

**"Belief Brings Miracle"**

**Scripture Passages:** 1) Psalm 19  
2) Galatians 3:1-14  
3) Galatians 3:15-22

**Read Galatians 3:15-22**

**Foolish Galatians:** You Foolish Galatians! So what do you think? How would you respond to that line if I used it in a sermon? What if I started my sermon, “You Foolish Paw Paw Presbyterians!” Would that be an effective way to start out a conversation?

Paul was definitely out of sorts. I think he was extremely worried about his Galatian friends. Paul had poured a lot of energy into the churches of Galatia. He had been so enthused by the faith of the people in those churches. He had been energized thinking about the ministry and mission taking place through those outposts of grace. Then all of a sudden some Jewish Christians from Judea came to the area and started teaching a different gospel from the one Paul had taught. These new teachers were taking the people of the Galatian churches down a path very different from the one Paul had been leading them. Paul was discouraged, he was stressed, he was disappointed, he was angry. Paul was a long ways a way wishing he could be there himself and all he could do was write a letter, pray, hope, and trust that the truth of the Gospel would take hold in the people he loved. Oh, those foolish Galatians, how could they lose sight of the truth of the Gospel so easily? How often is that the case for us as well? How often do we lose sight of the truth and the power of the Gospel?

**The Issue:** So what was the issue? Why had Paul worked up to such a tizzy?

The issue Paul was concerned about was the law. What does that mean? Does that mean that Paul was advocating for the law to be abolished, that we become a lawless people, that we abandon the rules of society?

Absolutely not! Paul was a law follower. Paul believed in the law. Paul was a supporter of the law. But Paul understood that the law was a dead end. Paul understood that following the law does not lead to life, to resurrection, to becoming new creations. Paul knew that following the law did not lead to God.

Following the law is good! Following the law is critical for the health of society! But following the law does not lead to life, to God. Paul understood that, but the Galatians had lost sight of that truth.

So when these new teachers showed up and started teaching that the goal was to follow the law, and the people of the church were buying it, he flipped his lid. He was pulling out his hair. He was like a parent who could not believe the choices his kids were making. He was at his wits end. You foolish Galatians!

**Law Leads to Defeat:** Following the law is important, but it does not lead to life. Does that make sense?

Just think about it. We can go through life, stopping at every stop sign, never going over the speed limit, never shoplifting, never peeking at our neighbors test, never cheating on our taxes, but does any of that change us for the better? Does any of that help us become more like who God is calling us to be?

No! Following the law is just frustrating because eventually we are going to miss a stop sign, or go over the speed limit, or lie. Then we just feel bad about ourselves. Our self esteem goes down. We feel like losers. When the goal for life is following the law, life is a dead end, a dead end that leads to death.

The goal of the gospel, the point of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the point of Scripture-- God's Word, the point of worship, and the point of our life together in the church is life, not death. A wonderful group of confirmands is joining the church today. Do we want them to join us, for a journey toward death or life?

**Miracle:** You see the way of Jesus, the way of discipleship is the way of grace, love, salvation, resurrection, transformation, becoming new. The way of Jesus is the way of miracle.

The Psalmist describes this beautifully in Psalm 19. The Psalmist describes the magnificent glory of creation. David saw God in the beauty of creation, because every sunrise, every starry sky, every flower, every wave, every tree, every person was different each time you looked at it. Creation is always new, it is always becoming, it is always in a process of transformation. Every time David watched a sunset the miracle of it took his breath away, because it was more beautiful than the day before.

When we give ourselves to the process of transformation, to the process of becoming new, to the truth of resurrection, we give ourselves to the stunning power of miracle.

Look at the person next to you. Look into their eyes. Go ahead. Don't be afraid. (Long Pause)

Do you believe you can love that person more beautifully than you have to this point in your life?

Of course you can. Of course I can. Of course we can. What will help us love them more, though? The law? No way!

What will it take for us to love that person more fully? What will it take for us to love God more fully? It will take us becoming new. It will take us dying to something so we can love more excellently. It will take us having grace for ourselves, so we can experience transformation. It will take a miracle. Transformation is miracle. Resurrection is miracle. Becoming new is miracle.

**Conclusion:** Paul wants so much more for those beloved Galatians than the law. Paul wants them to know the miracle of resurrection, transformation, and new life. Paul wants that for us too. Paul wants that for our confirmands. Paul wants that for everyone.

Our baptisms are all about the miracle of new life, the miracle of being born again, the miracle of becoming new. Joining the church is all about joining a community of people empowered and excited and passionate about becoming new creations together, so that we can experience the miracle of loving God and each other more fully, more freely, and more graciously today than we did yesterday.

Oh those foolish Galatians! How could they choose the law over the miracle of transformation? Well it is easier. And it is less painful. But it is also a dead end.

So what about us? What will we choose? Will we choose the easy, dead end road of the law? Or will we choose the path that leads to life, glorious life, abundant life? Will we choose the miraculous path of transformation, resurrection, becoming new?

Would Paul call us foolish Paw Paw Presbyterians? Or would Paul celebrate that we have chosen the miraculous path of life? Oh my friends, let us choose life! Let us embrace the miracle of our on-going transformation. Amen.