

# **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

Copyright © 1907

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **OTHER PASTORATES AND REVIVALS**

From the Van Wert circuit Mr. Jones was moved to the De Soto circuit in Floyd County. There were nine churches on this work. While Mr. Jones had preached in a straightforward way on his previous circuit, it was on the De Soto mission that he began to preach his convictions with all the strength of his mind and heart.

In speaking of the change, he said:

“There is difference between preaching the truth and applying it to the hearers. A dissertation on mustard, where it grows, how it grows, and how it is prepared for market is one thing; but that one thing does not help the colic. It is when you spread the mustard on a thin cloth and apply it to the stomach that the aches and pains of the agonizing patient are relieved. Abstract truth has influenced the mind to some extent, but it’s the concrete truth vigorously applied to the conscience that arouses the mind and produces the conviction which brings results.”

On this circuit by the aid of the Holy Spirit he sought as never before to get the truths applied to the consciences of his hearers. As he said, “The more conscience that I awake, the more people will be converted; as you know it is the shoemaker who gives the best fit that has the most customers.”

He believed then that the people knew better than they did. He did not try to point out new paths of truth, but sought to inspire them to walk in the old ones. From that day his preaching was directed at the conscience.

Soon his official board and church members were greatly agitated as to what the final outcome would be, but he continued his sermons at their sins, saying: “The consciences of men form a vast plane without an undulation from shore to shore, and he who preaches on a level like this will move, not only the common people, but the educated and intellectual alike. The conscience of Daniel Webster is on the same plane with the conscience of a farmer.”

This direct, pointed preaching soon resulted in the conversions of hundreds of people, and the quickening of every church on his circuit. While the official boards cried out against the change, however, admitting that he was right, still they argued that he had a wife and children that must be supported, and that the people would not pay their assessments if he did not change his way of preaching. He replied that he could not, and would not stifle his conviction for any financial consideration, or prospect for future promotion, but that he would preach the truth as he believed it, if the whole world turned against him.

I remonstrated with him, telling him that he could be successful to a marked degree without such pointed preaching, and furthermore, I said, "Husband, we have to live by the ministry, and the people will not support you if you continue to preach as you do."

He turned to me with a loving smile, and said: "Well, wife, if they do not pay us, and we starve to death, we will never tell them what killed us, but will just say that we died with typhoid fever."

A year afterward at a district conference, Mr. Jones referred to the experiences of this time. It was while going through this great change that he was in the crucible in which he was tested. The refining fire had burned away all the self and had left the "vessels meet for the Master's use." Standing up before the conference, when his circuit was called, in its order, for reports from the pastor, he told how he had gone to this charge where drinking, gambling and profanity were holding high carnival, and how indifferent, cold and sinful his members were, and that there was no interest manifested in religion, and that they wanted "women and children's religion," and the male members would support him if he would just let them alone, but he saw that his conviction of duty would not permit him to yield to them.

He said: "I preached against the sins of those people as I knew them to exist. I warned them of the dangers as I saw the dangers; I called many sins by their right names, and told them they were guilty of those sins. With all my ransomed powers I denounced their unholy living. But it seemed, brethren that the combined powers of darkness had conspired to overthrow me. For weeks I preached, talked and exhorted, without a sign of hope. At last, they began to desert me and refuse to support me. Finally, it came to the point of almost hunger in my home. One man, alone, stood by me. He was poor, but he was, and is, a hero. Going home one evening from my work, my wife said: 'Well, Sam, it seems like these people want to starve us out.'

"Brethren, it was surrender or starve, it seemed to me. I walked out into the darkness. I went to the stable. My faithful old horse whinnied a welcome, and I went in, and, in that stable, I fell on my face before God and prayed for light, for help, for direction. The answer came, 'Go forward!' I did. I went to my next appointment and announced protracted services. Single-handed, and alone, I went into my work, led by the Spirit, I assailed the strongholds of sin among my people; I told them of their lost estate, and begged them to return. From the first service, the congregation grew larger. The unconverted and the backslider came together, and soon they were seeking pardon together at the altar. The Holy Spirit was at work. One by one the lost were redeemed, and, finally, as with a great awakening light, God's power came down.

“Old De Soto circuit was ablaze of glory throughout its bounds, and one hundred family altars were burning, where not one burned before.”

Mr. Jones sat down. Some brother started the grand old song, “*How firm a foundation. Ye saints of the Lord,*” which was taken up by the conference and sung amid the shouts and hallelujahs of God’s people. The business of the conference was entirely side-tracked and a glorious wave of blessing swept over the people.

After the great work on this circuit the people were willing to attend upon all the services of the church, so he made a request of them regarding the prayer-meeting. Said he: “I want you to promise me to attend the Wednesday evening prayer services, and if you don’t come, to send me an excuse explaining why you were not there, and I will visit you and bring a doctor and look after the patient.” A great many of his most reliable members made the promise. Then it was that they had a pretty good joke on the pastor.

