

9/23/24

**Week 39: *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*, last week**

**James and Betty Robison**

**Carried by Love**

**In the studio**

**JAMES:** Well, I'm so excited to be here. Betty, I'm getting more excited about coming to be with our family. That is how I feel about you. I feel like you're our family. Betty and I are going to be spending maybe even more time with you than we have in a long time. I'm going to actually, in a few weeks, be taking you on a journey while I show you how this young lady, now think about this, I didn't have a home from 5 to 15. I lived with no home on a street, no father, no direction and just a very broken, very battered, very, let's say, wired the wrong way boy. And then when my father, who raped my mother, came back into our home and tried to kill her, and then said he is going to kill me and I nearly killed him, and I left.

I went back to the pastor and his wife who had me for five years and thought they were going to get me. I moved in and I met this 15-year-old girl, virtually the first Sunday. I had never dated. We had no way to date. I didn't have a car. I had nothing. Nobody knew me. I fell in love with her. It's easy to see how somebody could. But this perfectly beautiful, magnificently pure girl began the process of changing my life. We've been married for almost 62 years; the next anniversary will be 62, and we went together for four years. Boy, was she an angel. She began the process. I'm going to tell you about some of that in the coming weeks and it is going to show you how any one of us can change anybody.

I want to talk to you about somebody here in the Bible that has captured my attention right now when our nation is in serious trouble. This whole nation can potentially, so to speak, be on fire. The enemy wants to put us in total darkness. I'm going to expound on

that sometime in the very near future and tell you how you need to prepare for it. But they just want to cut us off from everybody so they can control us. That's where they're headed. We're going to have to have a miracle of God to be able to offset what the enemy has planned for us.

Betty, when you go to the New Testament and you see these disciples of Jesus and then you see that they walked out of the upper room in supernatural power, and God's Spirit starts moving, they have an experience where they are so busy they need to find some help. So God told them to get to several men and appoint them to take care of the widows so they could give themselves to the ministry the word and prayer. They picked Stephen and they picked a man named Phillip, several. These two in particular, they just began to shake the world.

But Stephen began to shake the world. He began to speak to everybody in public about how when you drift away from God and you turn against God, everything comes apart and you become the enemy of peace and freedom. He didn't hold back any punches. By the way, Betty, this is what the church needs to do today. We need to let people know that if you just throw aside the Ten Commandments, you throw aside the Word of God, God says when you don't glorify him as God you'll be given over to your appetites and they'll control you. But then he says something else. He says, "If you change my word into a lie you're given over to a depraved mind where you can't think straight." Well, have we changed God's Word into a lie today and abandoned it?

**BETTY:** Absolutely! We've changed it to fit our circumstances, to fit our likes and dislikes. Oh, that's okay. God will be okay with that—when he is not, really.

**JAMES:** It is not even close to all right and it certainly leaves us in trouble. Well, Stephen saw this and he took them on. Now I want you to notice what happened in how they reacted to this young man of God.

This is in the seventh chapter of the book of Acts: "Now when they heard this, they were

cut to the quick and they began gnashing their teeth at him.” At Stephen. "When being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

I've made this statement many times, he looked up and he saw Jesus giving him a standing ovation. He probably had no idea why Jesus would be doing that but let's follow this and you're going to see why.

"And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of God standing at the right hand of God.' And they cried out with a loud voice, and they covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul."

This is Saul of Tarsus. This is the greatest enemy the church has ever had in history. He is a man of power and influence and anti-Jesus and anti-God trying to destroy the very thought of Jesus and the New Testament church.

"And they cast their robes at Saul of Tarsus's feet and they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' And having said this, he fell asleep."

Betty, do you realize that Saul of Tarsus is attacking this Jesus and denying him? And all of a sudden, Stephen saw Jesus standing. Jesus saw him, Stephen, just as Saul did, dying. But as he died, he prayed just like Jesus, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they are doing. They're under another control."

Betty, our nation, and most of the world are under the control of the deceiver. They deny God, they change his truth into a lie, and they do not think straight. Did you ever think you would see people think so crazy and so viciously and so foolishly and so dangerously

as you're watching the general population, not only the United States, and sadly too much here, but all over the world like you're watching today?

**BETTY:** It breaks my heart. I never thought I'd live to see a day like we're in right now. If it wasn't for the hope of Jesus, the love of Jesus, and knowing that we can be with him forever and ever and that he is on our side, we couldn't take it, James.

