

A GRACIOUS PRECEPT AND PROMISE

SERMON preached at Union Chapel, Bethersden, by Mr. H. Dawson, on Sunday afternoon, January 25th, 1959.

Psalm 37: 5,6. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

How good it would be if you and I could get grace to help in everyday life to live in the light of the truth that this word enjoins upon us: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." You cannot go along in the way of everyday life aright, unless the Lord does go with you; you cannot live the life of the righteous without Divine aid. The thing is impossible, and I would, as the Lord shall be pleased to help me, open up that line of things. "Commit thy way unto the Lord". It may be this Sabbath afternoon, you are here, poor sinner, in the attitude of worship, going in a way that you never dreamed to be journeying in; a way hard to be understood, and you have many solemn reflections about it. You have searchings of heart, it may be, and you may have fears, ifs and buts and hows, as to how this way will open up before you. Here is the Word of the Lord to you, poor sinner: "Commit thy way", though it be hard to be understood, - "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him", and remember: "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth"; He reigneth on a Throne of Grace, and He delighteth in mercy. Who can tell but that great God will be gracious unto you, and show you, ultimately, that the way you are going is a way ordained for you to go, and it is the right way, however hard to be understood may be the steps you are taking therein. This is good counsel, God help you, and the preacher too, to heed it, and reduce it to practice: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him",-

you cannot trust elsewhere, the thing is impossible. Every sinner taught of God has such a way to go along that he needs God, and he must have Help from on high; for Wisdom from above alone can enable him to handle matters wisely as he goes therein. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps," and it is a safe place to be found in where the Psalmist was when he said: "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." (Psa. 175). You are in a good place when in your heart there is this concern:-

"Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land."

I want, as the Lord shall help me, to look at the subject from two or three viewpoints. I might say just a little about the setting of it. In the Psalm, where the subject is found, God inspired the Psalmist to draw a very solemn dividing line between the righteous and the wicked. All through the Word of God that line is drawn, and every man whom God ordains to preach the Gospel, as he gets help from God therein, will draw that dividing line between the righteous and the wicked. It is a very solemn consideration that you and I are on one side of that line, or the other; either found among the righteous, - a mercy beyond words to prize, - or else still amongst the wicked; and living and dying on that side of the line, you will be lost. What a weighty consideration :-

"As long as God shall God remain,
So long shall last hell's lingering pain."

Oh,
the reality of hell, and people taught of God know the reality of it, and this same Psalmist tells us elsewhere: "The pains of hell gat hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow, then cried I 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.' (Psa. 116.3) " David wanted sure evidence that he was brought from being amongst the people wherein he was born, on the other side of this line of

demarcation, to be numbered with the righteous, living and dying. Think on these things, dear friends, young and old? Is your religion just chapel-going, or is there something deep down within which causes you to weigh matters up between God and you as to how things really are?

"How stands the case, my soul, with thee,
For heaven are thy credentials clear?"

It is a great mercy to be exercised unto godliness; a great mercy to be found "asking the way to Zion, with our faces thitherward"; a great mercy if you are concerned to be found among the righteous; and it is a great mercy if you ponder this word I have read for the text, and find deep down in your heart a concern that you might be helped to live such a life as this truth brings before us: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." In the Psalm itself, it is made plain that the Psalmist had been perplexed in looking on at the dealings of God, and how kind it is of the Holy Spirit to leave these things on record for poor sinners, taught of God nowadays, who are often perplexed, that they should not be in despair. The Psalmist was perplexed because he looked on at the wicked, and saw how they prospered in the things that they put their hands to. A very solemn consideration it is, and sometimes Satan takes a great advantage of it to rob and spoil and discourage poor sinners who are taught of God. The devil will come and suggest: "What is the outcome of being like you are, with all your chapel-going, and seeking to be as you are, one with the people of God. You keep the Sabbath day, and you will not do this or that, and you are content to be found amongst "the afflicted and poor people" whom God regards as His, yet you meet with so many setbacks, while the wicked all around you seem to progress and prosper. Surely the ways of the Lord are not equal in