One night there was a fearful rain, and the wind was blowing hard. Mr. Jones said: “I won’t go to prayer-meeting to-night; no one will be at church this evening.”

We got comfortably seated around the fireside, and were reading and talking, when there was a knock at the door. Mr. Jones opened the door, and the porch was crowded with people.

“What in the world does this mean?” inquired Mr. Jones.

They answered: “We have come to see what’s the matter with our pastor. We have been to prayer-meeting, and as he didn’t come, we brought a doctor to look after the patient.”

Mr. Jones took the reproof good-naturedly, and the prayer-meeting was conducted that night.

A letter that Mr. Jones wrote to the *Southern Christian Advocate* from this circuit shows how deeply interested he was in all of the work of the church:

“Mr. Editor: The Rome circuit has nine appointments, including De Soto mission. We began this year with three hundred members, the circuit very much ‘run down,’ as the brethren expressed it, and its history for the past ten years fully justifies the expression.

“In the early part of the year I tried to persuade every member of the church to be punctual upon the attendance of worship, and every head of a family to subscribe for the *Southern Christian Advocate*. I succeeded well in my first proposition, but received only about twenty-five subscribers to the *Advocate* (several were taking it). I wish more of the Rome district would subscribe for the *Advocate*; if so, the itinerant’s pay would not be so slim. I never knew a Methodist to take and read the *Advocate* who did not pay his quarterage liberally.

“I encourage my brethren to work, labor in the church, at home, in the vineyard of the Lord everywhere. The more I can get them to do, the lighter my labors are. Moody never told a ‘bigger’ truth than when he said, ‘The successful preacher is he who can get the most work out of his members.’

“We have had good Sunday-schools all the year, prayer-meetings, class-meetings, etc. The first of August we began our protracted meetings, and for ten weeks we have had glorious old-fashioned revivals. Every church has been blessed, and our membership has been increased to near five hundred. The work was genuine, and manifests itself in every father praying in his family (not ten heads of families excepted on the whole work), reading the Scriptures, secret prayer, building new churches, ceiling, painting and putting stoves in old ones, etc.

“Our missionary assessments, foreign and domestic, were paid by the first of May, in full. Our conference collection will exceed the assessment. The pastor and presiding elder will go to conference without any claims against De Soto circuit. All seem to be hopeful, buoyant and happy.

“In conclusion, I will say that much more good might have been accomplished if we had fewer appointments. Nine churches for one preacher, like forty acres for one mule and man, will necessarily give the grass some chance to grow.

“May I live and die among a people who love Jesus, then will it be well with me here. And may God give us all a home in heaven, where ‘**no ox is ever muzzled**’ and where the weary are at rest.”

At the close of the conference year of 1876, he was elected an elder, and Bishop George P. Pierce ordained him.

It was on this circuit that he came in contact with that unique preacher, Rev. Simon Peter Richardson, who was his presiding elder. He was, at that time, the most powerful preacher, and at all times the most entertaining man that Mr. Jones ever met. He would throw out great nuggets of truth in pulpit and parlor that were food to Mr. Jones. He saw the great truths of the Bible more to Mr. Jones’s idea than any man he ever heard preach. He was a father, brother and teacher to him. He received more help from him than all other preachers he ever came in contact with.

It was from him that Mr. Jones learned that the pulpit was not a prison, but a throne; that instead of bars and walls for the boundary lines he might have wings and space as an inheritance. Mr. Jones said that he remembered as well when his involuntary confinement ended, and liberty began, as any fact in his history, and, afterwards, he enjoyed the liberty, and never consulted the theological landmarks or visited the orthodox prisons again.

The two years on the De Soto circuit strengthened his conviction as to preaching, and he followed his convictions from that day, and never deviated from them a hair’s breadth in after-years. We had some friends at that difficult time of our lives who were a tower of strength to him, and I may say, a wall of defense in a time of need. Mr. Jones never forgot them.

The preacher stationed at the First church in Rome, Rev. W. H. La Prade, and our presiding elder, Rev. Simon Peter Richardson, just the man, through God, to lead and guide Mr. Jones, helping him shape his future life by constantly encouraging him.

From this work he was moved to the Newberne circuit in Newton County, Georgia. There he spent two very pleasant and successful years. He was more successful in building up his churches, and in converting the unsaved than any years of his pastoral life. This circuit had four churches, and it was possible for him to devote more time to them.

One of the most striking incidents on that circuit happened at a country place where the unconverted people wanted preaching. It was somewhat of a fifth wheel to his circuit. He found only four members there; a gentleman and his daughter, and a lady and her son, constituted the church. He began to inquire who lived in that neighborhood, saying that he would have to have a quorum before he could get down to business. On Saturday before the fifth Sunday in March he went to the home of one of the best farmers, who was a graduate of Emory College. His name was Gaither. Finding that he was not a member of any church, he said to him:

“I haven’t enough members in my little church to work with, and I want you to join to-morrow.”

