

Keep on Rejoicing
by Dr. Lee Roberson

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I just came from a meeting in Angola, Indiana where I preached last Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. In all the services was a little lady in her eighties. She sat there enjoying the services. I spoke to her two or three times. My wife spoke to her.

Her husband, in his eighties, had died on Saturday. His body was at the funeral home in Angola. She came to church Sunday morning and came back Sunday night. She said, "There's nothing to worry about. He's with the Lord. We'll have the funeral service Wednesday, after the meeting is over." She was in every single service, smiling and rejoicing in the Lord, presenting a beautiful attitude of the child of God.

I thought to entitle this sermon "Keep on Smiling" or "Keep on Rejoicing."

The Lord said:

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John 16:33.

Paul exhorts us:

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:4—7.

David said:

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers."—Ps. 37:1.

All are saying the same thing—be happy in the Lord; serve the Lord with all your heart. With trouble everywhere, still we are to be of good cheer. Have no fear. Trust in, rest in God's promises. Keep smiling. Keep a good attitude, a good disposition. Keep looking up, knowing that you can win through Him.

We will have lonely hours, hours of disappointment when we feel we cannot go on. But keep looking to the One who said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." You may have difficulty physically. Keep looking up to God.

Years ago in Chattanooga we had a little old lady in the church, a Mrs. Gentry. She became ill and was put in the hospital. Her leg had to be amputated. She had been a very active person. Now she came home with only one leg.

I said, "Mrs. Gentry, you can still use your life. You can use what you have. Don't turn away from serving God."

I had her sing on my radio program. I called her the wheelchair singer. She became popular throughout Chattanooga. Mrs. Gentry's singing brought blessing to people all over that area. Though her body was suffering, she was serving God and rejoicing.

Again, when you fail miserably, keep smiling, keep rejoicing. Don't give up. Keep going.

Keep going when your friends forsake you—and sometimes they do. When some turn against you, keep smiling, keep rejoicing, keep looking up. Know that God is with you and that He will give you the victory as you trust Him.

One good thing that should come out of this Sword Conference would be hundreds of victorious Christians, overcomers. You will stand; you will be true; you will be faithful; you will go on with God and not quit, not give up.

I once had a position in the Southern Baptist Convention. I was the evangelist for the Birmingham Baptist Association for three years. I had been an officer in the Convention. But I felt led to come out, so I did.

A committee from the Sunday School Board in Nashville was sent to see me. These men begged me to stay in. I said, "No, I cannot do anything else but this."

I lost every friend (as far as I knew) in almost one week's time. I had nowhere to turn. My friends were in the Convention. When I came out, it all changed; but the Lord was still with me. And He will be with you too. Keep going when friends recede.

Then keep smiling and rejoicing when the world opposes you because of your convictions.

Keep rejoicing when loneliness envelops you. Remember, the Lord said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Keep rejoicing when old age claims you. You will come to such a time. I have. But keep rejoicing in the Lord and praising Him for His goodness.

Rejoice when death comes. Christian, remember: 'To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.' All is well. Keep rejoicing in the Lord.

I. GOD IS WITH US

The Lord may be saying to some of you right now, "Rejoice, I am with you. Lo, I am with you always: even unto the end of the age. I will never leave you, never forsake you. In the darkest hour, I will be at your side. In suffering, in illness, in persecution, in reverses, I will be with you every moment."

Can you rejoice and say, "The Lord is with me. He's walking by my side. He's encouraging me. I sense His presence with me all the time"?

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."—
Rom. 8:28.*

II. HE IS WORTHY OF OUR FAITH AND TRUST

The Lord speaks: "Rejoice. Smile. Trust Me. Have faith in God."

The Lord never fails. We do, but He cannot. The world fails, but He cannot. By faith you keep going forward. Keep trusting Him. By faith attempt great things for God. Out of such a meeting as this, many should go home inspired to do something mighty for God.

Out of a meeting like this I got the inspiration for starting Tennessee Temple University in 1946. One time our enrollment was over 5,500 in school. God blessed in a mighty way.

When we lost our baby Joy, God led me to start Camp Joy for children. God supplied the property and the money. It's still going and with great success.

Then we started Worldwide Faith Missions in the same way—from one missionary to 560 on the mission field.

Rejoice in your darkest hour. The world may think you crazy, foolish; but keep trusting God, keep building your faith on the Word of God. Rest in that Book. Do what He says do. He will help you, lead you in the same way He led Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, David, Peter, James and John and the Apostle Paul.

III. GOD WILL SUPPLY OUR NEEDS

Again the Lord speaks: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Be a faithful tither. Try Him. He will not fail you.

I've been tithing now for more than seventy years. I gave up my salary a long time ago, and God has supplied every single need I've ever had. And He will keep on supplying what I need.

Put away your worries and do what God says do. Friends may fail, the world will fail, but He—never!