I'd see what's going on around us, I get up in the mornings and I'm talking to the Lord and I weep. I think, why am I weeping? Because my heart is broken. I think God's heart is broken watching his children treat others so badly; watching people who don't know him, they can see but they're blind. They don't know what they're doing. It breaks my heart.

See, I think there is a time for weeping and crying out before the Lord.

**JAMES:** Well, you know this picture of what happened to Stephen should awaken us. He walked in the fullness of the spirit and no matter who he spoke to and called to repentance, they couldn't shake him. They couldn't get the glory of God off of him. And he died showing Jesus to the greatest enemy the church has ever had. Well, when Saul of Tarsus left, he got even meaner. He got more vicious, he got more deadly, and he got more damaging.

But all of a sudden, he had an encounter and he was struck blind. And he cried out when he realized he was being persecuted. He answered, Lord, what's going on? Why did he call him Lord when he doesn't even believe there is a Lord? And he is trying to destroy the very thought of him.

Well, Jesus spoke to him and in that blindness, he told him what to do. He told him to go to a place and there would be a man there that would tell him what to do. So Jesus went—he basically called the man to go. Ananias went, and he met with him when the man got there and told him that he had been sent and that he would pray for his eyes and he would speak to him and they would open. And although they were open, they were

blind, but they were open.

I heard you say this week, that's the way because I was talking about this encounter here. You said, "Well, people's eyes are open but they can't see, they're blind." God suddenly moved on Saul of Tarsus and the scales fell off and he could see. Then he asked, "What am I to do?" And he ended up being born of the spirit, baptized, and God commissioned him. Now you're going to find it starts talking right after that about how Saul of Tarsus became a different person. We find later that he spent three years just with Jesus alone. And then he came back and came in with the fellowship of the whole church. But it took a little while to accept him because he was the greatest enemy of the church. But now then he becomes the greatest champion of the church.

Now Betty, here's the significance of this story to us. Stephen was chosen by God just like we are. And we're chosen to be a witness, we're chosen to serve widows, people that are hurting. We're to love our neighbors, we love God with all our heart and love our neighbors with all our heart. That's how he's called us to live. When we do that, we're going to have opportunities to speak to people but also to speak correction to people. And we don't do it with an unkind spirit, we do it with a spirit of brokenness. They don't know what they're doing. They're under the control of another power. Jesus could say they don't know what they're doing when they're crucifying him deliberately, purposely, and yet he said they're under the control of another power. These people are being jerked around and misled, and they're doing these awful things, and that don't know the truth. They're being controlled by the deceiver and the father of lies. So we've got to pray for them, have mercy on them.

But we correct them. You can't throw the Ten Commandments out. You can't throw out authority. You can't be dishonest. You can't be a thief. You can't covet. And you can't be a murderer. You can't do these things. You have to come back to God. That's what the church has to say.

Betty, we're 80 years old. We're going to spend the rest of our lives trying to get you as a

member of the body of Christ, if you don't know Jesus, you need to trust that Jesus gave his life to give you life, that is alive to live in you, that changed Stephen, that changed Saul of Tarsus into Paul the apostle. This man was chosen to take care of the widows. He in his witness led the greatest enemy of the church of Jesus Christ to Christ. And it was Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the apostle and he was the one that opened the door for the gospel of the kingdom to go to every nation on the earth.

And today, God wants to awaken the church to fulfill the mission and commission that we were left here to fulfill. Jesus has called us to be transformed by the power of committing our lives to him and losing our lives in him. Betty, that's what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to lose our lives in Christ's will. In his what? Kingdom purpose! And Jesus said if you will, then I will give you the desires of your heart. I will direct your life. I will take over your life and direct it. But you lose your life for my purpose. You and I did that. And God amazingly, he would give us our dreams when they weren't necessarily perfect. Sometimes, I made an idol out of my dreams and God showed me that. I said, "Then why did you bless me?"

He said, "Because you did, you and Betty lost your life for my purpose, that's what you wanted. And you've reached a place right now that you're going to be able to help inspire the church, every believer, to lose their life for my kingdom purpose."

But here's what many people don't understand. He said, "The king has come." The whole Old Testament was talking about that kingdom, that day coming. It came. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus said, "Now the kingdom of heaven is in you." Now the kingdom of heaven in resurrection power is in you. All of this has happened. This is now! It's now. It's not the kingdom to come, that kingdom is coming. But there is a kingdom that has come.

