

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adult Sunday School

THE SEVENFOLD WILL OF GOD

LESSON FOUR: THE COOPERATIVE WILL

I. INTRODUCTION

God's decretive will is His sovereign, eternal plan that cannot be altered. God's directive will is His revealed commands that guide believers in holy living. Having studied these two aspects of God's sevenfold will, we now come to the third aspect namely, God's cooperative will.

The cooperative will of God teaches that, while God remains absolutely sovereign, He graciously chooses to accomplish many of His purposes through the willing obedience, prayers, service, and faithfulness of His people. God does not need human assistance, yet He delights to use redeemed sinners as His instruments in carrying out His work on earth. He invites believers to cooperate with Him by obeying His Word, exercising their spiritual gifts, witnessing for Christ, serving one another, and participating in the advancement of His kingdom.

Understanding God's cooperative will reminds us that the Christian life is not one of passive waiting but of active participation. Although the fulfillment of God's eternal plan ultimately rests upon His sovereign power, every believer has the privilege and responsibility of labouring together with Him. Our obedience does not make God sovereign, but it enables us to become joyful participants in what He is already accomplishing for His glory.

II. “I, BEING THE WAY” (GENESIS 24:27)

The account that surrounds Abraham's servant seeking a wife for Isaac is found in Genesis 24. This passage is a classic example of the Cooperative Will of God. Rev Timothy Tow called this cooperative will as “Self-help with God's help is the best help.” This is the maxim of the cooperative will of God.

Abraham's servant said “... I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren” (Genesis 24:27). This is a significant statement. He understood that he was being in the way, and he chose no other way even though he could have trusted in his own judgment, method, or used his own creativity, resources, and experiences. Yet by testifying that he is being in the way, suddenly turns the whole situation into a different perspective. It is no longer him but the Lord who gets all the credit and glory. He saw himself being in the way. It is not the Lord being in the way. He himself is in the way. He made sure that that very step is where God wants him to take. It is not take it first and then see if God would make any changes. It would then be “God, being in the way” right?

To be able to say “I being in the way” means we are led by God in every single step of the way. There is not a step taken without God. That's the significance! God's cooperative will calls for our complete surrender to His perfect will so much so that whatever will we have are all in subjection to God's will.

III. “THE MACEDONIAN CALL!” (ACTS 16:6-10)

The context of this passage was that Apostle Paul was on his second missionary journey with Silas. Led by the Spirit, they moved from place to place, city to city preaching the gospel. However, they were stopped by the Spirit to preach in Asia Minor as well as Bithynia where Russia and China were located.

Then Apostle Paul received a vision of a man calling from Macedonia (verse 8). There was no resistance at all from Paul and Silas. They followed where the Spirit is leading. This is the cooperative will of God. When the Holy Spirit stopped them from preaching in Asia, they obeyed and moved on. Every step is guided by the Spirit. And the way the Spirit leads them is very specific, though not all in one go, but step by step. What we think may not be where God wants for us. Apostle Paul and Silas are planning to go north east to Russia and China. But God stops them and calls them to go west into Europe to preach the gospel. We see the cooperative will of God at work in Apostle Paul and Silas for they obediently followed the Spirit's leading.

IV. APPLICATION: "BE GOD'S INSTRUMENT"

The cooperative will of God is seen in the Great Commission for the work of evangelism where God is pleased to use us as His instruments. We are Calvinists, not hyper Calvinists. Hyper Calvinists believe God will save His elect without any instrument. We are reminded of William Carey's example of being God's instrument in India. When he shared his calling to India with the missions board comprising of all the hyper Calvinist ministers, their reply was disappointing. They told him, "If God wants to save the heathen, He would do it without your help and mine." This is the hyper-Calvinist mentality.

But William Carey is a true-blue Calvinist who believed in both God's sovereignty and human responsibility. God used William Carey mightily when he submitted to God's cooperative will. William Carey came up with this great statement: "Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God." This is another great maxim for the cooperative will of God. As Calvinists, we believe "... faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (see Romans 10:17). We are to be God's instruments to go and preach the Word to where He wants us to be. Without preaching the Word, how will the people hear the Word?

Remember the beautiful feet of those who bring good tidings of peace and hope to the lost souls in Romans 10:13-15? Romans 10:13-15, **"¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"**

How will people hear the gospel if no one share with them? All of God's children have a significant role to play in reaching out to the lost. We are to do so by bearing a good testimony and active sharing of the gospel. This is the mission which God has given us after salvation. Let us show forth the example of one who obeys God's cooperative will. "I being in the way," "the Macedonian Call" and be the instrument God is pleased to use to reach out and share the gospel. May the Lord help us. Amen.