

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 THIRTY-ONE (Memorial Services — Continued)

The Memorial Service at the Auditorium, Chattanooga

The citizens of Chattanooga have always claimed that there was no city in which Mr. Jones and his work were held in higher esteem than Chattanooga. He had conducted several meetings there, and had appeared frequently on the lecture platform. The Chattanooga papers had a great deal to say at the time of his death, and the people were very generous in their words of expression and love. It was soon suggested that a great memorial service be held in the Auditorium, October 21st. The many friends and admirers of Mr. Jones carried out the suggestion and arranged for the service.

Early in the afternoon great crowds were seen going towards the Auditorium, and before the hour appointed for service people were being turned back by the hundreds. The great Auditorium was too small for the audience who came to participate in the service. It was an audience made up of distinguished citizens, lawyers, physicians, politicians, bankers and business men. The audience was also composed of the clergymen and Christian laity of the different denominations. The platform was crowded with the pastors and choirs of the city.

The opening song was "Nearer, my God, to Thee," led by Mr. E. O. Excell, of Chicago, who was Mr. Jones's chorister for twenty years, and was with him in the last meeting he held. The great audience joined reverently in singing the grand old song.

This was followed by a duet, sung by Mr. E. O. Excell and Mr. Oscar Seagle. The song was written by Mr. Excell, and entitled "I am Happy in Him." This was followed by a prayer, when Mr. Seagle sang "The Ninety and Nine."

Mr. Seagle sang this song a number of times in Mr. Jones's great evangelistic meetings, and it was one of his favorite songs. Dr. J. S. French, of Centenary Church, read a scripture lesson, which was the last one that Mr. Jones read in public. Mr. Excell sang the song that Mr. Jones loved best, "The Good Old-Fashioned Way."

There were a number of brief tributes, but the leading address was made by Rev. Geo. R. Stuart. Mr. Stuart was the constant companion and co-worker of Mr. Jones for years, having gone from the pastorate of the Centenary church, Chattanooga, to assist Mr. Jones in evangelistic work. It was very appropriate that he should make the principal address at this service. He said:

“My friends, an occasion like this has two objects, if properly observed; the first is to pay proper respect to a great character, the second is to bring to God those who are present.

As I come to you this afternoon I feel that I could not properly represent the life of this great man, if the second point were not the prominent one. It would be a difficult thing to make the name of Sam Jones any broader, to make his life any better known, or to bring his work forward in bolder type than his life has written it.

We have met at this hour, in common with other great gatherings all over this country, to pay our tribute of respect and love to a really great man.

He was great from every side of greatness in a preacher. First, he was a good man. For sixteen years, I was at his side; we roomed together; we slept together; we prayed together; we walked together; we planned together; we traded together.

This is one man whose heart and life I know, and I say to the glory of God, and to his honor, that I write him down in my heart as the cleanest, truest, straightest, best man God ever permitted me to know.

On this platform stands Prof. E. O. Excell, of Chicago, who in all these years was with us, and was even with him before I knew him intimately, and, as we talked together the past four days we have looked into each other's tearful eyes and said: “The greatest man this country has ever known has passed away.” He was a good man; not only good, but he was great.

I have been with him before every class of audience this country affords. I have stood for a month with him in the city of Boston. I have stayed with him in the great tabernacles preaching to the colored people in the South. I have stood with him in the great country districts of our land. I have stood with him in every conceivable place almost, and heard him talk to almost every conceivable class of people, and before them all he was marvelously great.

The culture of Boston hung on his lips like the illiterate man of the South, and he was the minister of righteousness to all alike. The Supreme Judge sat side by side with a twelve-year-old boy and their faces shone alike as he preached.

There are three things which make a man great: His goodness, his inherent powers of greatness, and his service to the people. No man has served his country for God like Sam Jones.

Standing by the side of his casket in the Capitol of Georgia at Atlanta, I watched the thousands of people pass by. I said to a man standing near: “Open your watch and see how many pass by in a minute; I want a correct record of the people who look upon his face.”

After he held his watch a minute, I counted through the period and estimated that thirty thousand people looked upon his face in the few hours I remained there.

And as they passed by, hurrying along, I looked at the great, the poor, the rich, the white, the servant, the little boy, the old man, the little girl, the old woman, the strong, the feeble, and as I saw them pass they wiped the tears from their faces, and I said to a man standing beside me: "He preached marvelously while he lived; but his cold lips preached to the greatest audience before whom he ever stood."

He was not accidentally great; he was great by the facts and qualities which make men great.

There are four things which make a great preacher; natural gifts, and character to back up these gifts; a gathering of these gifts together and the Holy Ghost to make these gifts sufficient.

Sam Jones was naturally gifted; he had a great mind; he was a great student, not of books, but of men; of current events and moving social affairs. He was one of the best-posted men on the great issues of this country that the country ever had. Going into a great city, he would stand up and preach his two or three sermons and the people would say, "Who has been talking to him?" and they would say, "Who has been reporting the situation to him?"

He could go into a great city and lay his fingers on its pulse, and, like a skilled physician, tell the great disease prominent in its social, moral and civil life.

He knew the great men of this country; knew their lives; knew the great advances of this country and knew their trend. He knew the great moral movements of this country and how they were set in motion.

Never a morning came that the daily papers were not in his hands, and when he passed over a paper you could not call his attention to a movement in this country he had not studied — a marvelous mind, studying the marvelous movements of the age in which he lived.

He was a marvelous judge of human nature; this was not accidental. When God makes a great man he begins early to make him.

