

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹“When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ then say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,’ and it will become a snake.”

¹⁰So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. ¹¹Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: ¹²Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. ¹³Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said. (NIV84)

Theme: Faith Triumphs over Reason

1. It believes that miracles are true.
2. It believes in Christ alone for salvation

In English class my freshman year of high school, my teacher taught us about the “willing suspension of disbelief.” It is a rather easy concept to grasp. It is mostly applied when you are reading a book or watching tv or movies. The willing suspension of disbelief is when a reader or viewer, on purpose, puts aside his doubt and criticism of events in order to enjoy what he is doing. For instance when you are watching a movie you don’t stop watching it or stop enjoying it because there is no way that a car can fly off of an off-ramp, roll a few times in the air, land on it’s wheels and still be drivable. You don’t turn the tv off because there is no way all those people could survive a plane crash like that. You don’t put the book down because vampires and werewolves can’t possibly exist. No, for the sake entertainment, you willing set aside your reason and stop not believing.

But is that how things work with God’s Word? Not exactly. Scripture is loaded with many things that are contrary to our reason. But don’t have to suspend our disbelief because it is actually true. We just suspend our reason. Only those who believe are able to do this. For faith always triumphs over reason. Faith believes that miracles are true, and faith believes in Christ alone for salvation.

God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to tell him to let the Israelites leave his country. But by this time the Israelites

were well entrenched in their duties as slaves. And Pharaoh didn’t want to just let his free labor walk right out of the country, so he refused. And he made the Israelites work even harder. So God told Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh again. And this time they were to perform a miracle in front of him to show him that the Lord—the almighty God, was on their side.

So they went to Pharaoh and Aaron threw down his staff and it turned into a snake. But Pharaoh wasn’t impressed. He called together the wise men of Egypt and some people who practiced the dark arts. And somehow they were able to duplicate what Moses and Aaron did. Yet their snakes were far inferior. Aaron’s snake devoured all the snakes of the magicians.

But Pharaoh didn’t care. In his mind what his people did was just as good as what God did through Moses. He should have gotten the clue that God is more powerful than anyone by the fact that his snake ate the others. God was showing Pharaoh that he was God of gods, and Lord of all; and besides him there is no god. Pharaoh didn’t get it. His reason was faulty. He was the most powerful man in the world who ran the most powerful country in the world. Why should he be afraid of anyone or any god? So he put his faith in his own power and that of his men. In his so-called wisdom, he put his trust in a delusion. He rejected God’s warning. He hardened his heart against God and his word through his messengers. He refused to listen to what God was trying to tell him. And it was the beginning of his downfall. He would continue in his stubbornness up until the firstborn sons of the Egyptians were struck down. And eventually he followed his hardened heart into the Red Sea.

Our reason might lead us down the same path. There are many things in Scripture that make no sense to our minds. “How can someone be God and man at the same time? How can some rise from the dead? It’s impossible for someone to make specific proclamations 500—1000 years before they took place and be exactly right. How can the Bible be God’s Word if man wrote it? There is no way the miracles could have happened, they must be made up.” We could go on and one with the list of things that our reason argues are impossible in Scripture. So we might be tempted to reject them. We may try to

explain them away, to downplay those stories. Or perhaps we are tempted to reject them as false—as man’s words, and not God’s. Perhaps creation is a perfect example. The Bible clearly teaches over and over again that God created the world in six days. But science and thus our reason tell us otherwise. “Evolution is the answer—that this world changed slowly over billions of years until we have what the world is today.” Science, then, triumphs God’s Word, according to many people. But they just aren’t willing to give up their reason. And they trust in a delusion.

