

New Testament

Philippians 4:10-19

Date written: 14 Sept 1951Theme: Making the best of the worst.Proposition: Even the worst and most unwanted circumstances of life can be of benefit to him who believes on Christ.Text: Philippians 4:10 & 13... "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.".... "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."Places & dates preached:*Camp Cooke, Calif*
Stockade 0800, Post Chapel 1000,

Hospital Chapel 1100 - 16 Sept 51

Arace, Campum, 8:15 & 11 a.m.,

May 26, 1957

Radio KWYO, Sheridan, Wyo., 10:15-10:30 a.m.,
July 16, 1958

1
New Testament
P. 111-112

Date written: 10 Sept 1951

Topic: Making the best of the worst.

Proposition: Even the worst and most unwanted circumstances of life can be of benefit to him who believes on Christ.

Text: P. 111-112: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Places & dates preached:

Introduction:

1. "Wars are just brought about by high officials, colonels and generals, there's no sense in them, and they don't settle anything," a sergeant said bitterly after reading his orders to go overseas. The chief problem that the sergeant revealed in this statement wasn't that of the cause of war, as great as that problem is. The problem revealed was that of his attitude toward an event which was distasteful to the point of tragedy for him. With not much over a year of marriage, with a new and cute baby boy, with much overseas time to his credit in a previous war, as a reservist who had been recalled to active duty, there is little reason for questioning the cause of his bitterness. Yet, that attitude toward the inevitable, the unavoidable, is important. For him the worst had happened. Why not make the best of it?

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2. The problem of how to make the best of any circumstance is important.

3. If one makes the best of all situations he can help himself and others, even in the worst circumstances.

4. Paul, the apostle and the inspired writer of our Scripture, faced the problem, as must any other person. In our text he states the attitude which he had acquired, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He doesn't claim the credit for this accomplishment, but gives credit in these words, "for I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

5. It would be difficult to classify all of life's "worst events." Generally, however, most circumstances fall into certain types. In each of these it can be shown that Paul's experience of strength through Christ is still the most satisfactory way of making the best of the worst.

Persons
New Testament
Pauline
4:10-12

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New Testament

Phillippians

4:10-19

I. Making the best of the worst when the worst is loss or disappointment in material or social realms.

1. Material loss often seems the worst that can happen.

a. In a recent motion picture one of the chief parts portrayed a man so anxious to be wealthy and socially prominent that he did almost anything to achieve these things. When his villainy was finally brought to light the plot had worked out so that he was dying from poison that he had intended for someone else. Knowing that he was dying, the thing that concerned him most was that he would lose the wealth and position for which he had worked. Death concerned him less than loss of material and social prominence. The worst for him was not death but the loss of material wealth. In periods of national economic depression, such as the 1930's in America, suicides increase on a percentage basis because many can't

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New Testament
Philippians
4:10-19

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Sermons
New Testament
Phillippians
4:10-19

stand the thought of losing the material for which they have worked so hard. Suicides are not uncommon, too, in cases that have brought social ostracism or other loss of social, business, or power position, sometimes because of an illegitimate pregnancy, because of drug or alcoholic addiction, or for other reasons. The worst seems to have happened to those who react to such circumstances bitterly, sometimes even with self-destruction.

6. Prior to the depression of the 1930's Mr. J. C. Penney had acquired a personal fortune estimated at \$40,000,000, which he says would be worth 5 times that today, considering the value of the holdings that comprised that fortune. In the depression he lost this fortune, to the extent that he lived as closely and in as small a house as any average family. Some men of that period in similar plight killed themselves, or lacking that turned to futile bitterness.

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Mr. Penney, too, underwent soul-trying experiences, but finally came to know God through Christ in a very real and satisfying way. Later when he recovered much of his fortune, he devoted his wealth to helping churches, religious periodicals, old-age homes, and other ventures of charity and faith. Mr. Penney had experienced what Paul had learned, that it is possible to make the best of the worst through Christ. He has testified that from the time of his religious conversion he found even the loss of his fortune had value.

d. Perhaps the failure to get deserved promotions, maybe absence from one's family. Whatever the problem, you can find good in life's experiences of material or social loss or disappointment, if you but put your faith in God through Christ.