I went to my first church in Memphis, Tennessee—Germantown Baptist—at a salary of fifty dollars a month. The church had been organized in 1865. I rented a room in the attic of a big house on Snowden Circle in Memphis, Tennessee. I ate meals at a hamburger stand. Hamburgers were a nickel apiece. What a day! I would leave that little room and go get a hamburger. I didn't have anything except an old Ford car that would barely run. It was hard going.

One morning I got out of bed in that little room in the attic and walked over to the door. Under the door was a white envelope. I thought, What in the world is that? I picked it up. Inside was a dollar bill, a whole dollar! I said, "Thank You, Lord." I went down to the hamburger stand and ate two more hamburgers. I thought, This is living! This is it!

I thought to myself, Now, if that would just happen again, that would be wonderful!

The next morning—there it was. Every morning for twenty-five mornings I picked up a dollar bill. I was afraid to say too much, afraid it would stop. I let the thing go on.

After awhile I thought, I'd better find out who is doing it. So I put a little trap by the door, a little piece of wood. If anyone touched that door, it would knock the wood over and wake me. I fixed it just right and went to bed and to sleep.

Sometime after midnight I heard that piece of wood fall over. I jumped up and jerked the door open. At the door stood a short little lady. In her hand was a white envelope. She handed it to me and said, "Son, if you ever tell a soul, I'll never give you another penny."

I said, "Lady, have no worries. I'll never tell a soul where my money is coming from. Thank you, ma'am. And God bless you."

That lady was Mrs. Kate Barker, the wife of the former president of the University of Kentucky. After her husband died she moved to Memphis and lived with her sister. I had the room in the attic. She thought, That boy needs help, and I want to help him. So she began putting those dollars under the door.

You trust God, you have faith in God, and He will see you through. If you are led of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit to do what you are doing, God will bring you through victoriously on the other side. You can depend on that.

My second church at Greenbrier, Tennessee paid me a bit more, seventy-five dollars a month. I had a tiny little room on the back of the church and lived there for three solid years—no conveniences, nothing but that little room. And God supplied every need.

I kept on trusting God. He did not fail me. And He won't fail you.

IV. HE WILL BE WITH US IN THE DARKEST HOUR

He will be with you in the darkest hour of your life, and dark hours will come.

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I was holding a tent meeting in Russellville, Alabama. Homer Britton was my singer. Crowds were coming. I was in the pastor's office one morning preparing for the service when the phone rang. I answered. The voice on the other end said, "Brother Roberson, I'm sorry to tell you this, but your baby Joy has just died." I didn't know how to respond.

I got in my car and started driv-ing back to Chattanooga. I didn't understand why that little one had gone so suddenly, why a phone message like that: "She is dead."

When I crossed the Tennessee River bridge, God gave me a verse, which is now my life verse: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). I don't understand the death of our baby; neither does my wife—just a few days old and suddenly gone. But out of that came Camp Joy for children, and many other things.

Keep on rejoicing when heart-aches come. He will take care of your every difficulty. Trust Him. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." He will be with you in the darkest hour.

In times of loneliness "be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:9).

When sickness comes, He is with you.

I preached in a big, open-air tabernacle near Chicago one night. We had a great service. I went to my room in a little motel down the side of a hill. I got up the next morning and tried to pray, but my voice was gone—every bit of it. I had to leave the meeting.

I came back to Chattanooga and went to several doctors. They tried to help but couldn't. For almost one year I carried that burden. Others preached for me. I stayed in my position and tried to work, but I couldn't preach. In that year I had to feel the presence of God, had to know that He was with me, had to know that He was guiding and directing in my life.

Almost a year later, God restored my voice and allowed me to go on. One year waiting on God! I was pastor of a church and seeing to Tennessee Temple—all of it without a voice! During that trying period I had to trust Him and tell Him, "Lord, I'm in Your hands. Take care of me."

V. HE IS WITH US IN HOURS OF FAILURE

We all fail at times. Don't give up. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Don't be a Demas. Keep going. Your sermon may not bring results; your visitation program may not bear much fruit, but keep going. Revival may not come, but keep trusting God, keep moving on.

VI. HE WILL USE US TO HELP OTHERS

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Smile and rejoice, for He said He will use us to help others.

I have my greatest joy in remembering when God saved my soul. But He saved me that I might tell somebody else, that I might help somebody else.

Paul wrote to the Philippians and told them of his joy and gave them words of encouragement:

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 3:13,14.

He wants to use you to bring comfort and encouragement to others. He wants to use you to give words of warning about what one can and can't do with his life.

Lift up Christ as Saviour, and He will show you how you can point others to the Son of God. How true are these words: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Others, Lord, yes, others!

Let this my motto be.

Help me to live for others

That I may live like Thee!

Winning others! Pointing people to the Lamb of God! Letting God use your life! You're a child of God; now let Him use you to bless the hearts of others.

I smiled when a little lady came up in our church in Chattanooga one day—a stranger. She said, "Brother Roberson, I'm here visiting with you. I have given my life to the matter of winning people to Christ."