And Betty, the thing people don't realize is, we've been left here to fulfill his kingdom purpose on this earth and prepare people for the kingdom to come. It is not a rescue. He is coming to get a church that looks like him, that's making a kingdom impact on this earth

because the king is living in us in resurrection power. That's what happened in Stephen.

As a result of that, that's what happened to Saul of Tarsus who literally helped turn the world to a relationship with Jesus and brought down the most powerful kingdom, Rome, and it came crashing down and Constantine slowed the next great assault on Christianity down; it's been slowed down a number of times. But the power of the gospel went out to where it could change people everywhere all over the world.

And today, in this day, I believe it is the time for the church of Jesus Christ to come up in resurrection power, in the power of the kingdom. Betty, it starts this way. We love God with all our heart. We love our neighbors as ourselves. But we keep His Word as His Word and we allow the Word to come alive in us and carry us.

Betty, this is perhaps the most important thing we've got to hear. God's family must come together and look like a family, like him. And the church must come together and look like a healthy body rightly connected. You and I have seen people who were taught in religious groups all the reasons to disagree with other members of the church and other members of Christ's body, and they cut each other apart. That has to stop. We may have serious disagreements. One of us may be wrong, both of us may be wrong, but we don't have to mistreat each other. We can come together in love seeking God's will. And Betty, if the church will do that, we're going to see the greatest awakening in the history of the world.

**BETTY:** You know, James, just briefly, the only way I feel like we can do that, is you talk about we need to love our neighbor. We need to love those around us. Maybe sometimes it doesn't feel like they're easy to love. We've all been there. But the only way we can do that, and the right way I believe is understanding how much God loves us.

In Ephesians his love is unlimited, James. How wide, how deep, how high? It is never—it never diminishes, his love. I've hung on to that love through hard times, through beautiful times, and just knowing that his love never changes for me. So why should my love

change for those around me? It should be that deep, that wide, that high just as his love is for us.

**JAMES:** His love doesn't change in you. It is his love. It flows like a river. I watch her pray for you. I watch her pray for this country. I watch her pray for the world. I watch her pray for God's family to come to the perfect Father with total love for him; love for God and love for our neighbor which certainly includes the members of Christ's body and every neighbor. Love carries her. Betty and I are being carried by love.

I'm inviting you, just like with Stephen, you may start by serving a neighbor or a widow or an orphan or a hungry person or a hurting person but start. But then tell everybody, we've got to come back to God's Word. You've got to take the Ten Commandments seriously. You don't change God's Word into a lie or you will not be able to think straight. You have to repent and admit there is a God who desires to be our father and wants a relationship.

Father, please, please help everyone listening to say, I want to know you as Father through Jesus. I trust you. God, please give them a new life as they give you their life, and raise us up to look like you; in Jesus' name.

Would you make that commitment? Would you right now say God, fill me with your love and your life? I yield myself to you. I want to love you with all my heart and I want to love my neighbor.

Betty, many of the people who watch us watch us because we try to put God's arms of love around the overlooked and the broken, "the least of these," Jesus called them. Right now we're giving what we call *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*. We're trying to give out 150,000 pairs of shoes. We try to do this every year. But we're also trying to give smiles, cleft palate surgery. We also have a miracle of being able to give a surgical center that we'll tell you more about but I want you to know right now, you can give some children the arms and the love of God and hope by giving them *Shoes and Smiles*. Watch this.



### **On the mission field**

**JOHN:** Well, I'm here in Uganda, standing in what is going to be operation room number three in the brand-new surgical center that we are building in partnership with our mission partners here in Uganda. Specifically designed to treat neurological disease in children, more than 2,000 surgeries a year, more than any hospital in the world, it is going to happen right here.

**ANNOUNCER:** For many families in developing countries, a child born with a neurological disability has little hope to survive, largely due to a lack of facilities or funds to get the proper treatment they need. That's why *LIFE Outreach* has joined with mission partner Cure International in building a brand-new neurological surgery center that will provide expert care and life-saving surgery at no cost to families.

This state-of-the-art treatment center isn't just about operating rooms and equipment, it will save lives while providing hope, love, and dignity for children suffering from neurological conditions like spina bifida, hydrocephalus, and brain tumors. Without surgical intervention, these conditions can be a death sentence for those most vulnerable. Yet with access to specialized treatment, these children can defy the odds and continue to grow, play, and learn as all children should.

