

Rev. Joseph Hall

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by G Hodgson Fowler

The late Rev. Joseph Hall was born at Audlem, in Cheshire, February 18, 1819, of John and Mary Hall. His early education was much neglected; a cause of deep regret to him in after life.

In his youth he had a strong passion for the sports and sinful pleasures of the world, still he frequently attended the preaching services held by the Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists at Sound Heath. The spiritual power felt in the means of grace made deep religious impressions on his mind, and led him to forsake his companions and remove to Blakley, near Manchester. Here he was induced to hear a female preach, which increased his religious convictions; he went home to pray, but did not find peace of mind.

Soon afterwards he attended a camp-meeting in Manchester—the Holy Spirit working still more powerfully with him—which resulted in his returning home to his parents.

In October, 1839, on the Sabbath day, he heard Joseph Williams, a Primitive Methodist local preacher. Under this sermon he was so crushed in spirit that he could not rise from his knees for a long time. In the evening of the same day, he attended service in the Wesleyan Association Chapel, and here the battle with sin and the devil was fought out. After an awful struggle, he was enabled to look to Jesus as the friends were singing:—

‘In darkest shades if Thou appear,
My dawning is begun;
Thou art my soul’s bright morning star,
And Thou my rising sun

Our dear brother says in some brief notes left behind on his conversion : ‘I believed in the world’s Redeemer, the power of heaven filled my soul, my condemnation was rolled away, and a flood of joy and peace filled my believing heart, and I then sang:—

“O happy day that fixed my choice.”

Next morning I went into the fields to meditate, commenced singing, and soon found myself on the opposite side of the field; and, on opening my eyes, everything seemed to be praising God. I soon began to read the Word of God diligently, and erected a family altar in my father’s house for the first time; and, in so doing, met with much opposition in my new course of life, and left home, for I desired to forsake all and follow Jesus.’

At this early period of his religious life, he seemed rather unsettled in his mind as to which society of Christians he should join, sometimes going among the Wesleyans or Association. However, in January, 1840, Divine Providence opened his way to live as farm bailiff under Mrs. Done, of Burland. For many years this godly woman’s house had been the home of Primitive Methodist ministers for a long time, and their counsels and religious influence at the family altar led him to say, ‘These people shall be my people, and their God my God.’

He joined our society in Burland, was put on the plan as a local preacher, and by his piety, quenchless zeal, and indomitable courage (which were strikingly characteristic of many of the first race of Primitive Methodists), our friend grew in favour with God and man. Bro. Hall says in his notes:— ‘The cause of God was very low in this neighbourhood, and I made a covenant with William Jackson to pray each day at noon for an out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. We kept our covenant. After many temptations from hell, and the weakness of my own nature, I told Brother Jackson I had prayed myself into the dark, and he replied, “The

victory will soon be ours." I took courage, renewed the battle, visited from house to house, a glorious revival broke out, and hundreds of sinners were saved, and several became local preachers. I spent three happy years in my situation and with the Burland Society, and then removed to Fadley to live under Mr. Dodd. Here, also, we had a good work of "souls saved" going on most of the year.'

'In the year 1845, I went to live with Mr. Dickens, of Yoclings Gate, near Whitchurch. In the spring of the year following, I was alone in a field on the farm sowing barley, when I heard a voice as the voice of a man saying, "Thou shalt go forth to sow the seed of eternal life." '

In a few days after Mr. George Fallows went as a deputation from the Prees Green Circuit Quarterly Meeting, to ask his master to release him that he might go to their circuit, and enter upon the work of a regular travelling preacher, the Station having decided to call him out.

Arrangements were made to that effect, and at the Conference of 1846 he commenced his probation. He travelled in the following stations—Prees Green, Wrockwardine Wood, Darlaston, Bromsgrove Branch of Birmingham First, Ramsor, Brierley Hill, Leominster, Minsterley, Bromyard, Stratford-on-Avon, John-street Mission, Birmingham. This station was joined to Birmingham First, at the Conference of 1870. Brother Hall's health broke down during the year, and at the Conference of 1871 he was superannuated.

