

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

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Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Sermon: *The Law of Excitement*

Story of the history of the early church. But it is never meant just to be a history to tell us what they did but really to be an example of what we ought to be as well. And so we ought to often read the second chapter of the Book of Acts because it describes who they were and enables us to test ourselves and see how well we are living up to it. So I would like to read for you Acts Chapter 2, beginning in verse 42 and talk with you this morning about the law of excitement. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship of the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together. They had everything in common. They sold their possessions and goods. They gave to everyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet in the temple courts. They broke bread in their houses and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people and the Lord added to their number daily those who were in the process of being saved.

There is an old story about a church that caught on fire. It was before the days of fire trucks so what they did was form a bucket brigade. What happened was, a man would go near a stream and fill a bucket with water and he would pass it to the next person and they would form a long line until finally the last person in the line would throw the water on the

fire. The pastor was in the middle of the line and he noticed that the village skeptic was standing next to him. And the pastor just couldn't let the opportunity go by. And so he said, "This is the first time I have ever seen you at church". And the village skeptic said "This the first time I have ever seen your church on fire." Now, there is a truth so basic that really it is called a law. And this is it. Truth must be shared with excitement to be effective. Faith, no matter how true spoken with staleness and lived with boredom will win few believers. Faith has been often likened to a disease. It has to have a fever to be contagious.

Charles Finney who was the Billy Graham of his day, said it this way. *The spreading of the Gospel comes when heroic souls enter the conflict determined to win or die or if need be to win and die.* Samuel Chadwick, the great English preacher, said it this way. *Truth without enthusiasm is nothing more than a Godless philosophy or an ethical system.* Now all around the world today are various kinds of religions. Those religions, while having part of the truth, also are riddled with falsehood. And yet, many of those religions are growing with rapidity because their adherents deeply believe what they have been taught. And when you read about them you see them spreading out and going through all kinds of sacrifices because of what they believe. So even though they have elements of falsehood, they are winning many people because they share their faith with excitement. It is also true in Christian history that there are countries where it can be said of the Christian faith it used to be. And what happened was that those churches began to live the faith with staleness and boredom until finally even though it was true, they began to disintegrate.

You might recall that on the day that Lenin brought his troops and captured Moscow, there was a national meeting of the Russian Orthodox Church. The main agenda of the day was how long should the tassels be on the Priests' robes. And when they turned in and became intent

on themselves instead of living the life and sharing it with excitement, then it became a country where it used to be. So hear it again, truth must be paired with excitement if people ever are going to listen to what you say. If they don't think that it means anything to you, if they do not sense that this is the most important thing in your life, then of course they are not going to listen to it very much.

I remember the story that John Besanio, who for many years was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Houston, Texas told. He was invited to speak at another church for a special meeting on Wednesday. He said it was winter, he had developed a sore throat. As he got out of the parking lot he saw a drugstore across the street and he decided to go over and get him some throat lozenges. He said that it was around Christmas and a man met him at the door, said he had on a crazy Santa Claus hat and said, "Merry Christmas, so glad that you are here. How can we help you?" He said, "Well, I've got a sore throat, do you have anything?" He said, "We sure do, let me walk you back." He said he walked him back to the throat lozenges and he said, "Anything else I can do for you?" And he said, "No that's it". Well, he said, "Here's the lady who will take your money. Merry Christmas to you!" And he said he noticed in the background all kinds of Christmas music taking place and even though he felt bad he was glad he went to the drugstore. He said he went across the street to the Baptist Church. He said he walked in, the place was about 10% filled and he said nobody spoke to him. Nobody said, "We are glad to have you as our guest for tonight." but they stood and sung 5 stanzas of Day is Dying in the West. He said as he rose to speak he noticed some of them immediately settled down for their long winter's nap and when it was over, an older lady came to him and shook his hand and said thank you for coming. He said, "I can tell you that night if an invitation had been given whether to join the drugstore or the Baptist Church I would have joined the drugstore." And the reality is you would

too. Who wants to join a graveyard? Who wants to be in a place where people are going through rituals and motions but it doesn't mean anything to their life.

