

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 TEN

REVIVALS IN SOUTHERN TOWNS

It was not possible for Mr. Jones to give his entire time to the work of an evangelist during the years 1884-5. At that time he was the agent for the Orphanage of the North Georgia Conference, and had to devote much of his labors to that institution. He held revival meetings as often as his work at the Orphanage would permit.

In Georgia he held meetings at LaGrange, Newman and Atlanta. These were the second visits to these places. In Tennessee he held a remarkable meeting, in 1884, at Jackson. After the first few days, the building was so small that it would not accommodate a fourth of the people who wished to attend the services. He was also at Charleston, S. C, during this period, and held a meeting that stirred the entire city. He visited Waco, Texas, and preached eight days, when he was taken seriously ill with malarial fever. The meeting had grown in interest until there was no place large enough to accommodate the audience, and a great arbor had been hurriedly erected on the church lot, the money for the temporary building was soon subscribed, and in a short while it was ready for use.

The city which had been so dead, religiously, was filled with religious enthusiasm within one week from the first service. The conversions were many at every service, and sometimes there were more than one hundred penitents forward for prayer.

Mr. Jones had been preaching constantly for weeks and the heavy work in the open air was too much for his strength, and he was suddenly attacked with fever and the meeting was postponed, but he finally recovered his health and returned to Waco and completed his work. There was an experience in his life, while in this first meeting, which is worthy of note. He had been battling with the disease, and the devil was harassing him day and night, as he did Job of old. He seemed to say to him "You will die right here; you have not enough vital force to live." He seemed to be present in bodily form. Mr. Jones replied, "Get out of this room; if I had to go over it all again I would not work any less, but would spend more time and strength in my Master's service. I don't know but that my work is ended, but I am happy, and if I die I shall be happy forevermore."

The devil left the room, and Mr. Jones in his suffering was happy at the thought that he had worked hard and faithful to win souls to Christ.

He held several meetings between Memphis and Chattanooga which were remarkable in their results. At Corinth, Miss., there was a great work. The town was known for its wickedness, and the meeting completely changed the tone of the place. Among the converts were some of the most abandoned drunkards in the city. The meeting took a strong hold upon the leading citizens, and many of them were converted and became useful members of the church. Two-thirds of the population had been won to Christ during the meeting. The Honorable Mr. Inge, the Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives, resided at Corinth, and was one of the converts of the meeting.

Mrs. Inge had a son in Texas who was dissipated and wicked. She prayed God to save him, and before the meeting closed he came home and was happily converted. He soon entered the ministry, and all over Mississippi the name of Rev. George Inge became a household word. He died a few years ago after a very fruitful ministry.

One of the most thrilling experiences of his life occurred there. He had become so wearied and tired from constant preaching that one night going to church he said: "I am so tired I cannot stand up and preach this evening. I shall ask the people if they will allow me to sit down and talk to them."

Upon announcing his text the baptism of the Holy Spirit came upon him, and when he had finished the sermon, and had concluded a long altar service, he went away from the church, saying: "I feel as if I were the best-rested man on earth." That night in his room the Holy Spirit continued to bless him, until he cried out: "This is glorious, the breezes of heaven are sweeping in upon my soul." For ten minutes or more these waves of blessing passed over his spirit, and for three months or more he didn't know the sense of fatigue as he labored day and night for the salvation of the lost.

At Iuka, Miss., another marvelous meeting was held. A large brush-arbor was erected in the grove. Seats were arranged for two thousand or more, and yet there was not room. The people came in on the trains from every direction, and the power of the Spirit was evident at each service.

One of the most striking incidents of the Iuka meetings was the conversion of Dr. Hodges. Mr. Jones met him at the Springs the morning after he arrived. Dr. Hodges was a retired, wealthy physician, about fifty years of age, and a perfect Chesterfield in his bearing. His wife was intelligent and beautiful. They attracted Mr. Jones's attention, and as they left the Springs the pastor said, "Brother Jones, that man is an atheist and his wife is an infidel."

