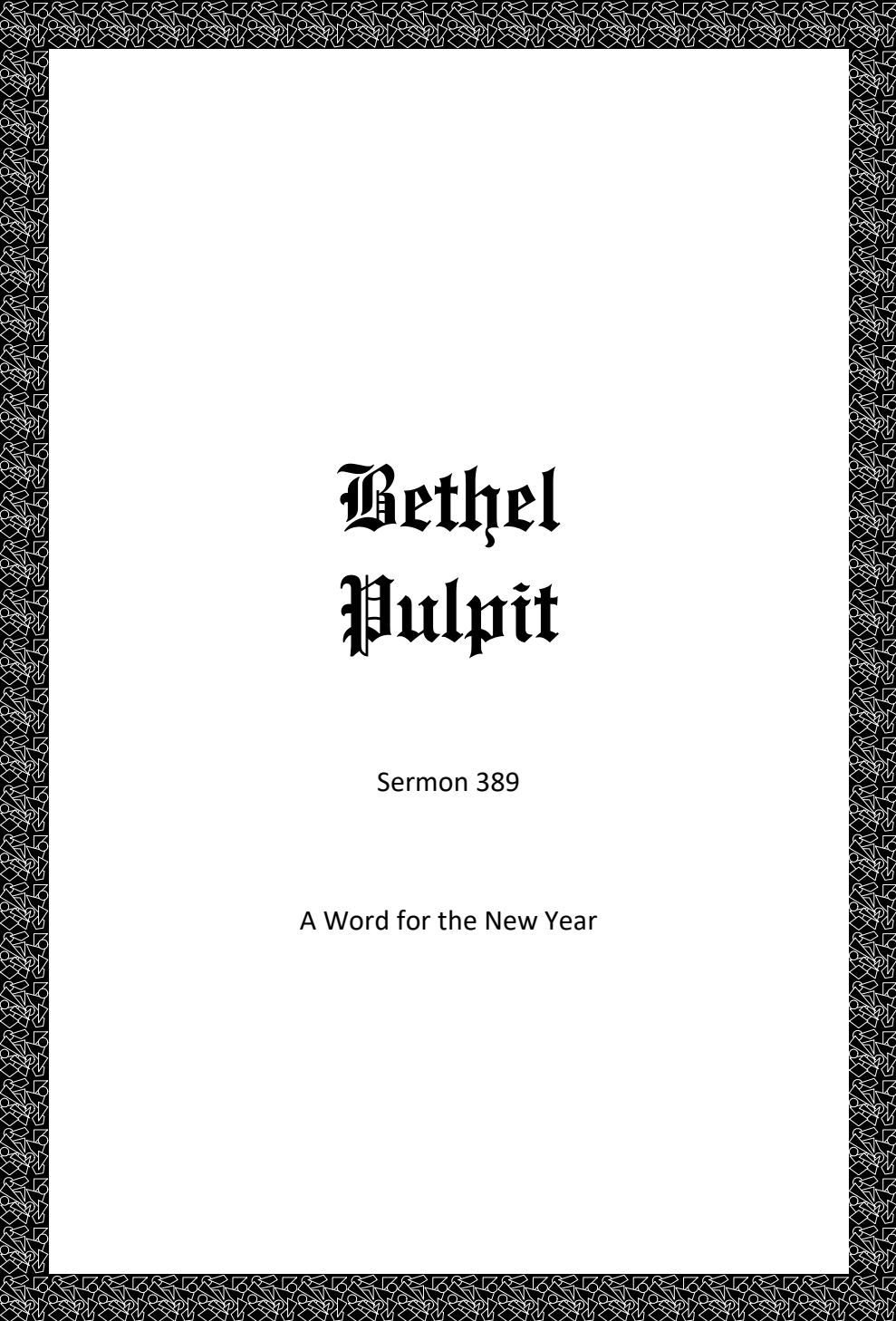




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 389

A Word for the New Year

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 1st January, 2017**

Text: *"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37. 5).*

One of the godly Scottish Covenanters, just before he was put to death for the truth's sake on the scaffold, spoke to the people, and one thing he said was this: "Through the whole of my ministry I have always sought to keep to the main things." And beloved friends, for fifty years I think I can say the same: I have always tried to keep to the main things. So when New Year's Day comes, you will not expect something exciting, something fresh, something sensational. It is something better than that. We have the new year before us, young and old, whether for us it is going to be long or short. All of us must have many thoughts, different thoughts, happy thoughts, sad thoughts, expectant thoughts concerning the coming year. But what a kind word this is that the Lord sends to us in the gospel on the grounds of His mercy!