His dealings?" On such lines the devil argues at times, and he is no fool; but he always misapplies his texts, and he never quotes Scripture properly. No, all that he does is with a lying motive to make you cast down, and perplex you more, and to stumble you as you contemplate the dealings of God. What are you to do, poor sinner? The text will tell you: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." It is evident that the dear Psalmist was brought to contemplate the dealings of God aright at length, and his mind was quieted, for instead of looking on the wicked living, he was helped to look on the wicked dying, and when he saw all that was mortal of the wicked going down into the gloomy grave, without God, and without hope, the Psalmist was brought down to bedrock truth, and his mind was made up, and he views the dealings of God aright: "A little that a righteous man has, is better than the riches of many wicked." As for the riches of the wicked: "We brought nothing into this world, and certain it is that we shall carry nothing out." Then the Holy Spirit, having led the Psalmist into these blessed truths, inspires him to put down the Psalm, and think of his opening words, - it would be a mercy if you could heed them: "Fret not thyself". What good did you ever get by fretting? Some of you do quite a bit of it, (I am not fitting any caps on), but you know it is the truth; you do quite a bit of fretting, and, if you are honest before God, what you fret about is because you would like things in your life to be otherwise than they are. What you need is grace to be still; yes, what you need is wisdom to leave God to order the way that you should go, and to know that:-

"He is too wise to err,
Too good to be unkind."

The opening word in the Psalm is what is called preceptive teaching, and it is a good sign in a sinner taught of God when he does prize such teaching; when he finds it in his heart to do what the Word of God enjoins on sinners taught of God to do. You will find in the Psalm itself that God has joined the precept and the promise together; and

under the Gospel in the dealings of God with His people, you will never find the precept separated from the promise, nor the promise separated from the precept, and that is not vain, meaningless, repetition. Ere you can have the benefit and blessing the promise sets forth, there is something connected with it that is preceptive in its nature, which you are to do as grace is given; and your concern must be to seek the grace to do it; remember that. "Commit thy way unto the Lord", now that is a precept; "Trust also in Him", and that is a precept, too; "and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday," and that is the promise. "For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb.10.36) The Will of God is that you, as grace is given, should "commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him," and that may mean a waiting time ere He brings it to pass. When all is said and done, religion that God is the Author of is to do for a life-time, and you may have to live long years and see, here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept, and so "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3.18) "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Let us look at "thy way" and this word emphasises the personal nature: "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Now, some of you may have a specific way wherein to go; God has ordained it; but, as yet, you may not realise the way you have to go is ordained, and you are not going therein by chance or haphazard. The Psalmist tells us: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in His way." (Psa.37.23) You may question: "Can it be that the Lord orders this and that to come into our lives which is contrary to His revealed Will in His Word?" No, no; look at the margin reading: "The steps of a good man are established by the Lord." Things may be permitted to come into your life to establish you in the truth deeper down than you

would be otherwise, knowing it only as a doctrine. This same Psalmist tells us elsewhere: "My soul, wait thou only upon God." (Psa.62.5) I would have you think on that word "only". When trouble comes into our lives, whatever its nature, as a rule our immediate reaction to it is: "Now, what can I do in regard to it?" What can I do. If you and I are taught of God, God will make it plain what is to be our attitude:-

"Thy whole dependence on Me fix,
Nor entertain a thought
Thy worthless schemes with Mine to mix,
But venture to be naught."

"My soul, wait thou only upon God." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." "Commit thy way unto the Lord." You may be going in a way wherein you are getting a deeper conviction of sin, wrought in your heart, and your conscience, and that is a mercy to prize. I have told you, I shall continue to tell you as long as I live, as grace is given, that it is the greatest need in our denominational life nowadays, - the outpourings of the Holy Spirit to beget in people, taught of God, a deeper conviction of sin. You and I need it because you must be aware, if you sit down before God, and think on your life as you are living it, that there are some things that need to be sorted out, straightened out, and put right between God and you. Good it would be to heed that word: "Let us search, and try our way, and turn again unto the Lord." (Lam.of Jer.3.40) If you should be going in a way where you turn again, and see every day you are a bigger sinner than you were the day before, according to what you realise of the plague of the heart, - known and felt, say "Thank-you" to God for it.

"Sinner, if thou art taught to see,
How great thy guilt, thy misery;
In every thought and act impure,
The Blood of Christ thy soul can cure."

Although

you can only lament: "Behold, I am vile", this word looks at you so kindly: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him"; do as the woman in the Gospel did when "falling down at Jesus' feet, she told Him all the truth." Go and do likewise, poor sinner, and you shall know what the Gospel makes plain; even "the lepers are cleansed";

"Jesus' Blood through earth and skies,
'Mercy, Eternal Mercy' cries."

