

SOME TEXTS I LOVE MOST

I need to acknowledge my debts before we have a brief devotional. It is obvious but it needs to be said that GNU is not and never was a one man show. Many of you will remember the brilliant help we had from people like Calvin Edwards and Noel Mason and Smuts Van Rooyen and Brad. It has never been a one man's show and it has never been a one man show. In front of me is Marion Fritz who has been here about as long as I have and then we have Molly and we have had other ladies who have helped us tremendously. GNU would have been impossible but for the dedication of many, many people and as for me, I could not have survived 20 years here but for the tremendous help I have had from so many. As I look at your faces and think of the benefits I have received from you, one and all, whether it has been of fairly recent work among us like Jim who is at the controls there who has picked me up early in the morning and taken me to airports, helped me in all sorts of things. You probably don't know, he was a very generous donor to GNU long before most of you ever met him. I will always been in Jim's debt. And Roy was more than a fellow worker. Roy was a brother in Christ. He has many talents I will never have. He is very precise and meticulous in all he does. I am not. I have been tremendously indebted to Roy for what he has done. Because many things fall to my lot that cannot be done elsewhere in GNU, I have often asked Roy to do things that I could have done just as easily but there was not enough of me to do it. And he has never complained. Many, many winter mornings around four or five o'clock he has picked me up to take me to the airport. I am tremendously indebted to Roy Gee. We have not lived in each others pockets because we are both very busy but my esteem for him is great, very great. And as for Marion Fritz, Roy and I both owe her a debt that could never be paid. GNU would not have been

manageable without either Marion or her twin, wherever she is. Marion has lifted so many burdens from my shoulders and wherever I was in the world, whether in Finland, England, Norway, Russia or in the Philippines, I never fretted about GNU because Marion was at the controls and has always done a job that is just superb, conscientious to the last degree, willing, cheerful, always up-beat and forgiving otherwise how could I have survived. I make many mistakes but Roy and I owe Marion a tremendous debt and Marion will never be forgotten and I thank you. You don't get much credence—the men are in the front but we could not have functioned without you.

And then I owe a great debt to another woman, my wife, who has often had an absent husband. She has spent thousands of nights in our home alone while I have been at the ends of the earth. Not many women would put up with that. She has not only put up with it but has helped me in a multitudinous way with things I couldn't do and she always has been willing to help. I owe a great debt to my wife but I owe a debt to all of you for your care and your love, your prayers and your gifts and it goes back a long way, to times when I dined with the Sudderts and had the privilege before me, your second marriage ceremony, after many happy years. I have been in the homes of many of you and walked with many of you and I am indebted to everyone present. Jill and I want to thank you all for what you have done for us. Our memories go back such a long way. I think it was about 1980 we rode with you by car, Dan, and then Marilyn supervised my getting to scores of places in the world with ticketing, etc. We acknowledge these things and, most of all, we acknowledge the mercies of God that have kept us. Every time I have set out on a world trip I have said to myself, well what will the Lord do this time? One always needs Him and

he is always there. So we stress, this is not a one man job. Recently we have had Molly come to us and Molly is a superb worker. We have never known her equal at the desk. She is so willing, cheerful and capable. It is not a one man show.

Now, a brief devotional. As I consider some of my favorite texts, I realize that a month of Sabbaths could not begin to deal with them so I selected one coately of them that appealed to me because I am naturally greedy. Aristotle Onassis was asked by his doctors just as his doctors were about to give him bad news that his time was up (which Aristotle never dreamed), the doctors said, you have this, you have that and the other thing, what else do you want? Onassis said, “more.” Because of the fall all our natural faculties and capacities have become exaggerated, all of them but, you know, the Lord meets us where we are. I was thinking this week of a little group of texts that appealed to me particularly because of my fallen nature, because of my finite nature, because of my sinful nature. They are the ‘all’ texts. That appealed to me because I am naturally greedy. ‘All’ is the word you find in the last verse in the Bible that is found all the way through Scripture. For example, “My God shall supply ALL your needs through his riches and glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). A text of which the depth I never saw until a few years ago such a well known text, “Above all taking the shield of faith whereby you may be able to quench ALL the fiery darts of the wicked,” all of them. Life is full of fiery darts. Life is an unending series of challenges, problems, troubles, defeats, victories, disappointments, hopes, fears, but above all, taking the shield of faith whereby ye may be able to quench ALL—apply that to all troubles, all sorrows, all temptations. Jesus said, “Don’t be anxious about tomorrow, what you will eat or drink or with what you will be clothed, after all, these are the things of

which the heathen think, your heavenly Father knows you have need of all these things so seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and ALL these things shall be added unto you. “ALL things work together for good to them that love God.” “ALL things are for your sakes.” There is an obscure verse in the Psalms that says, “ALL things are thy servants, stormy winds fulfilling thy word, for of him, through him and to him are ALL things.” “He that withheld not his only son but offered him up for us ALL.” Jesus was offered for you, for me, for your neighbor, for those you work with, for those you detest, for those you admire. He offered him up for us ALL. Paul, to Timothy, could say in effect, life’s been tough, lots of problems but out them ALL the Lord delivered me. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” That’s a good one, surely, ALL manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.”