They were regular attendants at the meetings. After three days Mr. Jones asked him to come to the altar and give his heart to God. Dr. Hodges replied, "You go back to the pulpit and read Hebrews 11:8-10."

“Mr. Jones returned to the pulpit and opened the Bible, and read as requested, **“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the promise. For he looked for a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”**

Dr. Hodges arose and went forward, giving Mr. Jones his hand, and turning around faced the audience and said, “I, too, like Abraham of old, will take God at His word, and start out for a strange country, not knowing whither I go, looking for a city, whose maker is God.”

The great audience was powerfully moved, and Mrs. Hodges arose and went to the front, throwing her arms around her husband’s neck, and said, “My husband’s God shall be my God; his people shall be my people, and his burying-place my burying-place.” They were both happily converted.

In after-years, while Mr. Jones was preaching in California, he received a letter from Dr. Hodges saying, “My precious wife has gone on to ‘the city whose builder is God,’ and I am sojourning alone in ‘the tabernacle.’”

It was only a few years afterwards that Mr. Jones had a letter from a friend in Mississippi saying, “Dr. Hodges died triumphantly, and has gone home.”

At Tuscumbia, Ala., he held a large brush-arbor meeting. Three and four services were held daily, and people came in from all parts of the country. Some of the most remarkable manifestations of the presence of God were seen in that arbor meeting. The people marveled at the results, and perhaps the secret was not known to them; however, it can be attributed to the earnest prayers of Mr. Jones. The great audiences that he preached to did not know how many times he wrestled with God in prayer before preaching. Just before the greatest manifestation of the Spirit’s work, Mr. Jones had been very earnest in prayer. He was always a man who went to the throne of mercy for the anointing for service. His child-like faith enabled him to take God at His word, and it was his custom to pray briefly, unless he failed to get the assurance of victory.

A friend of his said: “Mr. Jones, how is it that you do not spend more time in secret prayer, for I know you are sincere and. honest, and a man of deep piety, but you do not stay on your knees as much as some other men claim to do.”

His reply was: “I go to the Lord in the morning for my orders of the day, and having received them, I go about my Master’s business. I don’t run to the Lord with every little thing, but the good Lord understands me, and when He sees me drop down on my knees He knows that I want and need help, and He always supplies it.”

There was a great crisis in the meeting, and he met it by a long season of prayer.

The people had made all kinds of threats against him, so after the night service he walked out on the second-story of the porch and knelt down in a corner, the thick vines almost hiding him. He

remained there until midnight and yet no assurance of victory. The morning hours came, and he was still on his knees. He had not undressed or been asleep that night. The great audience assembled for the six o'clock service; perhaps there were twenty-five hundred present. He arose to preach, and such power came upon the people that the town was won to God.

Another meeting was at Huntsville. A marvelous work of grace resulted. All the churches cooperated very earnestly in the work, and were greatly built up by the direct accessions from the meeting. Here Mr. Jones had much to say about the liquor traffic. He went personally to a leading barkeeper in the town and said: "I will steal before I will sell whisky."

The barkeeper got angry. Mr. Jones said: "Over there on that hill lives a poor woman. You sold her husband the liquor that made him a drunkard. He died in a drunken condition, and went to a drunkard's hell. One of her boys is now in prison, and the other one has left home because of his waywardness. I want to ask you, sir, which is the worst, to damn that husband and ruin that family, and break that mother's heart as you have done, or to steal money?"

The saloon-keeper could not resist such logic, and turned away, saying: "I don't want to discuss the subject with you."

The conversions multiplied from day to day, and the meeting reached a climax in a great service for the men. After Mr. Jones preached to them he extended an invitation, and one who was present said: "There were from one thousand to twelve hundred men bending their knees before the altar of God. It was the most remarkable event that ever occurred in the history of Huntsville. It was a grand sight, and its solemnity impressed the most wayward that there was a God, and that He is ever ready to save and bless the unredeemed."

One of the most remarkable conversions was that of a leading citizen, who took Mr. Jones aside and said: "I want to be a Christian, I want to love God and do right, but I can't believe in the divinity of Christ to save my life."

