"Tulsa Is Beautiful": A Speech Delivered to the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce

Oral Roberts

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ORAL ROBERTS' CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SPEECH
March 1, 1956

Mr. Chairman, members of the Chamber of Commerce, friends, and fellow Tulsans.
Mr. Chairman, I am from Pontotoc County.

WHAT I AM DOING AND HOW. Every human being is born for a cause. He comes into this world for a purpose. He has a certain destiny, and he is under God's personal command to fulfill a specific mission in this earth. I am such a man, even as I believe that you are such a person. Yet, as a child, I had little promise in Pontotoc County that I would fulfill the destiny God planned for me before I was born.

I was born with a stuttering tongue, and as a child I stuttered so badly that I could not express myself. The first memory I have of going to school is a bad one. When they asked me my name I could not say it, and everyone laughed. I ran out of the schoolroom that day. Until I was healed by God at the age of 17, I carried that stigma upon my life.

When I was a little boy about 11, my father's oldest brother brought his family to see us out in the country to the little log cabin where I was born and reared. My uncle took delight in getting me to talk because he knew that when I talked I would stutter and stammer and he would get a big kick out of it. But that Sunday afternoon he hit me wrong. He kept tantalizing me, and laughing, until I broke away and ran behind the house and crawled under the house and stayed hid until they left. Just as the sun was sinking beneath the western rim I crawled out, stepped up on the back porch, looked out across the hills in Pontotoc County and wondered what was on the other side. I was dressed in a pair of overalls and barefooted. I remembered I put my hands in my back pockets and looked out at those hills and wondered if I would ever amount to anything in this world. I couldn't talk. Nobody believed I had any promise except Papa and Mama, who believed from the day that I was born that God had His hand upon my life. As I stood there I felt lost and helpless, bewildered and confused, frustrated and afraid. It was a cold wind that blew across me that day.

When I was 17 I broke down playing in a state basketball tournament in southern Oklahoma. My coach picked me up off the gymnasium floor, carried me out and put me in the back seat of his car, and said, "Oral, you are going home." I had run away from home when I was 15, to my sorrow. I lost my health; I almost lost my life. He took me home to my father, who is a preacher, there in Ada, and said, "Reverend Roberts, he has gone the last mile of the way." They put me to bed. Papa called Dr. King, Dr. Shy, and Dr. Craig, our old family doctors. They each diagnosed me positively with tuberculosis in both lungs. I grew so bad that once my father had to repaper the wall in my bedroom because of a hemorrhage I had in the night. I was coughing and hacking my life away, at 17. If any man has a destiny, if he does have a mission to perform for God in this world, I believe there is another power that tries to stop him on every side—the power of the devil. I lay there on that bed for five and a half months, hovering between life and death. Dr. McKeil, the county health doctor in Pontotoc County, was making official preparation to send me to Talihina where the TB sanatorium for eastern Oklahoma is. They had made a test of my blood and my spinal and I definitely had tuberculosis.
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My mother and father did everything they knew to do for me from the standpoint of medical science, but they believed in the power of prayer. My mother said, "Oral, you've got to get saved. You've never been saved in your life. Son; you've got to get saved."

I said, "Mama, I don't know how to pray."

She said something to me that I've told people around the world. "You don't have to know how to pray, Son. All you have to do is ask God for mercy and believe, and He'll do the rest."

I asked God for mercy. He came into my bedroom when I was forgotten by the world, without a chance, and He put His hand on my immortal soul and saved me. I knew it when He came into my heart. When I got saved the whole world changed. Things began to look brighter for Oral Roberts.

In the meantime, my oldest brother heard of a revival meeting, conducted by the churches of Ada, where the evangelist believed in the power of prayer. They carried me there as people are carried to my campaigns today, and that man put his hands upon me and prayed a simple, humble prayer. In some strange, miraculous way something happened to my lungs. I could breathe. I could breathe all the way down. I quit coughing and hacking and having hemorrhages. When Dr. Morie, of Sugg Clinic, took me in and fluoroscoped my lungs a few weeks later, he said, "Oral, your lungs are so perfect that it's as if you never had TB in your life." I knew then that somewhere beyond the blue there is a God who can do for us what no mortal power can do.