You begin to understand what it means when I say to you that truth must be paired with enthusiasm or excitement ever to be effective. In the first service one lady came and joined our fellowship. She said to me last week, "Let me tell you why I want to come and join this church. I sense a spirit of excitement and joy there and I want to be a part of it. You will remember the story that Jesus told in the last book of the Bible. He began to speak to the seven churches and one of them was a church named Laodicea. He said, *Let me tell you about your spiritual temperature. You are not hot, you are not filled with excitement.* He said, *You are not cold, you have some faith.* But he said, *You are lukewarm.* And he said, *Let me tell you what I want to do with you. I would like to spit you out of my mouth.*

And I've often wondered why the Lord would be so hard on people who are just lukewarm in their commitment to Christ. And I have begun to understand why. It is actually easier to take a person who knows little and tell them about Jesus and let them come in with great excitement than sometimes to try to deal with a person who is settled down in their spiritual life and are just going through the routine. Many times a person who is a new believer can come in and spread excitement to people who have let the fire go out in their life. Someone said it right. Often new believers have to back slide to have fellowship with us. Again, it is to help us to understand what Jesus was saying when I come I'm going to come with wind, and I'm going to come with fire. And you will understand that it is a fire that envelopes you that leads you to sacrifice and makes you want to stand for me

and when you know that then people will see it and they will want to be a part of your life.

I remember the little simple fella who used to always like to stand around and talk to the older men. Finally one day they got tired of him and they said to him, "Here's a dime. Would you go out and buy us 10-cents worth of enthusiasm?" In about an hour he came back. The older man said, "you back already? He said, "Yes sir, and there is not 10 cents worth of enthusiasm in this whole town."

Now let me ask you. When people look at your faith, what you profess, do they sense that it is something that excites you, that fills you with enthusiasm, that challenges you, is it something that then they are attracted to? I think every mother and daddy ought to ask that about their own faith in their home. And that is, is my faith so contagious that my own children want it? Is it so contagious that my neighbors want to know where I go to church? Is it so contagious at my work that people want to say, "What is it that makes a difference in your own life?" And if that isn't there then we need to get the opportunity to check our own spiritual temperature.

Now I began to wonder as I looked at that passage of Scripture I read today. What was it that spelled their excitement? I want you to hear it again. Every day they were learning. They had a thirst for the Word of God. I wanted to ask you, how does that stack with you? At the close of the first service, a lovely young couple came to me and said, we've been I worship how we want to know something, where is a good Bible Study class? We want to know God's word. They were people who saw themselves as a new community. They join together every day in time of fellowship. They were worshipping people. Singing praises unto God. They were people who had respect and all for God they said they came with all. They were people who saw miracles being done all

around them. They saw the community had a claim on their finances. The Bible says they actually went and sold things and gave it to the church. They saw people in need and so they gave it to them. They were excited at being in worship. They went every day. Sometimes they did it in their home and sometimes they did it at the Temple but you didn't have to be around them very long. So listen to the end of the story. People began to want to be a part of their fellowship and God brought people to salvation. You can understand what it meant when the Bible says that there was a wind and a fire and they began to understand the excitement and people began to have it. Do you understand that all around us there are all kinds of groups with excitement. There are people who are willing to put their money, because they believe in what they say.

I've been like you, I have been watching part of the Olympics this week. I'm not quite sure sometime whether I'm watching the Olympics or I'm watching the commercials. Sometimes the commercials are almost as long as the Olympics. But I'm fascinated at the commercials because I understand about how much it costs to put one of those commercials in the Olympics. And I see men and women who sit down and say this is so important to us we are willing to spend lots of money. I remember the missionary who came and told us that they went to share the Gospel with a group in Africa that had never, to their knowledge, knew they existed. And he talked about the treacherous, torturous route he took back into the jungle to finally get to the Chief's house. And when he got there standing right beside the Chief's house was a sign that said, Coca Cola. You see, people believe strongly in what they say. In the Olympics, the ad is about a person who feels very strongly about a product. ... and they were trying to get their word about, that they were against a certain product. And what I think is, here are young people, young adults sitting down, putting their money, and building these delightful

commercials and when you get finished you are aware they are speaking against what people are trying to say. Do you understand that people who feel a passion, who want a passion in life, who feel they ought not just be living with boredom and just to get through life when they come to a church, what they want to ask is do you really believe what you say? Is there something that will challenge me and something that will fill my life? And if it's not there, then they're not coming back.