Mr. Gaither replied, “I can’t join the church. I always said I never would until I got religion.”

Mr. Jones said, “Would you know religion if you were to see it coming down the road”

He laughed and said, “I suppose not. I swear, and drink sometimes, and I am not going to join the church and do like others have done.”

Mr. Jones said, “The very fact that you swear and drink is the reason that I want you to join the church; you have sense and honor, and if you connect yourself with the church, you will quit cussing and drinking.”

His wife was a good, charitable woman, and read her Bible carefully and attended upon service regularly. Mr. Jones turned to her and said, “I want you to join the church with your husband.”

She replied, “I will never join the church until I am converted.”

He had a hard time with this man and his wife, and decided he had struck two of the hardest cases he had ever encountered. He went to the church and preached, and at close of the sermon he opened the doors of the church, and they walked up and joined, with eleven others. Mr. Jones went back there on the fifth Sunday in July, to hold a three days’ meeting. We spent Saturday night at his home, and his wife and I and little child drove to the church that night while Mr. Jones and he walked over the field to the church. It was a beautiful night, and the moon was shining brightly.

One of the men who had joined the church with Mr. Gaither was his brother-in-law, Watt Griffin. Mr. Jones turned to his host and said, speaking of this brother, “How is old Watt?” He replied, “He is doing his whole duty.”

Mr. Jones realizing that such a man would have to be constant in his religious life to succeed, said, “He couldn’t be religious if he didn’t.”

Whereupon Mr. Gaither remarked, "Can any man be religious who doesn't do his whole duty?"

Mr. Jones said, "Well, I suppose not." Said Gaither, "I joined the church three months ago when you were here, and I haven't got any more religion (pointing toward us) than that old horse that is pulling our wives to the church. I haven't sworn or drank any, but I haven't done my duty, and I am willing to go to work if that will bring religion to me, so if you want me as a Sunday-school superintendent, appoint me; if you want to make a class-leader or a steward out of me, I will do my best. If you want me to pray, call on me —"

Then suddenly he exclaimed, "Glory to God, I've got it now, I've got it now!" and out there in the open field, with his mind made up to serve God, the Lord graciously converted him. He was always one of the most godly and influential members at that little church.

It was while on this circuit that he began to get initiations asking him to assist pastors in their revival work. He visited a great many of the small towns within the bounds of adjoining circuits, where there were many great and glorious revivals.

One of them was at Thomson, Ga. His appearance in that town was so unlike the ministry of anyone else that it was refreshing to both saint and sinner. The Honorable Tom Watson was a young lawyer in the town, and in after years he wrote his impressions of Mr. Jones and the revival:

"In the good year 1877, Sam Jones lit down in this veritable town of Thomson, and began to go for the devil and his angels in a manner which was entirely new to said devil; also new to said angels.

"Some one happened to remark in my hearing that there was a little preacher up at the Methodist church who was knocking the crockery around in a lively style, and who was dusting the jackets of the amen comer brethren, in a way which brought the double grunts out of those fuzzy fossils.

"I was not ravenously fond of sermons. When I have heard the same commonplaces droned out in the same lifeless manner, it requires politeness to keep down yawns and nods. I did not yawn the day I went to hear Sam Jones.

"There he was, clad in a little black jump-tail coat, and looking very little like the regulation preacher. He was not in the pulpit. He was right next to his crowd, standing within the railings, and almost in touch of the victims. His head was down, as if he was holding on to his chain of thought by the teeth, but his right hand was going energetically up and down, with all the grace of a pump handle: And, how he did hammer the brethren. How he did peel the amen comer. How he did smash their solemn self-conceit, their profound self-satisfaction, their peaceful co-partnership with the Almighty, their placid conviction that they were the trustees of the New Jerusalem! After awhile, with solemn, irresistible force he called on these brethren to rise in public, confess their shortcomings; and kneel for Divine grace.

“And they knelt. With groans, and sobs, and tears, these old bellwethers of the flock fell on their knees and cried aloud in their distress? Then what? He turned his guns upon us sinners. He raked us fore and aft. He gave us grape and canister and all the rest. He abused us and ridiculed us; he stormed at us and laughed at us; he called us flop-eared hounds, beer kegs, and whisky soaks.

He plainly said that we were all hypocrites and liars, and he intimated, somewhat broadly, that most of us would steal.

“Oh, we had a time of it, I assure you. For six weeks the farms and the stores were neglected, and Jones! Jones! Jones! was the whole thing.

“And the pleasantest feature of the entire display of human nature was the marked manner in which the ‘amen-corner brethren’ enjoyed his flaying of us sinners.

“Well, the meeting wound up, the community settled back into its old ways — but it has never been the same community since. Gambling disappeared, loud profanity on the streets was heard no more, and the barrooms were run out of the county.”

**~ end of chapter 6 ~**

**<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>**

**\*\*\***