God spoke to me and said, "Son, I am going to heal you, and you are to take my healing power to your generation." He did not give me His power to heal; I don't have the power to heal today. But He did say that I was to take the message of His healing power to my generation--not just to the United States or Oklahoma, but to the whole world. God spoke to me just prior to the prayer that was prayed for the healing of my body and said, "You are to take my HEALING power." Yet I am not in conflict with medical science. I believe in medical science. I believe that all healing skill is from the Almighty God. I believe that medical science is the gift of God to the human family. My family has a family doctor, a man in Tulsa that we greatly believe in and love and admire. I believe in medical science. I believe that God has given us good doctors. People who come to us for prayer, for the most part, have been given up by their doctors, and as a last resort they have asked for the power of prayer. I have never met a good doctor in my life who did not believe that there is a higher power and that after he had done what he could there is a God who is able to answer prayer. There is no conflict between medical science and the power of prayer.

I am so delighted today that I am an American, born in Pontotoc County, with Cherokee Indian blood, which I am extremely proud of. I am happy that I am an American because this is the land where we have the first amendment. Our fathers, in the very beginning of this great country of ours, wrote a small piece that there should be no abridgment of the establishment of religion; that
there should be freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly; that in this country every man has a right to worship God as his heart tells him to, and that no man has the right to scorn or stop him.

Gentlemen, I have just recently had an experience where in a great country I was given the authority by the government to hold a campaign. A Communist mob broke up our meeting. I was received in Australia as a prince. The people met me a thousand strong at the airport, singing a gospel song and welcoming me there. I was met by more than thirty pastors of organized churches in Australia. The opening night of our Melbourne campaign we had as great a crowd as I have ever had in my life, even in America. We said to our party, "This is like North Carolina or Oklahoma on the opening night of our meetings." Hundreds of people were standing. The Australian people are a very lovely, conservative, and dignified people. They filled the great tent and sat with the greatest of decency and respect. I cannot say too much for the lovely Australian people, who gave me every courtesy, and I shall not soon forget the thousands of people who cried like children when that campaign had to come to a close. We did not have to close it, but we closed it from a standpoint of strategy, believing that if we closed it as a protest against this organized mob, we would focus the attention of the nation upon a small group that would deny the right to worship God as one sees fit. Incidentally, in the State of Victoria where Melbourne is, there is no adequate law for the protection of any religion against a mob. That was brought to light at the end of the campaign, and I have here something which I think is interesting and I'm passing it on because I don't want to burden you with something like this.

Mr. Norman Banks, the most influential and distinguished radio commentator in Melbourne, Australia, said this on a Friday night after the meeting was closed, and I quote: "Never at any stage did the ten thousand people seated demonstrate against Oral Roberts. The actual disruptionists could be numbered on two hands. This element embraced three Communists whom I have seen on the Yarra bank and at recent election meetings. The main body of people--ten thousand of them--listened and were impressed with what they saw and heard. They were a good cross section of the community--clean, wholesome, and well-behaved." Then again I quote, "On Friday night last I said all that I wish to say about Oral Roberts' shameful treatment in Melbourne, but I thought you may be interested to learn, or to have recalled for you, the dramatic Atlantic meeting of Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941.

"At that historic rendezvous, when these two great democrats got together to plan for a better future for all mankind, a fundamental base for their Atlantic Charter was the American President's speech of January of the same year, in which he said:

"'In future days we will look forward to the four essential freedoms--freedom of speech and expression everywhere; the freedom of every person, and the right to worship God in their own way everywhere; freedom from want; and freedom from fear.'

"We Melburnians," concluded Mr. Banks, "should never be led away from this high
ideal. Freedom of religion for everybody is just as important as freedom from want and fear, as freedom of speech."

In the meantime, the International Council of Churches called a conference to protest this mob violence. There is a move now to reach Parliament to make a law for complete freedom in Australia. So often good comes from things like this, and I am delighted today beyond measure that I am an American. You just don't know what it means to step back on this soil, and to know that you can go into your church and worship without the fear of anyone's coming in and throwing stink bombs, as they did over there in the churches, and yelling and hissing. I wish to repeat, I cannot say too much for the beautiful and lovely Australian people who had no part in this. As this man pointed out, it was a very small minority and I wish to say one other thing. The Communist party is not outlawed in Australia. May God help us that we will never see it in America.

WHAT I AM DOING. I am trying to win a million souls to Jesus Christ each year. God put it on my heart, because my main work is to win souls. Yes, we do pray for the sick. Why? Because we are Christians and the Bible has demanded Christians to pray for the sick. But our main work is to win souls. The greatest miracle in the world is the saving of a human soul, and that is without question. That's the thing we put first in our meetings. If you have ever been to our campaigns you know that immediately after my sermon is our altar call, in which we urge and invite people to change their way of living and be converted to Jesus Christ and join the church of their choice. Our meetings are interdenominational and we urge people to join the church of their choice. Multiplied thousands of people have come down those aisles and publicly received Christ, joined a church, and are now living a wonderful Christian life.

