

1 Thessalonians 2:13 Commentary

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1Thessalonians 2:13 For [this reason](#) we [also constantly thank God](#) that when you [received](#) the [word](#) of [God which](#) you [heard](#) from us, you [accepted](#) it not as the [word](#) of [men](#), but for [what](#) it [really](#) is, the [word](#) of [God, which also performs](#) its [work](#) in you who [believe](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [Kai dia touto kai hemeis eucharistoumen \(1PPAI\) to theo adialeiptos, hoti paralabontes \(AAPMPN\) logon akoes par' hemon tou theou edexasthe \(2PAMI\) ou logon anthropon alla kathos estin \(3SPA\) alethos logon theou, os kai energeitai \(3SPMI\) en humin tois pisteuousin. \(PAPMPD\)](#)

Amplified: And we also [especially] thank God continually for this, that when you received the message of God [which you heard] from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: And we will never stop thanking God that when we preached his message to you, you didn't think of the words we spoke as being just our own. You accepted what we said as the very word of God--which, of course, it was. And this word continues to work in you who believe. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: And so we are continually thankful that when you heard us preach the word of God you accepted it, not as a mere human message, but as it really is, God's Word, a power in the lives of you who believe. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: And on this account, as for us, we also are constantly giving thanks to God, and that unceasingly, because when you appropriated to yourselves the word of the message which came from us, even the word of God, you welcomed it, not as a word finding its source in men but as it truly is, God's word which is being constantly set in operation in you who believe. ([Eerdmans](#))

Young's Literal: Because of this also, we -- we do give thanks to God continually, that, having received the word of hearing from us of God, ye accepted, not the word of man, but as it is truly, the word of God, who also doth work in you who believe;

AND FOR THIS REASON WE ALSO CONSTANTLY THANK GOD THAT WHEN YOU RECEIVED FROM US THE WORD OF GOD'S MESSAGE YOU ACCEPTED IT NOT AS THE WORD OF MEN: Kai dia touto kai hêmeis eucharistoumen (1PPAI) to theo hoti paralabontes (AAPMPN) logon akoês par hemon tou theou edexasthe (2PAMI) ou logon anthrôpôn:

- 1Th 1:2,3; Romans 1:8,9
- Jeremiah 44:16; Matthew 10:13,14,40; Acts 2:41; 10:33; 13:45,48; 16:14,30, 31, 32, 33, 34; Acts 17:11,18, 19, 20,32; Gal 4:14; 2Peter 3:2

Paul offers thanksgiving for the converts' reception of the Word of God and follows with a description of the nature of their reception. The opening conjunction **and** (kai) joins this paragraph closely with the preceding one in which he described how the gospel was delivered to the Thessalonians.

For this reason - Although **terms of conclusion** usually look backward, they sometimes precede the information they are concluding and in this case it could look either way and some suggest it is looking both ways.

Hiebert writes that "Jowett, indeed, regards **for this reason** (dia touto) as looking both ways: that which at first was thought of as the ground of thanksgiving, his success in preaching, became the subject matter of thanksgiving.' Although unusual, such an inclusive interpretation of this phrase is appealing. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#))

Constantly (89) (**adialeiptos** from **a** = negative + **dialeipô** = leave off, cease, leave an interval whether of space or time) means uninterruptedly, without intermission, constantly, incessantly, unceasingly, always, , unintermittently, continually, without omission or without ceasing.

Adialeiptos is used to describe that which is continuously done - uninterrupted necessary payment of hard taxes, continual uninterrupted cough, repeated military attacks, continual failing of a military effort, regular and consistent production of fruit.

Josephus used **adialeiptos** for the incessant attacks of the Romans against Jotapatha (Josephus, Jewish Wars 3:155-57) or for the continual hammering of a battering ram against the walls of Jerusalem (Josephus, Jewish Wars 5:298-302).

Unceasingly denotes that not much time elapsed between his prayers for them (like a frequent cough... even in that setting one is not coughing without any break whatsoever for that would be physiologically impossible). The point that Paul is conveying to the saints is that were constantly in his thoughts and prayers. **Do you have a brother or sister in Christ who cannot seem to get you off of their mind, prayerfully speaking? Thank God for them!**

Paul must have had a long "prayer list" for it seems he is always mentioning someone he is praying for in one of his epistles. Could there be any relation between his unceasing prayer and his incredible power in ministry?

Adialeiptos is found only 4 times in the NT...

1. Romans 1:9 (note) For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how **unceasingly** I make mention of you,
2. 1Thessalonians 1:2 (note) We give thanks to God **always** for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;
3. 1Thessalonians 2:13 (note) And for this reason we also **constantly** thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.
4. 1Thessalonians 5:17 (note) pray **without ceasing**

In the NT **adialeiptos** is used only by Paul and always connected with prayer (1Th 1:3-note and 1Th 5:17-note)

Spurgeon writes regarding **constantly thanking God** that...

this was a continual thanksgiving day... Our gratitude to God should be as lasting as life, as constant as the bounty to which it bears witness. Our American friends have one Thanksgiving Day in the year, but it was Thanksgiving Day all the year round with Paul and Silas and Timothy when they thought of the Thessalonians. They felt as if they never could leave off thanking God for the Thessalonians, for they knew by sad experience that all churches were not of the same happy kind. There were those Corinthians, for ever quarrelling and thus grieving the apostle. "Never mind," he says, "we will thank God for the Thessalonians." Oh, but there are those Galatians! They have gone off the line, bewitched by Judaizing teachers. They have wandered into "modern thought," and left the old orthodox faith. "Yes," says the apostle, "those Galatians are a burden to me; but, then, blessed be God for the Thessalonians." So I think we ought to bless God for those that are kept, and for

those that are true, and for those that are faithful; and when our harp is made to hang upon the willows because of part of the work which is barren and unfruitful, yet let us not cease to praise and bless the Lord our God for that part of the work which prospers. Let us magnify him for those that are brought to know his name. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because ye received the word of God."

This spirit of thanksgiving tends to make us stronger and stronger for labor in days to come. Yes, let us sing unto the Lord instead of sighing unto ourselves! Let us not rob him of his revenue of praise even in our most desponding moments. "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." What if Satan does not appear to fall from heaven? What if the devils do not seem to be subject unto us? Yet let us rather rejoice because our names are written in heaven. O child of God, fall back upon what the Lord has done, and this shall make you encounter every difficulty with a brave heart! What the Lord has done is but a token of what he is going to do. Let us hold the fort, and look out for better times. Never let us dream of fainting or retreating. Do not say, "I will give it up because of the Galatians." No, but go at it again because of the Thessalonians. Do not say, "I am worried and wearied with the Corinthians." No, but with your heart full of joy, persevere in your Master's service, because many Thessalonians have received the word, not as the word of man, but as the word of God. Hallelujah, there is still something to sing about! Bring out the trumpets: we are not yet silenced, nor shall we be while the Lord liveth. The walls of Jericho will be more likely to fall before our trumpets than our tremblings.

Ah, my hearers, you could make some of us very happy! If you gave your hearts to the Lord, how you would cheer and comfort us! And some of you that do love the Lord would do us a world of good if you would come and tell us what the Lord has done for your souls. If you have been blessed, do not hide it. If you do, you will rob us of our wages, for our wages come to us very much through our knowing that God has blessed our ministry. Think of this, and treat us fairly and kindly, even as we have sought your good. I, for one, have had such weary times of wolf-hunting that I should be heartily glad to have the quiet joy of watching the young lambs, and noting the growth of the sheep. ([Sermon](#))

Ray Pritchard has some convicting thoughts writing that "Prayer bridges the gap between people. You can be here and they can be way over there, and through prayer you can bridge the gap that separates you. Prayer spans the miles that separate us. Prayer overcomes the misunderstanding that separates us. Prayer leaps across the bad memories that pull us apart. Prayer nullifies the estrangement that keeps us from speaking. There can be bitterness and anger between you, even years of alienation. But that doesn't matter when you pray because prayer bridges the gap between you and those you love. Your heart can touch their heart by the simple act of praying. What starts in your heart goes first to the Father's heart, and purified by the sunlight of his love, your prayer falls like an arrow in the heart of the one you love. Prayer can do that! It enables you to touch people you can't even speak to... If you love someone, you'll pray for them. If you don't love them, you'll stop praying eventually. Because when you pray, one of two things will happen: You will either start loving or you will stop praying. ([A Heart to Heart Ministry](#))

Thank (2168) (**eucharisteo** from **eucharistos** = thankful, grateful, well-pleasing from **eú** = well + **charizomai** = to grant, give) means to show oneself grateful, to be thankful, to give thanks. Paul began his epistle with **eucharisteo** - **We give thanks to God always for all of you...** (1Th 1:2-note). Note the **we** indicating that this was the feeling not just of Paul but of Silas and Timothy, causing all three men to emote in a continual praise service to **God** whenever they thought of their beloved converts in Thessalonica. **Eucharisteo** is in the **present tense** which denotes that their feeling of gratitude for the Thessalonians' reception of their message was ever on their heart and mind and thus they continued to **give thanks** (cf 1Th 5:18-note).

Their thanksgiving renews the feeling of gratitude expressed in the opening of the letter (see note 1Thessalonians 1:2) but in this verse the reason for the thanksgiving is different. The thanksgiving in chapter 1 was prompted by the receipt of **good news** about the Thessalonians' **faith and love**. (see note 1Thessalonians 3:6). In this verse the missionaries gave thanks for how the Thessalonians had welcomed the gospel on Paul's first visit.

Thank God - It is only appropriate that their thanksgiving was directed to **God** for it was His good news (gospel of God) that the hearer's responded to through the gracious, efficacious working of His Holy Spirit.

Spurgeon writes that "These three godly ministers are holding what, if I use a Greek word, I may call a holy eucharistical service—a service of thanksgiving. **For this cause also thank we God without ceasing**. It is a pleasant sight to see anybody thanking God; for the air is heavy with the hum of murmuring, and the roads are dusty with complaints and lamentations. It is a delightful vision to see hard-working, earnest ministers of Christ met together and occupying their time with thanksgiving; for many waste their hours in speculations, doubtings, and discussions. ([Sermon](#))

In preaching on this passage the Prince of preachers makes a statement that surely is a clue as to why he was so effective. He declares...

Let us keep close to the text

The word of God which you heard from us - is literally "a word of hearing from alongside us, of God". The phrase **word of hearing** indicates it was an oral message. Thus one writer renders it

When your ears received God's message. (Lattey)

This reference to the oral nature of the message received by the Thessalonians reminds us that at that time the spread of Christianity was largely brought about through the spoken word, for the NT writings had not yet been produced. And so for some 30 years after Christ's ascension the main apostolic teaching was done by a living preacher and not by the circulation of books or letters. This pattern emphasizes the high place which preaching held as a means of bestowing the grace of God upon the hearers. Is preaching still held in such high esteem or is it considered a means of attracting seekers with user friendly stories, etc? Praise God for preachers who are holding fast to the Word of Truth and preaching preach the word, whether the time is favorable or not, patiently correcting, rebuking and exhorting the sheep with great patience and instruction. (cf **notes** 2 Timothy 4:2)

This idea of a **word of hearing** is seen elsewhere in Scripture...

(Negatively in Hebrews) For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they (the Hebrews who came out of Egypt and wandered in the Wilderness for forty years) also; but the **word** they **heard** did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who **heard**. (He 4:12-note)

(Positively) However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR **REPORT** (akoe = literally hearing and then that which is heard like a report)?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Ro 10:16, 17-notes)

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by **hearing** with faith? (Galatians 3:2+)

Comment: Did they receive the Holy Spirit by keeping the law? Of course not! The Holy Spirit came upon them only after they believed the message they heard about Christ

Paul then goes on to describe not only the Thessalonians' outward reception of the **word of hearing** but also of their inner reaction to the divine word. He emphasizes this contrast by the use of two different verbs, **paralambano** (received) and **dechomai** (accepted or welcomed).

Paralambano pictures an objective, outward receiving whereas **dechomai** (see below) pictures an acceptance with approval or welcoming and denotes a more subjective reception. **Paralambano** looks to the content of that which is received, whereas **dechomai** implies a favorable evaluation of that which is accepted. In other words the Thessalonians not only heard and intellectually understood the message (paralambano) but they also appropriated and welcomed it (dechomai) into their hearts.

