

Fulfilling the will of God

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Let us turn to **John 7: 43-49**.

John 7: 43-49

- 43 So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.
44 Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.
45 The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them,
"Why did you not bring Him?"
46 The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."
47 The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you?"
48 "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?"
49 "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."

As we look at the life of the Lord Jesus, there are many, many aspects that we can ponder over, learn from Him, and seek to walk as He walked.

Here, we see the way that the people, who met Him, saw Him, heard Him... responded to Him. We are told a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. Different ones had different opinions and their responses might be different.

But here, I want to concentrate on this aspect: that some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

Why is it no one laid hands on Him? We are told that some of them wanted to seize Him and this was not only at this point of time. On various occasions, people wanted to seize Him, wanted to kill Him, but then, it did not happen that way.

If we look at the physical realm, we ponder over it at the natural plane, we may think it should not be very difficult to seize Him; it should not be very difficult to kill Him. Mob behaviour can sometimes be very violent and if there are enough people who are determined to kill Him, it might not be so very difficult. Why then is it they did not do it?

At the physical plane, there can be many different reasons why that did not take place. For example, the officers who were sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, they returned but they had not brought the Lord Jesus and they were asked, "Why did you not bring Him?" The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

So here we are told that the reason why they did not seize Him was they were so impressed by what the Lord Jesus said, they could not bear to do that: something is very unusual. The officers did not bring the Lord Jesus as instructed because they were struck by the way the Lord Jesus spoke. Some others might refrain from seizing Him because of fear of others who might retaliate. There can be many different reasons.

However, there is an overriding reason, which we need to spend some time to ponder over and this can help us greatly in our walk with God.

John 7: 30

So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

So here we are told specifically they were seeking to seize Him but no man laid his hand on Him. The reason is given specifically: because His hour had not yet come.

So in that sense, we can say it had nothing to do with them. The overriding reason for their not seizing Him was not because of them.

It was because the time had not yet come. So what does that mean?

It means that the overriding reason is the sovereign undertaking of God, to enable the Lord Jesus to fulfil His mission in doing the will of God.

The Lord Jesus came from heaven to fulfil a mission of tremendous importance and in our understanding of the revelation in the Scriptures this has to do with His death on the cross.

So for Him to die at any other point in time would not be suitable, would not be appropriate. He was going to die on the cross for the sins of the whole world. He was not going to die by an accident, just by some unpleasantness that arises from violence in a crowd.

He would die on the cross on the basis of the sins of mankind, and in that context we know that the crowds cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" - a portrayal of the sins of the world in rejecting the Saviour, in going our own way, in rebelling against God: The Lord Jesus died on the cross for the sins of all of us.

This aspect is very, very meaningful and very comforting for all those who love God and are committed to do His will: The Lord Jesus came into this world as a mortal man; He was able to experience what we go through: hunger, pain, tiredness, and He could have been killed at the physical level in different situations of life. Why then was He not killed except at the cross?

It is because God was watching over Him from the time of His coming into this world until the time He left this world. No one could do to Him what God did not permit.

Can this also be true of our lives? Can we follow the Lord Jesus in living a life where God is watching over us each moment and we can have the confidence that we will be able to go through life meaningfully and fulfil the will of God?

The Lord Jesus fulfilled His mission, the will of God for Him.

All of us would like to fulfil the will of God but in reality, many Christians do not properly fulfil the will of God.

That is because fulfilling the will of God is not just God's sovereign undertaking: God watching over us and then enabling us to go through each situation.

God's sovereign undertaking in this kind of sense is appropriate only when we have the same kind of spirit as the Lord Jesus: a life totally committed to fulfil the will of God. He came into this world to do the will of God. He lived each moment conscious that He belonged to God, He would live for God; He would fulfil His purposes in His life.

The Lord Jesus, again and again, He would say something along these lines: "I have not come to do My will. I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I speak, I judge." The Lord Jesus was constantly looking to God to understand what would be appropriate, what would be helpful, what would be suitable in that situation. He lived a life of perfect oneness with God, total submission to His will, conscious of what was most critical and important in His life.

It was because of this that God saw it fit to make sure the Lord Jesus would fulfil His plan for Him.

So if we want to live like that, then we need to make sure that we are faithful in seeking to fulfil the will of God in our lives.

If that is so, we can be restful in the knowledge that God will be with us and our lives can meaningfully proceed according to God's plan for us.

God does have a plan for us that is most wonderful, that is rich and meaningful for eternity. We may not quite understand or appreciate it at times but if we learn to walk with Him, in time to come we will be able to recognize and appreciate God's wisdom, His love, His power, the meaning of what He is seeking to do.