Three years ago this coming July, it came into my heart that we could win a million souls in three years—thirty-six months; that by the combined efforts of our many thousands of partners and friends over this country, of all churches and all walks of life, we could cause a million people to make a decision for Jesus Christ. I am happy to tell you that of December 15, 1955, 29² months after we began, six and one-half months early, according to the records kept of that crusade, one million souls made decisions for Jesus Christ through our ministry. That was the greatest day of my life. Now, in 1956, we have conceived the idea that if we will work together; if we will use the means of mass communication; we, together, can win a million souls to Christ in twelve months. I'd like to give you the results of the Million Soul Crusade this year from the first day of 1956.

In January and February, 55,888 people were converted to Christ through listening to our radio broadcasts. Through our television program, 62,050 people were converted to Jesus Christ. You'd be amazed how many millions of people, even in this great church-loving country, have never, never received Christ. In our campaigns, both here and overseas, 29,000 souls were won in January and February; in South Africa, 8,592. Through our film, "Venture Into Faith," which is shown throughout this country and overseas in churches, auditoriums, and schools, 1,275 came forward and made decisions for Jesus Christ. Our magazine caused 3,562 to receive Christ as their personal Saviour. Through the letters we write to people who write us asking for prayer for their souls, 540 made definite decisions for Christ in January and February; through my books, 120 decisions for Christ. Through our tracts, 100 souls were converted to Christ.
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Through the tape recordings of my sermons, which are played in jails and places like that, 60 souls were converted to Christ; and through our Jewish work 60 souls were converted to Christ. This makes a grand total in January and February of a 1,124 souls. That's just a little too few to make a million this year, but that's only the first two months of the year. We feel that with people working together, we can, by the end of December, have brought to Christ one million human beings.

God has given me the 7-Point World Outreach Program in order to make this come to pass. First, we are to take our great campaigns in the tent cathedral and public auditoriums over this country in person, where we have about a million and a half to hear us. We have our schedule now for this year. I go next week to San Diego, followed by Long Beach in the auditoriums; then to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to a 13,000-seat auditorium; from there to South Bend; then to Danville, Virginia. We start the tent season in Scranton, Pennsylvania; Detroit, Michigan; Tyler, Texas; Tacoma, Washington; Bakersfield, California; and there is a strong possibility that we'll bring the campaign into the Oklahoma-Arkansas-Missouri-Kansas territory sometime this summer.

The second outreach is our overseas ministry. You know the Bible says, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Sometimes the church thinks it can just sit on a corner and say, "You people come to church," and fulfill Christ's great commission, but the Bible says, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Whether you are treated right, or treated wrong, you have to go. We have a slogan at Healing Waters: It doesn't make any difference about the storms; did you bring the ship in? That's the way we try to conduct our work for Almighty God.

Radio and television is the third outreach. I believe the most effective means ever devised by the mind of man to reach the masses for Christ is television. Since we have been on television the whole complex of our ministry has changed. We are now reaching an entirely brand-new audience. We had reached all strata of society before, but now we are reaching to the highest level of society. Recently, we had some of the highest officials of this country to view our programs in their homes, especially when a certain man was very ill. To tune in on our program was a blessing at that time. Television has changed our mail program. Prior to going on television in February 1955, we were averaging 45,000 letters per month through our radio program. In February 1956 we broke all mail records. One hundred and forty-four thousand letters came into our office in February, and we have averaged something like 130,000 per month the last six months from people from every level of life. We are able to go into their homes; and incidentally, this is what I think Christ meant when he said go into the highways and hedges. You see, even if our churches were filled, that would leave multitudes of people who couldn't get in. But we have a different type ministry, and we are going to the people who are unchurched, who do not have Christ. We are reaching people, many of whom haven't been to church in twenty, thirty, or forty years. We are reaching people that nobody else is going to reach. What a joy it is to stand up and preach to people who have never heard the gospel before. When I was in Manila the other day, I preached to a crowd of twenty thousand people, over half of which had never heard the name of Jesus Christ. You talk about making me feel good! I felt as tall as a mountain standing up there preaching to those people and letting them know that there is a
Saviour to save their souls.

Our fourth outreach is for the Jewish people. We believe that God is about to visit his ancient people and that the new nation of Israel is going to one of the greatest nations in this world. We are now printing the whole Bible in the Hebrew language, and we are distributing it throughout the new nation of Israel. We feel it is a great challenge to put the Holy Bible in their own language in that wonderful country. I've been there twice; and next to Tulsa, it's the most bustling place I have ever seen.

