

Title: FRET NOT

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FRET NOT

“Fret not!” ... page 653 in your Bible if you got one like mine. If you don’t, the book of Psalms. Psalms—the number of an individual Psalm—37. Now when God says something more than once—He’s got enough to say. There are a lot of people who have to say something more than once because that’s all they got to say—but when God repeats Himself, pay attention. It must have importance. Psalm 37, Verse 1, “Fret not;” Verse 7, “Fret not;”

Verse 8, “Fret not.” And everybody that has never fretted can leave. Wouldn’t let those that came to see the ‘Whore’ leave, but if you have never fretted and don’t know anything about that experience, I don’t have anything to say to you today.

Now this is a particular kind of message. I preach messages like a shotgun shot with a pellet for whomever it hits. I preach messages that are rifle shots. Most of the time here, we are displaying God’s control over history with a goal to produce: Faith..., because Paul said, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” and you don’t need to work it up. If you can be exposed to God’s performance long enough, you’ll learn to trust Him.

This message I preach annually for myself; and you can listen in if you are a fretter.

And for anyone else who ever has had to fret, this message is designed to lead us step by step into a focused way of living that, more often than I can count, has taken me through some awful, troubled times. The gray hair is not age; it’s mileage. And this is a message, if I can get people to just tune in and turn loose in your experience that will carry you through 1988 or any other year.

Now God never asks you to do something that you can’t do. And any preacher who tells you that... is one of those super-spiritual nuts that Bon Bowman—the pastor in Detroit who influenced me the most, used to describe to me. He said, “I used to have evangelists come by, and they are always telling my people ‘there’s something out there’; and they get them straining and straining to try to have this strange spiritual experience that nobody can have.”

If there is any one central truth to Christianity, it is in that New Testament simple doctrine from which all the other creeds grew out of: God was in Christ. And the Incarnation teaches that God—John’s words are ‘striking a tent’—God struck a tent in human flesh; moved into that tent of human flesh called Jesus of Nazareth; and brought God out of the invisible; and put Him on display and into the streets of ordinary life. John says, “No man hath seen God, but Christ hath declared Him.” The word in the Greek is the root and the basis of our word “exegesis” which means “to lead from behind a curtain”... “to put on display”.

God was hidden. The Incarnation teaches Christ was the “exegesis” of God. He led Him out from behind the curtain, put Him on display, brought Him into the streets of ordinary life. And all you need to know about God, He put it on display where ordinary people live. They supposedly teach you in Bible college to do Scriptural exegesis which is to lead the meaning of the verse from behind a curtain and put

it on display. How many have had the experience I've had? You come to church thinking you know something and when the preacher is finished, it has put the Word and you behind the curtain, or flat out!

God intended to be understood, or He would not have moved into that tent of human flesh. And God's Word and God's commands and God's promises start where we live.

Now in this passage "Fret not, fret not, fret not"—that's a simple command. Three times it is given to put the emphasis to the end of the chapter where it says in verse 37, "The end of that man is peace."

Now I can use this message out of God's Book; I told you it's for me. I got up fretting this morning. I've preached this message every year, except this year, for the last 12 years and it must need to be repeated because I still fret. How do you get from fretting to peace? Let's see. Now, you know what the message is about.

Let's do it.

"Trust in the Lord." Now you are going to find there's about four or five things that we are told to do. Now the trouble is getting it started. Not a one of these things are beyond our ability to do it. But you are not going to get turned loose anymore than you can get current into the light unless you plug in the cord. You will not turn loose God's contribution to this movement from fretting to peace until we do the very few things I'm going to outline. It is basic Christianity! But I forget every year.

Are you ready? I know you came to sit back and have the mystery of the "Whore" unveiled. And here I am with one of those work messages. Well, you got to follow me before God turns loose. You know the story. This is typical Christianity: "Oh God, let me win the lottery!" Week after week the guy prayed. Here comes another person—who comes into this country two weeks and wins another twenty million. So you sit here and say, "God, it's not fair! Why don't you let me win the lottery?" Remember the story? After several weeks God finally said, "Give me a break, man. Go buy a ticket!" This is the ticket-buying part.

Number 1 - "Trust in the Lord." Ah, yeah! Old stuff! Well let's just analyze that word for a minute. There are only two words in the Old Testament original that are translated "trust" or "faith". You have been over this with me.

One word is "to run to the shelter of a rock" or "to the shelter of a mother bird's wings". You can stand there all day while the threat is on you, and you're not trusting or having faith until you run to that rock, or run to the shelter of the mother bird's wings. That is action, friend. Not just thinking about it—it's action!