II. Making the best of the worst in waywardness, illness or death of loved ones, whether friend or kin.

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Sermons
New Testament
Phillippians
4:10-19

1. A family of average financial circumstances had 3 children. The parents in the family were conscientious christians and had very definite and strong attachment to their church, a Protestant church. Their convictions about such matters as drinking, promiscuous relations between the sexes, and other standards of conduct were strong and real, standing for clean and pure life. Their attitude toward other denominations than their own, ~~particularly toward the Catholic Church,~~ was one of tolerance ~~but of real opposition~~ in matters of belief and practice. When the oldest child, a boy, finally reached maturity, finished his education, got a good job, and told his parents he was ready to marry, they were pleased. After all, one big financial burden was off their hands! But when they learned that the girl he was to marry was Catholic, they were greatly disturbed; for their Protestant faith meant much to them. Prayer, careful refraining from

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New Testament

Phillippians

4:10-19

criticism, help of the young couple wherever possible, and soon they found that much good was derived to the whole family through the marriage. They had found a daughter whom they learned to love by striving to make the best of what seemed to them a pretty bad situation.

The second child, a girl, grew up to be very attractive and married a Protestant boy. The young couple took an active interest in sports of the area in which they lived, but before long they were smoking and taking "social drinks," both habits positively sinful in the eyes of the parents. Again, instead of criticising openly and otherwise causing a breach in the family, they turned to prayer and a continued tolerant and loving attitude. The young couple began to see the pleasure and the profit in the things for which the parents stood, and began taking an interest in church and good community activities too. Again, making the best of a bad situation through Christ who strengthens brought

Nov Testament
P. 111
01-19

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Sermons
New Testament
Phillippians
4:10-19

good, and, in Paul's words, content.

The third child was 10 years younger than the previous one, and a girl. The parents gave her every opportunity in school activities, music, church and in social life. If anything, they did too much for her, through love. In her junior year in high school the worst did happen, as far as they were concerned, for the girl, unmarried, was soon to be a mother. The parents reaction at first was pittyful, yet eventually admirable. The father had a heart attack, but pulled out of it. The mother, already frail, gave all she could to keep the family and the business going. Prayer, consultation with the pastor, a desperate groping for strength, was the story. Again they were wtriving to make the best of about the worst. Standing by the girl in her need, in spite of her sin, keeping up church and community activites in spite of knowledge that gossip was flying, they gained the admiration of many

4:10-12
Philippian
New Testament

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Sermóns
New Testament
Phillippians
4:10-19

because of their exhibition of Christian faith and strength. They truly demonstrated that both self and others can be helped when in the strength of Christ one makes the best of the worst in case of waywardness and misfortune among those we love.

2. Death of a loved one is often the worst life can offer. Death must come to all of us, to some of all ages, and you can adjust to the loss of a loved one eventually, however severe the shock. Sometimes prolonged illness of a loved one creates a situation that seems worse than death itself, particularly if the illness is of a type to bring severe suffering or of certain mental types.

In the September 1951 issue of Guideposts is an article entitled "When the Mind Snaps." It tells the story of the problem faced by the parents and husband of a young mother who suffered mental illness. The problem is common to thousands of families, some in worse degree, some in less. Shame, reproach and grief that

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New Testament

Phillippians

4:10-19

this has happened in my family are natural first reactions. The Guideposts article tells how one family came through this experience richer and stronger because of the experience. They made the best of the worst only after rediscovering that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Through His strength they learned to be content, while yet working to improve the situation. In their case the loved one returned to health, but many times the loved one never regains normal mind and a painful situation exists till death. Even in such a circumstance, you can make the best of the worst, find good and be of help to others at least by example, through Jesus Christ.