Let me tell you some things that help to make excitement in your life. First thing that makes excitement is always remembering what Christ has done for you. Several years ago I went over to Morgantown, West Virginia, to speak for 5 days. A group of Baptists had come out of the University there at West Virginia and started a little Baptist Church. They were meeting in a Union Hall and they just had a small group and they were meeting in metal chairs. And so I spoke. There was a young fellow there by the name of Mike. Mike sat and I noticed him on Sunday immediately, the crowd was small but he was right there and his eyes were glued on what I said and afterwards he came up to me and he said, "You know, I am here in school and I really am learning a lot but he said you know something is really missing in my life and he said I am really interested in what you are saying." Wednesday night came and I noticed there was Mike again and when I spoke I noticed after I spoke and the invitation hymn was given Mike got up and he started walking down the aisle and for those of you who are used to the custom you know that when somebody joins, the preacher usually takes their hand and introduces themselves and sits them down and so I reached out to touch Mike and when I did this college student just dropped before me and took his arms and put them around my knees like that and just wept like a child. So I took Mike away and talked with him about it and he said, "I just can't believe that God could love somebody like me and I just couldn't believe that Jesus has

come to save me." On Friday, he came to me after the service and he said, "What time does your plane leave tomorrow?" And I told him and he said, "Do you mind if I drive you out to the airport? I said, "Of course." And all the way out he was just bubbling. When I got on the airplane, we taxied down the little runway there at Morgantown and I looked out the window as we got ready to lift off and Mike was out there giving me this. For years Mike kept up with me. Graduated, married, became active in his church and always when the communications would come he would say, "You know I can't get over what Jesus did for me."

You want to know what most of our problems are? We've gotten over it. And instead of it being more deep and more meaningful and more joyous the longer you walk with him, it's gotten the other way, we just take everything for granted. And so I wanted to remind you that everything that you are and everything that you have and everything that you will be is because of God's goodness to you through Jesus Christ. And maybe it's time for you to go back home and just take a journal and plot what God has been doing in your life, where you have an opportunity to say God thank you and get so excited about it again that you want to have a part in His ministry.

The second thing that always is the foundation for excitement is when we stop again to realize really what it is that we say we believe. Do you understand that we believe in fulfilled prophecy. At the very first of the Bible, God said I am going to do this and what that means is that all the way through history there is a thread of God's purpose and what was fulfilled was that Jesus came, that God came to this earth in Jesus Christ. Scientists debate whether a man could ever live on Mars. Do you understand that pales in

significance to say that no man could live on Mars but God came to earth. And he lived among us to tell us what we are, how we are to live, and he died for our sins, and he resurrected and the hope is that all of history is going to end on his terms. I mean, how, when you read this, that a moment ago when we sang one of my favorite choruses, *Thou art worthy*, why don't we just want to lift our voices and our hands and our hearts and say, you alone are worthy. Of all that you are, and all that you have done for us.

The third way to always fuel your excitement is to remember the high calling that God has on your life. You see, God has worked in your life and called you so that you could help him to win this whole world to Jesus Christ. I want to tell you, Christianity is not local news. It's worldwide vision. And when you begin to sense that he has called us for all the world, my what a difference that makes in your life.

Saddleworth was one of the great explorers in history. He explored both of the Poles. On his first trip he said, "I want to go to the North Pole but I don't know if anybody will go with me." Small ship. Nobody had ever been there. Treacherous. He put an ad in the London Times. And this is the ad. Wanted: Men. Men who will go with me on a dangerous journey but who will live, who will want to be part of the excitement of being on a great voyage. And Saddleworth said, I could have found 10 ships to take all the men who wanted to go. Jesus comes to you and says, I want you on a great voyage with me and when you begin to sense all of what he has called you to do and all of what you are part of, there ought to be an excitement in your life that never will stop.

Preacher became very discouraged. Congregation was small. It seemed that little was being done. But he noticed across the street that there was the live theater and he

noticed on a regular basis large crowds going into the theater. So he went over and talked to the Manager of the theater. He said, "I have a church building open and very few people come. When you open up your theater the place is full. Could you help me to understand why? The Manager of the theater said, "My actors take fiction and say it like it is truth. You take truth and say it like it is fiction." Truth that is not lived out with excitement will never find people who want to be a part of it. So I wanted to ask you, "How is your excitement quotient? Is there a wind and a fire inside of you that others around you understand that it is something that you must share with them?" And when they come when we are all gathered together, is it true what they say the Scripture wants it to be? They can sense that God is here.

I hope today that somehow that you will begin to walk so close with him that you will say, "I want this to be consuming in my life, to be what it ought to be." There are people in this room today like Mike. Know a lot of things but never have really given your heart and your life to Him. You need to do that today. I invite you to come to Jesus Christ. There are Christians in this room today. Some of you have been coming to this church a long time. I wonder is it time to let your excitement say, I want to take a stand for Christ. I want to take a stand for what this church is involved in. I want to take a stand on the journey. We want to move our life and our membership and become a part. I want to encourage you to do that today, "Will you?" As you know our custom is that we are going to stand and sing our last hymn. We are going to invite you to come forward, those of you who God has spoken to, to come to Christ, to come to church membership. We are going to stand together and do it now.