily at this cemetery in a place called Catumbela. It is in villages like these where the death cycle starts as simple hunger pains. Each day, mothers struggle to find enough food for their children all the while hoping and praying that their children won't be next to succumb to the ravages of starvation.

SHEILA: This is Maria. She is like me. She is a mom. The only difference is that Maria was born in Angola and her little baby girl, Maria was born in Angola at this time when there is such a crisis going on.

You're never going to believe it but this precious little girl who weighs six pounds is one year and seven months old. A year and seven months and she weighs six pounds. I don't know if you can -- oh, darling, I don't want to hurt you, but can you see her skin? I didn't understand this before I got here but with severe malnutrition, the first organ to shut down is the skin. It is as if all the reserves go to try and protect what's left inside. So as you can see her skin has begun to literally peel off her body.

This is a fresh crisis. This is a fresh urgency. This will not wait. We talk about life where it is needed most. Where it is needed most is right here. But even more than that, where it is needed most is in the villages where these darling children live. They need our help, and they need it now.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: I'll never forget my first trip to Angola and what I saw there. I know that you have been, many of you have been with us for years and you care about the situation. The situation has never been worse. This is the worst drought that they have experienced in over 40 years. I remember just a couple of years ago going with some of these moms and scraping through the dry earth to see if there was anything -- anything that would have any basic nutrition or even just something to put in their little one's tummies. There was precious little then, and there is even less now.

Here's the thing that is just amazing to me. This is something that you and I can do something about. When James and Betty established Mission Feeding so many years ago, they did it because they believed it was our joy as believers to make a difference. And they have continued for years. What would give these children, when we set up the

Mission Feeding program in a village, is special -- it looks a little like oatmeal or soup, but it is specially made for children in that area of the world with the protein and the vitamins they need for strength.

But when we were first doing it, they were showing up with cans that A, for a start, when you put something hot in a can, it's going to burn you. But not only that, some children would show up with a can about the size -- and be able to get a decent meal. Some children were showing up with literally the kind of thing you would give your cat food in. One little one even arrived just with a lid. And so that's why we came up with this great solution -- bowls! It says "*LIFE Outreach*" on the bottom of the bowl. Do you want to join us today and give hope in a bowl?

See I've seen it. You're asking me how do you know it works? Because I've been there! I've been in that malnutrition clinic and watched these poor little ones where the skin is literally peeling off their bodies and their hair is turning a strange color, and they don't have the energy to cry. But then I've gone to the villages on the same trip where Mission Feeding has already been established, and I've had the privilege of being the one to fill the bowls and hand it to the children. And they just look like our children did when they were little. They're laughing and singing and dancing and sitting under the shade of a tree and enjoying this meal that has changed their life -- from death to life.

Please will you join us today? Will you help us fill these bowls? \$30 will feed three children, not for a day but three whole months. \$50 will feed five. \$100 will feed ten. As Betty once said, let's make sure the line of children is never longer than the food we have to put in these bowls. Please call now. Give the best gift you can. Give hope in a bowl!

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Across the continent of Africa, children are suffering, facing severe malnutrition and even death. With food reserves gone and many areas experiencing

severe famine, we urgently need to replenish supplies to keep feeding the 350,000 children who are counting on us.

Through *LIFE's* Mission Feeding outreach your gift of love can be an answer to prayer for a hurting and hungry child in their time of need. Call now with your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 to help feed and care for three, five, or ten children for three full months.

With your gift of any amount, we'll send you *The Chosen: 40 days with Jesus*. From the creators of the widely popular television drama, *The Chosen*, this devotional invites you to discover Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him best. With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "Amazing Grace" sheet music framed wall art. This timeless and well-beloved hymn can be displayed as a reminder of God's grace to you. Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children, be sure to request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come." This beautiful bronze is a reminder to care for children around the world in both word and deed.

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

End of video

On the mission field

ISAK: Sheila, I know your heart for the mothers here in Africa. You've spoken to so many of them. I've seen your heart break -- literally, break as you've heard their stories. I'm asking you today on behalf of Rita that you would speak to the friends of *LIFE* and you would ask them to give an extra-special gift. We're experiencing the worst drought that we have ever experienced in the last 40 years here in Angola. That is why mothers like Rita and children like Rosa are suffering like they are. You can be an answer to Rita's prayer today if you'll say yes; if you'll respond yes. Dial the number on your screen or get online and give the very best gift that you can give today -- give the gift of food, give the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Isn't that amazing? Hope in a bowl. You and I get to do that. You and I get to be an answer to the prayers of these darling mothers and grandmothers and their children who are desperately needing an answer. And the fact that we get to do it is just amazing. So please keep calling. If you haven't made a gift yet, would you consider calling now? \$30 will feed three children for three months. Where else could you get that kind of redemption for \$30?

So thank you for your help. Please keep helping. Let's be determined that as we are Jesus' boots on the ground, we will not stop helping until we see him face to face. So I'm Sheila Walsh for all of us here at *LIFE*, thank you for being with us, and we'll see you next time.