

Wrestling with the Sovereignty of God & the Freedom of Relationship

Introduction - His Tactical Flexibility in the OT

*Review last week

Over and over and over again God displays a Tactical Flexibility

A willingness to ebb and flow, to dance relationally with humanity

In a couple weeks we will go back to Genesis 1-3 and show that as Sovereign Creator he DESIGNED IT like this

And though He has a Goal of redemption that He will not let go of

More often than not, we see a different side of God...the flexible One

So for the next couple of weeks we are literally going to work thru the entire OT and NT

Narrative to see how often this comes up

To see if we are willing to take the Bible Narrative at Face Value

1. God's Tactical Flexibility

What does tactical mean?

The Narrative reveals a God who, within His strategic purpose, is amazing at accommodating Himself to the tactical needs of the moment

God shows up as someone committed to entering into a dialogue rather than simply just pushing a decree

We commonly speak in most definite terms about GOD's WILL and GOD's PLAN

And we do so in the sense that everything that happens was preordained, preplanned, pre-determined by God

Of course this does not fit other things we say as well

But I don't think this is the most consistent view in the Sacred Story

Remember...God's goal ultimately is RELATIONSHIP...NOT A PLAN

So, let's start our Journey thru the OT and see the patterns

And as we do, I am going to suggest to you that you will see God acting in the following ways:

1. God Regrets

Even His own decisions sometimes

Can you generally regret something that is fixed to happen?

Buy a car w/ no engine, go home, try and start – are you really disappointed it doesn't start?

Regret is when reality happens and it clashes with what you hope will happen

Future is open

2. God EXPECTS and gets let down

How do you get "let down" when you designed already what is gonna happen?

3. Gets Frustrated

Again, why if you already have it all planned out?

Again remember, EMOTIONS EXPRESS THE INNER EXPERIENCE OF GOD

4. Tests People

And it doesn't say SO THEY WILL KNOW, but rather so GOD WILL KNOW

5. Speaks/Thinks about the future openly

Using "IF" language all the time

6. Repents

Over 30 times

So, let's walk through some stories in the OT and see what God is like

Old Testament walkthrough

The question I want you to ponder is this: How in the "moment" is God?

I submit to you that God's plan is not so much a detailed blueprint, but rather a broad intention with flexible strategies that allows for a variety of options on how to reach His goals (TGWR)

The Flood

- Gen. 6:5-6

God actually regretting His decision, He is sorry He made them...CREATION for heavens sake

- Gen. 6:7

God shares His terrible secret with Noah about His impending judgment on the people

God is inviting Noah into His heartache in essence, almost begging Him for another solution

And you can see this after it is finished as God promises never to do it again

The testing of Abraham with Isaac

- Gen. 22:12

"Now I know since"

Normally when you hear this in a sermon, who is the test for and why?

But isn't it interesting that Abraham isn't said to have learned anything

It should be noted that the only one said to have learned something in the text is GOD

If God already knew, then there is NO TEST, and then why does God say this?

God needs to know if he is gonna fulfill Gen 12:3

You get the strong impression BOTH God AND Abraham take a risk with each other

This is by the way consistent

God will work in the world, but typically not apart from people of faith

Why?

Because He is collaborative...He loves and desires free love back...HE'S RELATIONAL

Sodom and Gomorrah

You can see it when God decides to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah

God invites Abraham into the decision and to basically haggle with Him over the decision

And through it God shows a huge willingness to change His decision

In fact in chapter 18 it says God decides to tell him because He cannot keep a secret from His covenant friend

This is not just a Strategically purposeful God, but a wonderfully flexible God as well

Jacob Wrestled with God

What happened in that story?

Notice, God did not overwhelm Him with His super powers

Why?

Created a fair fight...give and take

Who initiated the wrestling match do you remember?

GOD initiated the wrestling, not Jacob in this case