

## **POETRY BY RUTH BELL GRAHAM**

***“Anyone who wants to know Ruth Graham and her relationship with her husband, children and friends is missing a great deal if they ignore her poetry.”***

**Stephen Griffith, friend and publishing consultant**

### **Written in her youth as a prayer to God:**

(Collected Poems, Page 19)

Spare not the pain  
    though the way I take  
be lonely and dark,  
    though the whole soul ache,  
for the flesh must die  
    though the heart may break.  
Spare not the pain, oh,  
    spare not the pain.

### **Referencing the love she had for the man who was fortunate enough to capture her heart and keep it throughout their long life together:**

(Collected Poems, Page 28)

I looked into your face and knew  
that you were true;  
those clear, deep eyes awoke in me  
a trust in you.

I'd dreamt of shoulders broad and straight,  
one built to lead;  
I met you once and knew that you  
were all I need.

You did not have to say a word  
to make me feel  
that will, completely in control,  
was made of steel.

I'd dreamt of dashing love and bold,  
life wild with zest;  
but when with you my heart was stilled  
to perfect rest.

And how? I could not understand,  
it seemed so odd:  
till on my heart it quietly dawned  
– love is of God!

**About her children, especially her prodigal sons – all mothers can read it and identify:**

(Collected Poems, Page 208)

Lord,  
in this frenzied pattering  
around the house,  
see more!  
The dusting,  
straightening,  
muttering,  
are but the poor  
efforts of a heavy heart  
to help time pass.  
Praying on my knees  
I get uptight;  
for hearts and lives  
are not the only things  
that need to be  
put right.

And, while I clean,  
please,  
if tears should fall,  
they're settling the dust,  
– that's all.  
Lord, I will straighten  
all I can  
and You –  
take over what we mothers  
cannot do.

**On a mother's burdens:**

(Pg. 240, Collected Poems)

Listen, Lord,  
a mother's praying  
low and quiet:  
listen, please.  
Listen what her tears  
are saying,  
see her heart  
upon its knees;  
lift the load  
from her bowed shoulders  
till she sees  
and understands,  
You, Who hold  
the worlds together,  
hold her problems  
in Your hands.

**Had she been another mother:**

3<sup>rd</sup> Poem (Page 146-147, Collected Poems)

Had I been Joseph's mother  
I'd have prayed  
protection from his brothers:  
"God keep him safe;  
he is so young,  
so different from  
the others."  
Mercifully she never knew  
there would be slavery  
and prison, too.

Had I been Moses' mother  
I'd have wept  
to keep my little son;  
praying she might forget  
the babe drawn from the water  
of the Nile,  
had I not kept  
him for her  
nursing him the while?  
Was he not mine  
and she  
but Pharaoh's daughter?

Had I been Daniel's mother  
I should have pled  
"Give victory!  
This Babylonian horde –  
godless and cruel –  
don't let them take him captive  
– better dead,  
Almighty Lord!"

Had I been Mary –  
Oh, had I been she,  
I would have cried  
as never a mother cried,  
"...Anything, O God,  
anything ...  
but crucified!"

With such prayers  
importunate  
my finite wisdom  
would assail  
Infinite Wisdom;  
God, how fortunate  
Infinite Wisdom  
should prevail!

**On the mountains of North Carolina:**  
(Collected Poems, Page 125)

If I could have each day  
one hour of sun,  
glorious,  
healing,  
hot,  
like now –  
then  
let Winter come!  
Not  
mild and brief,  
but  
wild, without relief;  
let the storms rage,  
let the winds blow,  
the freezing rains  
lashing my windowpanes;

then  
let it snow!  
long  
and  
deep  
and cold.  
I would not mind at all:  
it would be fun...  
if I could have  
each day  
my hour of sun.

**Crystallizing her faith in words (Gigi Graham Foreman will read this at the Memorial Service):**

(Collected Poems, Page 162)

And when I die  
I hope my soul ascends  
slowly, so that I  
may watch the earth receding  
out of sight,  
its vastness growing smaller  
as I rise,  
savoring its recession  
with delight.  
Anticipating joy  
is itself a joy  
And joy unspeakable  
and full of glory  
needs more  
than "in a twinkling of an eye,"  
more than "in a moment."

Lord, who am I to disagree?  
It's only we  
have much to leave behind,  
so much ... Before.  
These moments  
of transition  
will, for me, be  
time  
to adore.

**On faith, doubt and pain:**

2<sup>nd</sup> Poem (Pg. 272-273, Collected Poems)

Into the heart of the Infinite can a mere mortal  
hope to gain access,  
what with no part of me geared to His greatness,  
to His vastness my infinite less?  
Yet the longing for Him was so wide and so deep,  
by day it crowded life's thronging,  
by night it invaded my sleep.

Then came the pain:  
again ...  
    and again ...  
        and again ...

As if a wing tip were brushing the tears  
from my face  
for the breath of a second I knew the unknowable,  
glimpsed invisible grace.

And I lay where for long in despair I had lain;  
entered, unshod, the holy There where God  
dwells with His pain –  
alone with the pain of the price He had paid  
in giving His Son for a world gone astray  
– the world He had made.

My heart lay in silence,  
worshipped in silence;  
and questioned no more.