

The Unseen Hand

by James W. Adams

Many times the charismatic personality and oratorical and rhetorical abilities of a speaker conceal the pernicious error implicit in that which he says, and multitudes are deceived. Conversely speaking, these same qualities often lessen the transforming influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is taught and preached. Under such preaching, multitudes may "join the church," but few are converted to Christ.

It is said that a person heard a world-famous evangelist and came away saying, "What a marvelous speaker!" Sometime thereafter, he heard a consecrated preacher of little fame preach in simple idiom, but with great conviction and sincerity, the story of the cross and came away saying, "What a wonderful Christ!"

This calls to mind a verse of a poem written by W.G. Elmslie which addresses the point of this article.

He held the lamp of truth that day
So low that none could miss the way;

And yet so high to bring in sight
That picture fair the World's Great Light

That gazing up the lamp between
The hand that held it scarce was seen.

We should so teach the Word of God as to emphasize the message which it conveys and Him who is its author that the hearts of the hearers may embrace "the World's Great Light." The less they see of "the hand that holds it up," the more impressive it will be.

However, let us not use these facts as an excuse for poorly prepared and slovenly delivered lessons or sermons. The lamp stand and the hand that holds it should be of such character as to display the Light, whether held "low" or "high," to the best advantage so that its rays of redeeming light may shine clearly and powerfully to all who need it.



Classes This Week		
Sunday 5:15 Kid's Class in Auditorium	Tuesday 8:00 PM Truth Seekers in room 2227 of the student center	Thursday 7:00 PM Ladies' class at Carmen Herd's house on "Seasoning"

February Birthdays			
Lisa Carter (Luke's mother)	Jesse Godwin (Troy's father and Mac's grandfather)	Nell Holcomb (Ben's grandmother, Joannetta's aunt)	Louise Pack (Anna and Christopher's grandmother)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Ruth Addison (gmom of April and Julie)
Madeline Morton (Greg Lanier's g'daughter)	Alexander Locke (Jeremiah's cousin's son)	Betty Bradford	Hazel Gilliland and Sherry Carroll (Toni's relatives)
Jean Buchanan (Abbie Harrison's grandmother)	Ermogene Laxson (Sara Lail's grandmother)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	William Smith (Ken Sullivan's brother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Arabelle Rich (Joannetta's aunt)	Sasha Rozier (Makenzie Reynolds' cousin)	Charles Hunt, chuck Hunt's dad
Bonnie Rhodes Kirkley (Toni Herd's family)	Howard Vaughan (Mary Ann's Granddad)	Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephew)	James Palmer (Rachel Hobbard's grandfather)

News and Notes

- ☒ - Fallon Hartsell was able to return home this week after successful leg surgery!
- ☒ - Please remember the family of Tyler Cox in the loss of his aunt, Anita Willis, last week.
- ☒ - Prayers requested for the sister of Orie Cecil and her husband, Kalie and Jonathan Thrasher, as they await the adoption of a son this week!
- ☒ - Please remember the family of Sara Lail in the death of her cousin, Jared Laxson.
- ☒ - Please remember these family members of Orie Cecil as they battle cancer: cousin Caleb Atnip and his mother Tina, grandfather Charles Cecil
- ☒ - Scott Smelser will preach on evidences at the Prattmont church Feb 12-14.
- ☒ - Please pray for our expectant mothers: Amanda Stephens, Brooke Perkins, Fallon Hartsell and Jenna Vaughn.
- ☒ - Please pray for the Anderson's as they await in Arizona for the birth of the baby they will adopt!
- ☒ - Please pray for the Anderson's newly adopted daughter, Julianna, that she is able to come home from the hospital soon. The delay could take up to a month.

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Bearing Fruit and Winning Souls

By Irvin Himmel



Thoughts to Ponder

Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ... (2 Corinthians 5:11)

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise (Prov. 11:30).

Every life is like some kind of tree. A righteous life is like a good tree bearing good fruit. A wicked life is like a bad tree bearing bad fruit. Jesus said, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Mt. 7:17,18).

Fruit of a Righteous Life

A righteous person produces fruit that may be considered "a tree of life." This includes the following:

- (1) Good Influence In Word and Deed.** The faithful child of God, "by his good deeds, is as a tree of life to those whose lives he sustains" (Whiteside). Many around us can be uplifted by the power of a good example. The Christian wields a wholesome influence as the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16). Good works have added weight when backed by good deeds.
- (2) Food For Souls Through Teaching.** The truly righteous man is more than a "Good Samaritan." He feeds hungry souls the bread of

To "persuade" means to prevail upon or win over by bringing about a change of mind by the influence of gospel promises, warnings, and exhortations. People who are baptized because of high pressure tactics turn back as soon as the pressure is removed.

life. While people of the world often perform humanitarian acts that aid the temporal man, the Christian sees his main task as helping the spiritually destitute.

(3) Encouragement That Helps Weary Souls. "Tree of life" means "that tree which bears fruit that contributes to the life and happiness and good health of those who eat it" (Lanier). The righteous have the right to the tree of life, that is, access to heaven (Rev. 22:14). And each life which reaches out to help others who have grown fainthearted is lifting them from death to life.