The other word is when you "lean upon a staff" and put your entire weight on it. Those are the only two words in the Old Testament that are translated "trust" or "faith". You go through every book; that's it. There is no word translated "trust" or "faith" that means "creed" or "belief" or even "thinking about something". You do not have what the Old Testament words translate into "faith" or "trust" until you have gone beyond belief and hung your body on that which the mind has agreed within an act conforming to what you have believed. Run or lean!

What is the New Testament word for "faith", huh? The Greek—it's an act, based upon belief, sustained by confidence. Nothing ruined the Biblical meaning of faith and trust like the English language that has a verb "to believe" that involves only the mind; when in every case, both the Old and New Testament, the word not only involves the mind, it involves the emotions at the level of confidence, and it involves

the will in grabbing hold of the body and forcing it to hang itself on that which the mind has agreed to and the heart can believe in.

I can watch an airplane take off and know every single theory of aerodynamics and believe it will be airborne. That is not faith. That is not trust. I'm not trusting, neither am I *faith-ing*, until I get in that plane, buckle on that seat belt, and hang my body on it.

Now you say, "I've heard that a thousand times." Well you are luckier than most churches—"but I know that." You think I don't know it? I've heard it a thousand times. But the fret takes over because the primary focus of my life.... And I forget it every damn week! And when I forget it, you can be damn sure it is a damn week.

Everything goes to pot! I have my mind and my focus and my emotions and my attention, and usually my will, on every center that's available to me, except the Lord. It's so simple! It's like everything else we get off the track on. Now you don't have to be a spiritual nut walking around saying, "Praise the Lord; praise the Lord!"—all day long. But in the envelope of our consciousness you keep yourself aware of a basic truth of Christianity and the whole Hebrew-Christian faith, or what in the world you doing here anyway?

Remember I've taught you the distinction in the Old Testament as we studied the heroes of faith? You remember the distinction between Elijah and everybody else around him? When he came on the scene there was something about Elijah himself that made people think of God. When he showed up they got very spiritual. He comes on the scene where the widow is starving to death and she says, "The Lord God of Israel." He comes upon Obadiah—good man because he hid the prophets when Ahab was going to kill them, but it took Elijah to come on the scene—then suddenly he got spiritual, "The Lord of Israel liveth." Elijah—no matter where you meet him there was a little footnote: "The Lord God of Israel liveth, in whose presence I stand." The more you live, the more you get involved, the more things come in that crowd out the reality of God's presence and the reality of that message we've been preaching for the last six weeks: God's care over us; His knowledge about you and me; His concern for us; His call on our life.

I've said more than any other philosophy of life, Christianity teaches individuality, because in God's plan He has something each of us can do in relation to Him that no other person in eternity can do, much less will do. And you have to settle it when the fretting comes, and I had to settle it every time I have come through any circumstance of fretting: "Can I trust? Can I trust the Lord?" That's the issue.

Now frankly, the way He's been acting this last year I've doubted it plenty of times. Come on you smug hypocrites.... At least fifty-two times this past year—that's once a week—I've said "Look Fella, I've been telling them You can be trusted! And this is another fine mess You got me into." You see, every so often you have to come to a fix on this. I don't know what kind of mess He's got you into today, but you know that I've told you this many times. I didn't have visions—I wish I had a vision like my dad had. I never saw a 70-foot-tall Jesus. Frankly, if I'd seen a 7-inch one materialize I would not be very braggadocios about it. I'd be on my face. Most of the time in the Bible when they see an angel, they're down flat. That's the most convincing proof they are telling the truth.

I lost my faith. I know what it is to wander in uncertainty for years. And I came back from a hard study of the Resurrection, and I believe He came out of that tomb—not because somebody told me or brainwashed me into it, but from a hard study! There isn't any other explanation. And you know I've said and I preach it every year, if you came along and said what Jesus said about Himself, I would probably think you ought to be committed. But if you came out of the tomb three days after we locked you in it, I'd take another look at you—particularly if you sailed off into the blue in another few days.

And once I made that commitment to trust this Lord, when the fretting comes it's usually because I've got my eyes, in the busyness, on everything else. And your pastor has to start settling it as he goes into 1988, as you do: Is the Lord trustworthy?...because if He is, I better run and renew that leaning on Him.

You say, "Well now, how do you do that? I don't see Him anywhere!" I like to make it simple, and I told you I'm going to lead you by the hand today till we get to God's part because His is the good part. This is the work part.

