

## **The Detours of Life** by Lee Roberson

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*"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." Romans 8:28*

[This simple message has been used in tract form for more than thirty years. Thousands of copies have been given out. Many excellent testimonies have come to us. Perhaps you are traveling a detour at this time - here is a message for you.]

There are many spiritual lessons which we can all get from this business of traveling; for example, arriving at crossroads reminds us of the daily necessity of making decisions. Again, we have the lesson of following a road map which reminds us of the Christian's guide book, the Bible. But, I believe that the strongest lesson we can learn from traveling on the highways of our great nation is this: The highway of life can't always be straight and smooth. There must be hills, there must be rough spots, and there must be occasional detours. We have all had the experience of traveling along a beautiful highway and suddenly being confronted with a large sign saying, "Highway Closed. Follow Detour Signs." And by following the detour signs, we are brought again to the smooth highway. Life is very much like that. Perhaps for months or years we go along and encounter very little trouble, but suddenly we are confronted with a detour. It may be one of sorrow, of loneliness, of illness and affliction, or of grave disappointments. May we notice some lessons about detours:

### 1. DETOURS APPEAR SUDDENLY AND WITHOUT WARNING

We are not always prepared with information to fortify us against the coming detour. In the long run, it may be better for us if we do not know all of the difficulties that lie ahead, for if we did know, every part of the trip would be spoiled by the anticipation of trouble. In life, how suddenly appear the detours! One day you are perfectly well, but the next day you are lying in a hospital. One day your home is intact, and the next day death has taken a loved one from you. Certainly we all know that trouble and sorrow are coming to us, but we do not know the moment or the day they will appear.

### 2. SELDOM DO WE KNOW THE LENGTH OF THE DETOUR

When the highway sign points out a detour, you take it without knowing how long it is going to be. When life's detours appear, we do not know how long we will have to suffer, but we are hopeful at any moment to come back to the main highway.

3. MOST DETOURS ARE ROUGH AND WINDING I don't believe I have ever seen a good detour road. They always take you out of your way, delay your arrival at your destination, and must always be traveled slowly and carefully. Likewise are the detours of life. They require great patience for their traversing,

### 4. A DETOUR MAY HAVE ITS GOOD POINTS

I have found in my experience as a traveler that sometimes the most beautiful scenery is found on the detour road. Over hills and through valleys we see the beauties of nature unmolested by billboards, telling us to eat at a certain wayside restaruant or to drink a certain brand of beer, and so it is that the bypath which you are now traveling may bring you the greatest spiritual blessings of your life.

#### 5. A DETOUR ALWAYS LEADS TO AN APPRECIATION OF THE GOOD HIGHWAY

Can you remember even now your great relief when you bounced over the last few yards of a rough and rugged detour road and came once more back to the smooth highway? Getting back on the main road you said, "This is more like it. That surely was a tough detour." In the realm of living, the dark days lead to an appreciation of the bright ones. If every day were filled with sunshine, we would soon lose our appreciation of it. The folks who live in Miami and St. Petersburg, Florida, do not appreciate sunshine nearly as much as we in Chattanooga. During the winter season we have many dark and dreary days, and when the sunshine bursts through the clouds, we all rejoice. Trouble, sorrow, or affliction are never enjoyed, but they do help us to take full advantage of the good days which the Lord gives us.

#### 6. ON A DETOUR YOU DRIVE MORE OR LESS BY FAITH

The detour road is one that you have not traveled before, therefore, you must follow the signs which promise to bring you back on the regular highway, and here is the place for us to quote again Romans 8:28: "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." We have this promise of God in the time of trouble that He is going to work out everything for our good; not for our pleasure or prosperity or popularity, but for our good. [And now let us see what attitude we shall take toward the detours of life.]

##### A. YOU CAN TURN AROUND AND GO BACK

Some weak, cowardly people take this way out of difficulty. In the Chattanooga paper of January 5, we find an illustration of this. In Reading, Pennsylvania, a woman and her husband and two sisters committed suicide because of ill health. Quoting from the article, "All gas jets in the kitchen range were found open. The bodies all fully clad, lay in a perfect row, heads resting on cushions." Dr. Stark said a note left by one person indicated that the deaths were a quadruple suicide pact. Surely here is an illustration of those who turn coward and take the cowardly way out of their troubles.

##### B. YOU CAN TAKE THE DETOUR AND GRUMBLE AND COMPLAIN ABOUT IT ALL THE TIME

There are many folks who do this. They press on through their troubles, but they are always growling and complaining. Such are the folks who are forever telling about their operations and about the constant pain which they suffer, and about the failure of others to understand their plight. As a result of this complaining attitude their condition is made

worse. Their own troubles are intensified and they lose the friendship and sympathy of others.

### C. YOU CAN ACCEPT THE DETOURS OF LIFE IN GOOD CHEER AND IN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD JESUS

The apostle Paul adopted such an attitude. Personally, I believe that Paul suffered severe bodily pain. I believe that all of his missionary endeavors were done in spite of an ailing body, and yet the great apostle wrote the major portion of the New Testament and did not one time tell us of his trouble. Thank God, for cheerful sufferers who say, "I do not understand it all, but I love God and trust Him completely." - Pause a while, Christian friend, and let God speak to you. Perhaps now you are traveling on the detour of sorrow. Maybe death has entered your home and taken away a loved one. The tears come easily to your eyes and you feel the sun has gone down for you. Listen to Jesus, the Man of Sorrows. "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." Sorrow will last for the night, but morning cometh when you will meet both your loved ones and the Lord Jesus - Are you traveling on the detour of loneliness? Sometimes we do find ourselves completely left alone. We do not have close friends and our loved ones are far away from us. And again, sometimes friends and loved ones are nearby, but they do not understand our needs and desires. The Christian who has definite convictions must often stand alone. The battle-scarred apostle Paul said, "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me." Let me help you if your life is following a lonely path. It is human to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the people, to follow the tide - it is God-like to follow a principle - to stem the tide. Remember this - truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves. Yes, you may feel yourself one of the earth's loneliest creatures, but if you are a child of God, then you have the promise of the presence of Jesus.

This is His promise to obedient followers: ". . . lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Someone asked David Livingston, the great missionary explorer, which verse in the Bible meant most to him, and without hesitation he said, " lo, I am with you alway. . ." Pause for just a moment and recognize the presence of Him who stands by you. - Detours of illness and affliction, are they yours? The mystery of human suffering is always before us. Hardly a day goes by that I do not hear some person say, "I wonder why I suffer so much." I wish, my friend, I could give you a definite and personal answer, but I cannot. I can only suggest that you remember that this world is one of sin and sorrow, sickness and death, and as long as the devil is abroad in the world, we are going to have illness and affliction. But for you, suffering one, there is also a blessed promise. It was given to Paul, and it is for your comfort: "And he said unto me My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. . ." - 2 Corinthians 12:9 -

In the last place, there are detours of disappointment. No one in life is free from this detour. We are disappointed in others. We are disappointed in the failure of our plans. We are disappointed in ourselves. There must be a constant battle against this foe, or we will find ourselves growing bitter and cynical. In the face of disappointment, we must smile, keep sweet, and trust God. My life is not all I would have it to be. I am oftentimes disappointed regarding circumstances and people, but in it all, I am keenly aware of God's love and grace. Even disappointment has a redeeming feature, for when I am disappointed in myself and in others, I lean more heavily upon God, for our God is One who never fails or disappoints His children. And now in full faith let us repeat together: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to is purpose."