McGee asks "How do you receive the Word of God? Do you receive it as the Word of God? Or do you get angry? Does the hair stand up on the back of your neck? Twice in all my years of ministry I was approached by a man after a sermon and asked if I had him in mind when I preached the sermon that morning. My friend, I didn't even know those men were there! They were giving themselves an added sense of importance that wasn't justified. But the real issue is that they weren't receiving the Word of God as the Word of God. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Wiersbe adds that **paralambano** "means simply "to accept from another," while the second (**dechomai**) means "to welcome." One (**paralambano**) means "the hearing of the ear," while the other (**dechomai**) means "the hearing of the heart." The believers at Thessalonica did not only hear the Word; they took it into their inner man and made it a part of their lives... How do we appropriate the Word? By understanding it and receiving it into our hearts, and by meditating on it so that it becomes part of the inner man. Meditation is to the spiritual life what digestion is to the physical life. If you did not digest your food, you would die. It takes time to **meditate**, but it is the only way to appropriate the Word and grow. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

Received (3880) (**paralambano** from **para** = beside + **lambano** = appropriate, receive) means to receive from another, to receive alongside or to take to oneself (into close association). There are two basic ideas - to take or to receive.

To take with one in order to carry away (eg, Jesus' reference to the Rapture in John 14:3 below where the taking also conveys a sense close fellowship and agreement associated with the receiving to Himself)

To receive something transmitted, as spiritual instruction or truth (see 1Cor 11:23, Gal 1:9 below) or a ministry (Col 4:17note)

To receive in the sense of an inheritance (see use of paralambano below in Da 7:18 - "receive the kingdom", He 12:28note)

The **orist tense** looks back to the time when the Thessalonians heard the missionaries' proclaim the gospel and records their

active response to that message - they **took hold** of the divine message. They received it alongside. They took it to themselves.

Paralambano is used 49 times in the NT (Mt. 1:20, 24; 2:13,14, 20, 21; 4:5, 8; 12:45; 17:1; 18:16; 20:17; 24:40,41; 26:37; 27:27; Mk. 4:36; 5:40; 7:4; 9:2; 10:32; 14:33; Lk. 9:10, 28; 11:26; 17:34, 35; 18:31; Jn. 1:11; 14:3; 19:16; Acts 15:39; 16:33; 21:24, 26, 32; 23:18; 1Co. 11:23; 15:1, 3; Gal. 1:9, 12; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6; 4:17; 1Th 2:13; 4:1; 2Th 3:6; Hebrews 12:28)

Below are some representative uses of **paralambano**...

Mt 2:14 And he arose and **took** the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt;

Mt 2:20 Arise and **take** the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead.

Mt 24:40 "Then there shall be two men in the field; one **will be taken**, and one will be left. 41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one **will be taken**, and one will be left. (**Comment:** Although **paralambano** means to take to one's self and to seize for one's own possession, and is usually used in a good sense [see John 14:3 below], here in Matthew 24 the context is not good. The upshot is that this is clearly not a proof text to support the Rapture of the saints as some commentators state! The ones taken will be taken to judgment and death. The ones left will be left to enter the blessings of the millennial kingdom.)

Mark 7:4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have **received** in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) (**Comment:** Here **paralambano** conveys the idea of receiving of tradition passed down from other men, similar to the use in 2Thes 3:6)

John 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not **receive** (or accept - contrast with Col 2:6 below) Him. (**Comment:** Metaphorically, **paralambano** here is equivalent to "to accept or acknowledge one to be such as he professes to be; not to reject, not to withhold obedience")

John 14:3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and **receive** you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Galatians 1:9,12 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you **received**, let him be accursed... 12 For I neither **received** (**paralambano**) it from man, nor was I taught it, but I *received* it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:6 (note) As you therefore have **received** (or accepted - contrast with John 1:11 above) Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk** (present imperative) in Him

Colossians 4:17 (note) And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have **received** in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

1Thessalonians 4:1 (note) Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you **received** from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.

Hebrews 12:28 (note) Therefore, since we **receive** a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

Paralambano is used 22 times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Ge 22:3; 31:23; 45:18; 47:2; Num. 22:41; 23:14, 20, 27f; Jos. 4:2; 2Chr. 25:11; Esther 5:1; Song. 8:2; Jer. 32:7; 49:1, 2; Lam. 3:2; Da 4:31; 5:31; 6:19, 28; 7:18)

Genesis 22:3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and **took** (Lxx = **paralambano**) two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Numbers 23:20 "Behold, I have **received** (Lxx = **paralambano**) a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it.

Daniel 5:31 So Darius the Mede **received** (Lxx = **paralambano**) the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

Daniel 7:18 'But the saints of the Highest One will **receive** (Lxx = **paralambano**) the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come. (**Comment:** This event describes the time of the inception of the Messianic Kingdom - see Millennial Kingdom)

Paralambano is the verb the Lord used to to encourage Joseph's reception of Mary after her conception

Do not be afraid to **take** Mary as your wife... And Joseph... **took** her as his wife (Mt 1:20, 24)

John uses this verb describing the failure of most of the Jews (in contrast to the predominantly Gentile population at Thessalonica) refusal to receive Jesus as their Messiah...

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not **receive** (paralambano) Him. (John 1:11, cp Jn 1:12, 13 in v12 "recieved" = lambano)

Paralambano denotes an objective, outward receiving. It was used for the reception of words which were to be conveyed, Paul writing...

For I **received** (paralambano) from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread (1Cor 11:23)

Paul used **paralambano** in the context of the gospel proclamation in other epistles...

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you **received** (paralambano), in which also you stand 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also **received** (paralambano), that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1Co 15:1-note; 1Co 15:2-note)

The things you have learned and **received** (paralambano) and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. (Php 4:9-note)

Paralambano also has nuances of seizing or taking to one's self or taking something into one's possession (ponder that as you think about the "attitude" of the Thessalonians. How do I compare when I am confronted with **the word of God's message?**)

Paralambano is the verb especially used of receiving a message or body of instruction handed down by tradition, to be delivered (paradidomi - literally give beside and so to pass down) to others in turn. Paul uses it in this sense in 2Thessalonians...

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition (paradosis derived from paradidomi - give alongside) which you **received** (paralambano) from us. (2Thessalonians 3:6)

In sum, **paralambano** conveys the idea that the Thessalonians had received **the word of God's message** into their mind and so they learned it.

Regarding the phrase **of God** Hiebert rightly remarks that...

Paul reminds his readers that they heard and received the message **from us** the missionaries who first brought it to Thessalonica. But to guard against any possible misunderstanding of the nature of the message they received, Paul at once adds **of God**, emphatically placed immediately after **from us** as marking the clear distinction between **us** and **God** as the ultimate source of the message. Although brought by human messengers, in reality it was God's message... It is God's message; the missionaries were the medium. Lightfoot comments, "The Apostle betrays a nervous apprehension that he may be unconsciously making claims for himself; the awkwardness of the position of the words tou theou (of God) is the measure of the emphasis of his disclaimer." ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#)) (Bolding added)

THOUGHT: How important is it for modern teachers and preachers to remember and assimilate this seemingly small point?

It is God's Message The missionaries were the Medium

Spurgeon - In these words we find a window into the heart of the Thessalonian Christians and what we see is like a cabinet of jewels. ([Sermon](#))

Accepted (1209) (**dechomai** = middle voice of a primary verb) means to to receive something offered or transmitted by another (Luke 2:28). To take something into one's hand and so to grasp (Luke 2:28, 22:17). To be receptive to someone (Mt 10:14, 40). To take a favorable attitude toward something (Mt 11:14).

As illustrated in some of the verses below Jesus used dechomai to describe the way that humble, childlike believers (Mt 18:5), faithful preachers of the gospel (Mt 10:14), and the gospel itself (Luke 8:13; cf. Acts 8:14; 17:11) should be received.

Dechomai - 56 times in the NT - The **NAS** translates **dechomai** as accept(2), accepted(3), receive(18), received(11), receives(15), take(3), taken(1),took(1), welcome(1), welcomed(1). The **KJV** - receive 52, take 4, accept 2, take up 1; 59 Mt. 10:14, 40, 41; 11:14; 18:5; Mk. 6:11; 9:37; 10:15; Lk. 2:28; 8:13; 9:5, 48, 53; 10:8, 10; 16:4, 6, 7, 9; 18:17; 22:17; Jn. 4:45; Acts 3:21; 7:38, 59; 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 22:5; 28:21; 1Co. 2:14; 2Co. 6:1; 7:15; 8:17; 11:4, 16; Gal. 4:14; Ep 6:17; Phil. 4:18; Col. 4:10; 1Th 1:6; 2:13; 2Th 2:10; Heb 11:31; James. 1:21.

There are 47 uses of **dechomai** in the Septuagint (LXX) - Gen. 4:11; 33:10; 50:17; Exod. 32:4; Lev. 7:18; 19:7; 22:23, 25, 27; Deut. 30:1; 32:11; 33:3, 11; 2 Chr. 7:7; 29:16, 22; 30:16; Ezr. 8:30; Job 2:10; 4:12; 8:20; 36:18; 40:24; Ps. 50:9; Prov. 1:3, 9; 2:1; 4:10; 9:9; 10:8; 16:17; 21:11; 24:22; 30:1; Is 40:2; Jer. 2:30; 5:3; 7:27; 9:20; 17:23; 25:28; Hos. 4:11; 10:6; Amos 5:11; Zeph. 3:2, 7; Zech. 1:6

Dechomai means to accept with a deliberate and ready reception of what is offered, to receive kindly and so to take to oneself what is presented or brought by another. It means to welcome as a teacher, a friend, or a guest into one's house. The word describes accepting persons with open arms, minds, and hearts, even going beyond normally expected gracious hospitality. The term was often used of welcoming honored guests and meeting their needs with special attention and kindness.

Warren Wiersbe makes a profound comment we dare not read over too quickly - "The way a Christian treats his Bible shows how he regards Jesus Christ. He is the living Word (John 1:1, 14), and the Bible is the written Word; but in essence they are the same. Both are bread (Mt. 4:4; John 6:48), light (Ps. 119:105; John 8:12), and truth (John 14:6; 17:17). ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

The picture (figurative use) here in Thessalonians is of one "putting out the welcome mat" for God's word of truth as one would a good friend or guest, and inviting entry into one's house (Luke 10:8,10; *Rahab welcomed the spies* - He 11:31-note). It pictures one assenting to God's Word of Truth. **Dechomai** indicates that the reception was a voluntary and willing act on the part of the Thessalonians.

Paralambano looks to the content of that which is received, whereas **dechomai** implies a favorable evaluation of that which is accepted. **Dechomai** means to take or receive, to accept with approval, to welcome, and denotes a subjective reception. **Paralambano** refers to the ear, while **dechomai** adds the idea of appropriation and in this sense refers to the heart.

The picture in this context (and the other use in 1Thessalonians 1:6-note) is of one **putting out the welcome mat** (so to speak) for God's word of truth as one would a good friend or a guest, inviting entry into one's house (Luke 10:8,10; Heb 11:31). **Dechomai** indicates that the reception was a voluntary and willing act on the Thessalonians' part.

The Thessalonians not only heard and intellectually understood the message (as conveyed by **paralambano**) but also appropriated and welcomed it into their hearts (idea inherent in **dechomai**). The **arist tense** points to a definite act of reception on the readers' part of accepting the divine message transmitted by the missionaries. The **middle voice** (subject initiates action and participates in effect/result) emphasizes that they embraced it and welcomed it to themselves!

Richards - In the NT, "accept" and "receive" are typically used to translate one of two very common Greek word groups. One of these, the **dechomai** group, indicates acceptance and approval, with the root meaning "to take, receive, accept." The **lambano** ([2983](#)) group, which appears some 262 times in the NT, also means to "take" or "receive."...**lambano** tended to indicate reaching out to take hold of (**Ed note**: although in some contexts it may also indicate a passive reception), and **dechomai** emphasized the passive aspect of receiving. **Receiving the Word**. In the early days of the church, this phrase, using **dechomai**, had a technical theological meaning. It meant to accept by faith the good news about Jesus. The phrase is found seven times in the NT (Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1Thes 1:6; 2:13; James 1:21-note). **Dechomai** may have a similar meaning when used of accepting the kingdom of God (Mk 10:15) and the gospel (2 Co 11:4). ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

NIDNTT adds that...

