

The Audacity of God

Someone already wrote a book about the insanity of God* (it's worth reading), so I had to come up with another title. Living in Rwanda has me thinking about lots of things that are outside of my usual box. Could God be described as insane or audacious (or any similarly colorful adjective)?

From a dictionary point of view, audacity has two sides:

1. A willingness to take bold risks - synonyms being words like boldness, daring, fearlessness, intrepidity, bravery.
2. Rude or disrespectful – with synonyms such as impudence, impertinence, insolence, presumptuousness.

If the premise of my thoughts here are based around God's audacity, I certainly don't want to describe the Creator of the universe as rude or disrespectful – I'm not even sure that I'm comfortable with "a willingness to take bold risks." My view of the sovereignty of God doesn't have God taking risks, even calculated risks. But I might be okay saying He is bold, fearless and brave. I guess my difficulty arises from attempting to describe God with human terms and characteristics.

If God is indeed audacious, what does that actually mean? How can I make (and support) such a statement?

First, consider the people God uses to fulfill His purposes. One could argue that God is audacious for using *any* people (some might even argue that He's crazy). The simple truth is that God has used some very unlikely men and women. There are countless examples in the Bible. Joseph, the spoiled brat. Moses, the murderer. Rahab, the prostitute. Saul/Paul, the persecutor.

And you've already figured out where I'm going next: God is using you and me. This is where I really want to call God audacious. Who am I? Like Moses arguing at the burning bush or Isaiah in the throne room before the Almighty. How can it be? (Great hymn, by the way). Here I am in the middle of Africa, teaching pastors and encouraging farmers. An "uneducated country preacher" that rarely went far from the farm. I have to be back by milking time! Ten years ago if someone had told me that this is where I would be, I'd most likely have told them they're, well, audacious.

But I also want to mention, regarding God's audacity, the circumstances God uses. There are situations that we would hardly think redeemable, yet are often the greatest opportunities. Thinking again of biblical examples, there was Abraham and Sarah's barrenness, Naomi and Ruth's widowhood, Daniel's sleepover in a lion's den. For that matter, Jesus' crucifixion certainly fits a description as the craziest of circumstances, yet that is the very thing that brings us to God.

Popular/contemporary examples come to mind. Joni Eareckson Tada's diving accident. Chuck Colson's Watergate involvement. And I could name a number of lesser known individuals that have lived through incredibly difficult and horrific circumstances, yet have become people of powerful faith. At times we might say that a person is strong in spite of the hard times, but mostly we would argue that it is *because* of the hard times.

I will close with a third thought on the subject – that is, the mercy and grace God shows. At least a part of what I'm thinking about here goes back to the people (like you and me) that God uses. The fact that we can be used by Him, blessed by Him, strengthened by Him only points to His mercy and grace. This might be a bit simplistic, but in a nutshell,

mercy is not getting what we deserve and grace is receiving what we don't deserve. Because of my sin, I deserve eternity in Hell. God in His mercy has forgiven me. Instead, God graciously gifts me an eternity with Him in Heaven. For the Father to send His Son for the purpose of our redemption is, in my view, audacious. He's not taking a "risk", per se, but He is certainly bold, daring and fearless. "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" *II Corinthians 9:15*

For the Master, Chris Elliott with the Church of the Brethren Rwanda

* *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected*, Nik Ripkin. B&H Books, 2013.