In the New Testament, the way you claim a promise and renew a commitment is very simple. The book of Romans says, "Don't think you can go up to heaven, get Him, bring Him down. Don't think you can descend into the depths and bring Him up." There is a stage in your Christian faith walk where God expects us to start acting on what He said because He has a record of having done it.

As the children of Israel had a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night and manna falling from heaven every morning, there came a point—and He parted the Jordan River—there came a point on the other side where the manna stopped falling and the pillar dissolved and the fire didn't lead. And they were expected, because of the performance already proven, to act a little more on the invisible reality of God and His consistency to keep His Word. "Can I trust the Lord?" You got to settle that first. You say, "But I've got this problem I want to focus on!"

Forget it, turn. You, don't forget—turn, displace it. Turn from the problem for just a minute with me and ask yourself: Why are you here in the last week of the year? Is the Lord trustworthy or not? If He is, how do you trust Him?

The New Testament says, "You don't have to ascend and get Him. You don't have to descend and bring Him up. The word is already nigh you; it is in your mouth, speak it forth. For with the heart man believeth; and with the mouth"—"proclamation" is the literal Greek word—"proclamation or declaration is made unto salvation." And salvation—*soterion*, the Greek word—it is a whole process that involves every dimension of your life which means man realizing everything he ought to be in health, in vision, in capacity, in potential, and in ultimate destination. This salvation process is a constant renewing of what God has promised by believing it with the heart and declaring it with the mouth—as simple as feeding a child. You got to settle it!

Instead of walking out when you get out of church.... The way most people listen to a preacher, they tune their brain out and then, when they get out, the first words to the one they go out with: "Boy, I sure have this problem. I don't know how I'm going to get at it now till next Sunday. I've done my little thing for God today, but it almost cost me the time I could have used solving my problem." Instead, I want you to go out of here today—this is the "work" part—saying (don't just think...) saying—you got to hang your body on it, "Wait a minute! What am I in this business of Christianity for?"

I mean, you are looking at the world's most natural sinner. I will make a confession to this crowd—it is going to demean me: I have never been drunk in my life. Now to the Jerry Falwell's crowd, they would be: "Ahhh, Praise the Lord!" you know. To my crowd, that is one dimension of your life I don't fully comprehend yet. You just grab your mind in what I'm saying, and you have to ask yourself is your religion just going through the motions, or is there a God you can trust. I don't necessarily have to put the shape on it for you. You know the shape that I think it takes: God revealed Himself in Christ. "Trust in the Lord"!

Number 2 - "Delight thyself." This is just so simple it makes me mad! "Delight thyself in the Lord." I want to tell you something and you can just take it or leave it. The theologians call it "prevenient grace". The church is not in the world to save the world. The church represents those few being saved

out of the world. And it was Jesus who said, “Few there be that go in there at.” You have heard me say this before—God is not some evangelist hat-in-hand, trembling outside your door begging to get in. God doesn’t want some people.

Jesus told a parable and He said, “If you don’t understand this parable, you ain’t going to understand anything I teach.” You can’t even be a disciple which is “learner”. And it was the “Parable of the Sower”.

Four kinds of soil; seed is the same. Three of them don’t get it. One...the good soil, brings forth fruit. He then says explaining the parable, “The reason I tell these truths in parable is lest some—if I didn’t tell it in parable which cloaks the truth, some might get it and be saved.” Now when I think of the ones I don’t want to see in heaven that just delights the world out of me. I got a whole list of people that I don’t want in heaven. You all can be lucky I’m not the determiner. But the truth is—and it’s said very clearly—He, Jesus...cloaked the truth in parables because He didn’t want some converted. “Huh?” You know, the church has been hat-in-hand begging for so long the world thinks that.... You know it’s, it is like, “If I can’t get anybody else, I’ll benefit this used woman.” God’s not that hard up!

When I was teaching in college, I had a kid who said, “I won’t become a Christian unless God called me to be a preacher.” I said, “Ah, son. Relax! God is not as hard up as we think.” But there are criteria of those that are “the called”, and that is what prevenient grace says—the initiative starts with God. And from the foundations of the world God began making up a number. You may think it’s an accident, whatever that experience was, that turned you on to God. There are thousands of people that have left the church, but in their deepest heart of hearts they haven’t left God, and neither has He left them.

The calling and election of God—God’s Word says, is without repentance or “turning from”. And when God has nailed you, however that light penetrated your heart, there are certain distinguishing marks of “the nailed” if you will have it. They have that capacity to respond. They have eyes to see light. When you turn it on, it brings forth the witness. All I’m saying to those people that have felt that call—for want of a better word, that tug, that interest, that ability no matter what hits them to not yet give up on some concept of God—trust Him!