The process of taking can be understood actively in the sense of taking possession of, passively in the sense of taking delivery. The two Greek verbs **lambano** ([2983](#)) and **dechomai** correspond to these two operational directions. **Lambano** stresses primarily the active aspect of getting hold of, whereas **dechomai** emphasizes more the passive attitude of receiving... The basic meaning of **dechomai** is to accept or receive (Homer, Il. 23, 647). Letters, presents, and offerings etc. are the principal objects. It can also be used more specifically in the sense of to receive words, i.e. to hear, understand (logon dechesthai, Eur., Medea 924), and to accept persons, i.e. offer hospitality (Xen., Oec. 5, 8). Man is generally the subject, who is able to accept things increasingly even to the point of enduring blows of fate (Homer, Il. 18, 115). More rarely the subject, in a religious context, is the godhead who receives sacrifices and prayers (Homer, Il. 2, 240). The corresponding

noun *doche* means primarily a receptacle (Eur. and Plato), and then, figuratively, reception of people, a meal for guests (Plut.)...

(In the Septuagint) Apart from everyday usage (e.g. Ge 33:10, accept gifts - **take** *my present from my hand*), **dechomai** denotes primarily the readiness to receive and accept the divine word (Deut. 33:3 *everyone receives Thy words*; Jer. 9:20 *let your ear receive the word of His mouth*) and action (e.g. *paideia*, discipline, correction, Zeph 3:7 *Surely you will revere Me. Accept instruction...*). In Jeremiah and Zephaniah it occurs in the negative declarations of judicial prosecution: Israel has not accepted Yahweh's correction (Jer. 2:30 *In vain I have struck your sons. They accepted no chastening...*; Jer 5:3 *they refused to take correction*; Jer 7:28; Zeph. 3:2 *She heeded no voice; She accepted no instruction. She did not trust in the LORD; She did not draw near to her God.*) and will therefore have to endure the divine judgment (Jer. 25:28 *And it will be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink,*, the picture of the cup of wrath). **Dechomai** thus obtains the further meaning of involuntary and necessary submission to disaster...

In the Wisdom literature *dechomai* characterizes the intellectually and existentially open and receptive life of the pious man: the wise man accepts the words of wisdom (Pr 4:10 *Hear, my son, and accept my sayings*); he heeds commandments (Pr 10:8 *The wise of heart will receive commands*); he accepts discipline (Pr 16:17) and receives insight (Pr 21:11 *But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.*). ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Wuest commenting on **dechomai** in Mark 6:11 (*any place that does not receive you*) writes that it means "to take with the hand, grant access to a visitor, not to refuse intercourse or friendship. The idea of a welcoming or appropriating reception is inherent in this word."

Paul used **dechomai** in the first chapter writing...

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having **received** the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1Th 1:6-note)

Unfortunately not all exhibit this receptive attitude toward God's truth, Paul writing in his second epistle that there would be those during the reign of the man of lawlessness (Antichrist of 1John 2:18, abomination of desolation of Mt 24:15, the little horn of [Daniel 7](#), the beast of [Rev 13](#)) would

not **receive (dechomai)** the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false. (2Th 2:10-11+).

Note carefully the order in this passage in 2Thessalonians -- their choice to not receive truth reaped the consequence of being given over to believe the lie. Paul explains the general truth that

a natural man does not (ou = absolute negation) **accept (dechomai)** - the **present tense** describes one's habitual action) the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness (*moria* from *moros* = dull, same word used in 1Cor 1:18, 23 of the unbelieving and thus perishing Gentiles) to him, and he cannot (lacks internal enablement to) understand (know experientially) them, because they are spiritually appraised (*anakrino* - to sift up and down, literally to judge again and thus examine accurately, performing careful and exact research as in legal processes. Same word used of Bereans in Acts 17:11 below). (1Cor 2:14)

Jesus used **dechomai** many times in the gospels...

(Jesus declared) And whoever does not **receive** you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet... 40 He who **receives** you **receives** Me, and he who **receives** Me **receives** Him who sent Me. (Mt 10:14, 40 - *dechomai* used 5 times!)

Comment: Here **dechomai** pictures receiving of one as you would a guest, which helps one understand the figurative uses in other NT passages. TDNT adds that here

"In Mt. 10:40, 41ff. special importance is attached to receiving the disciples, for since they are the envoys of Jesus, receiving them is receiving him, and therefore God. Through the disciples Jesus himself knocks at the heart's door. They are the bearers of Christ. Christ is present in them; they continue and extend his mission. More than simple hospitality is involved, and therefore the love expended on them will bring a special reward. The same applies to receiving a child in Christ's name - Mt. 18:5, 6 - for Christ himself comes in the person of the child, and what is done for the child is done for him. This gives even such an unassuming act a unique significance.- [Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

(Jesus declared) And if you care to **accept** it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come. (Mt 11:14)

(Jesus declared) "And whoever **receives** (dechomai) one such child in My name **receives** (dechomai) Me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. (**Comment:** Jesus' primary point here is that the way a person, believer or unbeliever, treats Christians is the way he treats Jesus Christ. When anyone welcomes with an open heart a Christian as an honored guest and friend, he welcomes Christ as his guest and friend. When he treats any Christian with tenderness and kindness, he treats Christ in the same way.)

(Jesus declared) Whoever **receives** one child like this in My name **receives** Me; and whoever **receives** Me does not **receive** Me, but Him who sent Me." (Mark 9:37)

(Jesus declared) Truly I say to you, whoever does not **receive** the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all. (Mark 10:15)

then he (Simeon) **took** Him (the child Jesus) into his arms, and blessed God (Luke 2:28)

(Jesus declared) And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, **receive** (dechomai) the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. (Luke 8:13)

(This verse uses a derivative of dechomai but is included in this group for illustrative purposes) And as Jesus returned, the multitude **welcomed** (apodechomai a derivative of dechomai) Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. (**Comment:** As in the ancient world and particularly in Judaism, so too in the NT hospitality played a large role. Because of their wandering existence Jesus, Paul and the other apostles were very dependent on it. In this verse mentions the friendly reception which Jesus met with amongst the people.)

But the multitudes were aware of this and followed Him; and **welcoming** them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing. (Luke 9:11)

And they did not **receive** Him (Jesus), because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. (Luke 9:53)

(Jesus declared) And whatever city you enter, and they **receive** you, eat what is set before you (Luke 10:8)

Here are other instructive uses of **dechomai** for you to study...

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had **received** (dechomai) the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them, that they might **receive** (lambano) the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-15) (**Comment:** In this verse Luke uses the receiving of the word as virtually synonymous with salvation - see Acts 11:1 below)

Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had **received** the word of God. (Acts 11:1)

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they **received** the word with great eagerness, examining (present tense = continually sifting up and down, making careful and exact research as in legal processes) the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11) (**Comment:** Ready reception of the word does not mean that such a reception is devoid of discrimination)

And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren **received** us gladly. (Acts 21:17)

But a natural man does not **accept** the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1Cor 2:14)

And working together with Him, we also urge you not to **receive** the grace of God in vain (2Cor 6:1)

And his affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you **received** him with fear and trembling. (2Cor 7:15)

And **take** (accept, receive, aorist imperative) THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (see note Ephesians 6:17)

By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had **welcomed** (dechomai) the spies in peace. (Hebrews 11:31)

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility **receive** (dechomai) the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

Spurgeon commenting on the words **received** and **accepted** writes that...

In the Greek those are two different words altogether. The second **received** (dechomai) might, perhaps, better be read, "accepted." I do not think that I should be straining a point if I read it, "Ye welcomed it."

They first received it by eagerly hearing it. They wanted to know what it was all about: they were attentive to it, and wanted to understand it. When they had heard it they rejoiced, and said, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, this is the very thing we want!" They embraced it. That word will do—they embraced it. They put their arms around it, and would not let it go. They were hospitable to the gospel, and said, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: come and live in our hearts!" They assented and they consented to the word of the Lord.

They first appreciated the gospel, and then they apprehended it by faith. They were like the man that was hungry in a foreign land, and he could not make the people quite understand; but as soon as ever they brought an article of food which he liked he fell to directly, and made them comprehend that he would be glad of more of that sort of thing. By his hearty reception of what they brought, the hungry man said plainly, "Bring some more of that."

So we have a people about us, thank God, that are looking out for the gospel! They are always willing to hear it if men will but preach it; and when they do get it they mean business, and feed upon the word with hearty appetite. How glad I am to feed men that will eat! It is a pleasure indeed. The spiritually hungry welcome heavenly food; they take it into themselves, and receive it as the bread their soul craves after. Oh, what a mercy it is when sermons are preached which feed souls, and souls hear so as to feed thereon! It is a happy day when a full Christ and empty sinners meet.

Now, I am persuaded, dear friends, that if any of you do not know the gospel—really do not know it—and yet are heavy of spirit and cannot rest, and are unhappy, it will be a very blessed thing for you to find out what the gospel is. I am pretty sure that many of you are in such a condition that as soon as you really know that the doctrine proclaimed to you is God's gospel, you will receive it into your very souls, and say, "There is none like it. That is the very thing we have been looking after all our lives." I think I hear one of you say, "I have been hunting after this for years. I did not know that there was anything like it, but it suits me to a turn. It fits me as a key fits a lock: it enters every ward of the lock of my soul as if it were made for me."

Brethren, I bear witness that when I received the gospel of Jesus Christ, it seemed to me as if Jesus Christ had made the gospel on purpose for me, and for me only. If there had been nobody else in the world, and Jesus had made a gospel for me only, it could not have been more adapted for me. His gospel exactly suited that poor sinner who, on one snowy morning, looked to him and was lightened (see Spurgeon's Personal Testimony). My dear hearer, you will find Jesus the very Savior for you. "But I am an out-of-the-way sinner," cries one. Have you never heard of him who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those that are out of the way? What a wonderful text that is for you—you out-of-the-way ones! He can have compassion on those that are out of the way. There is a remedy in the gospel for your disease. For the particular shape your malady has taken the Lord has a special eye. His Son, Jesus, has a plaster suited for your peculiar sore, a medicine adapted to your peculiar need. May the Holy Spirit bring you to receive it as these Thessalonians did!
([Sermon](#))

Paul now stresses the nature of the message, first in **negative** and then in **positive** terms.

Not as the word of men - Paul first emphasizes that their message was not humanly originated like the teachings of the religious quacks and charlatans who were everywhere exploiting the gullible people with their pretensions and pretexts (as he had alluded to earlier - 1Th 2:3, 4,5,6 -see **notes** 1Th 2:3; 2:4; 2:5; 2:6)

Vine comments that...

The gospel had been received from men, indeed, but it had been accepted, not as originating with men but with God. The apostle does not state merely that the converts had esteemed the message to be from God, he asserts that it is so. No person or society can by its sanction add weight to the word of God, the authority of which is inherent.

We see the **inherent authority of God's Word** in the following passages...

(At the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount Matthew records) The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching for He was teaching them as one having **authority** (see exousia), and not as their scribes. (See **notes** Matthew 7:28; 7:29)

For nothing will be impossible with God. (Luke 1:37) (**Comment:** The modern translations miss the richness of the literal rendition **No word of God can fail**. The 1901 **ASV** conveys the idea rendering it **For no word from God shall be void of power**. Do you believe this is true? The word of man can and will fail, but not the supernatural Word of God! Cling to it as if your life depended on it!)

(Regarding the Words of Jesus every Word of which was the Word of God, Luke records that) they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with **authority** (see exousia)... And amazement came upon them all, and they began discussing with one another saying, "What is this message? For with **authority** (see exousia) and **power** (dunamis = inherent ability, ability, capability or power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature - in this case the supernatural nature of the Divine Word) He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." (Luke 4:32, 36)

How important is it for a church to receive the Word not as the **word of men** but the authoritative, supernatural **Word of God**? I think **Richison** has answered this question in his comment that...

The Thessalonians' attitude to God's Word made them one of the most outstanding churches in the first century. (1Thessalonians 2:13; 2:13b; 2:13c; 2:13d; 2:13e; 2:13f; 2:13g) (**Question:** How does your church view the Word? How does your church show that they really believe it is the Word of God and not of men? What is being showcased in the Sunday School classes... the Word of God or offerings such as video series that give little more than token acknowledgement to the pure Word, instead substituting words of men about various topics from finance, to marriage, to a host of other "user friendly" topics? Has your church ever considered reading through the Bible as a body? How much of God's Word is found in your normal church bulletin? How much emphasis does your church place on memorizing and meditating on the Word of God? Your answers to these questions should give you some idea of whether your church truly has accepted the Word of God as divine and able to perform its work in those who believe!)

Preaching is not merely talking about God but in a sense is God Himself working through the message and personality of the preacher confronting men and bringing them to Himself.

F F Bruce commenting on the **word of men** writes that...