I recommend to you the ALL texts—“ALL things work together for good....he can supply ALL our needs....all manner of sin and blasphemy....Christ was offered up for us ALL....God is not willing that any should perish but that ALL should come to the knowledge of truth and be saved.” It is easier to be saved than to be lost. He puts so many warnings in our way when we do foolishly. His Spirit pleads with us, keeps us awake at night, sends us trouble so we acknowledge our need of Him and seek unto Him....the ALL texts.

They particularly cover two things in our lives, trouble and guilt. Very briefly we are going to look at two passages of Scripture. Would you look with me at the book of Job, chapter 5: 6-8. The ALL texts are meant to shield us from trouble and guilt and here is one about

trouble: “For affliction does not come from the dust nor does trouble sprout from the ground but man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, as for me, I would seek God and to God would I commit my cause who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.” Would you notice three things, affliction/ trouble, is not purposeless. It does not spring out of the ground. It has a purpose. You say, well, we often cannot see it; well, thereby you fulfill the passage of our Lord’s words where he says, “What I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter.” I write that text in so many letters to people around the world, remember, the Savior said, “What I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter” (John 13:7). Don’t expect to understand all the Lord’s dealings. Just trust Him. “No affliction seems to be joyous but grievous but, nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.” “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.” It is not purposeless. It does not spring out of the ground. Secondly, it is normal. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. As surely as when you are sitting at a camp fire the sparks go up, just as surely you and I are born to trouble. There is no dodging it. It is normal, it is part of life-- one of the most necessary parts of life. The worst evil is to be self sufficient. Trouble saves us from that fate, that awful destiny. Trouble wakes us up to our need. So it is normal.

First of all, trouble, we said it is not purposeless, it is purposeful. Secondly, we said it is normal. The third thing to say is it is remedial. It says in the last verse we read, “As for me I would seek God and to God would I commit my cause who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.” God has a thousand ways to provide for

us of which we know nothing. I have many times been in situations, and you have, where I could see no way out of the problem. By next week I had just about forgotten the problem. You find it very hard to remember the things that worried you six months ago-- most of them. There are some troubles that are long enduring because we need that sort of pressure. However, most of our troubles disappear and you cannot remember them six months later. So Job is saying trouble is purposeful, it keeps us near God. Life is not a playground, it is a school ground. We are here to form character, not to have a good time. God is far more interested in our holiness than our happiness because happiness can be brief but holiness is happiness forever. So trouble is purposeful. Trouble is normal. Don't say, hey why, rather, we should say, why not? Why hasn't God killed me since I got out of bed this morning? Trouble is normal and also remedial. "There is no trouble taken you but such as is common to man...God is faithful, can make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." The wall of trouble always has a place where it can be broken and God knows the place. So, God would shield us from fear and anxiety and worry about our inevitable problems by reminding us that they are not without purpose, they are normal and God, himself, has the remedy.

A Great illustration is the life of Fanny Crosby. She became blind at 6 months of age. At the age of 8 she wrote a tiny little poem, "Oh, what a happy soul am I although I cannot see for I am resolved that in this world, contented I will be. How many blessings I enjoy that others don't? To weep and sigh because I am blind, I cannot and I won't." Now, that was written at age 8. But the wonderful thing is, that as a child of 8, how could she see any purpose in her blindness? Now, you and I can. She wrote hundreds of marvelous hymns

that have lifted the spirits of the despairing, the hopeless and the fearful and the troubled—hundreds and hundreds of them. But, you see, only the wounded can minister to the wounded. If your life is always smooth flowing you might as well check out. You cannot help anybody. Only the wounded can minister to the wounded. Fanny Crosby who could see no reason, said to herself early on, what cannot be cured must be endured. Not a bad adage for all of us. But you and I, a century later, can see tremendous reason in the privileged burden that God trusted her with. Nowadays when people read the hymns, they say, hey a blind person wrote that, blind from her first year. What am I complaining about? What are my sorrows compared with that? A lifetime of blindness! And so it will be with most of our problems. We won't understand them here, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Now, something more important than trouble. Here is a verse you might not have thought of much: "I will go into the king which is not according to the law and if I perish, I perish." What's that all about? Well, you remember it is the story of Esther. You could not go to the king unless you were called in. That was the law. Mordecai said, if you don't, God will save his people some other way but as for you...she said, "All right I will go into the king which is not according to the law and if I perish, I perish." Now I want homileticize the text. We have a great king and by law you and I have no right to go into him. You think of the majesty of the great judge in whose sight the heavens are not cleansed who charges his angels with folly, whose presence melts the mountains, whose voice causes the earth to shake, think of his law of holiness that requires we should be like him in character, a law that requires obedience that is flawless, not only in acts but in disposition and state—a

