

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 TWENTY-FOUR

HIS LIFE AND WORK AT CARTERSVILLE

It was at Cartersville that Mr. Jones spent much of his time in his early days, and there he had practiced law. It was while living in Cartersville that he became a Christian. Taking up the work of the regular ministry, the Conference sent him away from his home. During his life in the itinerancy, he was permitted to visit his home and people frequently, and when he began the work of the Decatur Orphanage, he moved to Social Circle, where he spent a year, then returned to Cartersville, and spent his entire Christian life among the people who knew him before he was saved.

In the early days his work at the Orphanage took him from home, and in later years his evangelistic meetings and lecture tours took him away from his people and friends nearly all the time; nevertheless, he always loved Cartersville, and the interests of the people were very close to his heart. He felt that inasmuch as he had led his dissipated days here he ought to live his Christian life here, and, as far as possible, counteract any bad influence. He had held a number of bush arbor meetings in the State and some in Mississippi and Alabama that had made quite an impression upon his own mind. The people in our county near Cassville, who were great admirers of Mr. Jones, were anxious for him to come and hold a meeting in their community. They told him they would build a bush arbor, and he agreed to hold a service for them. The different churches came together and erected the arbor.

Mr. Jones held a remarkable meeting there, which resulted in the conversion of some of the most influential men in the county. The entire neighborhood was wonderfully transformed. The Cartersville people had heard of the meeting, and wanted to have a bush arbor meeting here. Mr. Jones believed that this would be the best way to reach his former associates and win them for Christ. The citizens put up an immense bush arbor which would seat about four thousand people. Mr. Jones invited in a number of ministers to assist him in this first meeting. The pastors of the churches in the town cooperated heartily in the work. Rev. J. A. Bowen, whom he had assisted in a meeting at Corinth, Mississippi, came and labored with him in the services. This was in September, 1884.

Great crowds from every direction came to this first meeting, and hundreds were converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mr. Jones pleaded earnestly with the men, who had lived dissipated lives with him, and had the pleasure of seeing the last one of them saved. One of the converts was his brother Joe Jones, who entered the ministry, and became a most useful and effective evangelist. He died suddenly in Mr. Jones's room in his presence.

This was one of the greatest meetings ever held in Cartersville. There were over two hundred people who joined the different churches at the close of the meeting. At that time there were eighteen saloons in the town. He had made terrific assaults upon the traffic during the meeting and created a strong sentiment against the saloon. An election was called in December of 1884, and one of the hardest prohibition fights in the history of Georgia occurred at this time in Cartersville.

There was a carpenter here who would go around to one of the saloons every morning, and clean it out for his morning drink of liquor. On the day of the election, he went around and did his work and had his drink.

Someone said to him, "Are you going to vote for the saloon to-day?"

He answered, "I am if I don't go to hell."

Immediately he dropped dead in the saloon.

When the votes had been cast and the ballots counted, the prohibitionists had carried the town by a majority of two. It is said that this old man's death influenced his son and others in not voting for liquor, and perhaps in the Providence of God carried much weight in freeing the town from the curses of the open saloon.

The following year the people desired another meeting, and the great gospel tent that Mr. Jones had used in his meetings in Nashville was rented for the services. It was a mammoth tent and would accommodate six thousand people. The interest of the last meeting had not waned, and the second great campaign began with earnestness and enthusiasm. Larger crowds were in attendance from the very first.

Mr. Jones had the assistance of a number of prominent ministers of all denominations and preached himself with marked power. It was at this meeting that the Rev. Sam W. Small, who was the reporter at that time on the *Atlanta Constitution*, came up to get Mr. Jones's sermon for the paper. The subject of the sermon was, "*Conscience, Record, and God.*" Mr. Small began to make a stenographic report of his utterances, when suddenly he lost sight of his mission, dropped his pencil and tablet, and was lost in what the preacher was saying. Instead of his taking down the sermon, the sermon had taken him down. When the invitation was extended, he made a profession and began to work in the meetings, and before it closed related his experience.

