

The Wednesday Word, March 9, 2022: Away with the ‘Hope So’

W. T. P. Wolston, one of the excellent Brethren (Gospel Hall) preachers of the 19th century, recounts the following story of talking to a lady after having preached the gospel. It is an excellent, helpful little piece. He writes,

“At the close of the evening gospel meeting, as I was standing near the door, I saw Mrs. H - leaving. Offering her a little tract, and at the same time expressing a wish that she might receive no harm on her way home from the rain, which was falling in torrents, she replied that she did not think she would, and further, that she was glad she had come, for she had much enjoyed the meeting.

As I had been speaking on the text “Be it known, therefore, unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it” (Acts 28:28), I added, “I trust you now know the salvation of God and have eternal life.”

“I hope so,” was her reply, showing no desire to pass me.

“But why should you only ‘hope so’ when God wishes you to ‘know so’?”

“Well, sir, I believe in Jesus, and all I can say is I ‘hope so’ and I don’t think anyone can ‘know so’ as long as they are in this world.”

“If you will permit me,” I answered, “I will show you just one little verse in the Word of God which will settle that matter definitively.”

“You need not trouble yourself,” said she, “I know the Word of God well. Ever since I was a child I have studied it and I don’t believe there is a verse you can show me that I don’t know.”

“Just one, Mrs. H.”

“Well, where is it?” said she. Taking her large-print Bible from her hands, I found and read to her,

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may KNOW that ye HAVE eternal life... “ (1 John 5:13).

I read it a second time, and then said, “Do you believe on the name of the Son of God?”

“I do,” was the emphatic reply.

“Do you believe that you are a lost sinner needing salvation and that nothing but the blood-shedding of the Son of God could avail to put away your sins?”

“I do.”

“Do you repudiate all thought of salvation by your own works, confess that you are an undone, guilty, lost sinner, and now simply believe in the name of the Son of God?”

“I do,” was again the short and sincere answer I got.

“Well, then, granting all that, have you eternal life?”

“I hope so.”

“Oh,” was my reply, “I see it now; in the days when you went to school, they used to spell differently than they do now.”

“How so, sir?”

“Why, K-N-O-W used to spell H-O-P-E in those days.”

“Not at all, sir.”

“What did it spell?”

“Why, of course, it spelt KNOW the same then as now.”

“There is a mistake somewhere,” I replied, “there must be, for you say you believe on the name of the Son of God, and He says, ‘These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life,’ and you stand there and tell me that you only hope you have it.”

“Let me see that verse myself,” said the old lady, suiting her actions to her words by diving her hand into her pocket, and taking out and adjusting her spectacles. Once and again she read slowly to herself, and then most emphatically out aloud, “These things have I written unto you that BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, that ye may KNOW that ye HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”

The Spirit of God blessed her examination of the sacred message and filled her heart with peace as she believed it. “Hope so” died on the spot, and faith and amazement had full possession of her soul.

Looking up, she now added, “Well, is it not strange? For, often as I have read the Epistle of 1 John, I never saw that verse. Of course, I must have read it for I am very fond of St John's writings, but I never saw it in the light I do now. I am very glad you spoke to me sir and showed me that verse. Dear me, how dark I have been, and there it was all the time and so plain too; I wonder I never saw it before!”

“Well, thank God you see it now, and you believe it simply as it stands, don't you?”

“Oh, yes, there's no room left for doubting now; thank you for drawing my attention to the Lord's Word.”

We had a little more conversation, and then, seeing that she was now resting simply on the Lord and His blessed written Word, I bade her “good-night.” I closed our conversation with this question, “And now, Mrs. H, if a friend meets you on your way home and asks, ‘Have you eternal life?’ what shall you say?” “With a face now beaming with joy in the assurance of God's salvation, she replied, “I should tell them that I KNOW I HAVE IT. I know because I believe on Jesus, and God has said, ‘These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.’ Good-night, and good-bye, sir.”

W. T. P. Wolston:

And that's the Gospel Truth.