That’s all I’m saying. And then analyze why you are in your mess because basically.... I read this verse a thousand times. I memorized it. I got points for memorizing it in Sunday school. I had my interpretation and what a shock it was when I really began to analyze it because I knew exactly what that verse said: “Delight thyself also in the Lord; he shall give thee the desires of thine heart”!

“Okay, God! There, you got your part. Now where’s mine? Let’s have it now.” I’ll delight myself in anybody that will give me the desires of my heart. You ain’t seen a fella that can delight himself in you like I can if you will give me the desires of my heart. And after that first little wave, it is going to take a year for me to unload the desires of my heart. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” Most Christian truths are paradoxical. The English language doesn’t know how to deal with that. We are based on Aristotelian logic: “If...; then...”—so I was quite ready to delight myself in the Lord, to get. That isn’t what it says!

There comes a point in any relationship, and ultimately the God of Christian revelation is a person, and in personal relationships—I do not understand this.... There are three words in the Greek for “love”: *eEos* we can dispense with in a minute—from that comes “erotic”. Everybody knows what that is, so I won’t bore you.

Phileo from which we get Philadelphia—you’ve already got it in the current *Truth Magazine*, so you ought to know what is *phileo*. It’s mutual: I do for you; you do for me. I don’t have to look out for

myself because you will look out for me. Whatever I do for you—the balance is automatic—you’re doing for me. And we go through life trying to find relationships like that. I don’t mind doing for somebody if I can count on them doing for me. The paradox put in it by our Creator—He made us—you can seek *phileo*, that mutual balance, all of your life; the very seeking of it precludes the finding of it. This is something you are going to have to gestalt with intuition, but you’ll know its truth when it’s said: the very act of seeking *phileo* denies the getting of it.

The minute I think you’re doing for me to get something in return—I can’t help it, it’s the way we’re made—I start looking out for me. You calculate in what you do for me, the balance sheet of return, and I’m going to calculate the balance sheet on my side—and I ain’t the only sinner here!

If on that rare moment that life gives you, someone does for me where there can be no possible reason that they are seeking anything in return, also part of my nature is the incapacity not to respond in kind. If I’m drowning in a river and know it, you risk your life and pull me to the bank, I don’t have to talk myself into liking you on the shore. The law of love is such. You ever give sacrificially to me without calculation, I can’t help it. Like a magnet, I’m responding. That’s *agapao*. This is the only kind of love that God commands. Nowhere in Scripture does He command *phileo*. Nowhere does He command *eros*. *Agapao* is a love that flows to the object being loved because of the intrinsic value seen in the object being loved. You pour on it devotion or sacrifice because of a sense of worth in the object being loved; and paradoxically, there’s nothing selfish in that.

Paradoxically, when that kind of love flows it triggers the response that produces *phileo*. Like all deep Christian truths: you get this way by going that way; you live by dying; you become first by being last. You get *phileo* not because you seek it, but because an object of love so claims you that for its value you flow to it—without thought of anything in return you get *phileo*. That’s the same meaning here.

Now that is why there may be people with all kinds of felt responses to God, which is the call of God that makes you the soil waiting the seed, or the eyes waiting the light. But there needs to be content to adequate Christian expression. That is why I can’t stomach these “stomp-on-you”, “dump-on-you” condemnation preachers that try to beat people into hell.

If you can ever understand that at our best, we were hopeless and lost; and as we are, God gave the best that He had, and His Son gave His life because He saw some intrinsic value in me and you—those in whom He placed the response or the capacity to respond to the Light when it shines.... Whatever you may think of me, I know God saw something in Gene Scott. You may not see much progress in what he’s doing with it; but God saw something, and if no one else had responded throughout eternity, He would have done it for me.

And when you come to know the basic truth.... That’s why I preach Grace and Peace and not this condemnation junk. God has got perfection all around Him. The Scripture in Hebrews says He did not give Himself to rescue fallen angels, but the mystery throughout eternity that made prophets struggle to see it; and Peter’s epistle says the angels bent down low to examine this mystery that God, Who would not go after fallen angels for some reason, saw something in the men and women that He would redeem, that He gave His Son for it. And whether I’m likeable or not, God as the song says, “looked beyond my faults”; and gave Himself to remove the barrier that He might tug on those heart strings and lead me into the Light.

There are many times that I have not wanted the responsibility of the knowledge of His Light, but I am thankful today and so can you be. Something brought you here today—some kind of tug, some basic looking which is the indices that God cares for you, and He has something in mind for you. And in the

fretting I suddenly begin to understand: “Delight thyself in the Lord.” If my delight can be focused more in Him and less in me, “He will give me the desires of my heart.”