We have the new year before us with its hopes and fears, its joys, its sorrows, what bright things may arise, what sorrows are hidden from us. But lovingly, "Commit thy way" in the new year, whoever you are, old or young, whatever lies before you, as the Lord shall help you. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Because you could not put it in a safer place. If we try to manage things ourselves, it may be confusion. There is no confusion when our circumstances are in the hands of the Lord. There is that beautiful word: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." That is all His people's sins to deal with, all their concerns to manage, all their needs to supply, and the eternal Father, who knows better than us, from everlasting has put them all into the hands of His beloved Son. Then it is your wisdom and mine to put all our concerns where the eternal Father has put them from everlasting, into the hands of His beloved Son. He can manage them far better than we can.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord." The only way we can do this, as helped by the Spirit of God, is *in prayer*, and *by faith*, God-given faith. So what a wonderful mercy it is as we begin the year! We think of things before us; we think of this word, that there is a throne of grace. There is a mercy seat sprinkled with blood. There is a God who with heaven and

earth at His command waits to answer prayer. Now, “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” It is a wonderful thing, the throne of grace. I was very touched at one of our prayer meetings recently when one of the friends said, giving thanks, that in our saddest moments we always have this to give thanks for: that there *is* a throne of grace. “Let us therefore” – because there is a throne of grace, because there is a glorious High Priest – “Let us therefore come boldly.” That does not mean carnal boldness, but with humble confidence, with that liberty the Lord gives. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy” – whatever it is, our coming, our receiving, our needs, our supplies – it must be mercy. “That we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

I will tell you one thing, beloved friends: the future is wisely hidden from us. We read even of the Apostle Paul going up to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall him (Acts 20. 22). That is you, that is me – not knowing the things which shall befall us. But one thing which is sure: there will be a time of need sooner or later with every single one of you. With some, you will feel it to be a time of need every day. But that time of need will always be there. “That we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” So as certainly as there will be a time of need, so certainly there will be the rich provision in the grace of God.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” So those who are old, those who are aged, “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” As the grasshopper becomes a burden and as eternity looms before you, that vast eternity, “Commit thy way unto the Lord,” that you might be made ready, graciously prepared, that that day may not come upon you unawares.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” And you young ones, you children, you little ones, seek that the Lord will help you to commit your way to the Lord. Soon you will be going back to school again with your difficulties which some of you have there. Some of you will be going back to college, to university, and all the things there. Some of you are making plans; some of you have thoughts of the future; some of you have your friendships; some of you are seeking friendships. “Commit thy way unto the Lord” in prayer, asking Him to lead you and to guide you and to be with you and to help you. That is a good word for us all, but especially for

our younger ones: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In *all thy ways* acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” And then there are those of you who are sad, those of you who have been bereaved, and there are those of you who are unwell, and some of you with those afflictions which continue from year to year, and some of you are concerned about those you love with their afflictions. “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” And then there are various troubles and problems and difficulties which young and old have. “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” We have that word: “He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good.” You will have a lot of matters you have to handle this year, and the Lord can handle them better than we can. The best way to handle them is to put them in the Lord’s hand and ask Him to handle them for us. “He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good.”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Those who are seeking guidance, those who are seeking to know the Lord’s will; above all those who are seeking the Saviour – “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Some of you have not found the Saviour yet, and some of you have waited long. But still seek grace to wait upon Him. He has promised that they that wait for Him shall not be ashamed (Isa. 49. 23).

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Some of you have things in your business. Some of you have deep needs, some in providence. “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” O but above all, the one thing needful. We are sinners. We are unworthy. By nature we are lost and ruined. We are not prepared. We are not ready to die. We cannot make ourselves right. If you feel your need on this point, then “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” If you do not feel your need on this point, ask the Lord to bless you with true repentance and the life of God in your soul, and living faith, but do not stay away till you feel better. You have to come just as you are, needy, empty-handed. It is sinners He will receive.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” It is this:

“My soul” – with all its sins and failures –
“My soul into Thy arms I cast;
I trust I shall be saved at last.”

