

Why Do You Believe *That*?

It's called "confirmation bias." The term describes the human penchant for continuing to believe what we already believe. We see it when a person (or group) interprets current or new data in a way that helps them to hang on to belief systems already held, even though the facts don't logically support their previous conclusions.

The Sadducees continued to deny life after death (resurrection of the dead) even after Jesus appeared to hundreds after His bodily resurrection. The Pharisees continued to believe Jesus was an imposter even after numerous miracles, including His resurrection. The Roman governors continued to believe in the power and even deity of the Caesars in spite of their obvious humanity evidenced by their mortality and deaths.

Consider the fickle assumptions of the people of Malta in Acts 28. In verses 1-6 we see the locals decide (from what they *thought* was reliable evidence) that Paul must be guilty of murder, "... Undoubtedly this man is a murderer." When Paul was bitten by a venomous snake, they saw it as proof positive (no doubt) that fate caught up with him; having escaped a shipwreck, he is now snake bitten. But Paul doesn't die, or even get sick or swollen! Within hours the very same people now decide that Paul is a god!

In both instances, their former beliefs, working through *confirmation bias* lead them to two opposite conclusions, both very wrong! That's what happens when our minds and our hearts (emotions) would rather believe our current systems of thought rather than accept the truths of God!

Making it personal, we must each strive deeply to overcome our strong propensities to simply believe what *seems* right and accept the truths of God. We recall that God told us through Solomon's pen in Proverbs 14:12 (and in 16:25), "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." No wonder Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," John 8:32, NASB.

Are you free today? Free of cultural confirmation bias? Free of negative personal agendas? Free of control by wrong inner desires? Are you, by the blood of Jesus, free from sin and sorrow? Jesus has joy waiting for you!

-Ray Wallace