While the saloons had been voted out, the blind tigers had gotten in their work. Mr. Jones preached against them with all the power of his being.

On Friday night he spoke of the violation of the prohibition law. He said: "It's a shame for decent people to allow a few sneaking, skulking scoundrels, who are not fit to feed hogs, to perpetrate their crimes upon them," and said: "I'll give you notice this infernal business must stop."

On Saturday night the liquor vendors took dynamite to Mr. Jones's barn. Next morning there was found a fuse about two feet long that belonged to a dynamite cartridge. It had been fired and the explosion blew the floor out of the buggy house, the heavy two by ten sleepers, right new, had been shattered, as if by a bolt of lightning. A new carriage and a buggy and a new wagon had been blown against the walls of the building. When the explosion occurred, the people in the tent on the hillside were awakened and saw the flash, as if a bolt of lightning had caused it.

Mr. Jones and his family were awakened by the noise, but thought that it was an explosion of a torpedo somewhere in the neighborhood, as there was much blasting going on at the neighboring mines. The next morning the servants upon going to the barn saw that it had been torn up with dynamite. Mr. Jones received a postal card that morning saying: "If you don't shut your mouth, we will put it under your house, and blow you, your wife and your children into eternity."

He showed me the card, and said: "Wife, here's what they say — what shall we do about it?" We thought over the matter prayerfully, and decided, as he expressed it, "that it was just as near to heaven by the dynamite route as any," and he went to the tent and preached that Sunday morning as never before.

The next year the citizens decided to make the annual meetings permanent, and at a conference Mr. Jones proposed to the people that if they would buy the land, he would put up the tabernacle. The lot was purchased by public subscription, and Mr. Jones built the tabernacle with his own money, which stands in our city to-day.

Year after year these great meetings continued. With the exception of one year, they have been held annually since they were inaugurated. Mr. Jones has preached some of his best sermons here, and while he has had with him in these meetings the leading ministers from all denominations throughout the United States, the people have heard him with more appreciation than any one that he has ever brought to Cartersville. He has always used the occasion to create a sentiment against the sale of liquor through blind tigers, or drug-stores, or firms in Atlanta, and has succeeded in keeping the saloons out of Cartersville. The meetings have always been seasons of great spiritual uplift and rejoicing. His interest in Cartersville was always the keenest, and it mattered not where he was, if his service was needed he would leave his work and come home on the first train to fight the battles for the mothers and wives and daughters and citizens of his home town.

One of the most remarkable incidents happened on July 14, 1890.

Mr. Jones heard that some men had come from another city to make arrangements for the sale of liquor in Cartersville, through the agency of "original package business." He immediately got aboard the train and left for Cartersville, and arrived on the first train.

He called a meeting of the citizens to be held at the tabernacle, which convened at eight o'clock. An immense audience was present. The chairman explained the object of the meeting, and Mr. Jones made a speech and offered the following resolutions:

“Whereas, The original package scheme is vexing many parts of our country, and

“Whereas, Cartersville is exposed to this scheme, as any other respectable town in the United States, and

“Whereas, We are already threatened with the vexed nuisance; therefore, be it

“Resolved, first. That we do not want whisky sold in our community, or in Bartow County, in ‘original’ or any other sort of ‘packages.’

“Secondly, it shall not be done.

“Thirdly, we propose to concentrate the sentiment of our community so that we will guarantee to make an ‘original package’ out of any contemptible scoundrel who attempts to run that game on us to the destruction of peace and good order of our sober, law-abiding community.

“Fourthly, we pledge ourselves to carry out these resolutions.”

The resolutions were unanimously adopted, and those who had proposed to ship liquor into Cartersville took the first train and left the town.

Thus he continued the fight against intemperance until the very last.

Once we considered leaving here, that being almost fourteen years ago. Mr. Jones made up his mind to go to Marietta, Georgia, where he would be more conveniently located, on account of access to a greater number of trains going into Atlanta. After coming to this conclusion, we went to Marietta and purchased a beautiful residence, not making mention of this fact to any of our friends in Cartersville.