The word of human beings, however wise in substance or eloquent in expression, cannot produce spiritual life: this is the prerogative of the word of God, which works effectually in believers. Like the Corinthians a few weeks later, the Thessalonians had proved that "*the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God* (1 Cor 1:18). ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

Commenting on **it** not **as** the word of men **Spurgeon** says...

you will notice that the word "**it**" is in italics; and so is the word "**as**." Let me read the text again: "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received not the word of men." You see I have left out the "it" and the "as" because they are not really there, though they are correctly added by the translators as giving the meaning of the apostle. Verbally they are not in the text. I take the sentence out of its connection, and say that these Thessalonians received not the word of men. And I like them for that. Oh, but there were very learned men in those days! When Paul was on the earth, and a little before his day, some of the greatest natural minds that ever existed were in Greece teaching the people. Yet the Thessalonians were in such a state that they received not the word of men. They did not hearken to Plato, or accept Socrates, for there was a something about them which made them hunger for more than the philosophers could bring them. God's elect are of that mind. You may know the Lord's sheep by the fact that "a stranger will they not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers." They will not receive the word of man; it is too light, too chaffy, too frothy for them. You may put it before them in the daintiest guise, illustrate it with poetry, and prove it by the fictions of science, but they cannot feed on such wind. They receive not the word of men; they will not have it; they want something more substantial. ([Sermon](#))

BUT FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS THE WORD OF GOD WHICH ALSO PERFORMS ITS WORK IN YOU WHO BELIEVE: *alla kathôs estin (3SPA) alêthôs logon theou os kai ενεργηται (3SPMI) en humin tois pisteuousin (PAPMPD):*

- Jeremiah 23:28,29; Luke 5:1; 8:11,21; 11:28; Acts 8:14; 13:44,46; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:12; 1Peter 1:25; 2Peter 1:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

- 1Th 1:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; John 15:3; 17:17,19; Ro 6:17,18; 2Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 1:6; Hebrews 4:12; Jas 1:18; 1Peter 1:23; 2:2; 1John 3:3; 5:4,5

But (235) (alla) is the stronger of the two Greek adversatives used to emphasize the positive fact, **for what it really is the word of God**. Whatever agnostics or skeptics may say or think about the Word of God, this is its true nature. See importance of interrogating **terms of contrast**.

What it really is - These saints genuinely grasped the "horns of the altar" so to speak, drinking in the Word of God as there truly supernatural sustenance.

A W Tozer alludes to their laying hold of the Word of God not man by faith noting that...

it is not enough that we believe; we must believe in the right thing about the right One!... Unbelief says: Some other time, but not now; some other place, but not here; some other people, but not us. Faith says: Anything He did anywhere else He will do here; anything He did any other time He is willing to do now; anything He ever did for other people He is willing to do for us! With our feet on the ground, and our head cool, but with our heart ablaze with the love of God, we walk out in this fullness of the Spirit, if we will yield and obey. God wants to work through you! The Counselor has come, and He doesn't care about the limits of locality, geography, time or nationality. The Body of Christ is bigger than all of these. The question is: Will you open your heart?

Really (230) (alethos) from **a** = negative + **letho** = forget related to **lanthanô** = escape notice = actual, true to fact) means indeed, surely, of a surety, truly, of a (in) truth, verily, very. The idea is what one sees reflects what it really in fact is. The real thing is not concealed. It is genuine or authentic.

Alethos - NAS Usage: certainly(2), indeed(2), really(2), sure(1), surely(2), truly(8), truthfully(1). 18x in 18v - Matt 14:33; 26:73; 27:54; Mark 14:70; 15:39; Luke 9:27; 12:44; 21:3; John 1:47; 4:42; 6:14; 7:26, 40; 8:31; 17:8; Acts 12:11; 1 Thess 2:13; 1 John 2:5

Word of God - In context Paul is not referring to the written word but the oral preaching of the gospel also **in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction** (see 1Thes 1:5-note). This phrase emphasizes that God's messengers must rely on the Bible and function solely as channels of **the word of God**.

See study on the **Power of God's Word**

God's Word is a **word**...

- ... of Thy lips - Ps 17:4
- ... of this salvation - Acts 13:26
- ... of God - Acts 13:44, et al
- ... of the Lord - Acts 13:48, et al
- ... of His Grace - Acts 14:3, 20:32
- ... of the Gospel - Acts 15:7
- ... of promise - Romans 9:9 (note)
- ... of faith Romans 10:8 (note)
- ... of Christ - Romans 10:17 (note)
- ... of the Cross - 1 Co 1:18
- ... of reconciliation - 2 Co 5:19 (note)
- ... of truth - 2 Co 6:7, Col 1:5(note), 2Ti 2:15 (note), James 1:18-note
- ... of life - Philippians 2:16(note)
- ... of God's message - 1Th 2:13 (note)
- ... of His power - Heb 1:3 (note)
- ... of righteousness - Heb 5:13(note)
- ... of the oath - Heb 7:28(note)
- ... of exhortation - Heb 13:22(note)
- ... (living and abiding) - 1Pe 1:23 (note)
- ... of Life - 1Jn 1:1 (note)
- ... of My perseverance - Rev 3:10 ([note](#))

Also (kai) - this small conjunction is vitally important in understanding this verse for what Paul is saying distinguishing is between those who merely heard the gospel and those who heard and believed. Like today, many had received the message with their ear,

but not all had accepted it into the **good soil** (cf Luke 8:15) of their heart. It was in this latter group that the message was confirmed to be a Divine, supernatural Word by its active power in their lives.

God's Word is **energized**. The Word of God, indeed, is **active** (related adjective **energes** - see Hebrews 4:12-note). The same Word that brings us salvation also enables us to live for Christ and endure suffering for His sake.

Note in whom God's Word is continually energetic and effective...

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you **abide** (literally means to remain in the same place over a period of time. In reference to state or condition it means to remain as one, not to become another or different) in My word, **then** (this is a conditional statement) you are truly disciples of Mine and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31, 32). (**Comment**: true dedication to following Christ or discipleship is measured by ongoing obedient belief in His Word. Ryrie rightly comments on **believed** noting that it is "*Likely only a profession because of what they said in John 8:33.*")

The Thessalonians had the verification of the divine energy of God's Word in their own experience, for it was the word which was at work in those who had believed.

Performs its work - God's word, and in context specifically the **gospel**, is operative and productive, continually (**present tense**) producing an effect in the lives of those who receive it. **Beloved, do you really believe this is true? Does your time in His Word under the teaching ministry of His Spirit testify to the authenticity of your belief? If not, why not? If you are too busy for the Word of life, your life is too busy!** When we believe God's Word and obey its good and holy precepts, His Spirit releases power—divine energy—that works in our lives to fulfill His purposes (see related discussion of **Walking in the Spirit** covered in Gal 5:16; 17;18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26 -- see notes Gal 5:16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26). (See notes on letting the Word of God dwell in you richly in Col 3:16-note and how this spiritual discipline relates to being continually filled with the Spirit - Ep 5:18-note)

Performs (1754) (**energeo** from **en** = in + **érgon** = work. English = energetic) means to work effectively to cause something to happen. To energize, to operate, to work effectually in. It means power in exercise, and is used only of superhuman power. To work energetically, effectively and/or efficiently. To put forth energy. To be at work. To produce results.

Energeo describes active, efficient, effective working. Paul is saying that the power of God's word exerts effective, energetic power in believers. This activity put forth in an individual energizes him to the doing of certain things intended by the one who is doing the energizing.

Energeo in the NT virtually always describes supernatural activity, principally God's energizing. Romans 7 describes the energizing effect of our Sin nature inherited from Adam...

For while we were in the flesh (in Adam, not born again, not regenerate, not in Christ), the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at **work** (**energeo** - imperfect tense) in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. (See **note** Romans 7:5)

Comment: The pricks and stings of passion were active in our members and the imperfect tense picture the continual action - over and over we these sinful passions pricked us to commit sins.

Eighteen of the twenty-one occurrences of **energeo** in the NT are in Paul's letters and he alone employs the corresponding nouns **energeia** ("working") and **energema** ("activity").

In Classical Greek, **energes**, **energeia** (energy), and **energeo** to be at work, seem to have been used almost exclusively as medical terms referring to medical treatment and the influence of medicine.

POWER OF THE WORD - The renowned preacher C H Spurgeon once tested an auditorium in which he was to speak that evening. Stepping into the pulpit, he loudly proclaimed, "Behold the lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." Satisfied with the acoustics, he left and went his way. Unknown to him, there were two men working in the rafters of that large auditorium, neither one Christians. One of the men was pricked in his conscience by the verse Spurgeon quoted and became a believer later that day! Such is the penetrating power of God's eternal word! Little wonder that Paul is so insistent on our "preaching of the Word."

Spurgeon also tells the story illustrating the power of the gospel...

Preacher converted by his own preaching. I wish that it might happen to you as it did with my dear friend, Mr. Haslam, whom God has blessed to the conversion of so many. He was preaching a sermon that he did not understand, and while he preached it, he converted himself. By God's grace he began to feel the power of the Holy Spirit and the force of divine truth. He so spoke that a Methodist in the congregation called out, "The

parson is converted"; and so the parson was. He owned it, and praised God for it, and all the people sang:—

"Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

His own utterances concerning Christ crucified had been the power of God unto salvation to him. (Barbed Arrows from the Quiver of C. H. Spurgeon)

In the New Testament **energeo** is used of

- **God** Gal 2:8, 1 Cor 12:6; Eph 1:11, 1:20; 3:20; 2:13; Col 1:29 (notes Ep 1:11, 1:20; 3:20; 2:13; Col 1:29)
- **the Holy Spirit**, 1 Cor 12:11; Jas 5:16
- **the Word of God**, 1 Thessalonians 2:13-note
- **supernatural power, undefined**, Mt 14:2, Mk 6:14
- **faith, as the energizer of love**, Gal 5:6
- **the example of patience in suffering**, 2 Cor 1:6
- **death (physical) and life (spiritual)**, 2 Cor 4:12
- **sinful passions**, Romans 7:5 (note)
- **the spirit of the Evil One**, Ephesians 2:2 (note)
- **the mystery of iniquity**, 2 Th 2:7

Energeo is used 4 times in the Lxx (Nu 8:24, Pr 21:6, 31:12, Isaiah 41:4)

Isaiah 41:4 Who has **performed** (Lxx = **energeo**) and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He.

Energeo is used 22 times in the NAS - Matt. 14:2; Mk. 6:14; Ro 7:5; 1 Co. 12:6, 11; 2 Co. 1:6; 4:12; Gal. 2:8; 3:5; 5:6; Eph. 1:11, 20; 2:2; 3:20; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:7; James. 5:16. The **NAS** translates **energeo** as - accomplish, 1; brought about, 1; effective, 2; effectually worked, 2; performs... work, 1; work, 6; working, 2; works, 7. The KJV translates **energeo** as - work 12, show forth (one's) self 2, wrought 1, be effectual 1, effectually work 1, effectual fervent 1, work effectually in 1, be might in 1, to do 1; 21.

The thought of the **activating power of God's Word** is common in the Scriptures...

So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. (**Isaiah 55:11**)

Which things (spiritual truth freely given to the apostles by God) we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (**1 Cor 2:13**) (**Comment:** Paul thus claims that his teachings are not really his, but God's, for the very words are taught by the Holy Spirit. This is a clear claim to divine verbal inspiration of the Pauline epistles!)

For the word of God is living (present tense - continually) and active (energes) and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (see **note Hebrews 4:12**)

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the **word** implanted, which is able to save your souls. (**James 1:21**) (**Comment:** We often hear people say, I don't get anything out of the Bible. How might this verse explain their lack of interest and understanding?)

