



# GROWING PAINS



Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 167–171.

**Fear** LESS

# 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

# It's Not Easy Being A Christian

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It was not easy to be a Christian in Thessalonica, and it is not easy in the world today. Believers faced persecution and suffering.



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# It's Not Easy Being A Christian

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Paul's choice of words:

- affliction (*1 Thes. 1:6; 3:3*) which means “pressure from circumstances”;
- suffered (*1 Thes. 2:14*), the same word used for our Lord's sufferings;

# It's Not Easy Being A Christian

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- persecuted (*1 Thes. 2:15*), meaning “driven out and rejected”;
- contrary (*1 Thes. 2:15*), winds that blow against and hinder progress;
- hindered (*1 Thes. 2:18*), which pictures a road so broken up that travel is blocked.

# While Suffering We Still Have Joy!

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Yet in the midst of suffering, the Thessalonian Christians experienced joy. They received Paul's ministry of the Word "in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (*1 Thes. 1:6*).

Paul certainly was burdened for his brethren who were going through suffering, and yet he also had joy (*1 Thes. 2:19–20*).

# While Suffering We Still Have Joy!

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It was a fulfillment of our Lord's promise:

**John 16:33** (NKJV)

33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

# Churches, And Christians Experience Growing Pains

Churches and Christians do experience “growing pains” as they seek to win the lost and glorify the Lord.

**2 Timothy 3:12** (NKJV)

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

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# GROWING PAINS!

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In this text, Paul explains the divine resources we have in times of suffering and persecution.

# God's Word Is Within Us

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## 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

# God's Word Is Within Us

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The church has been founded on the Word of God, the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## 1 Thessalonians 1:6 (NKJV)

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

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**The same Word that  
brings us salvation  
also enables us to live  
for Christ and endure  
suffering for His sake.**

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Paul was thankful that the saints in Thessalonica had the right spiritual attitudes toward the Word of God. This helped them endure in the hour of suffering.

- Paul said of his own suffering:

## Philippians 1:12–14 (NKJV)

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, 13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- They did not receive it as the word of men; they received it as the Word of God.
- We must never treat the Bible as any other book, for the Bible is different in origin, character, content, and cost.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- The Bible is the Word of God. It was inspired by the Spirit of God.

## 2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,



# They Appreciated The Word

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- Written by men of God who were used by the Spirit.

## 2 Peter 1:20–21 (NKJV)

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- God's Word is holy, pure, and perfect.

## Psalm 19:7–9 (NKJV)

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- The Bible was written at great cost, not only to the writers, but to Jesus Christ who became Man that the Word of God might be given to us.
- If we are going to be victorious in suffering, we must appreciate the Word. But there is a second attitude we must show toward the Bible.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- Paul used two different words for “received”: the first means simply “to accept from another,” while the second means “to welcome.”
- One means “the hearing of the ear,” while the other 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.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- The Lord Jesus repeatedly warned people about the wrong kind of hearing, and His warnings are still needed.

## Matthew 13:9 (NKJV)

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

- In other words, “Take heed that you hear.” Use every opportunity you have to hear the Word of God and take it to heart!

# They Appreciated The Word

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But He gave another warning...

**Mark 4:24** (NKJV)

24 Then He said to them, “Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.

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# They Appreciated The Word

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How often believers hear the Word of God in Sunday School and church, and then get in their cars, turn on the radio, and listen to programs that help erase the impressions made by the Word.

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# They Appreciated The Word

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Our Lord's third warning

**Luke 8:18** (NKJV)

Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”

- Many people are careless hearers and cannot apply themselves to listen to the teaching of God's Word.



# They Appreciated The Word

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- These people have “itching ears” and want religious entertainment:

## 2 Timothy 4:3 (NKJV)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

# They Appreciated The Word

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- Some of them are “dull of hearing”, too lazy to apply themselves and pay attention.

**Hebrews 5:11** (NKJV)

of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- One of these days our churches will be hungry because of a famine “for hearing the words of the Lord”.

## **Amos 8:11** (NKJV)

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the LORD.

# They Appreciated The Word

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- Too many churches have substituted entertainment for the preaching of God's Word, and many people no longer welcome the Word of God.

# 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.

# They Applied The Word

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- They obeyed the Word by faith, and the Word went to work in their lives.
- It is not enough to appreciate the Bible, or even to appropriate the Bible.
- We must apply the Word in our lives and be hearers and doers of the Word.

## James 1:19–25 (NKJV)

19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.



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# They Applied The Word

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- The Word of God has in it the power to accomplish the will of God.
- “For nothing is impossible with God” (*Luke 1:37, niv*).
- It has well been said, “God’s commandments are God’s enablements.”
- Jesus commanded the crippled man to stretch out his hand—the very thing the man could not do. Yet that word of command gave him the power to obey.

# They Applied The Word

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- He trusted the word, obeyed, and was made whole (*Mark 3:1–5*).
- When we believe God's Word and obey, He releases power—divine energy—that works in our lives to fulfill His purposes.

# Growing Pains!

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- The Word of God within us is a great source of power in times of testing and suffering.
- If we appreciate the Word (the heart), appropriate the Word (the mind), and apply the Word (the will), then the whole person will be controlled by God's Word and He will give us the victory.