"Commit thy way unto the Lord." Now thy way may be, as I said at the outset, a way hard to be understood, and you do need grace to be still when a way opens up before you that you never, never expected God would ask you to go along. Think of godly Job and the way that he had to go, when, in a day, the dear man was stripped of all his earthly possessions and his children too. Dear Job evidenced that grace superabounded over all that he was by nature as he started along that way ordained for him to go: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord"; and Job said: "He knoweth the way that I take, and when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold", (Job 23.10) and he did come forth as gold in the ultimate issue. Job had that concern: "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause," and he comes at length down to a bedrock truth, which he did not realise so much about in the early dealings of God with his soul: "Behold, I am vile". Then you come to the opening up of what this word tells us: "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." Godly Job's friends, though they were godly, misunderstood his case, mis-judged him, and said harsh words to him; and Job back-answered too. In the walking out of the way that he had to go, dear Job comes out at length, and grace was uppermost, super-abounding over all that he was by nature; and I believe that is one of the most wonderful words in the wonderful Word of

God: "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." (Job 42.10) God brought forth "his righteousness as the light, and his judgment" (which means his case) "as the noonday." Job's friends were rebuked by God, and Job was cleared and vindicated, and God was glorified. "This is the way, walk ye in it." "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Thy way that is hard to be understood, poor sinner; thy way may be a way wherein you "walk in darkness, and have no light". You may be going along a way where all your religion seems to be put to the test, and you wonder if you have got "a little that a righteous man hath", - a little that God has wrought in your soul. Go back to Job, and remember his lament: "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat, I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." (Job 23.4) Are you saying: "I go backward, I cannot behold Him, I go forward, He is not there; I look this way, that way, amongst people taught of God, and I cannot find Him to my soul's satisfaction." "Commit thy way", - thy dark, benighted way, whatever it is that makes thy way so difficult to tread; "Commit thy way unto the Lord," and remember, nothing can come in the way that you go, but Jesus Christ can deal with it. It may be you are looking very closely at the way that you are going; ask Divine aid to look closer at the Way that Jesus trod, and that will do you good, and help you to come to a right consideration of what God has ordained for you in the way that you are going.

"Did Christ my Lord suffer?
And shall I repine?
His way was much rougher
And darker than mine."

"Commit thy way unto the Lord." It may be that the way you go is a way of affliction, and it is not against you if God has laid an affliction upon you; if you can only believe it, it is for you, poor sinner; and do believe this: what God has laid on you may come to give you what you asked God for in an answer to prayer. Have you been asking

God to give you some religion to live by and die by? God is sending you an affliction. There is a word in Isaiah: "The Lord hath His fire in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem." Another word is "I will bring the third part through the fire;" and in this affliction that God has laid on you, you find at times what you are by nature frets under it, your spirit chafes; how glad you would be if God would remove your affliction, and give you back good health, that you could do what is in your mind to do, as you used to do long years ago. What you need is this, poor sinner: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him" regarding this affliction laid on you, and in the end you shall see it is well. I like that word: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the Will of God, commit the keeping of their souls unto Him in well-doing, as unto a Faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4.19) "Commit thy way unto the Lord," that whatever comes in the way as you go therein, you may get some good for your soul: "Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee, and let Thy judgments help me." (Psa.119.175) The way of affliction. Then "thy way" may be, what I like to term, the way of hope deferred. A way wherein you have hoped in God regarding a promise given, concerning which you have been saying: "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope"; (Psa.119.49), but, although you have waited year in and year out, the promise has not yet been fulfilled, and your hope is deferred, and sometimes you have searchings of heart as to what is the will of God for you as you journey on. "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psa. 46.10) "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Look in the Word of God; think of Joseph; what hope was born in his breast, when he was a teenager, that in the working out of his life there was something outstanding that God designed for him to be, and to do. Look how God brought it about. Ere it came to pass Joseph must be hated of his brethren, and go down into the pit, and out of the pit he comes to be sold as a slave and

journey down to Egypt; and then he is found in prison, and yet he is innocent of the charge laid against him that brought him therein. The Word of The Lord tells us: "Until the time that his word came", - that is, until the word was brought to pass on which Joseph had hoped so long, - "Until the time that his word came, the Word of the Lord tried him;" (Psa.105.19) and the margin reading is very significant: "the iron entered into his soul." At length out of prison came Joseph to see the promise fulfilled in every jot and tittle, and to reign along side Pharaoh on Egypt's throne; and all his early exercises of mind were brought to pass before his eyes and he said to his brethren who treated him ill and evil: "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." It is a bedrock truth:-

"It is the Lord, enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all Divine;
Who has the undisputed right
To govern me and mine."

Much might be said along
that line of thought. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." "Roll thy way upon the Lord", margin reading.