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding **word** of God. (see **note 1 Peter 1:23**)

(Here the **Word** is specifically the **Gospel**) which has come to you, just as in all the world also **it** is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as **it** has been doing in you also since the day you heard of **it** and understood the grace of God in truth (See **note Colossians 1:6**)

(In Ephesus Luke records that) the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. (**Acts 19:20**)

Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth. (**John 17:17**) (**Comment:** The supernatural, miraculous process of sanctification or of being set apart from this world for God's service is accomplished through the Word of Truth)

(Paul in his closing exhortation to the Ephesian elders declared) And now I commend (paratithemi = literally to place near. It was a banking term describing a deposit made as a trust or for protection = place in another's trust - commit for safe keeping) you to God and to **the word of His grace**, which is able (has the inherent

ability or power in itself by virtue of its divine nature) to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (perfect tense = All who have been born from above with that blessed state continuing into all eternity, forever and ever) . (**Acts 20:32**)

Hiebert observes that "In saying that this Word works **in you** Paul is reminding his readers that they personally knew the operative power of it. The effect it had wrought in their lives was widely known; it turned them to God from idols, committed them to the service of the living God, and gave them the hope of the return of the risen Christ as their Savior from the coming wrath (see **note** 1Thess 1:9; 1:10). Such a transforming experience convinces every believer that what he has accepted is truly the Word of God. No humanly contrived message can produce such results. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

You who believe - This indicates the condition under which the divine Word can operate in human hearts. Personal faith conditions the efficacy (the power to produce an effect) of the Word of God. To say it another way, there must not only be the hearing of the Word but also continuing belief. The **present tense** of **pisteuo** marks their believing as an abiding characteristic or a trait. A genuine faith is a continuing faith! Can it ebb and flow? Sure, but it continues to believe even when at "low tide" so to speak.

Believe (4100) (**pisteuo** from **pistis**; **pistos**; related studies the faith, the obedience of faith) means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust. To accept as true, genuine, or real. To have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something or someone. To consider to be true. To accept the word or evidence of.

Vincent notes that **pisteuo** "means to persuade, to cause belief, to induce one to do something by persuading, and so runs into the meaning of to obey, properly as the result of persuasion

In secular Greek literature, as well as in the New Testament, **pisteuo** (pistis, pistos) has a basic meaning of an intellectual assent or a belief that something is true. Michel says that this use arose during the Hellenistic period. During the struggle with skepticism and atheism, it acquired the sense of conviction concerning the existence and activity of the Greek gods. Thayer calls this the intransitive use of the word which conveys the idea of to be sure or be persuaded that something is a fact. This kind of faith does not require any action on the part of the believer but only an intellectual acceptance. As discussed below, James used this type of faith as an example of a dead faith stating that "The devils also believe, and tremble" (Ja 2:19).

The other secular Greek meaning that is the more common use in the New Testament is the transitive or active use which means to "put faith in" or "rely upon" someone or something. Sometimes it has even stronger meaning: "To entrust something to another." In classical usage it denoted conduct that honored a previous agreement, such as the honoring of a truce between opposing armies (Iliad 2.124). The meaning of entrusting something to someone is found in Xenophon (Memorabilia 4.4.17). An example of this use in the New Testament is 2 Timothy 1:12. Paul said

I know whom I have **believed**, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (see note 2 Timothy 1:12) (**Comment:** Here **pisteuo** means to trust in or rely upon Christ to save us)

Pisteuo means to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence. To believe in with the implication of total commitment to the one who is trusted. As discussed below Christ is the object of this type of faith that relies on His power and nearness to help, in addition to being convinced that His revelations or disclosures are true.

NIDNTT writes that in classical Greek literature...

pistis means the trust that a man may place in men or the gods (Hesiod, Works, 372; Soph., OT, 1445), credibility (Soph., OC, 611), credit in business (Dem., 36, 57), guarantee (Aesch., Frag. 394), proof (Democ., 125), or something entrusted (IG 14, 2012 A 23).

Similarly, **pisteuo** means to trust something or someone (Hdt., 1, 24; Aesch., Pers., 800 ff.). It can refer to and confirm legendary tales (Hdt., 4, 96) and mythical ideas (Plato, Grg., 524a). In the construction **pisteuo** tini ti it means to entrust something or someone to someone (Xen., Mem., 4, 4, 17).

With reference to people, **pisteuo** means to obey (Soph., OT, 625). The pass. means to enjoy trust (Xen., Anab., 7, 6, 33).

The adj. **pistos** means trusting (Theognis, 283), trustworthy (Hom., Il., 2, 124). to piston means dependability or the faithfulness of those bound through an agreement (Aesch., Ag., 651; Xen., Anab., 2, 4, 7).

The verb. pistoo has the meaning of binding someone or oneself to be faithful (Soph., OC, 650). In the pass. it means to be sure, to trust (Hom., Od., 21, 217 f.).

The pistis word-group has a special colouring, where it refers to believing doxa (opinion). In such a case dependability is limited (cf. Plato, Phd., 107b). ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT](#)

The noun **pistis** and the verb **pisteuo**, mean an adherence to, committal to, faith in, reliance upon, trust in a person or an object, to be persuaded of or convinced of something, to place one's confidence in, to trust.

See **Spurgeon's** sermons on **belief**...

- [John 8:30-32 Believing On Jesus, And Its Counterfeits](#)
- [Romans 3:3-4 God Justified, Though Man Believes Not](#)

Pisteuo can also mean to be confident about or to be firmly persuaded as to something, and so Paul writes...

One man **has faith** (**pisteuo**) that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. (see note Romans 14:2) (Here the believing conveys the sense of having an opinion, thinking)

As noted above, **pisteuo** can refer to an "**heart belief**" (saving faith, genuine belief that leads to salvation, this believing involves not only the consent of the mind, but an act of the heart and will of the subject) or an **intellectual belief** (mental assent, "head" knowledge, not associated with bringing salvation if it is by itself), both uses demonstrated by Jesus statement in John 11,

John 11:26 Everyone who lives and **believes** (refers to genuine saving faith) in Me shall never die. Do you **believe** (intellectually) this?

John 2:23-24+ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not **entrusting** (**pisteuo**) Himself to them, for He knew all men,

See comments on Jesus' "*belief*" in those who had believed in Him.

James 2:19+ You **believe** (**pisteuo**) that God is one. You do well; the demons also **believe** (**pisteuo**), and shudder.

Comment: In this passage, James explains that not all believing will result in salvation. The believing he is describing in this passage is a mental or intellectual believing that is not associated in a change in one's heart and thus in one's behavior or actions. Belief in the New Testament sense that effects the **new birth** denotes more than a "demonic" like, intellectual assent to a set of facts or truths. The demons believe but they are clearly not saved. Genuine belief does involve an intellectual assent and consent of one's mind, but also includes an act of one's heart and will. Biblical saving faith is not passive assent but an active staking of one's life on the claims of God. The respected Greek lexicon author W E Vine defines belief as consisting of

(1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2Th 2:1+ -"in order that they all may be judged who did not **believe** [**pisteuo**] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.")

(2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12+ "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** [**pisteuo**] in His name") and

(3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender.

Pisteuo can also refer to a committing of something to someone and so to entrust them. And thus we find **pisteuo** is translated entrust (entrusted, entrusting) 8 times in the NT. Here are 2 examples of this meaning of **pisteuo**...

If therefore you have not been faithful (**pistos**) in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will **entrust** (**pisteuo**) the true riches to you? (Luke 16:11+)

Great in every respect (Paul answers his question of what is the advantage of the Jew?). First of all, that they were **entrusted** (**pisteuo**) with the oracles of God. (see note Romans 3:2)

Pisteuo is one of the **most frequent and important verbs** in the NT used some 241 times. Notice **pisteuo** is clearly a KEY WORD in the Gospel of John.

Mt. 8:13; 9:28; 18:6; 21:22, 25, 32; 24:23, 26; 27:42;

Mk. 1:15; 5:36; 9:23, 24, 42; 11:23, 24, 31; 13:21; 15:32; 16:13, 14, 16, 17; Lk. 1:20, 45; 8:12, 13, 50; 16:11; 20:5; 22:67; 24:25;

John 1:7; Jn. 1:12; Jn. 1:50; Jn. 2:11; Jn. 2:22; Jn. 2:23; Jn. 2:24; Jn. 3:12; Jn. 3:15; Jn. 3:16; Jn. 3:18; Jn. 3:36; Jn. 4:21; Jn. 4:39; Jn. 4:41; Jn. 4:42; Jn. 4:48; Jn. 4:50; Jn. 4:53; Jn. 5:24; Jn. 5:38; Jn. 5:44; Jn. 5:46; Jn. 5:47; Jn. 6:29; Jn. 6:30; Jn. 6:35; Jn. 6:36; Jn. 6:40; Jn. 6:47; Jn. 6:64; Jn. 6:69; Jn. 7:5; Jn. 7:31; Jn. 7:38; Jn. 7:39; Jn. 7:48; Jn. 8:24; Jn. 8:30; Jn. 8:31; Jn. 8:45; Jn. 8:46; Jn. 9:18; Jn. 9:35; Jn. 9:36; Jn. 9:38; Jn. 10:25; Jn. 10:26; Jn. 10:37; Jn. 10:38; Jn. 10:42; Jn. 11:15; Jn. 11:25; Jn. 11:26; Jn. 11:27; Jn. 11:40; Jn. 11:42; Jn. 11:45; Jn. 11:48; Jn. 12:11; Jn. 12:36; Jn. 12:37; Jn. 12:38; Jn. 12:39; Jn. 12:42; Jn. 12:44; Jn. 12:46; Jn. 13:19; Jn. 14:1; Jn. 14:10; Jn. 14:11; Jn. 14:12; Jn. 14:29; Jn. 16:9; Jn. 16:27; Jn. 16:30; Jn. 16:31; Jn. 17:8; Jn. 17:20; Jn. 17:21; Jn. 19:35; Jn. 20:8; Jn. 20:25; Jn. 20:29; Jn. 20:31;

Acts 2:44; 4:4, 32; 5:14; 8:12, 13; 9:26, 42; 10:43; 11:17, 21; 13:12, 39, 41, 48; 14:1, 23; 15:5, 7, 11; 16:31, 34; 17:12, 34; 18:8, 27; 19:2, 4, 18; 21:20, 25; 22:19; 24:14; 26:27; 27:25;

Ro 1:16; 3:2, 22; 4:3, 5, 11, 17, 18, 24; 6:8; 9:33; 10:4, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16; 13:11; 14:2; 15:13;

1Co. 1:21; 3:5; 9:17; 11:18; 13:7; 14:22; 15:2, 11;

2 Co. 4:13; Gal. 2:7, 16; 3:6, 22; Eph. 1:13, 19; Phil. 1:29; 1Thess. 1:7; 2:4, 10, 13; 4:14; 2Thess. 1:10; 2:11, 12; 1Ti 1:11, 16; 3:16; 2Ti 1:12; Titus 1:3; 3:8; Heb 4:3; 11:6;

James. 2:19, 23; 1Pe. 1:8; 2:6f;

1 Jn. 3:23; 4:1, 16; 5:1, 5, 10, 13; Jude 1:5.

The **NAS** translates **pisteuo** as - believe(118), believed(73), believers(3), believes(29), believing(10), do (m)(1), entrust(1), entrusted(6), entrusting(1), has faith(1).

Pisteuo is found 24 times in the Septuagint (LXX)

Ge 15:6; 42:20; 45:26; Ex. 4:1, 5, 8f, 31; 14:31; 19:9; Num. 14:11; 20:12; Deut. 9:23; 28:66; 1 Sam. 3:21; 27:12; 1 Ki. 10:7; 2 Chr. 9:6; 32:15; Esther 8:12; Job 4:18; 9:16; 15:15, 22, 31; 24:22; 29:24; 39:12, 24; Ps. 27:13; 78:22, 32; 106:12, 24; 116:10; 119:66; Prov. 14:15; 30:1; Is 7:9; 28:16; 43:10; 53:1; Jer. 12:6; 25:8; 40:14; Lam. 4:12; Dan. 6:23; Hab 1:5).

The first use by Moses is one of the most important uses of **pisteuo** in all of Scripture...

Genesis 15:6-commentary Then he (Abraham) **believed** (Hebrew = **'āman**; LXX = **pisteuo**) in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (**Comment:** Note that in the OT, salvation was by faith, not works. Paul explains that Abraham heard the gospel - see Galatians 3:8. It is also worth noting that the Hebrew word for "believe" in this verse is **'āman** means to confirm, support or uphold and conveys the essential idea that one remains steadfast. At the heart of the meaning of the root of the Hebrew verb **'āman** is the idea of certainty or firmness. The derivatives reflect the concept of certainty and dependability. In other words faith is not a blind leap into the dark but a confident commitment to the One about Whom abundant evidence bears ample testimony of His eternal, immutable trustworthiness. Faith is far more than mere hope that something unlikely may happen. It is a deep, internal certainty, rooted in our trust of what God has said.)

Numbers 14:11 And the LORD said to Moses "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not **believe** (Hebrew = **'āman**; LXX = **pisteuo**) in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?"

Psalms 78:22 Because they did not **believe** (LXX = **pisteuo**) in God, and did not trust (hope) in His salvation.