So how much do we really want to know God's will? Are we really interested in that? Or are our hearts more occupied with the things of this world, with the things that we are interested in, with the things that are more interesting, pleasant, and enjoyable for us?

Whether God will undertake or not has much to do with how much we want to fulfil His will.

So this aspect is critical: that we truly want to know God's will and therefore we will seek Him daily again and again throughout our lives to understand His will. And yes, we will also pray for ourselves, pray for others to know God's will. We need to know, to understand what is in His heart and be identified with Him. It is then that we can properly fulfil it.

But knowing the will of God is not of value to us unless we are committed to live it out.

We need to ensure that the way we live our lives each day corresponds with our understanding of what He wants of our lives.

What He wants of our lives has the direction of the will of God for everyone as well as the will of God for each one specifically, and we need to understand both aspects: a general direction of what God wants for all of us to become like Him in the moral perfection of His character, to be one with Him in terms of what He wants to accomplish in the universe He has created; and then also to identify with Him in our specific circumstances, specific situations of life – what He desires of us.

Are we prepared to live that way, to walk according to His will?

Then wanting to do His will, committed to His will may also not result in our living it out unless we are sufficiently conscious we need His power to live that way.

We must recognize we are created beings; we cannot live out this life by ourselves. We do not have life in ourselves; neither do we have the power to live according to the will of God on our own.

So this aspect of: our dependence on God and our appreciation of His sovereign power and wisdom is critical in working out the will of God.

How wonderful it is always to live according to the wisdom of God and the power of God. And yet this is where it is up to us whether we choose to do that or not. That choice God leaves to us.

He will do His part according to what is meaningful. If our choices are not meaningful, we cannot expect Him to undertake in a way that will be truly the most meaningful. But if we do, then we can rest in the knowledge that God will be with us.

But then, how does God undertake in our lives?

The Lord Jesus went through His life such that He was not killed because His hour had not yet come.

In our situations, God will also undertake so that we can go through each situation as is appropriate in His sight.

But how does God do that?

We may think because God is almighty, so the way He does that would be His almighty power ensuring it. For example we have read in the Old Testament that when God worked in the context of protecting the people of Israel, He could work miracles such that the enemies were killed without human hands. They could be killed directly by God, whether with hailstones, fire, or whatever way that God may choose; He can do that.

But in many situations of life, we may find that God may not work that way and sometimes, or even often, when He works in ways that are not so obvious, we may not even realize that God is undertaking.

Acts 18: 9-10

- 9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;
10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

Here, the Lord assured the apostle Paul he would not be harmed in that situation. He told him, "...go on speaking... do not be silent... I am with you... no man will attack you in order to harm you."

God in His sovereignty would ensure that.

No man could go against that.

But here the Lord explained; in the context the Lord said, "for I have many people in this city."

So this tells us that the way He was going to ensure it was through His disciples. There were many people who would be obedient to the Lord and they would do their part to make sure that the apostle Paul would not be harmed.

So this is just an example of the kind of action that God may take in order to sovereignly protect us, lead us.

In the case of Daniel's three friends, they were thrown into the furnace of fire but God ensured that they were not burnt.

Daniel was thrown into the lion's den but God ensured that the lions did not kill him.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sold to become a slave in Egypt, but God undertook for him in ways that may not seem very dramatic. He was even put in prison, in the dungeon; life was not pleasant but God was with him and in time to come, God showed His purpose by raising Joseph to become the Second-in-Command in the land of Egypt and to save the people.

So if we are faithful to God, we can have the assurance, the peace of heart that we can go through each situation meaningfully.

But let us remember that it is conditional.

Will we be faithful? Will we truly seek the will of God? Will we live by it? Will we depend on God? Or will we go our own way? Will we choose what we prefer? Would we listen to the world and to the many voices around us rather than to the voice of the Lord?

So as we come before the Lord, let us ask Him to help us appreciate how we can properly fulfil the will of God in our lives.

As we look at the example of the Lord Jesus, let us be deeply impressed by how important it is for us to be so identified with God that our lives will truly bring honour to Him, joy to Him and we can properly fulfil His will.

Otherwise as we look back when we are about to leave this world, we may regret how we have lived our lives and it will be too late. Let us not wait until such a time before we seriously evaluate our lives.

Now is the time; now is the time to consider: What do you want to live for? What do you want to give your life for? What is truly valuable to you?

Your choice will determine the outcome in your life. God will respond to you according to the meaning of your choice.

So let us then ask Him to help us to ponder over these issues, to seek to understand more deeply what is important to Him and what should be important to us.

And let us ask Him to enable us to live according to His will.

Let us learn to exercise our choice such that we will choose God's ways always.