

Life and Sayings of Sam P. Jones:

A Minister of the Gospel

The Only Authorized and Authentic Work

By his wife
Assisted by
Rev. Walt Holcomb, a
Co-worker of Mr. Jones

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

IN BROOKLYN WITH DR. TALMAGE

It was in January of 1885 when Mr. Jones held a month's meeting in Brooklyn, N. Y., with Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage, in the famous Brooklyn Tabernacle. Soon after Mr. Jones's meeting in Memphis, Tenn., in 1884, Dr. Talmage was visiting in that city and heard of the remarkable work there. The people were talking the Sam Jones meeting to him, and he became specially interested in Mr. Jones and his work, and the unique and manly way in which he had preached in Memphis appealed to the noted divine.

It wasn't long until Mr. Jones received an invitation from Dr. Talmage to conduct a meeting in his city. Owing to previous engagements, he was unable to go until the first of the following year. Mr. Jones was somewhat apprehensive of his visit to Brooklyn, as it wasn't clear in his mind how the aristocratic and fashionable audience would receive him and his style of preaching. While they were used to the sensational preaching of Dr. Talmage, it did not augur that they would receive his plain, homely and blunt way of saying some things. The newspapers in the South and in Brooklyn and New York, had right much to say about the proposed visit. The New York and Brooklyn papers had printed and circulated some very ridiculous and ludicrous reports about him and his work.

He left home in time to meet his Brooklyn appointment, arriving in New York City early Sunday morning. After he had had breakfast, he went over to Brooklyn, reaching there about nine-thirty o'clock on a dreary, rainy day, to find the great crowds making for the Brooklyn Tabernacle. Dr. Talmage preached Sunday morning, and the meeting proper began Sunday evening. Before the morning sermon Mr. Jones met Dr. Talmage, and after a brief conversation and consultation they entered the pulpit together.

The great sea of upturned faces and the magnificent sermon that Dr. Talmage preached greatly impressed Mr. Jones. He said it was one of the most powerful and spiritual of any he had ever listened to; that Dr. Talmage was, on fire with zeal and enthusiasm while delivering the message of the morning hour.

At the close of the sermon he announced that the revival would begin that evening at the usual time for service. He introduced Mr. Jones to his audience and spoke of him in the very highest and most complimentary way.

In the evening when Mr. Jones accompanied Dr. Talmage into the pulpit he was greeted by an audience that taxed the seating capacity of the building.

When Dr. Talmage presented him to the audience he arose and began his work in his characteristic way. In his preliminary remarks he said: "Dr. Talmage has introduced me as the Rev. Samuel Porter Jones, of Georgia. Well, I am just plain Sam Jones. I am no great evangelist in the sense of Munhall, Moody and others, but I am a plain Georgia circuit-rider. I am a member of the North Georgia Conference, and received my appointment just like any other Methodist preacher. At present I am the agent for the North Georgia Conference Orphanage, and am permitted to conduct revival meetings wherever my services are wished. I am a Methodist, but I won't find any fault with you Presbyterians and others if you will just co-operate with me in this meeting.

Remember, I don't want your endorsement; in fact, I don't think it would be worth much to me, but just co-operate with me, and let's try to run the devil out of Brooklyn. I am afraid there is too much pride in this church for the Lord to do much for us. If you people and Dr. Talmage had as much of the grace of the Lord in your hearts as you have pride you wouldn't need a little sallow-faced Georgia preacher.

I am not going to preach like Dr. Talmage; I am going to preach like Sam Jones. There is no use in my preaching just like he does. If his preaching would convert you, there wouldn't be any room for mine."

These words being received with considerable merriment, he then turned from himself and Dr. Talmage, and the crowd in general, to the deacons of the church and asked how many of them really had any acquaintance with the congregation. He reminded the deacons that they couldn't have a revival until they became personally acquainted with the sinners and showed them that they had their soul's salvation at heart.

After having preached for them, he pronounced the benediction, and the audience went away discussing his uniqueness, and expressing themselves as delighted with his first sermon. A sunrise prayer-meeting was held next morning, in which quite a number participated. He preached again at eleven o'clock to a larger audience. Monday night there was something over two thousand in attendance.

Mr. Jones in a letter says:

"Our meeting last night was glorious; some conversions. Dr. Talmage and his church are very hopeful and full of faith. The rain has ceased, and I think we will have better services to-day. Dr. Talmage and I spent the afternoon of yesterday together; he takes to the meeting with all of his heart."

On Monday after the first service Dr. Talmage and Mr. Jones walked over to New York. Soon Mr. Jones found himself in the office of Dr. Talmage's tailor. Dr. Talmage turning to the tailor ordered a handsome overcoat, paid thirty-five dollars for it, and handed it to Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones accepted it with thanks, and they walked off together without another word about it. This gave room for the story that has been widely circulated through the press of the country to the effect that Dr. Talmage was not pleased with Mr. Jones's pulpit appearance, and before his first sermon presented him with a suit of clothes and a silk hat, and Mr. Jones going before the audience and saying upon his presentation to them, "This is not Sam Jones, but the Rev. Samuel Porter Jones. This is not the suit that he wore here, but one that your pastor bought for me. This is not the hat I wore, but the silk one that your pastor presented to me. Now, if Dr. Talmage had as much grace in his heart as he has pride he wouldn't have needed me to preach to you."