Psalms 78:32 In spite of all this they still sinned, and did not **believe** (LXX = **pisteuo**) in His wonderful works. (In spite of all His works and lessons the generation of Israelites that left Egypt in the Exodus continued to disbelieve and disobey Yahweh)

Psalms 106:24 Then they (speaking of the nation's rejection of Joshua's and Caleb's positive report of the Promised Land) despised the pleasant land. They did not **believe** (LXX = **pisteuo**) in His word.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who **believes** (LXX = **pisteuo**) in it will not be disturbed. (quoted in part 3 times in the NT, see **notes** Romans 9:33; Romans 10:11; 1 Peter 2:6)

Isaiah 53:1 Who has **believed** (LXX = **pisteuo**) our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (Quoted in NT, see note Romans 10:16)

POSB note on **believe** (**pisteuo**)...

Believe— Commit: the word "commit" (**Pisteuo**) is the same word "believe" (cp. John 2:23). This gives an excellent picture of saving faith, of what genuine faith is—of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent. It is not just believing the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. It is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the Savior just as George Washington lived upon earth as the President of America. It is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus in the same way that a person would believe the words of George Washington.

2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, who and what He is, that He is the Savior and Lord of life. It is a man giving and turning his life over to Jesus. It is a man casting himself upon Jesus as Savior and Lord.

3. Saving faith is commitment—the commitment of a man's total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man's commitment of all he is and has to Jesus. It gives Jesus everything; therefore, it involves all of a man's affairs. The man trusts Jesus to take care of his past (sins), his present (welfare), and his future (destiny). He entrusts his whole life, being and possessions into Jesus' hands. He lays himself upon Jesus' keeping, confiding in Him about his daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. He follows Jesus in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions and leaving his welfare up to Him. It is simply commitment of a man's whole being, all he is and has, to Jesus. (John 4:50; Hebrews 5:5-10.)

There are three steps involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage. (Romans 10:16-17.)

1. There is the step of seeing (John 2:23) or hearing (Romans 10:16). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.

2. There is the step of mental assent. A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so. But this is not enough. Mere agreement does not lead to action. Many a person knows that something is true, but he does not change his behavior to match his knowledge. For example, a man knows that eating too much harms his body, but he may continue to eat too much. He agrees to the truth and knows the truth, but he does nothing about it. A person may believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and yet do nothing about it, never make a decision to follow Christ. This man still does not have faith, not the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.

3. There is the step of commitment. When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of commitment, a personal commitment to the truth. A man hears the truth and agrees that it is true and does something about it. He commits and yields his life to the truth. The truth becomes a part of his very being, a part of his behavior and life. (Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible).

A DISTURBING PASSAGE: TWO TYPES OF FAITH

Biblical faith (faith that truly saves, that truly results in regeneration) is not synonymous with mental (intellectual) assent or acquiescence, which by itself is a superficial and represents outward profession without inward possession (conversion, regeneration, being born again, receiving a new heart, having one's heart "circumcised", etc). For example, the apostle John distinguishes two types of believing using the verb **pisteuo**, one of which is only a **superficial** profession...

John 2:22 (commentary) When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they **believed (pisteuo)** the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

(**Morris** in [Defenders Study Bible](#) writes "Note the superior category of faith of the disciples to that of the "many" in John 2:23 who **believed** "when they saw the miracles," but soon fell away. The disciples did not believe because of the miracles but because of the Scripture and Jesus' words. It is far better to place one's faith in God's Word than in signs and wonders.")

23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many **believed (pisteuo)** in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing.

(Note that their belief was associated with His signs)

24 But Jesus, on His part, was not **entrusting (pisteuo)** Himself to them, for He knew all men

(**Morris in the Defender's Study Bible** writes "Although many in the Jerusalem crowd **"believed** in his name when they saw the miracles" (John 2:23), Jesus did not **"believe"** in them because He knew their hearts and knew their outward faith in Him was only superficial)

25 and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in

man.

([The Ryrie Study Bible](#) notes that "The contrast is between people who **put their trust** (pisteuo) in Jesus, and Jesus, who does not **put His trust** in people because He knows their motives and thoughts. Enthusiasm for the spectacular is present in them, but Jesus looks for genuine faith.)

Related Resource:

- Discussion of False vs True Disciples-The Test of a True Disciple of Jesus

John Piper's has some very important comments on John 2:22-23

John's Task: Belief in Jesus - In John 1:12, John says, "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." After the miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, John says, "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (John 2:11). Then after he drove the moneychangers out of the Temple and said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," John comments, "His disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken" (John 2:22). So John is on task. He is writing with a view to helping people see the glory of the Son of God, experience his grace, and believe on him as the Son of God and supreme treasure of their lives and have eternal life. **Some Belief Is Not Saving** - In view of this, John 2:23–25 has an unsettling effect. **What it says, in essence, is that Jesus knows what is in every heart, and so he can see when someone believes in a way that is not really believing. In other words, Jesus' ability to know every heart perfectly leads to the unsettling truth that some belief is not the kind of belief that obtains fellowship with Jesus and eternal life. Some belief is not saving belief.** So there are two things to focus on here. First is the glory of the omniscience of Jesus. And the second is the discovery that there is a kind of faith in Jesus that he does not approve and does not accept. **Faith That Jesus Doesn't Accept** - We said there are two things we should focus on in this today's text: The first is the glory of the omniscience of Jesus. Now the second is the discovery that there is a kind of faith in Jesus that he does not approve. This is the implication of his omniscience that John focuses on. He draws out the implication that when Jesus looks into the heart of those who believed, he sees something other than the kind of faith that makes you a child of God. Remember John 1:12 says, "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). And here in John 2:23 it says, "Many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing." It seems Jesus should be thrilled. But he's not. John 2:24 says, "But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people." This is not the way he treats His own sheep whom He calls by name, His own disciples. When Jesus withholds Himself from them, **He is saying that they are not believing in a saving way. They are not the children of God.** They are not doing John 1:12. Whatever their faith is, Jesus does not approve. **Not All That Looks Like Faith Is Really Faith** - John is still on task here. The aim of his book is "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). So it's crucial that John clarify that not all that looks like faith is really faith. It is unsettling. But that's the way life is. Better to have Jesus point this out, and help us come to terms with it, than discover it on our own when it may be too late. What's wrong with their faith? Are there clues here? Yes, there are. The first clue is the reference to signs and what Jesus says about this elsewhere. And the second clue is that this incident is mentioned as an introduction to the story of Nicodemus that comes next. Nicodemus is probably supposed to represent the people (of John 2:23) who believe in one sense but not in the way Jesus approves. **The Faith of Nicodemus** - Take the clue of Nicodemus first. Remember chapter divisions are added later. Don't pay much attention to them. John 2:25 ends, "For [Jesus] himself knew what was in man." And the next verses say, "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him'" (John 2:25–3:2). I think this is the kind of faith Jesus sees in the people: "We know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (Jn 3:2). This is a great statement of faith. It's what some pious Jews believe about Jesus. It's what Muslims believe. It is a very high view of Jesus. He is "from God." God is "with him." What he does are "signs" of God's power in him. This is significant faith. **Signs Meant to Point to Jesus** - But it is not saving faith. Nicodemus was not born again. That is the point of John 3:1–8. Nicodemus, with all his faith, needed to be born again. Nicodemus had no spiritual life. What he had seen was entirely natural, not spiritual. He was still spiritually blind. He did not see through the signs to the glory of the only Son of God. He only saw the signs, and they were so impressive that the natural mind drew the conclusion they must

involve God. Notice the reference to signs in John 2:23—this is now the second clue about what's wrong with the faith of John 2:23—"Many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing." They believed when they saw the signs. Signs were meant to point people to the true Son of God and what he stood for. But many saw the signs and did not see what they stood for. **(For complete discussion please see Dr Piper's message [He Knew What Was in Man](#))**

Zane Hodges presents another interpretation (one with which **I strongly disagree** but present for completeness):

(In [Thomas Constable's comments](#), he writes) "Zane C. Hodges, "Untrustworthy Believers—John 2:23–25," Bibliotheca Sacra 135:538 (April-June 1978):139-52 argued that these were genuine believers who "were not ready for fuller disclosures from the One they had just trusted" (p148)."

Comment: Be a Berean! Acts 17:11+ - Even the title of Hodge's article strikes me as an "oxymoron". Clearly Hodges belief is diametrically opposite to that of most conservative evangelical scholars. Only one teaching can be correct. And only one teaching results in eternal salvation. These issues have eternal consequences. See that no one takes you captive through specious reasoning, instead of letting the plain sense of God's Word mean what He says! Compare the sobering words of our Lord Jesus Christ - Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note)

Related Resources:

- [The Unusual Teachings of Zane Hodges](#) - George Zeller
- List of resources that address some of the teachings of Zane Hodges (note these are at the top of the page)

Edwin Blum in **Bible Knowledge Commentary**: They believed in His name, that is, they trusted in Him. **This was not necessarily saving faith as the next verse implies.** They believed He was a **great Healer**, but not necessarily a **great Savior** from sin. ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

Comment: Dr Blum like Zane Hodges was also at Dallas Theological Seminary but they have interpretations that are completely different. I agree with Dr Blum's interpretation. Why? Because of the context - remember that Context must be "King" for the most accurate interpretation!

Adam Clarke: They believed him to be the promised Messiah, **but did not believe in him to the salvation of their souls:** for we find, from the following verse, that their hearts were not at all changed, because our blessed Lord could not trust himself to them.

Larry Richards: But the belief of the people was shallow; so shallow that "Jesus would not entrust [or commit] Himself" to the crowds as He had to the Twelve. What is a shallow faith? Perhaps it is best to think of it as a faith that exists only as long as its object fits our expectations. **These people, who "believed" in Jesus superficially,** turned away from Him when He did not speak and act as they expected (see John 6:60-66). They "believed," but not enough to abandon their own notions and submit themselves fully to Jesus' fresh revelation of God. May God protect you and me and those we teach from shallow faith as we study John's Gospel. May He help us be willing to abandon our old ideas when He calls us to submit fully to His Son, Jesus, so that we might find life now. (Teacher's Commentary)

Harold Wilmington: Jesus knew that many of the Jews who professed to believe in him had only a superficial faith, relating to his miracles and not to his deeper ministry of deliverance from sin. John would later come back to this theme of "unbelieving believers" (see John 6:22-66; John 8:31-59). (Wilmington's Bible Handbook.)

KJV Bible Commentary: The word used to express belief (Greek pisteuo) is used in the next verse. But Jesus did not commit himself. Christ did not entrust Himself to them **because they were not true believers.** He concluded this because he knew all men. These were [nominal](#) (in name only) believers whose only interest was the miracles. He did not need their testimony for he knew what was in man. These people had not accepted Him with saving faith, but rather they accepted Him as a powerful miracle worker. ([Dobson, E. G., Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

Gerald Borchert in **New American Commentary**: The real point is that **Jesus did not believe their believing...** Accordingly, we need to understand that the living Jesus does not believe everyone's believing

because he knows what is in them. Those words ought to stand as a warning to everyone.

Steven Cole commenting on John 2:24 - Jesus never committed Himself to unbelief. ([Jesus: True, Yet Rejected](#))

William Hendriksen in Baker NT Commentary: Jesus did not look upon all these individuals as being true believers to whom his cause could be entrusted. The reason why he did not do this was because he knew all men; i.e., knew just what was in the heart of anyone with whom he would come in contact.

G Campbell Morgan: If belief is nothing more than admiration for the spectacular, it will create in multitudes applause; but the Son of God cannot commit Himself to that kind of faith.

Warren Wiersbe: The words believed in John 2:23 and commit in John 2:24 are the same Greek word (pisteuo). These people believed in Jesus, but He did not believe in them! They were “**unsaved believers**”! It was one thing to respond to a miracle but quite something else to commit oneself to Jesus Christ and continue in His Word (John 8:30, 31). ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary, 1989, Victor](#)) (Bolding added)

J Vernon McGee: The language that is used here is saying that He did not believe in them. You see, they believed in Him, but He didn't believe in them. In other words, to put it very frankly, **their faith was not a saving faith**, which He realized, of course. He knew what was in their hearts. **This is always a grave danger today for those who say they believe in Jesus. What do you mean when you say you believe in Jesus? Do you mean that you believe in the facts of the gospel? The important question is: Do you trust Him as your Savior who died for your sins? Was He raised for your justification? Is He your only hope of heaven.** (Listen to his Mp3 comments [John 2:23-25.mp3](#))

In another example of **believing** that falls short of genuine saving belief John records that when Jesus spoke to the Jews **who had believed** (pisteuo) **Him**" (John 8:31-**see in depth discussion**) but as their subsequent actions demonstrated their belief was not genuine for Jesus accused them declaring "**you are seeking to kill Me**" (John 8:40) and after several heated exchanges, these same "believing" Jews "fulfilled prophecy" and indeed sought to kill Jesus, picking "up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple." (**John 8:59**) These Jews had a profession but not genuine possession in respect to their belief in Jesus).