That is solid ground to venture upon. David on one occasion said, “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit.” That is it – to go in our helplessness and need, confessing our sin, pleading the Saviour’s mercy, His sin-atoning blood, and as led by the Spirit and blessed with faith, to commit our souls and our everlasting concerns into the hands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – and think not that He will reject you, because if He did, you would be the first.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Commit thy way into the hands of the eternal Father. It is a wonderful thing to be found beneath the shadow of the Almighty, to know that wonderful providence which “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will,” which makes no mistakes, which makes “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Commit thy way into the hands of the gracious Spirit to teach you and lead you. “Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths”; especially to reveal Christ to you. And then “Commit thy way” into the hands of the dear Saviour of sinners. O to feel that not only are all your concerns in His hands, but that you yourself are in His hands! And so to prove this year, whatever lies before you, whatever does not lie before you, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath” – now you cannot sink any lower than that – “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Sometimes it may be a very deep, special, awful need when you are almost on the brink of despair, and many of the Lord’s people have proved this is the time when they know the Lord’s faithfulness and His wonderful compassion to understand, and His divine, almighty power to deliver.

I think our children may know the well-known story on this point: “Commit thy way unto the Lord,” and the wonderful deliverance that was given. It was in one of the German states many years ago. There was an exceedingly-poor man who was expected to pay his rent. He lived in a little cottage with his wife and family, and through no fault of his own he could not pay the rent, and went to the landlord three times, but he still could not help. He was told the next day he would be thrown out. It was a snowy day, a bitterly-cold day, and he could not see any deliverance. That night, thinking it would be his last night in his little cottage, he gathered his family together and they tried to pray on the grounds of this prayer:

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” Then they sang Paul Gerhardt’s well-known German hymn which begins, “Commit thou all thy griefs.”

Suddenly, they were startled by a banging on the window. It was a raven that had been tamed and which was knocking on the window. They let this raven in, and it had a beautiful, ornate ring in its beak. They could tell at once it was a ring of supreme value. So the poor, godly man took this ring and thought the only thing was to take it to his minister. The minister also realising the supreme value, took it to the royal court, and it belonged to the prince. Having sentimental value as well, he was so grateful and wanted to find the poor man and reward him. He rewarded him handsomely on the spot, and also made provision for him for the future. He found him a little cottage from which he would not be turned out. That was a remarkable case. But you know what it is:

“Sooner all nature shall change,
Than one of God’s promises fail.”

Didn’t Elijah prove it! This dreadful drought, this dreadful famine. He committed his way to the Lord. There was Brook Cherith, the widow woman.

You can go right through Scripture. Joseph, all the circumstances in which he was found. When he was thrown into a pit, when he was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, when Pharoah wished to reward him, he committed his way to the Lord, and the Lord did bring it to pass.

And of course David himself. He was a king, but he knew what it was daily to have to commit all his concerns into the hands of his Saviour and God. I have told you so often that when David wrote his psalms, it was not like Milton or Shakespeare or Shelley, just sitting in a room and making up a poem. These were forced out of his heart in the deep places of the earth. If you could have talked to David and said, How did you manage when that lion came? He would say, There was only one thing I could do: commit my way to the Lord. What about when the bear came? Well, it was just the same. “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” What about when you were old and there was Absalom? Well, it is still the same ground. It is this at the beginning; it will be this to the end.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” There is one little word in this that I like: *thy*. “*Thy way*” – that which lies closest to your heart; that which weighs on you as you come to chapel this morning; that which you are specially thinking about in the new year; that which is troubling you the most. “*Thy way*.” Perhaps nobody else knows it, but you do and the Lord does. But I do like the way the Lord here seems so beautifully to leave the word open. He might have said this way and that way and another way, and left your way out. This does not leave you out. “*Thy way*,” whatever it is, commit it to the Lord. “Commit *thy way* unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.”

Beloved friends, I think of a word like this, and probably some of you are the same. I think of two or three other scriptures which seem similar, and which are so helpful. One is this: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Thy burden – cast it on the Lord. The margin says, “Roll it on the Lord.” It is like someone carrying a heavy burden and someone stronger comes along and bends down before them. They cannot pick it up; they cannot lift it up; they let it roll off onto the stronger one. Roll thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. Perhaps you say, But this word does not altogether promise deliverance; it says, “He shall sustain thee.” Well, there are one or two burdens that you do not want to be delivered from. Perhaps you say, That is a strange statement. I am thinking of you mothers, the burdens you have to carry with your children. You do not want to be rid of them, but you do value a word like this: “He shall sustain thee” – bear you up, supply your needs. The gospel minister has a terrible burden. He does not want to lose it. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” I thought that little prayer in Matthew chapter 15 might be suitable to some of you: “Lord, help me” – an almighty Saviour and a helpless sinner, providence and grace. “Lord, help me.” But the word we read in 1 Peter chapter 5: “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” “*All your care*.” Sometimes we cast some of it on the Lord and then try to manage the rest ourselves. “All your care.” Sometimes we cast our care on the Lord, and then try to take it back.