Third. That’s just the frame. Now, put your 70-league boots on because we’re going to move. Now, this basic frame that I had to wrestle with your brain to bring you to this point is: Is God trustworthy? Are you willing to run to Him? “Well, I got these problems.” Well, turn the focus for a minute. It’s not a complicated thing. You come home with children and you have problems, but in the envelope of your consciousness, like Elijah who would never forget the presence of God, you make room for this Person. You have companions, and fretting gets in the way of companions, but you better make room for those loved ones or the relationship deteriorates.

As we go into 1988, no matter what the problem, can you trust in the Lord? Then regularly, we better flee into Him, and I’ve already told you how to do it. Don’t make it complicated.

You don’t have to stand on your hands or mutilate your body. The mouth sort of leads the body. Just stop in the middle of your problem and say, “Wait a minute, Gene!” “With the heart man believeth, with the mouth confession is made.” It looks like they are coming from all sides but, by crackie, I’m 58 and when I got my faith together. When I’ve run to Him, He has never forsaken me yet. In 1988 I’m ready to show the problem my heels and God my face again. “Well, but you know I got some things in mind for God to do.” Wait a minute! I had some plans last year and they didn’t work out, some of them, and I had some this year. If me and the Lord got it okay, the hell with all these other plans. That’s what delighting yourself in the Lord means. That’s all there is to it!

We’ve got to move fast now. “What has that got to do with the price of tea in China? I got my attitude right, now. Big “A”! I know the Lord can be trusted no matter what. I’m going to run to Him no matter how much the pressure; and yes, when it all boils down, God can have everything else as long as He and I can keep it together. What’s that got to do with my problem? Fine, I’m sitting here like Job in the midst of his problems. I still have the problems and I’ve got it together with Him. I trust Him and I really do want to please the Lord more than I want Him to please me and He knows that, and I don’t have to prove it to anybody else.” And neither do you.

What about our problems?

Okay! “Commit thy way.” (verse 5) You know what the word is in the original? The *King James* just doesn’t do it for me. “Commit thy way.” (verse 5) You got that? Underline it! “Commit thy way.” How do you do that?

Well, the word in the original is “to roll off”...and it comes from camel trains packing up. And the burden-bearer would bring the burden over to the camel that was kneeled down; and would lean over and roll his burden onto the back of the camel, then walk away. That’s what the word means. “Roll off thy way unto the Lord.” Now, “thy way”—what does that mean? Come on! It’s everything you are involved in—your plans, your mess....Am I boring you? Everything you are involved in; you roll it off.

You know how long it would take me to tell you my problems today? Don’t tell me. I don’t.... I’ve got my fill of me. How do you get...? How do you do this? I want it to stay practical because we are still on your part. Didn’t I just tell you the New Testament formula: “With the heart man believeth; with the mouth proclamation is made”?

Now, you know most of these Christians are a bunch of praying mantises. Everywhere you see them: “Woo-woo-woo!” (I want the seeing-eye-dog franchise for heaven because all Christians have to close their eyes

when they talk to God.) I can just see them up in heaven going around, “Where do you get that?”

Furthermore, they really get holy. Have you ever notice how they change the tone of their voice? They talk ordinary till they talk to God, then “Oh, Gaaawd!” If I were God I would say, “Shut your silly mouth and talk to Me like you talk to anybody else.”

Matthew 6. Jesus said, “When you pray, don’t get on a street corner and trumpet like the Pharisees. Go in your closet and close the door and pray to your heavenly Father in secret who will then answer you in secret.”

There’s nothing complicated about spirituality. Most people are more interested in their spiritual image that other people see, than being spiritual. You just go privately—you could probably, if you didn’t make a scene of yourself, start whispering it right here. You say, “Okay, by crackie, I’m going to do it.” How do I roll my burden off on the Lord? Is He concerned about things like divorces, and bankruptcy? ...heart attacks? He sure is. You spell it out. Most people just think about their religion. Go somewhere today and spell it out just with the heart if you can trust God; with the heart you spell it out. You say, “Lord, this is what I’ve been fretting about. I’m glad we can get from You to it.” And you spell it out: “With the heart man believeth; with the mouth the declaration is made unto salvation.”

And you say, “Here Lord, I’m going to commit my way, the problems and me, to You.” “Oh, it can’t be that simple! If it is that simple more people would do it!” Because it’s so simple, we intelligent people won’t do it. “Commit thy way.” “Are you serious, pastor?” You better believe it! Are you going to do it? “Yeah!” That means some of you that have been a problem to me, God is going to deal with you now. Hey, by crackie, they’ll be praying for God to send me back. “Commit thy way unto Him.” Then, there God does it again: “Trust also in Him.”