But not you. You believe. But why? What causes you to believe in something that makes absolutely no sense? How can you believe that a wooden staff changed into a snake simply by throwing it on the ground? That there were 10 plagues against Egypt. That water parted at the Red Sea and millions of people were able to walk through the Sea on dry ground. How can you believe in Divine creation when science consistently points to evolution? Why exactly would you believe in things that are so contrary to your reason? Because of the Holy Spirit. For he has worked faith in you through the gospel. And that faith leads you to reject your reason. You don’t care that it is contrary to wisdom. You don’t care that it makes absolutely no sense. It’s in the Bible. And the Bible is God’s Word. And because God says it’s true, you believe it’s true. You don’t need proof. You don’t need to it to make logical sense. Yet because we are sinners, we still have our doubts. And when we start to doubt we turn to God in his Word. We make use of the gospel whenever you can so that the Holy Spirit may strengthen our faith. And as our faith is strengthened the Holy Spirit will lead us to reject our reason.

But miracles aren’t the only thing that is contrary to our reason. So is God’s grace.

Why would God show us grace? Why would God have compassion on us? He created us in his image. But we thought we knew better than he did. Adam and Eve ate that fruit, thinking they could be like God. Ever since then, we have been his enemies. When we were born we hated God. We wanted nothing to do with him. We did nothing but sin against him. And we constantly rebelled against his Word.

And even we as Christians still sin against him. We constantly fail to live up to the level of perfection that he demands of us. Every single day our sins are too numerous to count. So why would God show us grace? Why would God send his one and only Son into this world to suffer and die for those who rebelled against him? Why would God give such a gracious gift to his enemies? It doesn’t make sense. It is contrary to our reason. And they devil uses that. He wants you to doubt God’s grace. He tries to convince you that you are such a horrible person, that you have done such horrible things, that God cannot possibly forgive you. For reason leads us to doubt that we have forgiveness.

Unless, of course, we earn it. You see, on the other side of the coin, our reasons think that we can be saved based on what we do. “For God certainly can’t love us enough to forgive us who constantly sin against him. But he does forgive those who are good people who do good things.” Our reason tells us that “we must do something to be saved. All we have to do is be a good person, try our hardest, or simply be sincere and we’ll have eternal life.” By nature we think that by following certain rules, doing certain things, or behaving in a certain way, we can earn God’s favor. We can force him to give us his grace, or we can make him chose us. Our reason tells us that God’s grace is not enough. We must add to it—so that we can be sure that we are saved. But Paul says in Romans 11, **if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.**

Those whose reason convinces them that they are saved based on what they do, even in the least bit, believe only in a delusion. For how can we save ourselves? How could we who constantly sin, save ourselves from our sins? How could we who are God’s enemies convince him to save us? Why would God chose us? What could we possibly do to impress the almighty God enough to save us? He knows all our thoughts, he knows everything we have ever done both in public and in private. Trust me, he’s not impressed with you. And you think that you can earn your own way to eternal life? That is believing in a delusion.

God’s grace, on the other hand, is no delusion. It may not make sense. It’s foolish that God would give up his one and only Son to die for us. It’s foolish that he lived a perfect life, yet willingly died so he could

take our sins on himself. And then rise from the dead so we could have eternal life. It's foolish, but it's the only way we are saved. Reason doesn't know this, but faith does. Through faith we receive the blessings that Christ won for us and graciously gives us. And it is faith that rejects all other teachings as false. It is faith that leads us to ignore what science, reason, or other worldly wisdom has to say when it is contrary to God's Word.

God's grace may be foolish. But it's the way God decided to do it. And it's a good thing that **the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom** as Paul says in first Corinthians. His way is not our way. His way is wiser and better. His way relies on the work of his Son, not on the work of us sinners. His way removes all doubt and gives us certainty. So we put aside our so-called human wisdom and reason. And we turn to the Word of the Lord. For the only answer to the source of salvation is not found in our feeble minds, but in Scripture. And through faith we say along with Peter, **Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life.**

The willing suspension of disbelief? Not, when it comes to God's Word. For in his Word is nothing false. The willing suspension of reason? Yes—through faith. For our reason leads us only to believe in a delusion. But God's Word gives us faith which believes in nonsense. For God's Word is true, and so is his grace. In faith we reject our reason and turn to the one who has, reveals, and gives eternal life. For God's wisdom is greater than ours. And his grace is greater than our sin. Amen.