III. Making the best of the worst when that worst is personal illness or a knowledge of approaching danger or death.

1. There are periods in many lives when serious illness brings discouragement.

New Testament
Philippians
1:12-13

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New Testament

Phillippians

4:10-19

ment and many problems.

a. Illness.

(1) Paul, the writer of our Scripture, knew something of this himself for he suffered from some type of chronic disease or disorder which he described as a thorn in his flesh. Some scholars have thought it epilepsy, but there is no conclusive proof of its nature. In spite of that, Paul through his faith in Christ was able to write the beautiful words of our text.

(2) A coal miner contracted the dread occupational disease of silicosis and became a bed patient. For years he was gloomy and bitter. His extreme poverty, and that of his family, agitated his gloom and hopelessness. A young minister, pastor of a local church, called on him frequently and had many long, serious conversations with him about many things, but always about Christ and his promise

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.of comfort and hope. One day the miner, still not an old man, professed his faith in Christ, was baptized and joined a church, although he was able to attend services only occasionally. The whole population, practically, of the small Arkansas community remarked on the change in his attitude toward life. He accepted his condition and became one of the most cheerful persons of the community, a real example of the power of Christ over a condition conducive to despair. At the time of his change his disease seemed no more aggravated than before, but shortly thereafter his illness became more acute. His death within a year was that of a peaceful man confident of a happy eternity. Prolonged personal illness can seem the worst, but out of it can come the very best for you, and through you even for others.

b. A chaplain recently returned from Korea tells a story which illustrates

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New Testament

Phillippians

4:10-19

how in danger the best can be made of the situation. A soldier refused to enter battle with his company, being scared to the point of "freezing" when danger neared. The other members of the company ridiculed him, calling him yellow and using other more insulting, unprintable words. His captain usually addressed him as "you yellow dog." He wanted to overcome his fear, but just couldn't seem to do it. One day following a church service he approached the chaplain and asked for prayer and baptism saying he felt that Christ had entered his life. A few days later when the company charged a hill the captain, leading the way and in an exposed position, was shot and fell on the spot. The "coward" was the one who rushed to him, in spite of the great danger, and pulled the captain to cover, only a few minutes before the captain died. The strength of Christ had enabled this soldier to overcome fear, to make the

10-19

Philippine
New Testament

10-19

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New Testament

Phillippians

4:10-19

best of the worst. In any danger you can make the best of the worst if your strength is in Him.

c. To some comes a time when the knowledge is given that death will overtake them within a limited, given period of time. Then, if ever, comes a testing of personal resources. A movie of not too long ago, entitled "No Sad Song for Me," portrayed one young mother's reaction to the knowledge that she would die of cancer in a few months. Though the picture didn't present her as specifically religious, her action from then till death, was truly noble. She prepared for the future care of her child, and broke the news as gently as possible to her husband. A woman in real life had much the same situation. She had always been a woman of strong Christian faith. Her suffering was intense right up to her death. Yet her constant thought seemed to be for her husband and son, and also for her community, to a remarkable extent, considering her condition. Sep

Common
New Testament
Philippians
4:10-19

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seemed little concerned about what she faced in death, and at least once expressed herself as being sure she would be in good hands. It is possible for you and me to make the best of the worst, even certain death within a short time, if our faith is well founded.

Conclusion:

1. The bulk of our time has been spent with illustrations from life of the strength available through Christ when life seems to have dragged the very bottom. Where better than in the reaction to the hells of life can we find proof of the best way to approach and use such situations?

2. We have thought about life at its worst in areas which pretty well cover the worst that can come. We have considered (1) loss or disappointment in material and social realms, (2) waywardness, illness or death of loved ones, and (3) illness and approaching death of self.

3. In all of these black nights which life can bring there is a way of making the

New Testament
Philippians
3:10-11

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New Testament
Phillippians
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