"Shut your mouth," said Mr. Jones, "don't come to me with talk like that; do just as Christ told you to do, and if you don't make the landing I'll swim out to you and drown with you."

"Well," said the man, "what would you have me to do?"

Mr. Jones replied: "Come to the meeting to-night, and when I call for sinners you be the first one to come forward. When the doors of the church are opened you join."

The gentleman replied: "What? Join the church when I can't believe!"

"Now," said Mr. Jones, "I told you to keep your mouth shut, I am prescribing for you, and you take the remedy, and I'll warrant the cure."

That night he walked up and joined the church. Mr. Jones said to him: "Go home now and have family prayer, and come back to the service to-morrow, and I'll ask you to pray in public; I'll get you straightened out if you will just keep your mouth shut."

That night he had family prayer, and started right; then Mr. Jones called upon him to pray in public, and he offered a very earnest prayer. He had started right, and a few months afterwards, when Mr. Jones went back to Huntsville for a special service, he said: "How is Brother Ford getting on?"

The pastor replied: "He is one of the best members we have."

"How is he on the divinity of Christ?"

"Oh, he has quit all that long ago."

Mr. Jones always believed that if a man would put himself in the right attitude for salvation that God would lead him into the light. It was true in this man's life, as in many others under his ministry.

One of the ministers wrote a letter to the editor of the *Christian Observer*, of Louisville, whereupon the editor answered in a very uncharitable manner. This called forth another letter from Rev. Flake White. It is such an unusual letter that we use a portion of it. Addressing the letter to the editor of the *Christian Observer*, he said:

"Yes, I got your letter telling me not to write you any more rhapsodies of Rev. Sam Jones, revivalist, that when you wanted theology you preferred taking it out of deep old wells with a Greek bucket and Hebrew windlass. Of course I know that, and how scholarly your defense of a learned clergy has always been, but when you hear that almost every friend you have in Huntsville has come to Christ through this man, I know you will want to learn more of his ways. When Mr. Jones (I wish his name had been Thomas Aquinas, for your sake), came to us last night there was silence in the air, then there was a keynote from no uncertain trumpet, and we were all at his feet. There was such simplicity and unhesitating straightforwardness in his manner, as if the act itself was the law of God. It seems 'foreordained.' Suddenly the man, who has quietly thrilled you, is making you laugh, and some roughs over there in the corner are applauding, and a moment later they are weeping. You can't help either the laughter or the tears. He makes Heaven so sweet and apostasy so sad, and tells the story so simply that our humanness bubbles over without measure. Suddenly he lifts his arm like a cleaving wing and Heaven opens, and he shades our eyes from the light as he tells us in panting words of its glories. You remember 'Old Martin' of the coal-mines. He says, as the tears run down his dark face, 'Mr. Jones has got sympathy for folks.' This is about the truth of the matter. He loves, pities and pleads with sinners, on his knees, and on his feet, while speaking to them, he is like a warm gulf-stream which melts them from their anchors and floats them past the tide of mortal to the sea of heavenly love."

At Knoxville, Tenn., he conducted a marvelous meeting. While he was not in the city very long, the work was far-reaching. In order to make room for the people, he would preach to the women in the morning and to the men in the evening. Some of the papers said foolish things in the beginning of the meeting, but finally gave faithful reports of his sermons, which helped the work much.

The ballrooms and liquor traffic received dangerous wounds; while they were not killed, they were considerably crippled. All pastors, except the Catholic and Episcopal, rallied around him to a man. Before the meeting closed the conversions numbered over five hundred, and more than four hundred had joined the different churches. There were great numbers who joined churches after the meeting closed; however, the figures do not indicate a tithe of the good done. Knoxville had been converted, and the leaven of the Divine influences had permeated the entire community.