Hiebert adds...

That the participle (of pisteuo) is used absolutely, with no indication of what is believed, indicates that from the earliest times faith was recognized as central to Christianity "The believers" is a synonym for Christians. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book, 1996](#))

Jerry Bridges writes that **faith** that justifies...

involves both a **renunciation** and a **reliance**. First, we must renounce any trust in our own performance as the basis of our acceptance before God. We trust in our own performance when we believe we've earned God's acceptance by our good works. But we also trust in our own performance when we believe we've lost God's acceptance by our bad works—by our sin. So we must renounce any consideration of either our bad works or our good works as the means of relating to God. Second, we must place our reliance entirely on the perfect obedience and sin-bearing death of Christ as the sole basis of our standing before God—on our best days as well as our worst...

The gospel of **justification by faith** in Christ is the mainspring of the Christian life. And like the mainspring in old watches, it must be wound every day. Because we have a natural tendency to look within ourselves for the basis of God's approval or disapproval, we must make a conscious daily effort to look outside ourselves to the righteousness of Christ, then to stand in the present reality of our justification (**Ed:** Do not misunderstand - Bridges is not saying that making the effort to look outside ourselves merits salvation). Only then will we experience the stability that the first bookend is meant to provide...

Paul (**Ed:** Phil 3:7-14) utterly renounced his own righteousness as a means of attaining a right standing with God; instead, he relied solely on the shed blood and righteousness of Christ... (From a book I highly recommend as an antidote for legalism as well as a "listless" Christian life - this book will change your experience of Christ - if you need more encouragement, take a moment to read the reviews - [Jerry Bridges and Bob Bevington - The Bookends of the Christian Life](#) or [e-book](#))

As an aside, Bridge's description of faith in the preceding paragraph reminds me of the old acronym which you may have heard...

F.orsaking

A.ll

I.

T.rust

H.im

There is a world of truth in this old acronym, which I had previously failed to see, until Bridges description of **faith** opened my eyes. And beloved, please remember that the same **faith** that saved you the first time (justification), is also the same **faith** that saves you every day (progressive sanctification). Seriously, how are you doing in your daily struggle against the powerful fallen flesh (Been angry yet today? Let an unwholesome word come out of your mouth? Let an unwholesome image into your eyes? Let unwholesome words into your ears? Loved your enemy? Forgiven seven times seventy? Refused to pay back evil? Prayed for those who persecute you? How did you do on the freeway today?, etc). **Faith** means you forsake or renounce any intrinsic or inherent ability you think you might possess to overcome your besetting (or intermittent) sin. Only Christ overcame sin and now only His Spirit now enables us to overcome sin, but part of our "actuating" His enabling power is confession of our sin and renouncing our natural tendency to depend on our efforts to conquer the temptation to sin. **F.A.I.T.H.** needs to be tattooed upon our heart, lest we forget and fail to rely on His Spirit's enabling power. If you are intrigued by these thoughts, let me strongly encourage you to purchase Jerry Bridges book discussed in the preceding paragraph. And don't try to speed read it. I have been chewing it over and over (at least 5 times to date) and I have yet to be bored by their teaching. Try it. You'll like it!

Ryan Habbena addresses the crucial questions of what constitutes genuine faith versus a transitory (non-saving) faith. He concludes that

Authentic Faith Continues in His Word...

Authentic Faith Abides in Him...

Authentic Faith Trusts...

Authentic Faith Loves and Obeys...

Authentic Faith and its Worship are Fixed upon Jesus...

What are the Characteristics of a Transitory Faith? It is safe to assert that transitory or inauthentic faith lacks the above qualities. In other words, inauthentic belief is defined by those who place their faith in Jesus for reasons other than genuine trust and association with Him on His terms. Transitory faith is defined by a reserved association with Christ. As a result, when these underlying reasons for their belief are challenged and undermined by Jesus' teaching, they do not continue. However, beyond simply noting transitory faith is the inverse of authentic faith, it is profitable to note the specific aspects that caused those who had "believed" to be offended and, thus, cease to follow in John's narrative.

The two stark accounts of the failure of transitory faith are in chapter six and chapter eight. In chapter six a primary source of offense was that Jesus taught, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56). In the wake of this teaching we are informed, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore" (Jn 6:66). Whatever we may make of the Eucharistic implications of this text, I think it is clear that, at a cursory level, this text affirms to the reader the need for disciples to continue in the reality of a crucified Messiah; this being central to abiding in Christ.

In chapter eight we read of those that embody transitory faith. In mere moments within the progression of the narrative they move from faith in Jesus (Jn 8:30) to blasphemous unbelief and a desire to kill the Messiah (Jn 8:48, 52, 59). The following exchange served as the source of offense to these temporary converts (For full discussion see [Formulating a Theology of Pisteuo \(believe\) in John's Narrative](#))

Wuest writes that when **pisteuo**...

to the faith which a lost sinner must place in the Lord Jesus in order to be saved, they include the following ideas; the act of considering the Lord Jesus worthy of trust as to His character and motives, the act of placing confidence in His ability to do just what He says He will do, the act of entrusting the salvation of his soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus, the act of committing the work of saving his soul to the care of the Lord. This

means a definite taking of one's self out of one's own keeping and entrusting one's self into the keeping of the Lord Jesus.

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary says that...

A belief that saves is one that rests in the finished work of Christ; it trusts God alone for salvation (John 3:16). Believers are those who have trusted God with their will as well as their mind (see notes Romans 1:16; Romans 3:22; 1Thessalonians 1:7). ([Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#))

Larry Richards has an excellent discussion on believing writing that...

Originally this word group (pisteuo, pistis, pistos) seems linked with a more formal contract between partners. It stressed faithfulness to the agreement made or trustworthiness in keeping promises. In time the use expanded. In the classical period, writers spoke of trust in the gods as well as trust in people. In the Hellenic era, "faith in God" came to mean theoretical conviction about a particular doctrine, a conviction expressed in one's way of life. As different schools of philosophy and religion developed, the particular emphasis given pistis was shaped by the tradition within which it was used. The NT retains the range of meanings. But those meanings are refined and reshaped by the dynamic message of the gospel.

The verb (pisteuo) and noun (pistis) are also used with a number of prepositions. "To believe through" (dia) indicates the way by which a person comes to faith (Jn 1:7; 1 Peter 1:21 [note]). "Faith en" indicates the realm in which faith operates (see notes Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4; 2 Timothy 3:15). The most important construction is unique to the NT, an invention of the early church that expresses the inmost secret of our faith. That construction links faith with the preposition **eis**, "to" or "into." This is never done in secular Greek. In the NT it portrays a person committing himself or herself totally to the person of Jesus Christ, for our faith is into Jesus. (**Ed note:** Leon Morris in "[The Gospel According to John](#)" agrees with Richards writing that "*Faith, for John, is an activity which takes men right out of themselves and makes them one with Christ*" indicating that Morris likewise understands the Greek preposition **eis** in the phrase **pisteuo eis**, to be a significant indication that NT faith is not just intellectual assent but includes a "*moral element of personal trust*")

One other aspect of the NT's use of faith words is fascinating. Usually the object of faith is Jesus. Only twelve verses have God as the object of faith (Jn 12:44; 14:1; Acts 16:34; see notes Romans 4:3, 4:5, 4:17, 4:24; Gal 3:6; 1Thessalonians 1:8 [note]; Titus 3:8 [note]; Hebrews 6:1 [note]; 1Peter 1:21 [note]). Why? The reason is clearly expressed by Jesus himself: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me" (Jn 14:6). God the Father has revealed himself in the Son. The Father has set Jesus before us as the one to whom we must entrust ourselves for salvation. It is Jesus who is the focus of Christian faith. ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

J. B. Lightfoot discusses the concept of faith in his commentary on Galatians. He notes that in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the definition of the word for **faith**

"hovers between two meanings: trustfulness, the frame of mind which relies on another; and trustworthiness, the frame of mind which can be relied upon... the senses will at times be so blended together that they can only be separated by some arbitrary distinction. The loss in grammatical precision is often more than compensated by the gain in theological depth... They who have faith in God are steadfast and immovable in the path of duty."

Faith, like grace, is not static. Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender, and a supernatural longing to obey. None of those responses can be classified exclusively as a human work, any more than believing itself is solely a human effort.

Mark Dever has some sobering thoughts on **believe**...

One thing I think of as a member of our nations largest Protestant denomination, is that we have a lot of **nominalism**, in our own Southern Baptist Convention, and in other Evangelical denominations. There are a lot of people who will happily say that they **believe** in Christ, that they prayed to receive him as their savior, that they've invited him into their hearts, but who **don't give any evidence of truly being converted**. So we see lots of people—I remember one time picking up a drunk, giving him a ride in my car, I began to talk with him about the gospel. He finished the gospel presentation for me. Said that he believed it. Well, what am I supposed to do? But that seems to be typical of a lot of American Christianity. We have suggested that someone needs to sort of take care of their business with God, and then they're sort of done. A good

illustration of this is when we were driving around in Northwest DC and there was this beautiful home on the right... the walk came down from it, and there was this nice gate, and I think it was white painted... and we noticed that there was no fence on either side of the gate. There was just no fence... it struck me what a picture that was of so many churches. There's a way in, you have to fulfill some sort of membership requirements (whether its attending a class or being baptized or being confirmed or something, some way in), but once you get in there's no distinction between the church and the world (the yard and the sidewalk), there's just no distinction. People can live in the church in whatever way they want, regardless of how scandalous it was. So American Christianity may look healthy statistically, but I think that there are some real problems with it. A lot of times I hear Evangelicals say that they think the problem is that there are no good follow up programs... I think the problem may be trying to follow up with people who aren't truly converted. I think we need to rethink our evangelism, and we need to rethink what exactly the Gospel is (**Ed**: see Gospel; cp 1Cor 15:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 - see notes 15:1; 15:2; 15:3; 15:4; 15:5; 15:6 ; 15:7 ; 15:8), what does it mean to **repent and believe**? Well, it's not simply to assent that Jesus is the Savior in some merely mental fashion. To repent and believe means to be convicted by God of your sin against Him, and for Him to change your heart so that you trust in Christ. So I think a lot of what's going on in American Christianity in some ways, it appears healthy, but I think there are also some deep problems in what our understanding of what it means to be Christian. ([Ref](#)) (**Bolding and Scripture references added**)

Recommended Resource (if you are a pastor or elder I would encourage you to take a moment and go through the marks and examine yourself and your church): [Nine Marks of a Healthy Church](#)

Faith is manifest not by believing in spite of evidence (there is abundant evidence of the veracity of Jesus!) but by **obeying in spite of consequence**. John uses **pisteuo** to demonstrate the relationship between genuine faith and obedience writing...

He who **believes** (**pisteuo** - present tense = continuous) in the Son has eternal life but he who **does not obey** (**apeitheo** [word study] - present tense = continuously disobey, habitually, as their lifestyle) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Comment: The verb **apeitheo** conveys more an attitude of unbelief but also involves deliberate disobedience, conscious resistance to authority.

Charles Swindoll commenting on **faith** and **obedience** in **John 3:36** concludes that...

the one who **believes in the Son has eternal life** as a present possession. But the one who **does not obey the Son shall not see life**. To **disbelieve** Christ is to **disobey** Him. And logically, to **believe** in Christ is to **obey** Him. As I have noted elsewhere,

This verse clearly indicates that **belief** is not a matter of passive opinion, but decisive and obedient action. (quoting J. Carl Laney)...

