

**HE SOWER**  
**ARTHUR (IL) CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
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**LIVING IN HOPE**

Someone once wrote: "Next to the gospel of love, the gospel of hope is perhaps the most blessed story in life. It makes us optimists for tomorrow, and we look for bright skies, good health, congenial work, true friends and a happy future." As we view the world, it seems that many are losing that hope. Young folks often have no vision for the future. Healthcare costs soar. Our government wants us to trust bureaucrats to take over. Higher education continues to get farther and farther out of reach for many young people. How discouraging can life become? I even heard of a couple who killed themselves and shot their baby [still surviving] because the fear of predicted catastrophic effects of "global warming" convinced them there was no hope for themselves, their child or even humanity. It is in times like these that Christians must sound out the message of hope in Christ most emphatically. Hope is one of the three major tenets of Christianity ["faith, hope and love", 1 Cor. 13:13]. As someone wisely observed, "Other men see only a hopeless end, but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope." The greatest hope for the child of God is the coming again of the Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. This is the event the apostle Paul said we should be looking for-- "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).  
--Ron

(In line with this thought, we would share the following article by Neal Thurman. When I copied it off the Internet, I failed to write down who sent it. Thanks to whoever that was.)

Hope has an amazing power over the human spirit; it energizes the heart and the spirit to hang on and keep fighting even when times are hard. The athlete who has hope will give maximum effort to the very last second. The soldier with hope will press on undaunted by perils or fear. Yet, take away their hope, and they will most likely quit completely.

These same principles apply to Christians as well; we are encouraged by the inspired writers to recognize the hope that is ours through Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter tells us how Christ "*has begotten us again to a living hope*" (1 Peter 1:13). He tells us how the death of Christ has given us life. The apostle Paul in writing to the Thessalonians in regard to the righteous who had died, wrote: "*I do not want you to be ignorant...lest you sorrow as others who have no hope*" (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

He wanted these Christians to see a distinction between Christians with **hope** and the unbelieving **without hope**.” In writing to the church in Ephesus, Paul wrote of this distinction: *“At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”* (Ephesians 2:12).

These writings, and others like them, were to remind and build up hope within Christians, helping them to see that the grace of God through Christ provides a hope that cannot be shaken or taken away.

Today, we need to encourage one another in like manner, reminding each other of our living hope, for having this hope will inspire us to greatness.

***“And let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation” ( 1 Thessalonians 5:8).***

## **THE LOST AS LOST**

When Jesus viewed the masses of people, He saw them as poor, captive, blind and downtrodden (Luke 4:18, 19). In response to their condition, He proclaimed the good news, seeking to set them free and give light to their darkened lives. Paul reminds the Gentiles that before they were in Christ, they were separate, excluded, strangers, and without God (Ephesians 2:11, 12). In response to their condition, Paul devoted his ministry to proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47, 48).

You and I must also have a keen awareness of the spiritual condition of those who are lost. It is often difficult, though, for us to constantly view our friends, neighbors and relatives as poor, captive, blind, downtrodden, separate, excluded, strangers, and without God. We see their material wealth, their physical health, and their contentedness with life, and before we know it we no longer see them as lost, and therefore have no reason to share.

It is tragic for a person to be spiritually lost and not even realize it. But perhaps it is even more tragic for us as Christians to neglect, dismiss, or not see one’s lost condition and not share the life-saving message of Jesus. Maybe it’s time to renew our vision to view the lost as being lost. Lift up a prayer, invite a friend to church, and speak a good word for Jesus, for the lost are indeed lost.      --Andy Miller, Starkville, Miss.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER AND "COMMUNION"

(A vital part of congregational worship on the Lord's Day is the observance of the Lord's Supper—the partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, emblems of the Lord's body and blood [Matthew 26:26-28]. While many rarely observe it, yet the early church made it the heart of their assemblies. Acts 20:7 informs us that it was their practice "upon the first day of the week" to assemble to "break bread." Paul reproved the Corinthian church for not partaking of the Lord's Supper when they came "together into one place" [1 Corinthians 11:20], their having transformed it into a common meal. Church history also shows the weekly observance to have been the practice of early disciples. I came across the following article in *Christian Studies*, Vol. 23, 2009, published by the Austin Graduate School of Theology. The article is taken from Michael Lodahl's *The Story of God*. Read it carefully and prayerfully. It will help us realize that the Lord's Supper is more than a habitual ritual, but a "communion" with our Lord.) (See next column)

Like Passover, the Lord's Supper is not simply a collection of past events or a fitting memorial to a dead hero. For it also includes the element of the present, with its communion (literally, 'union with'). Here we are met by the living Lord of mercy at his table, and we sit at the table with his multitude of disciples down through the centuries. At this table, Luke reminds us, Jesus is a servant, outpouring his life and blood in our behalf. "For who is greater, Jesus asks, "the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27).

"I am among you," says Jesus, promising his continued presence at the table. But it is not simply that he is among us as we gather for Communion: our living Lord is among us as "the One who serves."

### THINK—

- No one can rise above the people in it.
- It is harder to hide feelings we have than pretend to have feelings we lack.
- One who thinks he can get along without others is mistaken. One who thinks others can get along without him is even more mistaken.

*The Encourager, Dongola, IL, via Bulletin Gold*

### INJUSTICE ABOUNDING

Planned Parenthood wants pro-life sidewalk counsellors thrown in jail, but an abortion activist can tell hundreds-of-thousands of kids that abortion is normal. A sickening video on YouTube featuring an abortion activist even states abortion is probably "God's plan." The abortion industry wants to normalize abortion. —American Center for Law and Justice

**PRAY FOR:** I found out at this week's checkup at the optometrist's that I have a ripe cataract in both eyes which need to be removed. I have been scheduled for the removal of one this Friday, Feb. 1. \*\*\* Sammie awaits word from her surgeon as to future surgery. David Ferguson and Bill Livesay (Mattoon, Lake Land Church) are scheduled for the kidney-transplant surgery this Thursday, the 29<sup>th</sup>. \*\*\* Continue in prayer for the many being persecuted for their faith, especially those in China and Muslim nations. There are reports even of some being crucified. Where is the outrage in the media?