At Chattanooga he held one of the strangest and most peculiar, yet powerful, meetings in his life. Dr. G. C. Rankin, who was pastor of the old Market Street church, tried to get the ministers of the other denominations to join him in an invitation to Mr. Jones for a union revival. Not one of them; was willing to enter into such an arrangement; then Dr. Rankin invited him to hold the meeting in his church. The newspapers were soon full of the proposed meeting, and no little excitement was created by some of the stories circulated.

One of the reporters said: "If Sam Jones cuts and slashes into society people, as we understand he does, during his meeting, we are going after him "without mercy."

Dr. Rankin said: "All right, I will have tables inside the altar railings for the reporters, and they can have a fine chance at him."

The day arrived for the meeting, and Mr. Jones and the pastor started to the church and found the streets packed for one hundred feet with people trying to crowd into the building. Finally they reached the pulpit, and after a song and prayer, Mr. Jones was introduced. He referred to the singing, saying: "You can stop that singing, I could take two or three down in Georgia and beat all such music as that."

Then leaning on his hand and resting with his elbow on the stand in his inimitable style, he stared at the reporters for two or three minutes without a word. The congregation began to laugh, and for five minutes there was an uproar. Then, without changing his position, he said: "My! my! I would not mind being swallowed by a whale, but to be nibbled to death by such a lot of tadpoles as you reporters is enough to give a man the jimjams."

The congregation was convulsed.

Then he said: "Boys, I know the threats of some of you, and if you bother me you will hit the ground running. I will have four shots a day at you, while you will only get one nibble a day at me, and if you can stand it I can." He preached, and at the night service the audience was still greater, and he said:

"Now, the next service will be at six o'clock in the morning."

The people went away feeling that no one would be present, but next morning before good daylight people were seen flocking towards the building and the church was full, and you could scarcely find a vacant seat.

He preached four times a day, and the people were being converted at every service. The newspapers, instead of carrying out their threats filled the papers with his sermons, and editorials rang with his praises. The Associated Press took up his sermons and sent them broadcast over the land.

It wasn't long until the saloon-keepers and the worldlings, and other sinners, were fighting the movement. The preachers, with the exception of Dr. Rankin, became scared, and Mr. Jones was asked to meet with the Ministerial Alliance. When the ministers got together, one after another arose and said in substance, the churches are all going to pieces. After each one had presented his complaint. Dr. Rankin arose and said:

“Brethren, I haven't a word to offer, I haven't a word to say, further than I have put you all on notice before Brother Jones came that this meeting would reach a crisis, and all I have to say is, I'll die in my tracks before I'll forsake him.”

During the entire meeting Mr. Jones didn't open his mouth, and finally the conference ended and each minister went his own way, and Mr. Jones went back to his room at the parsonage. Upon reaching his room, he knelt down by his bed in prayer. He remained on his knees for several hours. His assistant sat there and looked through a great stack of letters until the room became so awful and the picture so heartrending that he got up and walked out of the room. Finally he went back and looked in again, and Mr. Jones was still on his knees. He walked off, and just about the time the sun was setting he walked back to the door, and still Mr. Jones was on his knees. He hadn't moved since he first dropped down by his bedside. Later someone slipped in, lighted the gas in the center of the room, and the last time he entered the room Mr. Jones had risen and was standing under the gas jet with a countenance of utter despair, when, finally, he threw his hands over his face, and as with victory in sight, he walked down to the auditorium.

The news had gone all over town that the preachers and citizens had asked Mr. Jones to change his manner of preaching. The streets were literally filled with people, and finally Mr. Jones got through the crowd and entered the building through a window. A great many of the society people, saloon-keepers, and friends of the liquor traffic, came out to see if he would retract his utterances.

He began to preach, and such a power that followed that sermon; gradually he led them along, until he saw his opportunity to let the people hear what he had to say. Finally, he exclaimed: “I know I have been preaching the truth here, and that I have stirred up the devil and his crowd. I have this to say about the liquor traffic: the man who will drink it is a fool, and the man who will sell it is an infamous scoundrel, and church-members who will rent their stores for saloons and will give their sympathy to the saloon-keepers, are bigger scoundrels than the red-nosed devil that drinks it, or the bull neck scoundrel that sells it.”