The fifth outreach is for the American Indians. I feel that the American Indians are the most neglected people, as far as the gospel is concerned, in this nation. We are now definitely promoting a program for Christ among the North American Indians. I have been going in person to the reservations, where I was received and made a chief. You should see me in my headdress! We reached, and made a film for television which you will see shortly...if it were on in Tulsa.

Our sixth outreach is for the world's children. I have traveled over most of this green earth of God's and the thing that has stamped itself upon my mind is the children. I saw them in Jordan; I saw them in Israel; I saw them in Africa; I saw them in Asia; I've seen them in Europe. When you leave those borders you go into another world. If I had time I could tell you something about children. We have four of our own and every Sunday morning they are in the church that we are members of in Tulsa, attending both Sunday school and church. Millions of little children are growing up without the knowledge of Almighty God. They don't even know there is a God. We are now starting a great work among children. We are invading the comic book field for Christ. I don't know what you think, but there are some comic books that aren't fit for any child to read, while some of them are, of course. We have just brought one million copies from the press. That's our first effort of a comic book that's decent and fit for children to read. We're getting ready to launch a very large program, putting this book in the languages of the people of the earth and sending it around the world.

Our seventh outreach program is in the field of literature. We're printing millions of pieces and sending them around the earth. Through these combined seven outreaches we hope, through the co-operation of our sponsoring churches and through thousands of people who are our friends and partners in this ministry, to bring one million people to Christ during 1956. I have a goal to win ten million souls to Christ in ten years. That is my main work in this world.

When God created the earth and man, He said, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." Since the dawn of creation, man's growth has been measured by his fruitfulness and multiplication of himself. God does not hand me success on a silver platter. He does not give to me, and carve out for me, a great life. He says to me, "Be fruitful and multiply." I believe that is God's way of growth. There can be no growth of a city, a nation, or of a person's life or even his business, unless he grows by fruitfulness and multiplication. When Christ was baptized, one of the reasons that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove is because the dove has little ones every month. It is one of the most fruitful birds of all, and God used this type because of fruitfulness. The Bible says that who doesn't work shall not eat. That's in the
New Testament. God says people grow by fruitfulness. Cities grow by work, vision of great ideas, and by multiplying themselves. At Healing Waters we work by multiplying ourselves. I cannot do this work alone. I'm just one man; I only have one voice. I multiply myself through our campaigns, through radio, television, the printed word, so that we multiply ourselves millions of times every week, and that is God's method of growth.

NOW A WORD ABOUT HEALING WATERS, INC. When I began this ministry in 1947, I recognized the dangers that would confront me personally if my ministry was ever successful. So I had some Tulsa attorneys, in fact, the former chief justice of the supreme court of the state, to draw up a legal trust and incorporate Healing Waters as a nonprofit religious corporation. Healing Waters has no water. It is taken only as a symbolic name from a great Bible story. In Christ's time there was a pool in Jerusalem where an angel came down once a year and troubled the waters and whosoever dipped in that water was healed at that time. It's a beautiful story. So "Healing Waters" is a symbolic name. We had a lady to write, "Dear Rev. Oral Roberts: Send me a bottle of that water." We have no water. It is a symbolic name only.

Healing Waters is a nonprofit religious trust. I do not own the building, or the land, or the assets, or the equipment, nor does any member of my family. We can never share in Healing Waters. The contributions that come to Healing Waters to pay for radio and television time and for these seven outreaches cannot go to me, ever, or to members of my family.

How am I supported? In the time-honored church way where in this country the churches have followed the Bible method for over three hundred years. They that preach the gospel shall live of the gospel. At each campaign in this country I receive one offering, and one offering only. Also, I receive earnings from my books. My annual income is derived from these two sources, and because of that, I receive no private gift. I made the vow to God in 1947 I would touch neither the gold nor the glory. By His help I have kept that vow. Not even a penny that has ever come to Healing Waters has come to me. I can never receive a private gift. Due to the very nature of my work, it must not be done. I can be free and I can pray for people without any respect of persons whatsoever. Healing Waters, in my estimation, has a great future in Tulsa. We have some great plans. We have over three hundred people - fine young people of this city - working at Healing Waters. We are very proud of them all.

