

# Hindrances To Belief

*We wanted very much to come to you, and I, Paul, tried and tried again, but Satan prevented us. 1 Thessalonians 2:18 (NLT)*

## A LACK OF DISCERNMENT

God wants his people to have discernment. When we look carefully at the word of God we will learn amazing things. Here we want to focus on discernment, particularly discerning right and wrong motives in others.

We are told in the Bible to be as wise as serpents, but as gentle as doves. God wants us to understand how the devil is trying to kill, steal, and destroy the faith, freedom, and life God wants to give us.

In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul is attacked over and over by the religious. Please turn to **Acts 24** and we will look carefully at how Paul was accused by educated, religious people in court. They wanted Paul destroyed. Ananias, the high priest, headed the group. He had Jewish elders with him and even a lawyer to present their case against Paul.

The charges against Paul start in **Acts 24:2**

The lawyer starts by complementing the judge and expressing thanks for all he had done for the Jews.

Tertullus, the lawyer, which from here on out will be referred to as Tert, then says he doesn't want to bore the judge, so he will be brief. Now we must ask ourselves, was this true, or was he brief because he really didn't have a case?



In **Acts 24:5** we see the accusations made against Paul. He is a troublemaker. He is constantly stirring up riots all over the world. He is a ringleader in a cult. He was trying to desecrate the Temple.

Now, in **Acts 24:8** Tert says that the judge can find out the truth by investigating and by questioning the witnesses. I don't know about you, but for me, for years if someone



told me I could check into the truth, I then assumed they were being honest. When someone told me they had witnesses I assumed the witnesses were honest. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

Liars can lie about anything, anytime, anywhere to get what they want! They are copying their father the devil, who is called the father of lies.

I encourage every person reading this to pay attention! Liars are everywhere seeking to use you to their own advantage. Paul was destroying the comfort and finances of the religious and they were determined to get Paul out of the way.

Just because someone says they are religious, doesn't make them honest! The Bible shows us that over and over and over. Jesus warns us over and over to beware of those religious wolves who pretend to be God's sheep.

Because America has turned from fearing God, and trusting in themselves, we can find liars on every level of life. From the top politicians, to judges, to preachers, to the man on the street begging for a bit of change. Not all are liars, but liars are everywhere. We have to pay attention.

Now let's look at how Paul, the Christian, reacted to this planned deception to destroy him.

Paul starts his defense in **Acts 24:10, Page 1,000.**

- Paul begins by acknowledging and honoring the position of the judge.
- Paul says he "gladly" presents his defense. Notice Paul didn't weaken or cower in fear!
- Paul simply presents the facts and encourages the judge to check them out.
- Paul did not hesitate in pointing out the lies of his accusers. He wasn't worried about being "politically correct" as are many in America.
- Paul says:

***They "never saw me arguing". Nor "did they see me stirring up a riot"  
"These men cannot prove what they accuse me of"***

- Paul said that his accusers called his views cultic, but then told what he believed.
- Paul told the judge why he returned to Jerusalem. It was to give money to aid his people and to offer sacrifices to God.
- Paul tells the judge where to find the men who actually saw what he was doing.
- Paul was straightforward exposing why Ananias and his colleagues had brought charges against him. It was not against the law to believe in the resurrection of the dead.

It is interesting to note the similarities in both defenses. Both claimed to be telling the truth. Both respected the judge. Both were educated. Both had witnesses. We must be careful and realize that in any situation there are two sides to a story. Sometimes one side is truth and the other is false. Sometimes people honestly see things differently. In this case, Ananias and Tert presented themselves very well. But they were liars.

As Christians in America today, we must be like Paul. We must gladly present our case without cowering down in the face of intimidating people. We must tell the truth with quiet confidence.

Precious people, we must desire to have God's discernment. We must mature to know the truth from lies, honest men from liars. We must ask God for strong, bold courage to stand for the truth.

# Prayer

*How we thank God for you!  
Because of you we have great joy as we enter God's presence.  
Night and day we pray for you, asking God to let us see you again  
to fill the gaps in your faith. 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 (NLT)*

## ASKING FOR GOD'S HELP

Heavenly Father,

We come to you and pray as David prayed when his reputation was attacked. Help us to be like David and trust You to guide us through this time. Let us handle these lies against us, as David and Paul handled them.

*O Lord, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning.  
Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but you.  
Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord.  
Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.*

*O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness, you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked.  
Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil.  
You will destroy those who tell lies.  
The Lord detests murderers and deceivers.*

*Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house;  
I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe.  
Lead me in the right path, O Lord, or my enemies will conquer me.  
Make your way plain for me to follow.*

*My enemies cannot speak a truthful word.  
Their deepest desire is to destroy others.  
Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.  
Their tongues are filled with flattery.  
O God, declare them guilty.  
Let them be caught in their own traps.  
Drive them away because of their many sins, for they have rebelled against you.*

*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever.  
Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be filled with joy.  
For you bless the godly, O Lord,  
You surround them with your shield of love.  
Psalm 5:1-12*

In Jesus' name we ask you to protect us from the lying wickedness in this world. Amen

“YET  
TO ALL WHO DID RECEIVE HIM,  
TO THOSE  
WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME,  
HE GAVE THE RIGHT  
TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD -  
CHILDREN BORN NOT  
OF NATURAL DESCENT,  
NOR OF HUMAN DECISION  
OR A HUSBAND’S WILL,  
BUT BORN OF GOD.”

JOHN 1:12-13



# Wow! Jesus Loves You!

*Long ago the Lord said to Isreal: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself." Jeremiah 31:3 (NLT)*

## WHEN YOU WERE SAVED, YOU WERE CREATED AGAIN IN CHRIST JESUS

We were created in the image of God. When Adam sinned and man fell, that image was damaged. Christ enables us to be transformed, renewed, and restored. Be sure and personalize each verse. God wants the relationship with you to be genuine. God wants you to believe every verse.

1. Read and write out ***Ezekiel 11:19-21, Page 750***

GOD WILL GIVE YOU A NEW SPIRIT, TOO.

2. Read ***Ezekiel 36:26-31, Page 777***

GOD WILL GIVE YOU A NEW HEART.

3. Read and write out ***John 1:12-13, Page 949***

GOD GIVES US THE RIGHT TO BECOME HIS CHILDREN.

4. Read and write out ***John 3:3, Page 951***

IF YOU ARE BORN AGAIN YOU WILL SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.