And then verse 7—I hate that part. I love everything about this chapter except this one. I don’t even mind the committing part, the roll-off part. I did that. That’s fine.

Now, number 4 - “Rest in the Lord.” Give it to Him! Okay, I locked myself in the closet and I’ve already got it in my mind. I can’t hardly wait to get done preaching and get alone because I’ve got a whole spiel for God today. I didn’t preach on this all year; and it’s just now, I finally have convinced myself I’m going to lay it on God. I got a list. If you see my eyes looking sort of glazed—I’ll preach the rest of this sermon because I’ve preached it often enough—I’m building my list back here. God, You are going to get it!

Then comes this part: “Rest in the Lord.” “Huh?” Just leave it there. Rest. “Huh? There ain’t no.... there ain’t no damn way in the world that I can relax when this is in God’s hands—no way in the world, man! I got to watch Him every second. You never know what God will do with something when you let Him have it—and then He makes it worse.” “Wait patiently”! God made the whole universe in seven days, and I’ve just given Him my little....

When I consider God, I figured out my problems aren’t very big. “Now here, I’ll be back to check on You at 9:00 in the morning, God; and it better damn well be done!” Wait patiently. “Of all the all-fired idiot things I ever heard of. If I had known God was going to be as slow as He is, I wouldn’t have bothered Him.” Wait patiently.

Well now, we’re right back here—can I trust Him? I’m not sure.... an hour maybe, but two days? No, I don’t know.

Now there are laws in the spiritual world just as operational as laws in the natural world. I'm telling you God's formula for peace. You settle your attitudinal fix. Can you trust Him? Is He really... let's say you are struggling to find God. If you could get it straight, would He have the prior place in your heart? I love my mom and dad, but they know you let me get convinced God wants me on a one-way trip to Calcutta tomorrow, I'll create a jet stream going.

"Commit thy way." Okay, I know how to do it. This is the part—I mean....well, I'm going to work on this part.

Let me end this message now real quick with what God does. Let me show you something. God's Word has it.... I have preached for years that if you take a step toward God, He'll meet you before your foot hits the ground. He waits for that initiative on your part which is a response to His initiative that put that call in you. But before you ever get to the tough part of your job, let me show you His part now.

"Trust in the Lord"... "Delight thyself in the Lord"... "Commit thy way unto the Lord." We're only three into the five things we have to do, right? By the time the third one happens where we roll off our burden onto the Lord....

The moment you take that step—fix your attitude, trust, delight, and then commit thy way—the minute you take that third step, before you get to the "rest" and the "wait patiently", what does it say? "Commit thy way unto the Lord and trust also in Him." What does it say? Read it to me. "And He shall bring it to pass." What a terrible translation! It talks about the end result and it doesn't translate the word. You go check any commentary. You can go to the library, the seminary in your town. Let me tell you what it says, short and simple. The Hebrew is very simple: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and the Lord worketh." That's all.

It just says the minute you commit it to Him, poised and ready, the Lord goes to work on it—you have no longer, or no sooner, got it out of your mouth in response to your heart and committed it to Him the simple New Testament way because I repeat, "You don't have to go get Him, or go down and bring Him up. You just speak it forth. The words are nigh you; it's in your mouth, speak it forth. With the heart man believeth; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The minute you commit it—(you can do it today), the Lord goes to work. He goes to work. It doesn't say He finishes it instantly. He goes to work.

I've been 58 years creating this mess. Why can't He unwind it in an hour? "Here, Lord. Fix it! I've ruined my health doing what the Bible describes as....

—You know, I get so tired of Jimmy Swaggart and Jerry Falwell preaching on sin. They don't even know how. I mean these poor little ol'.... You know the best they can do is.... You remember Paul Pipkin? He was going to tell his life story when he came to preach for you. The most exciting thing he did was push ducks out of the puddle when he was a kid. I mean.... Jimmy Baker! One fling and he is heralded as the world's greatest sinner—and the last I heard, fourteen minutes—fourteen minutes of sin. I'll show you how knowledgeable I am. He hit dead center on what they have statistically figured out is the average nationally, for one act. So you can go home and time yourselves now, folks. (You won't get that in Jerry Falwell's church. I'll tell you that for sure.)

...Sin is simple in the New Testament: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we've turned every one to our own way." God unleashed that one thing that gave the capacity for sin which is freedom and self-determination because He prized most highly what cannot be done without freedom—love freely given, trust freely resting.