"The effect of a righteous life on oth-

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Elders
Walker Davis (334) 703-0050
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday
Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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ers is like that of a tree of life; and the result which flows from a life of wisdom is the winning of souls" (L. G. Thomas).

Wisdom of Winning Souls

The winning of souls is a wise thing to do, and the winning of souls requires wisdom. Where is the wisdom of winning souls?

(1) Souls Are More Precious Than Gold. Every human being is endowed with a soul which dwells in a physical body.

However, that which kills the body does not kill the soul (**Matt. 10:28**). The soul is one's most priceless possession. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" said Jesus (**Matt. 16:26**).

(2) Souls Won Are Saved From Death. While the soul does not die physically, it can die in the sense of being separated from God. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (**Ezek. 18:20**). "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (**Jas. 5:19,20**).

(3) Winning Souls Increases The Influence of Good. Every time one soul is won to the Lord the influence of good multiplies just that much on this earth. Each soul won to the Lord becomes a potential for winning additional souls. I can think of no better way to improve conditions in this world than by turning men and women from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.

(4) Winning Souls Brings Joy. The New Testament tells about people who rejoiced when they were baptized (**Acts 8:39; 16:33,34**). Sometimes people weep for joy when they obey the gospel. But there is joy in the heart of the soul winner as well as in the heart of the converted-sinner. Paul referred to his converts at Philippi as his "joy and crown" (**Phil. 4:1**). It is a great thrill to have a part in leading someone to the Savior.

How Souls Are Won

The New Testament teaches Christians how souls are brought to Christ. Here are some truths to consider in this connection:

(1) By The Gospel, Not A Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit. No apostle, no evangelist, no teacher in the New Testament instructed sinners to pray for God to send the Spirit to save them from their sins. In every case of conversion the gospel was presented, and by the power of God's word sinners were drawn to the Lord. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (**Jn. 6:44,45**). Indeed, the gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation" (**Rom. 1:16**).

(2) Through Persuasion, Not Force. God does not attempt to coerce people against their wills to serve him. We should use every righteous means to convince people to accept the gospel, but we cannot force them to turn to the Lord. Paul said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (**2 Cor. 5:11**). To "persuade" means to prevail upon or win over by bringing about a change of mind by the influence of gospel promises, warnings, and exhortations. People who are baptized because of high pressure tactics turn back as soon as the pressure is removed. To pressure a person is one thing; to win him to the Lord is another thing.

(3) Through Godly Living. Peter advised women whose husbands were not Christians that they might be won by the conduct of the wives (**1 Pet. 3:1-4**). Many who will not listen to the oral presentation of the gospel can be influenced when they see the gospel in action. We should live daily with the thought of winning others who may be watching our behavior.

Bearing fruit is inseparably connected with winning souls in a righteous life. God does not want us to be barren or unfruitful (2 Pet. 1:8).

Guardian of Truth— February 1, 1990



A Health Care Reality Check

By Steve Klein

No health care program is going to keep you from dying. We talk about health care as if it is going to prevent people from dying. It will not.

It's easy to get caught up in the political and social issues of our time. Currently, you can't turn on the TV or radio, or pick up a newspaper without being bombarded with news on the health care debate going on in Washington. Most of us probably have our opinions about the issues involved. Some might like more government control and financing of health care, and some might want less. Some might prefer that health insurance be mandatory for all, while others might like a choice in the matter. No matter what our feelings are on these and related issues, Christians need to remember to allow their thinking to be directed by their faith in God and the truths found in His word. Whatever Washington decides about healthcare, certain things will remain true.

Clean living leads to good health. The best health care plan in the world is to live like God says. He created us and surely knows what is best for us! "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones" (**Proverbs 3:7-8**).

Listening to wise parents promotes a long healthy life. Solomon said "My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart, for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh" (**Proverbs 4:20-22**). "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (**Ephesians 6:2-3**) Health is a gift from God. It is the Lord who blesses people with good health and well-being.

As was mentioned earlier, we can certainly do things to promote our health. And the Scriptures indicate that doctors and pharmaceuticals also have roles to play in keeping us healthy (**cf. Matthew 9:12; 1 Timothy 5:23; Luke 10:34; Jeremiah 51:8**). But ultimately it is God who blesses us with health and healing. Let's not forget that! "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases" (**Psalms 103:2-3**). We may have all the money in the world, but the health and strength to enjoy it is a gift from God. Solomon observes, "As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor -- this is the gift of God" (**Ecclesiastes 5:19**).

No health care program is going to keep you from dying. We talk about health care as if it is going to prevent people from dying. It will not. You can take all the pills you want. Exercise, eat right and avoid risky behavior, and you will still die anyway! In the end, it won't matter what health care program our nation adopts. "No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war, and wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it" (**Ecclesiastes 8:8**).

If our thinking is right, we'll be much more concerned about what happens after death than we are about what to do to prolong life -- for "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (**Hebrews 9:27**).