Tragically many people are convinced that it doesn't really matter what you believe, so long as you are sincere. This reminds me of a Peanuts cartoon in which Charlie Brown is returning from a disastrous baseball game. The caption read, "174 to nothing! How could we lose when we were so sincere?" The reality is, Charlie Brown, that it takes more than sincerity to win the game of life. Many people are sincere about their beliefs, but they are sincerely wrong!" (**Ed comment**: As they will tragically discover when it is too late to repent and truly believe, as they hear one of the most sobering warnings our Savior ever uttered! = Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note) ([Swindoll, C. R., & Zuck, R. B. Understanding Christian Theology: Thomas Nelson Publishers Bible Software](#)) (This book is recommended if you are looking for a very readable, non-compromising work on "systematic theology". Wayne Grudem's online book - [Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine](#) is comparable and would be an excellent addition to your resource library.) (**Bolding added**)

Subjectively faith is firm persuasion, conviction, belief in the truth, veracity, reality or faithfulness (though rare). **Objectively faith** is that which is believed (usually designated as "the faith"), doctrine, the received articles of faith. Click separate study of "the faith (pistis)"

True faith is based not only on empirical (observable - cp Jn 20:30, 31, Lk 1:3,4) evidence but also upon divine assurance (cp 1Jn 5:13, 5:10, "the testimony in himself" = "the Spirit [Who indwells all believers - Ro 8:9-note] testifies" = 1Jn 5:6, Ro 8:16, 17-note)

Spurgeon wrote that...

Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments.

When missionary [John Paton](#) was translating the Scripture for the South Sea islanders, he was unable to find a word in their

vocabulary for the concept of believing, trusting, or having faith. He had no idea how he would convey that to them. One day while he was in his hut translating, a native came running up the stairs into Paton's study and flopped in a chair, exhausted. He said to Paton,

It's so good to rest my whole weight in this chair.

John Paton had his word: **Faith** is resting your whole weight on God. That word went into the translation of their New Testament and helped bring that civilization of natives to Christ. Believing is putting your whole weight on God. If God said it, then it's true, and we're to believe it.

Nothing before, nothing behind,
The steps of faith
Fall on the seeming void, and find
The rock beneath -- Whittier

Some quotes on faith...

It will not save me to know that Christ is a Savior; but it will save me to trust him to be my Savior. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that his atonement is sufficient; but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge, and my all. The pith, the essence of faith lies in this—a casting oneself on the promise. (C H Spurgeon)

R. W. DeHaan...

I read about an instant cake mix that was a big flop. The instructions said all you had to do was add water and bake. The company couldn't understand why it didn't sell—until their research discovered that the buying public felt uneasy about a mix that required only water. Apparently people thought it was too easy. So the company altered the formula and changed the directions to call for adding an egg to the mix in addition to the water. The idea worked and sales jumped dramatically. That story reminds me of how some people react to the plan of salvation. To them it sounds too easy and simple to be true, even though the Bible says, "By grace you have been saved **through faith**; it is the gift of God, not of works" (Ep 2:8,9-note). They feel that there is something more they must do, something they must add to God's "recipe" for salvation. They think they must perform good works to gain God's favor and earn eternal life. But the Bible is clear—we are saved, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy" (Titus 3:5-note). Unlike the cake-mix manufacturer, God has not changed His "formula" to make salvation more marketable. The gospel we proclaim must be free of works, even though it may sound too easy.

Little faith will bring your soul to heaven; great faith will bring heaven to your soul. (C H Spurgeon)

Never put a question mark where God has put a period. (John R. Rice)

True faith commits us to obedience. (A. W. Tozer)

A faith that hasn't been tested can't be trusted. (Adrian Rogers)

Comment: Adrian Rogers statement is one reason **James 1:2-4-note** should be verses we memorize, mediate upon and live out, so that the "muscles" of our faith might be strengthened! Remember that the Greek word for "trial" used by James (also Jas 1:12-note) is also the word he later translates "tempt" (Jas 1:13, 14-note, see also peirasmos and peirazo)! So what is the point? God is sovereign and He allows trials and tests in our life, albeit He never tempts us to sin. The crux of the issue is "How do we respond to the tests and trials in our life?" If we respond by trusting in the enabling power of the Spirit of Grace Heb 10:29, He will give us victory in the midst of that trial or test. On the other hand, if we trust in our flesh [in any form - rules, regulations, vows that "I won't do that or say that or react that way."] you have in effect placed yourself up under the law and that will only stir your flesh further and you will fail the test or trial. In that scenario the test or trial functioned in effect as a "temptation." In other words, when the trials or tests come, our choice will determine whether that particular trial trips us up or we walk through it unscathed in the power of the Spirit and with the effect of strengthening our faith. Inherent in every trial or test is the potential for it to be a "temptation" to commit sin. We must chose the God way or our way, the former is filled by the Spirit, we choose to walk by the Spirit. The latter is filled with self, we choose to follow the flesh and we fail the test. Does that make sense?

Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God. (John R. W. Stott)

Faith is not anti-intellectual. It is an act of man that reaches beyond the limits of our five senses. (Billy Graham)

Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable, and receives the impossible. (Corrie ten Boom)

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done.
-- Charles Wesley

I prayed for faith and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." I had up to this time closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since. (Dwight Lyman Moody)

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H. A. Ironside tells the story of a new convert who gave his testimony during a church service. With a smile on his face and joy in his heart, the man related how he had been delivered from a life of sin. He gave the Lord all the glory, saying nothing about any of his own merits or what he had done to deserve the blessings of redemption. The person in charge, who was very legalistic, didn't fully appreciate the reality of **salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from human works**. So he responded to the young man's comments by saying,

You seem to indicate that God did everything when He saved you. Didn't you do your part before God did His?

The new Christian jumped to his feet and said,

Oh yes, I did. For more than 30 years I ran away from God as fast as my sins could carry me. That was my part. But God took out after me and ran me down. That was His part. (cp Jn 6:27, 28, 29, 44)

Commenting on this testimony, **Ironside** wrote

It was well put and tells a story that every redeemed sinner understands.

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Andrew Murray has a devotional thought on this verse writing that...

THE value of the words of a man depends upon my knowledge of him who speaks. What a difference when a man gives me the promise, I will give you the half of all I have, whether the speaker be a poor man who owns a shilling, or a millionaire who offers to share his fortune with me. One of the first requisites to fruitful Bible study is the knowledge of God as the Omnipotent One, and of the power of His word.

The power of God's word is infinite.

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast. (**Ps 33:6, 9** -see Spurgeon's comments [on 33:6](#))

In the word of God His omnipotence works: it has creative power and calls into existence **THE VERY THING OF WHICH IT SPEAKS**.

As the word of the Living God it is a living word, and gives life. It can not only call into existence, but even make alive again that which is dead. Its quickening power can raise dead bodies, can give eternal life to dead souls. All spiritual life comes through it (cf John 6:63), for we are born of incorruptible seed by the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. (see **note** 1 Peter 1:23)

Here there lies, hidden from many, one of the deepest secrets of the blessing of God's word -- the faith in its creative and quickening energy. **THE WORD WILL WORK IN ME THE VERY DISPOSITION OR GRACE WHICH IT COMMANDS OR PROMISES.**

"It worketh effectually in them that believe."

Nothing can resist its power when received into the heart through the Holy Spirit

"It worketh effectually in them that believe."

"The voice of the Lord is in power."

Everything depends upon learning the art of receiving that word into the heart. And in learning this art the first

step is -- **FAITH IN ITS LIVING, ITS OMNIPOTENT, ITS CREATIVE POWER.** By His word

"God calleth the things that are not, as though they were."

As true as this is of all God's mighty deeds from creation on to the resurrection of the dead, it is true too of every word spoken to us in His holy book.

Two things keep us from believing this as we should. The one is the terrible experience in all around, and perhaps in ourselves too, of the word being made of none effect by human wisdom or unbelief or worldliness.

The other the neglect of the teaching of Scripture that the word is a seed. Seeds are small, seeds may be long dormant, seeds have to be hidden, and when they sprout are of slow growth.

Because the action of God's word is hidden and unobserved, slow and apparently feeble, we do not believe in its omnipotence. Let us make it one of our first lessons. The word I study is the power of God unto salvation: **IT WILL WORK IN ME IN ALL I NEED, ALL THE FATHER ASKS.**

What a prospect this faith would open up for our spiritual life! We should see all the treasures and blessings of God's grace to be within our reach.

The word has power to enlighten our darkness: in our hearts it will bring the light of God, the sense of His love, and the knowledge of His will.

The word can fill us with strength and courage to conquer every enemy, and to do whatever God asks us to do.

The word would cleanse, and sanctify, would work in us faith and obedience, would become in us the seed of every trait in the likeness of our Lord.

Through the word the Spirit would lead us into all truth, that is, make all that is in the word true in us, and so prepare our heart to be the habitation of the Father and the Son.

What a change would come over our relation to God's word and to the Morning watch if we really believed this simple truth. Let us begin our training for that ministry of the word which every believer must exercise, by proving its power in our own experience. Let us begin to seek this, quietly setting ourselves to learn the great faith-lesson, the mighty power of God's word. Nothing less than this is meant by saying:

THE WORD OF GOD IS TRUE!

because God Himself will make it true in us. We shall have much to learn in regard to what hinders that power, much to overcome to be freed from these hindrances, much to surrender to receive that working. But all will come right if we will only set out upon our Bible study with the determined resolve to believe that

GOD'S WORD HAS OMNIPOTENT POWER IN THE HEART TO WORK EVERY BLESSING OF WHICH IT SPEAKS.

(Andrew Murray. The Inner Chamber and The Inner Life)

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STAYING ON COURSE - A new device developed by the United States military is now available for use by civilian pilots. Called the Global Positioning System (GPS), the unit utilizes signals from a system of satellites to calculate to within 50 feet the exact location of the plane, as well as the nearest airport.

David Ramsdale could have used such a device on one of his flights. As a pilot for the Jungle Aviation And Radio Service (JAARS) he was flying passengers over uncharted jungle from Yarinacocha, Peru, toward the Brazilian border. After a while, Ramsdale realized he had been following the wrong river and was lost. Daylight was fading and the plane was low on fuel. Radio contact with the base gave no navigational help. Through the dusk, Ramsdale spotted a little river. He followed it to a larger river, and then to a village where he was able to land on a narrow airstrip just as darkness fell.

A similar thing can happen in our spiritual journey. We lose our bearings and get off course. Soon we realize we're going in the wrong direction. But we have a positioning system that will always tell us which way to go -- the Word of God. If we consult it regularly, it will guide our path and keep us from straying. - David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lamp for the feet that in byways have wandered,
Guide for the youth that would otherwise fall;

Hope for the sinner whose life has been squandered,
Staff for the aged, and best Book of all. --Anon.

To stay on course, trust the unfailing compass of God's Word.

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TAPPING THE TREASURE - And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 1Thessalonians 2:13

Stephen May discovered a treasure while teaching literature at the University of Northern Colorado. In the library, he found 150 boxes of letters, manuscripts, journals, outlines, and notes given to the school by James A. Michener.

Surprisingly, no one was using those materials to write a biography of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author, known for his historical novels. After years of research and writing, May produced a new account of the life of Michener from that great treasure.

Each day, you and I are writing the story of our lives by what we say and do. Are we using the great, but often neglected, wealth of the Bible? The psalmist wrote: "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches... Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Ps 119:14-[Spurgeon](#), Ps 119:18-[Spurgeon](#)).

The Bible is the written record through which we get to know Jesus Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3-note). Its nuggets of truth are available to us all.

A life well-lived is directly related to a Bible well-read. As we live out our life story, let's be sure to tap the treasure of God's Word every day. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

My Bible to me is a treasure house,
Where I can always find
Whatever I need from day to day
For heart and soul and mind. —Anon.

The Bible's treasures are found by those who dig for them.

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FROG AND THE TOAD - One of my favorite children's books is Frog And Toad Together by Arnold Lobel. Frog had a garden that Toad admired, and he wanted one too. So Frog told him: "It is very nice, but it was hard work." When he gave Toad some flower seeds, Toad quickly ran home and planted them.

"Now seeds," said Toad, "start growing." He tried very hard to make his garden grow. He shouted at the seeds, read them long stories, and sang songs to them—but they didn't grow.

"What shall I do?" cried Toad. "Leave them alone," Frog said. "Let the sun shine on them, let the rain fall on them. Soon your seeds will start to grow." Then one day, little green plants appeared. "At last," shouted Toad, "my seeds have stopped being afraid to grow! But you were right, Frog. It was very hard work."

So many people think it's very hard work to grow in righteousness. We must spend time reading the Word, praying, and cultivating our faith by being with other believers. But our progress in holiness is still dependent on God. As He shines His face upon us and rains His love into our lives, we will grow. Then righteousness will begin to "spring forth" (Isaiah 61:11). Don't be discouraged if growth comes slowly. Soon you will have a garden. —David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Within the seed lies God's creative power—
He's given us the joy to see it grow;
And when He puts new life within our heart,
His wonder-working power we can know. —Hess

**Spiritual growth depends on the water of God's Word
and the sunshine of His love.**