After having made the purchase, we came home and talked the matter over with a few friends, and these friends were so much exercised over it that they told others, and soon it became known in Cartersville that we were going to leave our home here and go to live in Marietta, in the future. When this news was spread abroad, one of the most beautiful events of our lives happened. Its influence was so great that we could but feel its power, and although we had purchased this beautiful residence, we disposed of it.

On the day of our decision, and when it became generally known, a little after dark, I answered the ring of our front door-bell. Mr. Jones was visiting one of our married daughters who lived nearby.

The front yard and the veranda were full of people, and I could not imagine the cause of the crowd. About this time a noise at the backdoor caused some one to open it, and the backyard and veranda were full of colored people.

Mr. Jones came in a few moments later. Several of our prominent citizens had appointed Col. Warren Aiken, one of our most gifted lawyers, as well as one of our personal friends, as spokesman for the white people of Cartersville. When he had spoken about twenty minutes telling us of the love and respect in which Mr. Jones was held in his home town, and urging us to give up the idea of moving away, the one appointed as spokesman for the negroes stepped forward and with a voice full of emotion said:

“Mr. Jones, we colored people don’t want you to move away from Cartersville. We feel that you were the instrument in God’s hands in putting whisky out of our town, and we believe that if you go away from here it will come back again, that we will not be strong enough to keep it out, and we beg of you, Mr. Jones, not to go away. You have been our guide and comforter in times of sickness and distress and death, and we just don’t want you to go away. But, Mr. Jones, if you are determined to go, although we don’t want you to go, please don’t take ‘Miss Laura.’ She is so good to us; she feeds us when we are hungry, clothes us when we are naked and prays with us when we are in sorrow, and we just can’t let her and them children go. And, Mr. Jones, have you ever thought about it while you were off on God’s business, not one time has ‘Miss Laura’ and the children been harmed? No one has come here to harm or hurt them, and now, Mr. Jones, if you must go, you go, but leave Miss Laura and the children.”

They protested against his going away from Cartersville. They plead with tender words of affection for us to remain here. They said they could not give him up. I could not in a full page of this volume give the arguments they advanced, in thus urging him to stay. Time and again they repeated the words, “We cannot let you go.”

This appeal melted our hearts and we decided to give up all thought of ever leaving Cartersville. In succeeding years he again and again alluded to the scenes of that memorable night. This affectionate interest was like refreshing dew to his spirit, when he was worn down with many cares and beset by worry and difficulties. No man ever had a greater number of friends and no man was ever more sincere in his friendships.

Last September he held his last meeting in the tabernacle. He invited some of his closest friends and best workers from all parts of the United States. It was conceded by all to be the most spiritual and helpful revival that had been held since the first great bush arbor meeting.

Mr. Jones preached several times, and Sunday morning he made his last address. He began by preaching a most thoughtful, elegant and refined sermon, but near the middle of his discourse he thought of the efforts being made to advertise liquor in Cartersville, and ship it in from Atlanta, and he turned aside from his discourse and spoke more powerfully than ever against the evils of the liquor traffic, and of the infamous efforts to debauch the town with the jug trade. The following account of his sermon appeared in the Georgian, and we reproduce it as his last utterances against whisky in his town:

“A prominent liquor dealer of Atlanta has caused the city of Cartersville to be placarded with posters, advertising their whiskies, a course which, especially at this time, is very offensive to me and the Christian people of this community.”

He handled the company without gloves, and many people who have often heard the evangelist handle evil-doers in a vigorous manner say that he far surpassed all his previous efforts, and that they had never before heard him administer so stinging a rebuke, nor attack any one with such blistering invective.

“‘It is impossible,’ said Mr. Jones, ‘for one to get a word in an Atlanta daily newspaper that would hurt a whisky man by name, as it would be to grow pineapples in frozen Alaska, or to get a bucket of water in hell.