The alternative to that is the misuse of freedom. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we’ve turned every one to our own way”—and that is my life story and most of yours. And having messed it up, we commit it to the Lord: “He worketh.”

You’ve ruined your health, don’t—that’s Oral Roberts’ stuff—don’t expect Him to put a new heart in today! But He goes to work on it. “The Lord worketh.” What else? I’ve committed it to Him. “The Lord knoweth.” (verse 18) “The Lord knoweth.” You know when I got a problem, I got to do a lot of explaining; and when I’m done there’s several meanings in the conversation. I know every one of us struggle to be understood. “The Lord who goes to work knoweth.” I remember sitting in a hotel in Taiwan far from home being abused by somebody. I pulled open a drawer and opened the Gideon Bible and it just.... it doesn’t happen to me very often, but on this occasion it fell open.

“Thou, Lord, knowest my downsittings and mine uprisings; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. If I make my bed in hell, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, ascend to the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there thou shalt hold me.” No matter where. “If I say, Surely this darkness will cover me; even the night will be light about me.” He sees through it. If you settle this trusting part and God’s Word—and I’ve had to ask myself....(And you know I’ve scared my dad to death sometimes the way I talk to God.) But every so often I’m convinced that I dig a tunnel for myself God can’t see in. There ain’t no way He knows some of the things I get in. You understand what I’m saying? “When you commit it to Him, the Lord worketh instantly. The Lord worketh with knowledge.” I don’t know how to unravel some of the knots I tie. But He knows where every intricate thread is, and we’re back to that attitudinal fix.... I mean this is a risky business, this “faith” business. As you go into 1988 I’m simply daring you to do it God’s way. “Commit thy way!” He goes to work instantly.

Well, good! “The Lord knoweth.” Yeah, He does.

“The steps....” What’s the next thing? So I can move on. “The steps...” (verse 23), “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” “Huh?” Okay, I committed my way to Him; I trust Him, delight in Him. I’ve committed my way to Him—He goes to work instantly when I commit. He knoweth so He can unravel things that I don’t even.... He knows the steps that my enemies are taking. He knows their plan; it’s like having a secret agent.

“The Lord ordereth.” Sure enough! Every time I’ve committed—(I’m about done so just hang in there)—every time I’ve committed my way to the Lord, the first step He takes is exactly the one I know He shouldn’t have took. Did you ever notice that? I commit my way to the Lord on Sunday—whew! First night I’ve had any peace in a year. I sit down and thank God, “You got it, Lord.” And Monday by 7 o’clock, He has blown it! Anybody with a brain in their head knows that is the wrong move. And I then say, “Sit down, God. And let me put it back together and then I’ll give you another chance.” You understand what I am saying at all?

President of Wheaton, V. Raymond Edman, wrote on this once. He said people commit their way to the Lord and then.... that’s like mailing a letter. You go down to the post office and you drop it in. World-shaking events are transcribed; dropped in a postbox. And we go get in our car, off somewhere to take a drink! We know that the act is committed. That world-shaking event we dropped in that postbox is long gone, man. We relax. We rest and wait patiently for the results. How often do you go down to the post office and see somebody stand in front of the postbox with his arm inside the slot? “What are you doing?” “I just can’t be sure they will deliver it—I’m making a decision. I’m making a decision about the postal service. This is a very important letter. It affects me and I’m... I’m close, but I’m not going to turn loose till I’m sure.” Finally you turn loose of it, then you go first charter a helicopter and a Lear jet, circle around the post office because you want to be sure it is going to Chicago—but you want to be sure it goes through Denver and certainly not through Houston, so you follow every mail truck.

“I want it in Chicago, but I also know the right way to go!” How many here have ever followed the mail trucks? We trust the US Postal Service more than we trust God. And you try to say you trust the Lord?

“The Lord knoweth.” He not only goes to work, He goes to work with knowledge, and “the Lord ordereth.” I thank God for the gray hairs today because as I preach this message some memories come back, of times that with all good intentions, I knew what God’s will was, and if He wasn’t going to do it, I would. And I set out; I did it good! Then when I got in a mess.... Believe me, I’m really good at reminding God how important I am to His program. Furthermore, He didn’t even see what needed to be done. I did it for Him, and I did it expecting Him to wake up after I started, to figure out....

I could just see Him having a council in Heaven: “You know, Gene is ahead of Us again! Now get a bunch of angels down there. We should have done that without him starting it. Now get on down there and help him get that job done!” Got it?