**JOHN:** Listen! We do so many wonderful things through *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*, but this facility specifically is the difference between life and death for children who have severe but repairable disabilities. I can't say thank you enough for spreading the gospel through word and deed. God bless you.

**End of video**

### **In the studio**

**JAMES:** You make as great a gift as you can make because we're going to build a neurological center. We're going to give brain surgery. And in order to do it right now,

there's \$1.2 million that must be raised to complete it. One of our donors gave \$700,000 so we need to raise the last \$500,000. That's what your love does. It makes things like that happen. It is God's love through you. Would you do that? Could you give \$1,000 or several thousand toward it? Could you give \$100? I mean would you help us with the shoes, 150,000 pairs of shoes? We still need more help there.

There is a way that you can help us put God's arms around the overlooked, "the least of these" Jesus called them. And he said, basically, you're ministering to me. You're putting your arms around me. You're loving me by loving them.

Father, please give us a miracle.

Would you help us complete that surgery center that's going to give a life to a child who never had hope? Would you do it? Would you give us some more shoes? This is the last week. Go get your bank card; use it like a check. Go online or dial that number and be determined to get through. Please make the greatest gift you can make because you really are giving life and you're sharing and demonstrating the great love of God. Thank you for putting God's arms around the overlooked. Thank you for doing it now.

### **Begin video**

**ANNOUNCER:** For almost two decades *LIFE's Christmas Shoes and Smiles* has continued to provide shoes for impoverished children throughout the world, as well as corrective surgeries for children with cleft palate disorders. By responding today, you can help provide new shoes for 150,000 children in time for the holidays, and for some children a beautiful new smile. Your gift of \$36 will help provide shoes for ten children. \$72 will help provide shoes for 20. \$180 will help provide shoes for 50. And a gift of \$500 will help provide a corrective smile surgery.

This year we have an incredible opportunity to help construct a new surgical center that will provide lifesaving surgeries to children suffering serious neurological conditions.

This \$1.2 million project is up and above *LIFE*'s normal budget but because of one generous friend for *LIFE*, only \$500,000 is needed.

As a thank you for your gift of support to this life-saving outreach, be sure to request the blue crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request this keepsake boxed set featuring four crystal shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider an extra gift of \$1,000 or more to help construct *LIFE*'s new surgical center. And with this gift, you may request this beautiful bronze sculpture, "A Cup of Water."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

**End of video**

### **On the mission field**

**JOHN:** Boy, it is a great day here in South Sudan as we come and we get to bring Christmas shoes to these precious children. I want to say thank you to all those who have helped us in the past but I want you to realize that there is still a great need, an opportunity for us to put a little love and a little Christmas into each of these children's lives.

Remember, it is not just shoes that we give at Christmastime, it is also the smiles. Around the world, kids in need of cleft palate surgeries or kids in need of shoes will be able to have a little extra something of joy this Christmas because of your giving. I want to say thank you to you for your giving, for your caring, and for loving. I just want you to know that it is so important—so important for the shoes that we're giving them. There are so many other children that we want to give shoes to. We're going to reach their villages too and it is all because you cared enough to give. So God bless you and thank you so much.

### **In the studio**

**JAMES:** Betty, we're going to give little shoes like this. We gave them to lots of kids ourselves. It is a little bit hard for us to travel to those—I don't know how many of you know but she hurt her back to the point that she could have been paralyzed. And God has miraculously healed her. But it is hard for us to go into those areas like we did for 25 years or more. And boy, we marched into hell to give *Shoes and Smiles*.

Let me say this to you, you're going to be hearing more of us in the near future than you ever have, and more of her because I'm going to let her carry us on the journey that she carried me on. It changed the life of a very broken boy. I don't know how with what she met me with that I ever went where I went in the glory and power of God but it was a miracle. She saw the miracle when God called me to preach. It was a total change; I was not the same person. But I still had the same challenges. And she was the one who helped me break the grip and the power of the enemy over and over. And we can all do that in some way for somebody we love.

Don't miss the shows. Stay with us, and let's keep putting God's arms around a hurting world that he gave his life for. Remember this now, this is the last week, and boy, we need a miracle and you can be a great part of that miracle. Last week! Do what God leads you to do. Thank you! And thank you!