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I love soccer. When I went to secondary school and university, I had played soccer a lot with friends. Nowadays I do not play any longer, but enjoy watching English Premier League on TV from time to time. Like other sports, the role of the manager is very critical in a soccer game. The team manager must do lots of things, but one of the most critical jobs is planning the right tactics to win a match. But, the tactical planning is not easy or simple.

The best strategy is helping his players to do the best they can do. However, if a number of the best players are injured or banned from playing, the manager should think and select who the second or third best players are on his team. Considering the playing styles of the opponents, or whether they are stronger or weaker, the coach must be able to make effective game plans.

The core of soccer tactics is choosing a formation for the particular match. A soccer team consists of 11 players, ten field players and one goal keeper. How to dispose of ten field players has a huge impact on the outcome. So, the head coach has to carefully select the best formation for his team, reviewing lots of facts and figures and variables.

In choosing a formation, the most important thing is to put the right person in the right place. Have you heard about Paul Pogba? He is a midfielder of Manchester United and one of the most expensive players in the world. His strong point is creative playmaking and great passing at the offensive line, but in the last few games his performance was poor because his defensive position allocated at those games did not match his playing style. No matter how expensive they are, players cannot afford to shine in the wrong place.

Also, the manager must have tactical agility. When his game plan does not work in the match, he should be able to change his strategy flexibly depending on the situations. Whether they are good managers or not relies on the level of tactical agility.

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In this regard, our God is the greatest manager. It is very interesting to view God's ministry as if he was a team's manager, which provides us with a fresh

perspective for understanding him. He has always selected the correct people for his salvation works and put them in the right places.

Sometimes, however, his chosen people were far from fulfilling his expectations; they did not do what they were supposed to do. But, he did not give up the match and tried to reverse the situations changing his plans and strategies or replacing some people with great missional agility. Interestingly, God was also disappointed by his workers' poor performance or unwanted situations.

He even regretted what he did or planned, which was rare though; then, he directly admitted his plan was not right and fixed the problems. Some people may not like that God could mistake or regret, but this is not my own opinion, but what the Bible testifies.

One of the representative scenes containing God's regret is the story of Noah's flood. After God's creation, human beings began to increase in number on the earth, but God saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become.

Genesis 6:6 shows well how God felt at that time as follows:

“The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.”

Here, the Hebrew word translated ‘regret’ is *Naham* which means ‘to repent.’ And, the word translated ‘be troubled’ is *Achav* that signifies ‘distressed.’ Yes, God looked very disappointed and depressed at the people's sinful lives. It seems that he would not have imagined that result.

So, God planned to wipe from the face of the earth the human beings together with all the living creatures. He decided to save only Noah and his family, and a pair of all the creatures. He wanted to cleanse the world by sweeping out all living beings except for the chosen ones.

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Today's first Bible reading, Genesis 9:8-17, is talking about what happened after the flood of judgement. What is important here is the divine covenant made with Noah and his family. In verse 11 God says to Noah and his sons, “I

establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

In today’s passages, he mentioned the term ‘covenant’ eight times. This shows God’s strong will to keep the covenant no matter what happens. As you see, the essence of the promise was that he would not destroy the world by a flood again. In verse 11 God stressed that decision twice. In verse 15, he emphasised it once again, “Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.”

What do you find through that covenant and God’s firm resolution? We can see, No, we must see that God’s key strategy for the salvation of human beings was dramatically changed here. Many people tend to focus on the word ‘flood’ in God’s promise with Noah. So, some of them believe that God will judge the world with fire next time.

But, there is one missing point in that interpretation; and that is God’s heart. In preparing today’s message and reading the scripture again and again, I could feel God’s broken heart due to the total destruction of all human beings and all living creatures by the flood. God’s repetitive emphasis on his promise reveals his regret at the judgement.

If we read the divine contract again taking into consideration God’s sadness, we would not focus on the term ‘flood’ but the expression ‘never again destroy all life.’ God used the phrase three times in his covenant.

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Look, at the time of Noah God’s plan for purifying wicked human beings was to sweep out all bad things. Then, he saved a righteous person and his family. Genesis 6:8 says, “But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.” However, since the covenant with Noah after the Deluge, God’s plan was changed. The rainbow God showed was the sign.

After Noah, he did not choose one person to reserve. Instead, he selected one person to sacrifice for all other lives. Yes, he determined to select his only son Jesus as a sacrificial offering. Karl Barth describes this plan as Double Predestination in Jesus Christ. That is, God picked all human beings for salvation, and elected only one person for damnation; he was Jesus. Jesus got

God’s NO alone and became a channel of blessing to make God’s YES to be given to all human beings.

Barth explains this grace of Jesus in his book, *Dogmatics in Outline*, as follows:

To pronounce the name of Jesus Christ means to acknowledge that we are cared for, that we are not lost. Jesus Christ is man’s salvation in all circumstances and in face of all that darkens his life, including the evil that proceeds from himself. . . . We do not exist in any kind of gloomy uncertainty; we exist through the God who was gracious to us before we existed at all. It may be true that we exist in contradiction to this God, that we live in remoteness from Him, indeed in hostility to Him. It is still truer that God has prepared reconciliation for us, before we entered the struggle against Him. . . . It is this faith that we are called to belief through the Christian Church and in the Holy Spirit.

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Sisters and brothers,

At the time of the great flood only Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord, but through Jesus Christ now we all can find favour in God’s eyes. Like the player called ‘crack’ in soccer who has a great ability to tear down a solid defence formation and make space for other teammates, Jesus broke through the strong wall of death and gave us gilt-edged chances following God’s incredible strategy.

Now, the defence line of the demons was already broken by the death and resurrection of Jesus, our captain. However, the match does not finish yet. Stay alert, and keep fighting and running until the final whistle is blown.

The Apostle Paul said, “I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Jesus Christ, is calling us.” Amen.