Now then I come to that moment that I have been waiting for. I want to talk about Tulsa. I am a Tulsan. I love Tulsa, and I am one of the chief boosters this city has around the earth. When I came to Tulsa in 1947 I went down to Seventeenth and Boulder and saw a lot very high and vacant. I walked all over that lot and bowed my head in simple prayer and asked God to help us get it for our work, which He did. Where I go in this world, the name of Tulsa is very precious. The farther you get from it, the brighter it shines.

I believe that Tulsa is one of the best known cities in the world. I was riding from Manila to Australia and one of the men on board was the Chief of Staff of the Philippine Army, General Bargas, who had heard of my work. He said, "Mr. Roberts, where do you live?"

I said, "General, I live in Tulsa." That's all I said.
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He said, "Tulsa, Oklahoma?"

I said, "Yes, Tulsa, Oklahoma."

He said, "That's the place where I've always wanted to go. I hear it's the most beautiful city in the world."

I said, "General, Tulsa is God's city," and I believe that.

Tulsa is a city of great churches. Tulsa is a city of spirit. When you walk down the street, you feel something in this man's town. That's one reason I wanted to come here; its great university, its great Tulsa fair. It has more dedicated men per population, who are giving of themselves to Tulsa's progress, than any place I ever saw in my life. It is not only the oil capital of the world, it is a place where people work for their city. I love Tulsa. Throughout this earth there are multiplied thousands of people who know of Tulsa. In fact, I scarcely ever take a trip in America but what someone asks me where I'm from, and even if they haven't been here they say, "I like Tulsa." "I've heard about Tulsa." "I'd like to live in Tulsa." How many soldiers have told me that, "I've passed through Tulsa on a troop train, stayed overnight, and I've always wanted to go back to Tulsa." I believe that Tulsa is the most progressive, alert, modern-minded city on the face of the earth. I believe that in thirty years it's quite possible we'll have a half million people. We need a great new auditorium for these gatherings. We need better roads in this city. We need a lot of things, but we're going to get them. I believe that Tulsa has a future. It is the city with a future. Friends, if I didn't live in Tulsa, you know what I'd do? I'd move here!

Ladies and gentlemen, I am a Christian. Jesus Christ made it possible for my little, insignificant life to amount to something, and He changed my stuttering tongue. I want to tell you a story. In a Texas town this story happened recently. It is a true story. A pastor of a great church was called by one of his members. She said, "Pastor, there is a man going in our church about the same time every morning. And, pastor, it's old Jim. You know who he is. I don't know what he's doing. Maybe he's trying to steal something."

The pastor said, "Oh, I don't think old Jim would bother anything in the church."

Old Jim was the town bum. He was an alcoholic. Often he slept on the streets, and everybody in this Texas town knew old Jim. Each morning for three mornings he came into this church at the same time and he went down to the altar and prayed, then left. The third morning the lady across the street said, "Pastor, you've just got to go in there and see what old Jim is doing."

The pastor slipped in the next morning and hid behind the piano. Old Jim came in and knelt at the altar. He raised his face and with his eyes open he said, "Jesus, this is Jim. Jesus, this is Jim. Jesus, this is Jim." Then he got up and left. The pastor thought, "Maybe I'd better catch him. Maybe I can help him," but by that time old Jim had gone out of the church and disappeared down the street.

Next morning, the pastor was eating breakfast when his wife brought him the
newspaper. There on the front page was a headline that old Jim had been run over by a car the night before and was critically injured, not expected to live. He said to his wife, "I'd better go up to the hospital and see old Jim and pray with him." When he got to the hospital the nurse said, "Pastor, he just came out of a coma; he's been unconscious all night."

He said, "Well, is he going to die?"

She said, "It looks like it. You'd better go in, but don't stay long."

The pastor went in. When he got in the room he stopped a moment, looked over at the bed, and then walked over and took Jim's hand and said, "Jim, this is the preacher at the church where you have been praying each morning. I'm sorry to hear about your accident and I thought maybe I'd come up and pray with you."

Jim said, "Pastor, I just had the most unusual experience of my life."

"What's that, Jim?"

He said, "Early this morning, while I was lying here in this bed, Jesus came into my room. Pastor, I saw him. He came over to my bed and looked at me a few minutes, then He spoke."

The pastor asked, "What did Jesus say, Jim?"

He said, "Jim, this is Jesus. Jim, this is Jesus. Jim, this is Jesus. I had the sweetest feeling to come in my heart. I felt, oh, so light and so happy. Suddenly He was gone, but I've been singing in my soul ever since." Well, old Jim is not the only one who's ever made contact with the lowly Nazarene. He changed my life. Thank you and God bless you.

--The end.