



# THE BEREIA PAGE

*“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11*

## What Open Eyes Must Seek

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A [previous study](#) considered the two-stage healing of the blind man recorded in Mark 8.22–26. We noted that, within the context of Mark, the episode illustrates different stages of response to Jesus and growth by his disciples. From this, we learn that, while he does not want us to imitate the response of the Pharisees, neither does he want us to remain in the formative stages of spiritual maturity exhibited by the disciples in the middle section of Mark. We also called attention to the importance of truth in the growth process (cf. John 8.32).

A major obstacle to growing in truth is that our spiritual sight is often diverted by “the things of the world” that appeal to our flesh, eyes, and pride (1 John 2.15–17). To use a word repeated throughout the book of Psalms, when we “meditate” (מָדַד, *hāgāh*) on the wrong things, we pursue those things instead of God and his ways (note the different nuances and objects of *hāgāh* in Pss 1.2; 2.1; 35.28; 37.30; 38.12; 63.6; 71.24; 77.12; 143.5; cf. Matt 6.24, 33; Rom 12.1–2; Jas 4.4). To meet that obstacle, we should periodically renew our resolve to prioritize our pursuit of truth.

We observe, first, that nothing is more “New Testament” than devotion to the truth. Forms of the noun ἀλήθεια (*alētheia*, “truth”) and three cognates appear 165 times in the text;<sup>1</sup> 109 are in Acts—Revelation, writings about and to the churches. Space permits the citation of only a few examples of this emphasis. In 1 Timothy 4.3, Paul contrasted those who were forbidding marriage and requiring abstinence from certain foods with “those who believe and know the truth.” In Romans 2.8, he criticized some who “[did] not obey the truth.” In Galatians, he corrected Peter and others because “their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel” (2.14), and later asked the readers, “Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (4.16).

A notable passage is 2 Thessalonians 2.9–13. The theme of verses 1–12 is “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 1). In statements the exact meanings of which have puzzled many interpreters, Paul says that “the rebellion comes first” when “the man of lawlessness is revealed [as] the son of destruction” who is opposed to all that is good and presumes to “take his seat in the temple of God” (vv. 3–4). The “Lord Jesus will kill” this lawless one “and bring [his work] to nothing” (v. 8).

Whatever the specifics of verses 1–8, we understand what he says in verses 9–13. (1) To choose “the man of lawlessness” is to choose the way of Satan (v. 9). (2) Satan is a deceiver

<sup>1</sup> The 165 appearances of truth words include the noun, ἀλήθεια, (*alētheia*) [109]; adjectives ἀληθής (*alēthēs*) [26], and ἀληθινός (*alēthinos*) [28]; and verb ἀληθεύω (*alētheuō*) [2].

whose followers will perish (v. 10). (3) They will perish because they “believe what is false” (v. 11). (4) They are “condemned [because they] did not believe the truth” (v. 12). (5) In contrast, salvation results for those who are “sanctif[ied] by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (v. 13).

Obviously, *believing* the truth is necessary to realize salvation. But that is not all Paul says about truth in this text. One of his most important statements declares that the deceived did not believe the truth “because they did not accept [ἐδέξαντο, *edexanto*] the love [ἀγάπην, *agapēn*] of the truth so as to be saved” (v. 10 NASB 2020).

The phrase, “love of the truth” points to a crucial issue as we face the siege of the devil’s methods (cf. μεθοδεΐας, *methodeias*; Eph 6.11) that are intended to compromise our commitment to God’s way. Because people believe things for various reasons, including accepted tradition, convenience, self-gratification, the avoidance of penalties, or receipt of rewards (see Kaufmann 1978, 132–134), we should regularly evaluate our *love* for the truth. Without that love, we relax our pursuit of truth and stunt our growth in understanding and obedience.

How do we do such an evaluation? We can start with some questions we’ve referenced in more detail in previous discussions of truth’s nature and what it means to seek it (e.g., [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). The following, selected from a love-of-truth test distributed by one of my teachers, will help us begin.

- Am I willing to hear — really hear — all sides of a matter fairly before making up my mind about what is true?
- Do I understand that just because I or those close to me have believed something for many years does not necessarily mean it is true?
- Am I willing to change my view, to give up any previous belief I have held that cannot be supported by the evidence?
- Am I willing to accept and live according to a point of truth even when people who matter in my life don’t?
- Am I willing to admit when I am wrong? (see the complete list [here](#))

## Works Cited

Kaufmann, Walter. 1958. *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*. pb. ed., 1978. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

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