A man who accepts God's conditions and God's circumstances, and works out with God, God crowns with greatness his efforts.

He was marvelously endowed with natural wit, and humor bubbled and sparkled naturally with him. What a marvelous instrument it has been to him; how it has attracted the people, and how, attracting the people, he has done honest work for God.

But all of these natural gifts would have been worth little to that man having not been backed up by a great character. He had a moral character which stood like a solid rock — he was the most honest man I ever knew.

Think of him!

In a long life before the people, with his enemies digging him up at every corner, there has never been revealed to the world a solitary dishonest act. And how often he has said: "A man who throws as many stones as I throw could not live in a glass house."

Think of how the men have dug at his character, and dug at his life. Where is the man who ever dug up a black act connected with him?

Many have criticized him because he received large sums of money, but, to me, the disposition of the money which has come into his hands, through all these years, has been the most marvelous thing connected with the man.

He talked like a bosom friend to me, as he was; his life is an open book to everybody. Almost every step of his life has been published.

I can say what will surprise you, but I believe I tell the honest truth when I say I don't believe he ever invested one single dollar but that he invested it to help somebody else. He so often preached the doctrine, too, that God will take care of those who take care of His cause, which is singularly illustrated in his own life.

But God has in a strange way blessed him. He was one of the most liberal, the most charitable men I ever knew. No man ever came to him, in all my acquaintance, and reached out a hand and begged for help that he did not get it.

Honest in his transactions, honest in his dealings with God's money, honest towards the world, honest in friendship — no man ever had a truer friend. There was no sham, no hypocrisy. I never saw him do a thing for show in my life. He was sincere, honest, and candid from beginning to end.

The characteristic that made him the greatest of all, probably, was his indomitable courage. I never saw him cower. I never saw him wince. I have sat with him in the hotel when men would come in and say: "There are a hundred armed men organized who are going to shoot at you when you go on the platform to-night." When they were gone he would look at me and smile and say, "They are all scared."

We would get in the carriage and drive out to the tabernacle and he would go in and step out on the platform. He would go as calmly and quietly as I ever knew a man, and enter upon his invectives of sin; and, in the very midst of his terrific arraignment, he would stop and say, "Now is the time to shoot."

I have seen men come in and sit down in his room and say.

"Brother Jones, it will not do to touch upon this, and that, and the other subject in this town; it is so organized, so fortified, that to stir it up will ruin everything." The first time he got on his feet in that town he would put his crowbar under that very thing and turn it upside down.

I never saw him stop a moment for fear of public criticism, or human opinion of what would happen. He asked one question, and, having answered it, he moved straight ahead. His question was, "Is it right?" Having settled that, there was no other question for him to answer.

God teach us a lesson from that.

But, with all these characteristics, Sam Jones would not have been great but for another — that was the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the thing which made him great.

His faith was as simple as a child's faith. I never saw him raise a question about the truth of the Bible, or the authenticity of the Bible, the existence of God, or the divinity of Christ.

He walked upon these great truths, and planted himself. He believed God would rule and control.

Many a time, in our hard-fought battles, when it looked to me as if everything was going to burst, he would turn his calm face to mine, and say, "George, God still lives; He will see us through."

I thank God that I ever came into contact with such an humble and simple, but marvelous faith as that man had. He was consecrated to his work.

I have read his mail and seen him turn his back upon Bureau letters, in which there were thousands of dollars offered for lecture-courses, and talk with a plain preacher from a backwoods district and take out his little book and write down the very dates for which the Bureau called and give them to this humble place, and leave the preparation and remuneration entirely to him.

In all my years of experience with him, I have never known him to make financial conditions, but to one man, and he always regretted that — the preacher said he would not do it in any other way. They were afraid they were going to be robbed by him, I suppose, and he let it go.

Brethren, we stand to-day on this platform to offer this tribute to a man who will be greater fifty years from now, in the minds of the people, than he is to-day.

A Cartersville man, as he stood in Atlanta watching the great throng passing by, whispered to me and said, "George, we didn't know what a great man was living in our town; he has lived and died before we found out how great he was."

This country has not yet found out how great he was. He has talked to more people than any other man who ever lived in America. There is no man to-day who has moved more people to better lives than he.

He has led more people to consecration to God, and reformed more men in their personal lives, and more communities in their civil and moral conditions, than any man who ever spoke on the American platform. And I stand in my place and say to-day, that I do not believe any preacher has ever died in America who is as sincerely and broadly known as Sam Jones.

As I have passed up and down this country, railroad men, merchants, citizens, preachers — every class of people have gripped my hand and almost invariably a tear would start in their eyes and they would say, “We have lost a great friend and a great man.”

The last thing I want to say is this:

“I want to thank God for ever being associated with a man so honest through all his life, so brave in all his conduct, so clean in all his transactions, so consecrated to God’s service, so simple in his faith, so baptized by the Holy Spirit, and so marvelously useful to the cause of God and humanity.

This country will never forget the fact that Sam Jones lived and denounced every wrong, and stood for everything right. May God anoint men in this country to be true, honest and consecrated; grave and fit for the work of God.

This one personal thing: I have felt for four days as if one whole side of my being has been turned out. The loneliness has been crushing — just to think that I will never see the man or hear his voice again, or put my heart close up to him again. What a loss personally. And the nation and the individual feels the loss almost as a personal friend.

Let us to-day pledge God a better life. Let us to-day in our own lives reach out towards something higher, so that some bright day we may go to the heaven in which he believed, and meet him, with loved ones, in that better country.

God help us.”

~ end of chapter 31 ~

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