We trust the postal department more than we trust God. When you give it to Him Monday morning, wait. Get ready for your assignment because “The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord”; and I’m telling you on the authority of the record of God’s performance when you make that commitment, and when your attitudinal fix is right, the Lord is going to order your steps. So tomorrow morning when the whole roof caves in.... (tonight you give everything to God), and tomorrow a tornado hits your house—just thank God you are in the basement; and get up and know God was clearing the deck for something. That’s what faith is about! You get up with an attitude that says whatever happens to me, the Lord ordered it.

“Well I committed my way to the Lord, this divorce is happening, and I’m wanting....” Do you remember the guy that called one night, remember? And said, “What do I do?” I’m sure he had listened to my teaching, he committed his way to the Lord—and I get this phone call: “I just went into bankruptcy and my wife left me.” I said, “Man, not very many men at your age get the chance to start over clean like that!”

“Well, I committed my way to the Lord.” This is the way most of us do it. “Okay, Lord, I trust you. You’re my delight. Now there’s a divorce and I can’t live without this woman, so I’m going to commit my way to you.” It’s amazing when people get in trouble, how spiritual they get. They make all kinds of bargains with God—foxhole religion! So you commit your way and tomorrow morning you get an announcement she’s marrying somebody else. Then you sit there and start fretting again wondering how you can kill somebody. Man..., God’s clearing the decks to find you a good one! That’s got to be the attitude. If you’ve committed it to the Lord, rest and wait patiently because the Lord goes to work instantly with knowledge, and He’s going to order your steps. He’ll take you through that minefield if you’ll quit arguing about it. You understand me?

What is the next thing? He’s about done now. “The Lord upholdeth thee.” “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth thee with his hand.” Listen, if you start this kind of lifestyle to where you’ll commit your way to the Lord and rest and wait patiently, let me tell you where the attack is going to come.

When you waver, here comes the accuser to say you blew it, and your chance is now gone. The thing I like about Christianity—properly understood—is the way God provides for these stumblings and fallings. “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.”

As long as Elijah was perfect, God just got tougher on him—sent him to a brook that dried up and to a widow that didn’t have anything. When he finally fell, God sent an angel to bake a cake for him.

You've heard me say this many times: It's not an accident that the one that failed the Lord the most was chosen to preach the sermon on the Day of Pentecost that brought the church into existence. There had been a lot of people who would have grabbed his coattails and said, "Sit down! I've heard you speak before, and you are the one who denied the Lord, and you ain't speaking!"

I am telling you the formula is simple: Trust in the Lord, delight, commit, rest, wait patiently. The Lord goes to work instantly when you commit; and He does it with knowledge. He can unravel the parts. He orders your steps.

"What if I stumble?" (which you are going to do once you start this path of commitment.) That's why I'm still here today. It's been a long, long commitment for me, and I've stumbled more times than I want to count. And Satan has figured me out—he ain't never going to get me... to give up on a challenge. Where he's going to get me is beating on me when I think I have somehow either gotten ahead of the Lord, or missed Him, or gotten off the track. And oh, how he loves to come and tell the guy that stumbles, "You worthless hunk of whatever, you ain't got a prayer!" "Though he stumble"—shove it in the devil's teeth!—"he shall not be utterly cast down."

When God called you, the calling and election of God is without repentance or turning from. I don't care if you made this commitment a year ago and you've got 365 days of stumbling, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth with his hand."

Verse 28. "The Lord forsaketh not his saints"—and the "saint" is the word that comes from commitment. It's a liturgical word, those that have committed their way to Him. No matter how much you stumble, the Lord will not forsake you.

And the last promise is: "The Lord shall help them, and deliver them"—I really like this—"deliver them from the wicked." Deliverance is the ultimate promise. Now you can decide that you have come to God and it is a fruitless endeavor, or you can thank God for that tug that brought you in the first place.... that something that makes you different from the rest of the world who don't really give a damn about God or anything He might do.

Those that have that little responsive capacity that is placed in you by God, I'm telling you today—and this is my final Pastoral message of this year.... You get that attitude frame, and if you can come to the point that you can trust the Lord that you serve, and delight yourself in Him, you commit your way to Him. If it's a new commitment, you rest and you wait patiently. The minute you commit He goes to work. Some of you that whispered it while you were sitting here, while you are driving in the traffic going home..., the Lord of hosts that can command the stars in their places is going to work on your problem with knowledge you don't have.

Trust Him to order your steps, and don't complain if it looks like He's going the wrong way with you. When you stumble, get up and start over because you won't be utterly cast down. He'll uphold you with His hands. He doesn't forsake you, and He will deliver you out of them all. That's my promise to you in 1987. See you next Sunday.