

Theme: Christians Unexcited.

Text: II Thess. 2:2 -- "We beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited," (RSV)

Proposition: An individual's Christian faith should help him to face life's problems calmly and unexcitedly.

Date written: March 2, 1957.

Number of cards in these notes: _____

Dates and Places preached:

March 3, '57, Gore Church, Cheyenne, Wyo.
8:15 - 11:00 a.m.

June 25, 61, Sheridan, Wyo., 9:30 a.m.

July 2, 61, Montrose, Colo., 9:00 a.m.

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Introduction:

1. II. Thessalonians, like I Thessalonians, was written to the Christian Church at Thessalonica (now Salonika) shortly after the organization of that church. Like the first letter to the Thessalonians, II Thessalonians introduces itself as from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Like II Peter, there is some dispute among Biblical scholars as to whether or not the Book actually was written by the persons named within it. One of the chief reasons put forth for doubting that Paul had a hand in writing this is that the Book stresses a viewpoint about the second coming of Christ which seems at first glance contradictory to writing on the same subject found in I Thessalonians.

2. In I Thess. Paul stresses that the second coming of Christ will be at an unexpected time, "like a thief in the night." But many of his readers understood him to mean that Christ would return soon, and became excited, even using the idea of the approaching end of the earth as an excuse to have one last fling in unchristian living. They were excited, and normal living routine was upset. When one recalls these circumstances the purpose of II Thess. becomes clearer. To emphasize the ne-

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cessity to live steady, calm, unexcited Christian lives, Paul felt it necessary to point out that the Second coming might not be so soon. He tells of things that he believes must happen before Christ comes again, and goes into some detail on the subject.

3. His thoughts along this line are frequently quoted by folks who feel they must figure out in detail in advance the end of the earth. They point to his predictions and to present happening as being the things that he wrote about. The trouble is that we may interpret a happening falsely as the sign Paul meant, and a hundred or a thousand years from now somebody else may associate something of his day as that great event preceding the day of judgment.

4. My own feeling is that Paul was using popular ideas of what might happen at the judgment day to impress on the Thessalonians one great truth: that faith in Christ is the key to a calm and serene, unexcited life, in which the greatest events can be faced with sane and effective action.

5. It is this idea of "Christians unexcited," that we examine here. Our theme is suggested by words from our Scripture, as written in verse 2, "we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly

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saken in mind or excited."

I. The tendency to become excited over causes or events of great interest is widespread among the human race.

1. Who hasn't attended a ball game of some sort, and almost screamed his lungs out when the home team neared the goal line, or made a homer run? Dignified community leaders can be observed at such times thumping on the back equally excited folks who are strangers to them. Otherwise reserved and respectable women have been known to plant a big kiss squarely on the unexpected lips of the strange man sitting next to them when the old school team upset the favored rival.

2. More seriously, many of us can remember the great nation-wide excitement at the end of World War II, and perhaps some remember that at the end of World War I. People gathered in crowds in the streets. Church bells rang, and the whistles of industry blew loudly and wildly. The shooting had stopped, we had won the war, and the boys or girls -- our sons and daughters, husbands, fathers -- were soon to be home, some returning from a four year absence. It was natural and right to be happy and to rejoice over the end of the war.

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Similar scenes were taking place throughout the world, even to some extent in the defeated countries, for even for them the killing was over.

II. Christian faith leads one to channel into usefulness such feelings of relief, gratitude and of wanting to something about the great event.

1. Evening during the months prior to the end of World War II many of America's churches formulated plans to help rebuild war-torn countries, to re-establish churches, and to care for refugees who could not return to their old homes. Our own Methodist church sought from its people some \$25 million for after-the-war purposes of these types, and within a 2-year period our people responded and gave more than that, in addition to their regular giving for both local church and missionary work. Had not our people felt that they wanted to and thus joined in righting war's wrong, had they not felt gratitude and relief at the approaching end of the war, and had they not had Christ's standards of love and mercy moving within them, they would not have done as they did. But when the war ended we were ready with funds and trained personnel to help in many a needy, war-stricken area.

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2. A person was riding in a car following a hearse bearing the body of her father to the cemetery. Almost uncontrollable sobs came forth, and she said rebelliously and bitterly, "They just can't haul him out like this and dump him in the ground." But she was really a person of firm and steady Christian faith, and her God-given source of comfort and good sense soon enabled her to say instead: "He was a good man, and I know he still lives and that God will be good to him." The memory of her father's fine, quiet and gentlemanly manner became a constant inspiration in her struggle to meet life's problems sanely, unexcitedly and calmly. Yet, it was her Christian faith that made it possible for her father's influence to serve her in this way.

3. We are told that the effectiveness of Communism is due largely to its ability to claim from its followers a zeal to ~~do~~ the work of Communism anyway and anywhere. It is almost a religion, and its new-won converts sometimes are particularly zealous, excitedly active in furthering the cause of the autocracy of the masses. But observation and study of current events shows that the seasoned Communist soon loses this excited zeal and becomes a hard-bitten

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individual struggling for a power position in a merciless organization. Christianity, on the other hand, has standards of right which can never be changed for a temporary present goal. The Christian faith inspires activity based on a calm but solid respect for the welfare of others as being equally as important as of self. It is a faith that demands day by day steady application of moral principles to all areas of life; and not just that ~~lifetime~~ **lifetime** goals may be achieved, ~~but~~ as preparation for eternity. It is not, as might be thought from observation of some groups, a religion that must cause one to act insanely and ~~wildly~~ **wildly** at any time. It is a faith which causes joy, activity, and yet calmness and assurance. An unexcited Christian is a typical Christian, for his faith is not a passing fad but a living reality undergirding all of life.

4. Dedication is one of the key words of Christian faith. It means that one is given completely to the standards of Christ; that self's time, talents and money are available for ones faith insofar as possible. Hence, the Christian faith causes people to want to give regularly of time and talents to Christian service, and to support the christian

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endeavor, whether home church or foreign mission, regularly and systematically. Dedication is devotion to the cause of faith, devotion with ones full self.

Conclusion:

1. The tendency to become excited over causes or events of great interest is widespread among the human race.
2. Christian faith leads one to channel into usefulness such feelings of relief, gratitude and of wanting to do something about the great event.
3. An individual's Christian faith should help him to face life's problems calmly and unexcitedly.

Hymn 342

COYCE PETERSON
1940

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