



Unfathomable

Ephesians 1: 8b-9 NIV

With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ...

Have You Ever Come Across Something Incomprehensible?

When I first started college, there was a girl in our church that I kind of liked, but I hadn't asked out. She was cute and my best friend had a crush on her. I had a convertible and asked her and my friend if they wanted to drive down to the beach. We got there and it was a beautiful day. Nice sun and perfect for body surfing. As the day wore on, I realized that this girl was really cute and I decided that when we got back, I would ask her for a date. I knew my best friend liked her a lot but it seemed to me that he didn't stand a chance with her anyway so I would go ahead "take the plunge". However, in the afternoon, the girl wandered off and left us both. We spotted her up on a hill overlooking the water sitting next to a guy. I took her to the beach in my car and she was hanging out with some surfer dude she just met? I could understand that she was not interested in being with my friend, but to walk away from me. That was incomprehensible. It was at that point I decided that girls are unfathomable. I have known of numerous women, probably including my wife, who would say the same thing of men. King Agur in the Proverbs says there are four things that are too amazing for him. Probably you could come up with a much longer list than that! The world is filled with unfathomable parts to it. You have come across many of them in your lifetime

Our key verse today in Ephesians 1: 8-9 says there is something specific that is beyond understanding. **With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ...** We are told that it is what the English text calls a "mystery". The Greek word it translates sounds much like mystery and is *musterion*. It though does not mean something you can eventually unwrap and discover what is inside. A *musterion* would not be a solvable puzzle. It is something unfathomable, incomprehensible. Science cannot figure out how this happens, and neither can psychology or sociology. What God has done through Christ is not graspable to the human mind. It is simply observable.

We are told there are three aspects to this work of God. One, it came about through all wisdom. This is the translation of the Greek word *sophia* and speaks of learning, knowledge. God knew what He was doing when He came up with His plan. Two, the plan also springs out of understanding. The Greek word here is *phronesis* and has to do with intelligence, thoughtfulness. In other words, God put His mind to the problem facing the universe, the corruption brought about by sin. The Lord did not just willy-nilly put some ideas together and do whatever seemed fine. He pondered the problem with all of His great mind and salvation came out of His thinking. There is a third aspect to how God developed His plan. He did so in His "good pleasure". This is an amazing consideration. The Greek term is *eudokia* and it could be translated "good will" or "good determination". The key here is that it is good. If you were to ask me what marks God from us it is that He is good. Jesus made it clear that there is no one good, but God. Beyond His supernatural abilities and creation power, what lifts Him above us all is that God is good in every single way.

God put every resource available to Him to create a plan for making His people and all of creation right and good. Christ crucified was the total plan. There was no other way He was going to do this but through Jesus dying on the cross to save us all from our sins. He considered all the options, used the might of His great intellect, summoned all of his knowledge and the only plan He had was for Jesus to die Good Friday. What is unfathomable to us, that Christ's death could work such a great miracle for the world is the genius of God.

The other day I saw a video of a young man who was angry that the number of chicken nuggets in his bag was less than he expected so he went on a cursing rage at the employee who served him. With all his strength, he slapped the guy and walked out, having threatened to get the manager sent to prison for life because he didn't get every piece of fried chicken he thought he should. How do you change that kind of guy? What do you do to rework that man's emotional and psychological wiring? I read this week of a professional murderer who killed hundreds of men and women for money. He had no remorse for what he had done. The killer was a doting grandfather that loved making his grandkids and children happy. Everyone in his neighborhood adored him and yet he in cold blood killed people for more than three decades. What could be done to rehabilitate that guy? God had a plan.

Our verse tells us that God has made known to us that plan, which is a musterion, unfathomable. The Greek term translated "made known", means to make known by experience, by an intimate encounter with the revelation. How do you figure out that God's plan for remaking people works? I recently heard the account of a young woman who had an abortion when she was sixteen. In college, she dated a guy who was a staunch atheist and on a whim, the two of them decided to go to a worship service at a huge church they jokingly called, "Six Flags over Jesus". One of the speakers was a director at a pregnancy support center. As she spoke, she was so soft spoken and kind that the woman who shared her testimony said that her heart instantly broke. She realized how terrible her sin was and what it cost Jesus to take it away and within seconds she was transformed by God. The woman reported that in a crowd of a thousand, it was like God was dealing just with her and something like scales fell from her eyes and new life was breathed in her. Now every once in a while, this woman says that she will be in a worship service and tears will stream down her face, not because of shame over her past but out of awe of what a great salvation she has gained in Christ. That is God's plan. Jesus makes even the worst of us completely new and filled with eternal life.

Consider the fascinating case of the brother of Jesus, James. Many don't realize that Jesus actually had half brothers and sisters and one of them was James. We don't hear anything about their early lives, but there are strong hints of what they thought of Jesus recorded in two of the Gospels. In John 7 we are told that Jesus' brothers tried to convince Jesus to go up to Jerusalem and parade about at the festival taking place then. They wanted Him to work miracles and draw a crowd. It is funny though, they seemed to have been egging Him on without any real interest in Jesus doing God's work. They argued, "**No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.**" (John 7:4 NIV) What is most telling is the comment made just following this quote. **For even his own brothers did not believe in him.** (John 7: 5 NIV) They wanted Jesus to be a side show at a carnival, they certainly, including James, did not see Him as "Savior of the World". Even more telling is an incident recorded by Mark. Jesus had gone into a house to teach and a large crowd had gathered there to see Him. It was so wild that Jesus' disciples, who were hungry, couldn't find a way to get something to eat. Jesus' family, including his brothers thought Jesus was deranged by now and went to the house to take charge of Him. **When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."** (Mark 3:21 NIV) How little respect Jesus' brothers had for His ministry is astounding.

Jesus knew what His brothers thought of Him. When He returned to His hometown of Nazareth to preach, He was not exactly warmly received. In fact, many mocked Him, noting that Jesus own brothers and sisters were on hand, but did not seem to think much of Him. Jesus' comment is telling. **Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."** (Mark 6:4 NIV) In His own house, meaning among His family members, Jesus was not honored as God's

Messiah. It's crazy to think, but one of the most important people in the church thought little of Jesus before God's plan of salvation was unveiled.

Something completely transformed how James thought of Jesus once Christ was crucified. He became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and the one who finally settled the conflict between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles over how much of the Jewish law non-Jewish Christians had to keep. Not only did James's faith in Christ as Savior lead to him being given authority among the believers, it became so intense that according to a non-Christian historian of the time, he died the horrible death of stoning because Jewish leaders hated the intense loyalty He had to Jesus as Savior. What turned James around brought Him to see that Jesus was the Savior of the world was salvation. The plan God developed after much thought and consideration resulted in the means by which sinful, broken, and unbelieving people could become perfect and right in every way. There comes a point when you must realize you cannot fix yourself. Too much of you is broken by sin and you won't ever get yourself right. God has the perfect plan for you! Put your life in His hands and trust Him with it. Every detail is worked out by Him and no crisis or bad circumstance is too big for the one who created the way of salvation to solve. Victory is yours! It is on the way. God has already figured out how it will happen.