This incident never occurred, but the gift of the overcoat mixed up with some utterances in his preliminary remarks was taken up by the press and much exaggerated and, like many other stories which were almost without foundation, went over the country. These exaggerated episodes never bothered Mr. Jones as a rule, and it was only occasionally that he ever contradicted them, unless they had a decidedly bad moral influence.

While the Brooklyn meeting was not one in which the great dailies took undue interest, he received very liberal and generous press comments. The *Brooklyn Bugle* had its reporters there, and sometimes gave verbatim reports of his sermon, and always had a good, lengthy account of the work. Their estimates of him and descriptions of his style and manner were very sane and creditable. They said in substance what the great papers of Memphis, Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston and other cities throughout the country had said concerning him and his work.

The crowd continued to increase. Writing January 9th, Mr. Jones said:

"Our meeting is growing in interest and power at each service. I look for great things. A score or more have already joined Dr. Talmage's church. There was no service on the first Saturday night and Dr. Talmage again preached on Sunday morning."

Mr. Jones, in writing January 12th, said:

"Dr. Talmage preached one of the most powerful sermons yesterday morning I ever heard. His soul was full, and he moved the vast congregation as you scarcely ever saw people moved. I preached with liberty last night to the house packed. This morning, Monday, at the sunup meeting, we had a good number; still the weather was awful — a rain and wind storm, the only kind that hurts a meeting here. We hold service again at eleven o'clock, as you will see by the card."

Dr. Talmage, at Mr. Jones's suggestion, telegraphed to Professor McIntosh, of Emory College, to come and take charge of the singing. Mr. Jones was glad to have him, as he was great company and good help in the meeting. Plans were made for a great men's meeting to be held the following Sunday.

The second week the interest increased, and the audiences grew larger and the papers gave more space to the meetings. In another letter, written January 14th, Mr. Jones said:

“Our meeting is glorious. There were about fifty conversions last night. I look for great things from now on. I have the most and the best helpers here I ever had anywhere. Dr. Talmage’s church is full of consecrated workers. Dr. Talmage is greatly encouraged, and said last night’s meeting was the best he ever saw. He says the revival is better attended than any one he ever saw held in the tabernacle.”

It was not convenient for me to go to Brooklyn with Mr. Jones, but the letters I received daily were full of urgent requests that I join him. Finally, the conditions at home were such that I went to Brooklyn during the latter part of his meeting. At almost every service some of the number who were converted united with the church. Mr. Jones was constantly receiving letters from many places where he labored in the South assuring him of sympathy and prayer. This greatly encouraged him and he preached with unusual power the closing week of the revival. The largest audiences that he had addressed up to that time were attending his ministry. The people had become accustomed to his preaching, and were working earnestly for the salvation of the erring and lost. Dr. Talmage’s church was greatly strengthened by the direct accessions from the meeting, and the last Sunday night service was one of tremendous power and force.

Standing there before the building packed and jammed, he related in closing his sermon the story furnished him by his old presiding elder, Rev. Simon Peter Richardson, of the old ship going out to sea. Said Brother Richardson, “I was brought up near the beach of the ocean. We lived up on the hillside in sight of the beach. One morning I saw a grand old ship that had been swept up on the beach by the storm in the night. After breakfast I went and looked all through and over that old ship. I have been on that ship often. I have sat and watched the high tide — the spring tide — go in and surround the ship and rise higher and higher. ‘Oh do, poor old ship, go out to sea!’

I have said, and I would look out again and see that the tide had gone out and left the old ship high and dry. I have seen the tide flow out and come in and in until the old ship would quiver and tremble as if about to float away. ‘Do go to sea,’ said I, to the old ship, ‘or you will crumble to pieces’; but the tide would go out and leave the ship still aground. Finally, one morning, sure enough, that old ship had crumbled into ten thousand pieces, and was swept off forever.”

After relating the story he said: “My brother, your good wife has stood by and seen this high tide come in often, and perhaps tonight is the highest tide you will ever see. Old ship of humanity, do go out to sea to-night. The tide is up and around you, and you quiver and tremble under the pressure of this tide of grace that sweeps over you. If you do not go out, you will be stranded forever on the beach of eternal despair. God help you to turn loose and go out with this tide, and enter the haven of eternal rest. Will you, my brother, my sister, consent to give your heart to God and start?” When he extended the invitation, hundreds responded to his appeal, and the great and glorious meeting was closed.

The Brooklyn meeting was like every other meeting that he held; one of power and force, and was instrumental in bringing hundreds to the Lord, and in adding great numbers to the church.

Upon his arrival at home, Mr. Jones received a picture painted by an artist who was present that night. The picture is one of a ship stranded on the beach, and the last tide gone out, and it is left to crumble to pieces. A letter followed in which the artist said that he was present that night and realized that if he didn't go out on that tide that he would be stranded for all eternity, assuring Mr. Jones that he gave his heart to God that hour, and expressed desire that he would accept the gift as a token of his appreciation for the illustration that had been such a blessing to him. The picture now hangs in our sitting-room, and Mr. Jones valued it as much as any in our home, not because of its intrinsic value, but its association.

Dr. Talmage and Mr. Jones formed friendship that deepened and broadened during the years to follow. Mr. Jones was an ardent admirer of Dr. Talmage, while Dr. Talmage loved him and always spoke in the highest terms of the work done in Brooklyn. When Dr. Talmage made his last visit to Atlanta, he spoke of the meeting, in which he said that it was the greatest and best meeting he ever saw in Brooklyn, and that his people remembered, loved and cherished Mr. Jones for the great and lasting good he accomplished during his mission there.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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