“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” I have found, beloved friends, there are two ways to approach a text like that.

One way is in the confidence of faith: I have a sweet hope the Lord in love and mercy cares for me, and so then, when the need comes, I can cast all my care on Him. But then perhaps most people cannot come on that ground, but you just have to venture on the promise and seek grace to cast your care on the Lord. As you cast your care on Him, as you are sweetly enabled to do it, so you prove that word: “He careth for you.”

“‘Cast,’ He said, ‘on me thy care;
’Tis enough that I am nigh;
I will all thy burdens bear;
I will all thy needs supply.’”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him.” Now that is the ground, the foundation of it, that confidence in the Lord Jesus. We read of the marks of the true circumcision (Phil. 3. 3). There are three marks given, but one of them is this: they “have no confidence in the flesh.” O to be delivered from that self-confidence! “Trust also in Him.” Do you remember that John Bunyan was once very tried and a word arrested him, and it was a wonderful help, a wonderful deliverance, and he could not find it in the Bible? It was not in the Bible; it was somewhere else. But it was this: “Did any ever trust in the Lord and were put to shame?” It was a wonderful help, a deliverance to him.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him.” “In Him, and Him alone, confide.” It is a safe place. How many have trusted in what is so often spoken of as an arm of flesh. Look how David himself trusted in his son Absalom, and Absalom sought his life. Look how he trusted in Ahithophel. He said, “We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.” He found him to be a traitor, a deceiver. But none ever trusted in the Lord in vain. That is a good word in Psalm 62: “Trust in Him at all times” – the beginning of the year, the end of the year and all through the year.

There is a word in Deuteronomy where we read that the eyes of the Lord are upon the land – that was Israel – “from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deut. 11. 12). That is the Lord’s watchful, tender care, His loving provision, the supply of every need. The eyes of the Lord are upon the land, “from the beginning of the year even unto the

end of the year.” “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers.”

Well, there is so much ground for a sinner to trust in the Saviour – His promise, His faithfulness, His mercy, His love, His righteousness, His precious, sin-atonement blood. There is everything why a sinner should confide in the Saviour, and not just in providence, but to trust in His sin-atonement blood for salvation. Now may the Holy Ghost apply a word like that and make it effectual. It is personal dealings we want.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him.” Trust Him as the Friend of sinners, as an almighty Saviour. Trust Him in things great and in things small. And it is this: that He has promised He will not fail thee. “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” Now it is this little word *it*. What does it mean? Well, it is the answer to His people’s prayers. It is that way that you hope to commit into His loving, gracious, almighty hands. He will hear it, He will answer it, and He will bring it to pass, not perhaps just as you would like, but for the honour and glory of His name and for your real, lasting good. It is all in His gracious hands. It cannot miscarry. The Lord has promised to supply all His people’s need, and that will never fail. He shall bring it to pass. But it is not everything His people would like, or their carnal hearts desire, or they want, but if you really need it, you will have it. I believe there are times when the Lord’s people in humility can go and say to the Lord, I believe it is something I really need.

“My every need He richly will supply;
Nor will His mercy ever let me die;
In Him there dwells a treasure all divine,
And matchless grace has made that treasure mine.”

“My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” “He shall bring it to pass.” However hard, however impossible, “He *shall* bring it to pass.”

So beloved friends, on this new year’s morning, I hope you will receive this, not as a word from me, or a word just from this pulpit, but a word from heaven, a word from Almighty God Himself, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. May you be blessed with living faith to receive it, gratitude to

thank the Lord for it, wisdom to walk it out, all in utter and absolute, complete dependence on Christ the sinner's Friend.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.”

* * *

Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands,
To His sure truth and tender care,
Who heaven and earth commands.
Who points the clouds their course,
Whom winds and seas obey,
He shall direct thy wandering feet,
He shall prepare thy way.
Thou on the Lord rely,
So safe shalt thou go on;
Fix on His work thy steadfast eye,
So shall thy work be done.
No profit canst thou gain
By self-consuming care:
To Him command thy cause; His ear
Attends the softest prayer.
He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.
When He makes bare His arm,
Who shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?
Put thou thy trust in God,
In humble hope go on;

Walk in His strength with faith and hope,
So shall thy work be done.

Paul Gerhardt