Look at this viewpoint of it: "Trust also in Him." "Commit", - and that is :

"Pray, if thou canst, or canst not speak,
But pray with faith on Jesus' Name;"

and then,
"Trust", - and that means: "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him." (Heb.11.6) "And He shall bring it to pass." I want to emphasise this truth that you will notice the little word "it" is in italics, which means it is not in the original. If you think on the text without it: "And He shall bring to pass", it might be instructive for you to consider it from that viewpoint. In committing "thy way unto the Lord", you may have been asking the

Lord in regard to some specific issue in your life, some matter that you want to handle wisely, something which you have desired God would grant you, and work out for you in your life. It may be that exactly what you desired the Lord to do, the Lord will not do that; but what he pleases to do will be much better for you, and in the ultimate working out you will see: "It is the Lord, and let Him do what seemeth Him good". I have been glad to think of this little word "it" being in italics, and that sometimes it can be deleted. Be sure of this, if you get help to "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and trust also in Him," and leave the issue with Him, whatever He does you will be glad to see Him doing it for you. Yes, like Manoah, and his wife, - "And the Angel did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on" (Judges 13.19.). Remember :

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His Own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

You have sung it often, I would have you think on the wording there, for Cowper got down to a deep foundation truth :-

"God is His Own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

And sings Ambrose Serle:

"Thy ways, O Lord, with wise design
Are framed upon Thy throne above;
And every dark and bending line
Meets in the Centre of Thy Love."

"God is Love."

Whatever you may think about His dealings, "God is Love."

Whatever trouble beats upon your head, it remains a truth in the present tense: "The Lord is good, a Stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him." (Nahum 1.7) "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "Trust also in Him"; trust in Who He is :-

"Whom though we cannot comprehend,
Knowing Thou art the sinners' Friend,
We love Thee and adore."

"Trust in Him" as "Emmanuel, God with us". "Trust in Him" as a God, Who is approachable, Who delighteth in mercy, and Whose Word declares: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb.4.16) Trust in Who He is, verily God, verily Man; and do trust in what He has done; - and what has He done? Oh, He came down into this world to save sinners, and He did it; He wrought out an everlasting salvation for every sinner on whose behalf He came. Trust in the Life that He lived, - the beauty of it, the holiness of it, the perfection of it; and trust in the death He died. Remember :-

"It is finished, cried the Lord,
In His dying minute;
Holy Ghost, repeat the word,
Full salvation's in it."

"Trust in Him"; and remember too that He rose from the dead on that Easter morn long ago, and now He is in heaven for sinners interceding, - sinners like you and me.

"Awake! sweet gratitude and sing
The ascended Saviour's love;
Sing how He lives to carry on
His people's cause above."

"Trust also in

Him." Trust in His finished Work; trust in His all-prevailing Blood; trust in His spotless Righteousness; trust in His infinite Merit, and...

".....no denial take
While you plead for Jesus' Sake."

"Trust also in Him"; and I add this thought: trust in His all-wise Providence. He is God only Wise, and He can make crooked things straight, and darkness light. In the Word of God it is made plain that some things that looked so unhappy, so unfavourable, - things of which godly James says: "My brethren, these things ought not so to be", but they are; and then God, only wise, declares: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn," and He is pleased to level the mountains down, make the crooked things straight, and darkness light, and His people look on ultimately and declare: "It is the Lord's doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes." (Psa.118.23) "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

One more thought, as I come to the "Amen", - "Thy righteousness". It may be that some poor seeking soul is here, hoping in God, hoping against hope, with many fears as to whether the day will ever dawn in his or her life, that it shall be known that matters are right between the soul and God. This word is a word to encourage you to hope, poor sinner: "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment", - thy case, - "as the noonday." Be thankful to God that you have got a case, and remember: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2.1.) When a man has got a case that has to be dealt with under the law of our land, he needs an advocate, and he goes to one in whom he believes; he trusts in him, and he tells

him all the truth about his case, going into the details, and leaves the issue with the advocate whose business it is to plead. Poor sinners have got the great mercy, and the blessed privilege, to go to Jesus, - a blessed Advocate indeed. He says: "The case that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it." (Deut.1.17) Remember John's disciples, when he was put to death: "Then the disciples came, took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus". (Matt.14.12) "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him." It may be some of you are waiting, hoping to realise that inestimable mercy, forgiveness of sins; long have you been seeking it, begging mercy, but as yet the great question is not put out of question; and you have many ifs and buts and hows as to whether that happiness is laid up in God's purposes for you. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Think of Elijah on Carmel's Mount, when he said to his servant: "Go and look toward the sea, and tell me what you can see;" and the servant returned and said: "There is nothing". Elijah said: "Go again", and he said it seven times. Six times was the answer: "There is nothing"; and you, poor sinner, say in the worship of God, and as you look into His Word: "There is nothing". "Go again". The seventh time Elijah's servant returned and said: "I see a cloud, about as big as a man's hand, arising out of the sea," and that was the token for good Elijah was hoping to receive. Remember, as you reduce this word to practice: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass:"

"A time he has set to heal up thy woes,
A season most fit His love to disclose;
Until He is ready to accomplish His Will,
Be patient, and steady, and wait on Him still."

Lord help you to do it.

Amen.

The