flawless obedience and a fervent obedience. Obedience without a fervent spirit is like sacrifice without fire, a heartfelt obedience, a joyous obedience, a consistent obedience. The Bible says, "Whoever keeps the whole law and offends in one point is guilty of all." If I am hanging from heaven by a chain of 10 links, just snap one and I am gone. If you leave me in a room and say, Des, there at 10 exits here, stay in this room. I say to myself, well, I won't go out 9 of them, I will just go out one of them...I've blown it. Whoever breaks the law in one point is guilty of all so God requires an obedience that is flawless, that is perpetual, consistent, joyous, fervent and he has done me in! I don't fulfill any of that. I am a broken, fallen creature. My natural tendencies are downward, not upward. I can do no good thing without Him. And so, how can I go into the king? Do you remember what the king did to Esther? He held out the scepter. That is what our king does to us. He holds out the scepter of grace for Christ's sake.

Law for the fallen human being is not a way of salvation or we are done for. It remains a wonderful standard. It sets ideals, like the stars by which we plot our course, but we never touch them but law is not a method. It is not the way of salvation. No one can climb to heaven by the quaking sides of Sinai...one slip and you're done. So we go into the king which is not according to the law and he holds out to us the scepter of grace. How dare he? Isn't he supposed to be holy? The Bible says he might be just and the justifier. How can he be both just and the justifier? Because he made Christ to be made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him...the great exchange. Think of that marvelous scene of a spread eagle God rejected by heaven and earth, abandoned by both, poised between two, not wanted by either, unworthy of either...why? Because you

were there in Him and I was there in Him because there was the whole world on that cross. The Roman soldiers did not know what they were doing. They were crucifying the whole world. They were crucifying you and crucifying me. He was our representative. What he did, we did. "Mine are Christ living and dying as though I had lived his life and died his death," said Martin Luther. I was crucified with him; I was buried with him. I rose with him; I sat down in heavenly places with him and that is why God can extend the scepter of grace to me. That is why the guilty become guiltless. We have become preferred, the heirs of God. Isn't it a marvelous thing that the crucified God gives his perfect spotless, seamless robe to those who crucify him. Here are his crucifiers, here, and he gives his seamless, spotless robe to his crucifiers. What a miracle of grace! "I will go into the king which is not according to the law; if I perish, I perish." It is not done just once because life is so complex. The human organism is so weak, difficulties so many, that the temptation to discouragement is perennial and recurring and everybody, at times, feels like throwing in the sponge. Again and again we have to say, I will go into the king....I have nothing to offer him except my guilt and my weakness, doubts and my fears, my mistakes, follies, my stupidities, that is all I've got but I will go into the king which is not according to the law. If I perish, I perish. No one will ever perish while they do that. Remember, on the tumultuous sea of Galilee, the storm is on the sea and the disciples see that Jesus is calmly sleeping and they lose their cool and say, "Master, don't you care that we perish?" But you can't perish looking to Christ. It does not matter how many mistakes one is prone to, how many hereditary inclinations the evil one has, it does not matter how many failures there have been in the past. It is a great mistake to look to oneself for what we can only find in Jesus Christ. Don't ever look to yourself for righteousness. We don't have any. Don't

look to yourself for strength, we don't have any. Don't look to your self for wisdom, we don't have any. It is easier to do wrong than to do right, often, often, but we can go into the ^{king} king which is not according to the law and we will not perish.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the old texts that tell us that our God is sufficient. That he is sufficient despite what we are in our weakness, in our folly, in our confusion, in our doubts, fears, troubles and bewilderment. Our God is sufficient, he is sufficient even when we contemplate our duties and realize how far short we fall in fulfilling them. He is sufficient for our guilt. He is sufficient for today, tomorrow and for all the days. Our God is enough because of Christ, because of Calvary. We see in that cross our title to Heaven. We see in that seamless robe the gift of his imputed righteousness. We see in his crown of thorns the crown of life given to those who trust Him. Grant, dear Lord, that whatever life brings to us we will say, we will go into the king which is not according to the law and we will never perish for we are trusting in Jesus Christ, our Savior. AMEN.