Under these withering words those guilty in the great audience writhed in agony, and, finally, seeing a saloon-keeper drop his head, he said: “I don't blame you, old rednosed devil, I'd drop my head, too.”

Then, standing erect, he said:

“Physically, you are stronger than I, and you might take me over here to the river and tie my body to a rock and sink me to the bottom, or you might act a coward and shoot me down, but I put you on notice right here that you will have to do that before you will ever still my tongue. If you want to shoot now is your time — shoot — shoot.”

His dauntless courage and the anointing of the Holy Spirit that had come upon him while spending an afternoon in prayer made his words absolutely irresistible, and from that night he had won Chattanooga.

After that night the preachers joined forces with him, and the meeting was no longer confined to the old Market Street church, but adjacent churches were thrown open to overflow meetings. Mr. Jones would speak at one, calling penitents, then leave these with the workers and go to another church and preach to that crowd and call for penitents. Other times he would send those interested in their soul to a church several blocks away, and when the workers arrived they would find the building crowded with those who were seeking Christ.

The meeting continued to grow in power until many of the most prominent men of the city had been converted, and when his time had expired the citizens besought him to postpone other engagements that he might remain with them for a few days longer. The friendship and love of the citizens of Chattanooga for Mr. Jones increased as time went by, and some of the warmest friends he has in the world are the converts of that meeting.

At the close of the meeting all the churches received many members, and Dr. Rankin received one hundred and forty-eight, most of them men and grown young men. They are the bone and sinew, many of them, in what is now called the Centenary church.

As Mr. Jones went down to the depot he passed the present Centenary church, then nearing completion, and turning to the pastor said: “Rankin, who is going to dedicate that church for you?”

Dr. Rankin replied: “I guess one of the bishops.”

Then, said Mr. Jones: “Yes, that’s the way you do; when you have a dirty job you want done, Sam Jones is good enough for that, but when you have a fine church to dedicate you want a bishop.”

A few weeks after that the official board decided to invite Mr. Jones to dedicate the church, and as half of them were converts of the recent meeting, Dr. Rankin reluctantly yielded to their wishes, with the understanding that Dr. J. B. McFerran would be on hand to assist. Mr. Jones preached for several minutes a beautiful and touching sermon, when all at once he did the unexpected thing.

Looking around at the inside of the edifice, he said:

“You fellows think you have done something great to build this new church. You think I am here to say nice things to you, but you have got the wrong sow by the ear.”

Dr. Rankin’s heart sank within him; then, said Mr. Jones: “How much do you pay your preacher?”

Nobody uttered a word. “I know you are ashamed to tell, but spit it out”; not a word. Finally he said: “Tom Snow, what do you pay your preacher?” No response. “I know you don’t want to tell, but I am going to know.” At last a rather subdued voice said twelve hundred dollars.

Mr. Jones groaned until you could hear him in every nook and corner of the building. The audience went to pieces; the pastor was covered with confusion. After the uproar subsided he said: “Well, I know that’s all Rankin is worth, but you ought to give the poor fellow something; I stayed at his house about a week when I was here in that meeting, and the Lord knows that I would have been glad if somebody had sent something around there.”

He then picked up the thread of his discourse and finished a most helpful sermon.

The next day there were two dray-loads of things driven up to the parsonage with jocular notes, and Monday night the stewards met and raised the pastor’s salary to eighteen hundred dollars.

So, often when Mr. Jones would go off on a tangent like that, people would imagine that he had spoiled the service, but the results that followed always gave evidence of the wisdom of such digression.

In after-years he held other great meetings there, which were always attended by the thousands, and resulted in great good.

In his last meeting there at the close of his sermon to men nearly a thousand, by actual count, came forward and gave him their hands, promising to lead the Christian life. He lectured in the city frequently, and also took part in a campaign against the saloons in recent years, which resulted in closing the saloons of the city at ten o’clock at night.

The results of his preaching against the liquor traffic cannot be estimated in this world.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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