FRUITFUL FRUSTRATIONS

Introduction:

1. Life is a diary (where we mean to write one thing, and are forced to write another.).
2. Paul planned to go to Spain—that was his dream, but he wound up in a Roman cell.
3. If we are not conditioned for this, we are not conditioned for life. (Strain can produce breakdown, alcoholism, even suicide).
   *We train for success—(but failure is more common) (Poverty/wealth; dissapointment/arrival).
   *Settling for less than we wanted is a major problem for many. (Scribbling vs. Spain).
   *With Jesus, "all can be made fruitful". Jas. 1:5-6.

Discussion:

I. Make traction out of trouble.
   A. We don't understand pain, much less enjoy it.
   B. But there is no progress without it. (Bird, fish, stand—all take resistance). Illustration: The Weight of the Grandfather Clock.
   C. Character comes through conflict. Rom. 5:3-4.
   D. The "Comfort Cults" are wrong—as Holiness, not happiness, is the highest good. Illustration: Mystery, "Why are vitamins in spinach rather than in ice cream, where they belong?"
   *The Negro spirituals are some of America's sweetest music.
II. Make beauty out of blunders.

A. Where do "accidents" end and "providence" begin?

1. Illustration: Decatur, Illinois, Bergin ordered a magazine on photography and got one on ventriliquism.

2. Illustration: In 1915, Coffee County, Alabama, was a depressed area, because of the boll weevil. Then Carver found the peanut in 1919 and now there is a memorial to his weevil as "Herald of Progress".

3. Edison spilt acid in a baggage car and got fined.

4. Whistler flunked out of West Point, "If silicon had been a gas, I would have been a Major General."

5. Lincoln failed at law—and became President.

***So, Paul's prison in Spain was not the end. It was here that 13 letters of the New Testament were written, in jail.

*God was in Paul's disappointment. Here he quieted his restless missionary spirit—so he could penetrate the mystery at the heart of God.

III. Are we dealing too lightly with disaster?

Then, let's go to the valley of the cross—too dark for magazine success stories.

A. Tolstoy in "My Confessions" tells of what frustration and disappointment can do. Some get:

1. Frightened—drunk.

2. Despair—suicide.
3. Resent--harden heart.

4. Accept it irrationally--stand up to it.

B. Not Jesus.

1. He didn't "endure" the cross, he "used" it.

2. Persecution became his weapon against evil ("From the ground, there blossoms red...etc.")

3. Dividend - "richness in quality of life that was not there before.

4. So, sickness? - "get something out of it" vs. "just go through it".

Criticism - "profit by it" rather than just "take it". So also with "disappointment", "broken hopes", "severed relationships".

5. Not like Socrates. "Get married. If you get a good wife, you will be happy; if a bad one, you will be a philosopher."

Conclusion:

1. See Hamilton Thornton Wilder's play about "Bethesda".

2. Illustration: "Scotland Lodge--the painting by Landseer which began as a smudge".