I said, "Ma'am, are you doing any good? Are you succeeding?"

She turned from the Bible, opened a notebook and said, "Yes, I have had the joy of leading 1,526 people to Christ."

Did you get that? 1,526! She had all their names and addresses written down in the book. That little lady had gone from place to place, city to city, witnessing for Christ.

I thought, Boy, this is a little too much! I'm not sure I can believe it. But I believe it now. She was deeply sincere and had given her life to the one great purpose of pointing others to the Lamb of God.

So should you, and so should I. We should say, "O God, my business is to win people to Christ."

When I preached one Sunday morning in Chattanooga, a fellow came down the aisle and was saved. I baptized him. His wife was baptized later. This man, M. J. Parker, came to me and said, "Brother Roberson, I know I'm born again. I want God to use me. Would you mind if I go out and rent an old bus and run it around Chattanooga to bring people in to Sunday school?"

I said, "Go right ahead."

He rented an old bus and began. We later owned thirty-five brand-new buses and filled them for every service—Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night. (I've never had a junior church and never intend to have one. Everyone came into the church service, and thousands were saved.) M. J. Parker—the man who was inspired to do that—started me off when he felt this could be done.

Then M. J. had a stroke. He was paralyzed on one side for a long time and had to walk with a cane. Then he passed away. I held the funeral. At the graveside the wife was standing there with tears in her eyes. She pulled me aside and said, "Brother Roberson, may I speak to you just a moment?"

I said, "Certainly, ma'am."

She said, "He never told you, but M. J. never finished the third grade. He could barely read and write." Yet he was a smart businessman and a great soul winner. God put His hand upon him.

If M. J. Parker could lead thousands to the Lord in Chattanooga, then God can use you as well, if you will just say, "Lord, I'm ready. I will rejoice."

Yesterday in my office, I talked to Solomon Owolabi, a graduate of our school. He has been back in Africa for many years. He talked about his work. He has built three churches in Africa—beautiful, big churches with thousands being saved. He said, "I want to thank you for what you have done in helping me to get back to the mission field. I'm now on furlough and will be going back." He was winning people to Christ in Africa.

Rejoice that God can and will use you. Let Him have His way. Ask Him to take your life and use it for His glory, for the winning of souls.

I was preaching in Springfield, Tennessee. A lot of people got saved. One lady came forward often, bringing people down the aisle. I asked who she was. They told me she was Mrs. Abi Burr, cashier for the First National Bank in Springfield. Every service she won people to Christ.

I went back home and didn't hear from that church nor Mrs. Abi Burr for a long time. Then one day the phone rang. "I'm calling you from Springfield, Tennessee. Mrs. Abi Burr just died. She left word that she wanted you to have a part in the funeral service."

"I'll be there," I said.

I went to the First Baptist Church in Springfield and sat on the platform with the pastor, Dr. Pettigrew. They had the songs. A big crowd was there. I had my word to say and sat down. Then the pastor stood and said, "Before I bring the message, I'd like for you ladies to stand here at the front, if you will." A group of ladies stood. He said, "These ladies were led to Christ individually, one by one, by Mrs. Abi Burr." I counted them. Fifty-two women were standing at the casket of Mrs. Abi Burr.

She worked at the First National Bank, went to a little mission church, knocked on doors and told people about Christ, including these fifty-two ladies.

God will use anyone yielded to Him. Let Him use you. And don't be afraid. Rejoice and praise God. You can be a soul winner.

Smile, rejoice, be happy because

VII. CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN

He said:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:1—3.

I believe in the second coming of Christ. I am a premillennialist. I haven't changed my viewpoint in all these seventy years. I believe that Christ may come at any moment. I have to rejoice in that fact—that He has promised and will fulfill that promise. I will see Him and will stand in His presence. I believe in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the saved, the rapture of the living believers, caught up into His presence!

This came to me when I was pastor of my second church in Greenbrier, Tennessee. Sitting in the little room in the back of the church where I lived, I began reading the truth of the second coming. I read: "I will come again...." I preached my first sermon on it in that church. I didn't know anything about terms like premillennial, postmillennial, amillennial, etc. I had never seen a Scofield Bible at that time. But I knew He was coming, for He promised He would. I began preaching it, and people began getting saved. I saw what could result from preaching on the second coming, and I have kept preaching on this truth all these years. Jesus is coming again!

Think of His coming in times of failure, in times of opposition, in times of loneliness. Rejoice! Praise God! Keep on smiling in the midst of it all. God will be with you, help you and make you a better Christian by your faith in Him.

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Oh, what a mighty, mighty Saviour we're following! He's our Saviour, our Keeper, our coming King; He's all and in all. Rejoice that you are His child! And in rejoicing, ask Him to use you to tell someone else about Christ. Obey the Great Commission. Do what He says with your life and do it rejoicing and praising God for His presence, for His power, and for His peace.