“‘To-day poor old Atlanta is trembling in the throes of a horrible race war. She is reaping what she has sown. The greed of her citizens has licensed the saloon, the hog-wallows of hell, and these dives have been dishing out to the low, black and white, the stuff that inflames their passions and causes the Negroes to commit nameless crimes. The morning papers tell us that a large number of Negroes and several white people have been killed and wounded, and that our city of Atlanta, the pride of Georgia, is now all but under martial law, trembling with fear for the lives of its men, and fearful as to the fate of its women. The Sunday morning papers of Atlanta tell us in great headlines of the horrors that have taken place in Atlanta, but not one of them will say a word against the real root and cause of the trouble, nor will they permit anyone else to strike through their columns at their owners.’

“Speaking of the advertisements that have been placed upon the boards in Cartersville, Mr. Jones said:

“‘If I had been mayor of this town when they put those damnable things on those billboards, I would have torn them off if it had involved the city of Cartersville in a lawsuit that would have ended in the Supreme Court of the United States. And yet this dirty scoundrel that has the insolence to come to this town with his infernal advertising will pay the Atlanta newspapers for a full page of advertising, inviting the ladies of Atlanta down to drink his damnable stuff. I would as soon think of permitting my Negro Charlie to commit a nameless crime and then come back to work for me, as to have him to go to his place at any time.

“‘I cannot understand how the men of Atlanta could let that insult to their women go unchallenged, and why they did not take the dirty devil out and cowhide him then and there. Women drinking at his store! Think of it.’

“Mr. Jones devoted most of his sermon to the denunciation of the liquor traffic and to the newspapers and politicians that were owned by the whisky interests, and when he had finished his sermon, he asked all who would endorse what he had said to get ‘on your hind legs and say so.’

“Amidst deafening applause the great audience arose and gave its endorsement to what Mr. Jones had said.

“While the audience was standing, Mr. Jones turned to the reporters, who were also standing, and said:

“Now, Bud, you tell that firm that if it’s going to get mad, it will have to get mad with eight thousand people who have stood up and said what I have said is true, and that they endorse every word of it.”

In many other ways, as he served the people of Cartersville by his labor of love, he won for himself a place in their hearts that time will only make larger and safer and warmer.

A letter from a gentleman in San Francisco, to the postmaster of Cartersville, was turned over to the mayor of our city for reply. After Mayor Gilreath had replied to the letter, he wrote the following one to Mr. Jones, which explains itself:

“Dear Brother Jones: About a month ago Walter Akerman handed me a letter from Wm. B. Hargan, of San Francisco, making inquiry of Rev. Sam Jones, in which letter he asked if you were still alive and still preaching, and if you were still true to the cause of Christ and living right, etc., etc. I replied to the same as follows:

“Wm. B. Hargan, Esq., 49 Third St., San Francisco, Cal.

“Dear Sir: Your favor to the postmaster here making inquiry of the Rev. Sam P. Jones was handed me by the postmaster, for reply. It affords me a great deal of pleasure to say in reply, that Brother Jones is still alive and in good health. He is still in the ministry and still doing a great work for the Master’s cause, and if it was not vain to wish, I would be glad he could live a thousand years yet. We all love him, and no man has done more for the cause of Christ than our own Sam Jones. You ask if he is a wealthy man. Will say, that he is not a wealthy man, but lives well and has plenty — but this is no, more than every man and individual is entitled to who lives right, puts his whole trust in Christ and gives his life’s work for the cause of Christ. Psalm 84:11: **“The Lord God is a sun and a shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”** Brother Jones lives in Canaan’s land, temporarily speaking. A true child of God has everything he wants, both here and hereafter. Sam Jones has given away a fortune to charity and worthy causes, and if a man has his investments in the kingdom of God, don’t you know that this stock never fails to pay handsome dividends? Signed “Very respectfully,

“Paul Gilreath, Mayor.’

“I send you herewith a letter which I received from this party in which he says he was converted from having read one of your sermons in print. These things no doubt do your heart good to know them, and encourage you in your work, and for this reason I am sending you the correspondence. Wishing you perfect happiness here always, and a glorious eternity, I am, truly and sincerely, Your friend, P. G.”

~ end of chapter 24 ~

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