From 1846 to 1871, there were about one thousand souls added to the circuits in which he travelled as nett increases. Darlaston was the greatest success, about four hundred being added in that circuit alone. It was while travelling in this circuit that the cholera was raging through the 'Black Country,' and our dear brother was most self-denying and constant in visiting the sick and the dying, often going where others feared to go.

As far as we can gather, he was most successful in chapel affairs in the Bromsgrove, Stratford-on-Avon, and John-street Mission, Birmingham, stations.

Our friend was eminently devoted to the Church of his choice. His talents as a preacher were moderate, but devoutly pious, full of zeal, a good family visitor, lived in the affections of his people, and above all, very successful in winning souls to Jesus Christ. His decision of character was entire. He was no trimmer, but followed the Lord fully. No sacrifice was too great for him to make, no journey too long for him to take. He appears ever to have kept in view that he was sent to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, and to lead the Church in holiness up to heaven. As the head of a family, he knew how to rule his own house, and command his children after him.

During his superannuation, he preached and attended the means of grace as often as his bodily infirmities permitted, and, indeed, frequently disobeyed the doctor's orders, and preached at the risk of his life.

The following extracts are from letters of his ministerial brethren, supplied to me. The Rev. S. Peake writes:— 'I well remember the Rev. Jos. Hall coming to travel in Stafford Station about thirty-six years ago. He laboured unsparingly and successfully for the conversion of souls. About twenty-five years since we travelled together on the Minsterley Circuit. At that time he was a big powerful man, and could do a wonderful amount of labour; his whole being was put fully in the work. As a colleague, I found him very agreeable, kind, and generous; and when by ourselves he would often go aside for private prayer. The Station was prosperous in every respect, under his superintendency. Several years after this time, we met again at Stratford-on-Avon; he had then superannuated some time. The change in his appearance was great, caused, no doubt, by hard labours; he was only a wreck of his former self. He took a deep interest in the Sunday-school, and was very punctual and regular in his attendance at all the means of grace. I deeply

sympathise with his sorrowing widow and family. He was a good man, a kind husband, and a faithful friend ; and I have no doubt his crown will be radiant with many stars.'

The Rey. W. Evans writes to say:— 'I knew the late Rev. Joseph Hall when he first entered the ministry in my own home at Prees Green. I heard him give an address at a tea-meeting held at Hatton Heath soon after I found the Lord. That was in 1846. He was full of fire and power in those days, and on the south side of the station he was very popular. Many regarded him as a *great revivalist*. The churches worked well with him, and very many were brought to God, some of whom remain useful in the church until now, but a portion have passed away from earth to heaven. A friendship sprung up between him and those people, that continued until the day of his death, for he spent several days with them about a week before he was summoned to join the church above. Thus he was permitted to visit the first scenes of his labours prior to receiving his reward. I saw very little of him after he left the circuit, till I joined him in the work of the ministry in the Leominster and Weobley Station in 1857. I found him to be a very kind superintendent. Yes, remarkably so. We spent two years together in the most agreeable manner. The Lord favoured us with a blessed revival of religion which spread all over the circuit, and continued all the time we were there. The circuit went up from 325 members to 478, and doubled its quarterly income. These were days of heaven upon earth. We were all at it, and always at it. The people would not leave the mercy-seat.'

The end came suddenly, but, thank God, safely. Brother Hall had gone on a visit to some friends in the Prees Green Station. While there, he was seized with a fit of coughing which gave him great agony of pain, and he was obliged to return home. Medical aid was at once called in, but the surgeons refused to treat the case, as it was highly dangerous; and advised his removal to the General Hospital, Birmingham. He there underwent an operation. On being visited by his son Rowland, he said, 'his mind was quite calm, all was peace within,' and his patience was most exemplary. On June 12, 1884, early in the morning, he suddenly became unconscious, never rallied, but at a quarter to five same day he fell on sleep. May the bereaved partner who shared so many years of his toils and successes, and his family, meet him in heaven.

References

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