

Rev. Jacob Wilson

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Methodism owes very much to the small societies in country villages. They have given to its various branches many of their most stalwart members and some of their most efficient and successful ministers. Among this number Jacob Wilson occupies an honourable place. He was born at Hayton, near Pocklington, in 1837. His parents belonged to the working classes. They were of decided religious opinions, so that his early life was spent in the midst of healthy moral and religious environments. The Bible was a prominent book in the home and constantly read. The sanctity of the Sabbath was observed with puritanic strictness. The house of God was regularly attended. Conversations on religious topics often obtained on the hearthstone, and the messengers of the gospel were highly respected and heartily welcomed. All these things made a great impression on Jacob's opening mind and tender heart. Held by the cords of love, he never wandered great lengths in sin.

At a very early age his thoughts turned Godward, and in a revival service that was held in the village his conviction of sin and desire for a higher life ripened into conversion. He immediately joined the Church and became a religious enthusiast. He was greatly assisted and wisely guided by Francis Rudd, of whom he made an intimate companion. His exceptional gifts and talents were soon recognised, and his name placed upon the local preachers' plan long before he was twenty years of age. His soul was ablaze with holy fervour. He devoted considerable time to preparation for the pulpit. He served his own circuit and several adjoining circuits with great satisfaction. He was a great soul-winner. The Bible was his constant companion, and with its contents he was specially familiar, and it proved to be to him, in after years, a great storehouse of argument and illustration. Great distances, in lonely country lanes, had to be travelled to his appointments, but no distance was too great and no number of appointments too many. An opportunity to do good work was a real luxury. Sometimes he travelled on a Sunday from twelve to thirty miles, preached three times, conducted open-air services, and remained in the prayer meeting to gather the fruit of his labours, and would be cheerfully ready for his ordinary work at six o'clock on the Monday morning. He always had a full compensation for his toil if he had won a sinner for his Master.

At the close of his apprenticeship as a joiner, the officials of the circuit were convinced he was possessed of both gifts and graces that fitted him for larger service in the Church, and he was called to be a hired local preacher in the Patrington Circuit. He soon manifested exceptional ability as an evangelist. Great numbers were converted under his ministry. He was distinctly called of God to the Christian ministry, which call he promptly obeyed. His special fitness for this office was soon manifested.

He was a diligent student of good literature, had a good command of language, was fluent in speech, independent in thought, fearless in expression, and possessed of a great passion to save men. He was soon popular and successful. He commanded some of the best circuits in the Connexion, and not seldom in both District Meetings and Conferences there were struggles by representatives to secure his appointment to their particular circuit. He travelled with great pleasure and acceptance in Patrington, Hull, Doncaster, Pocklington, Grimsby, Tetney, Driffeld, North Cave, Bridlington, Swinefleet, Epworth, Howden, Winsford and Tarporley, Lydbrook, Welshpool, and Wem. His devotion to the varied interests of his circuits was highly commendable. He was in the truest sense a circuit minister. He had no ambition for district or Connexional offices. Sometimes they were pressed upon him, and then he discharged the duties conscientiously and efficiently; but he was most at home when he was attending to the interests of his own circuit. He fulfilled the various duties of the ministerial office without fear, and he coveted no favour. His government of official courts and his conduct of circuit affairs were sometimes criticised, but he was never diverted from any course of procedure that he believed to be just and right. He was sometimes misunderstood and, in

consequence, his plans opposed, but however strongly any official might oppose him, every man cheerfully credited him with purity of motive. He served the church of his choice and love well in the active ministry forty-three years. His work very seldom found a place in a public or Connexional periodical, and was never flattered or boomed on a conferential platform. He was perfectly content to have his record on high. During the whole of his long ministry he was a conscientious, ardent and successful church builder.

When he was compelled to superannuate he settled at Newport, in Yorkshire, and placed his membership with the Jubilee Church in Hull I. Circuit. In his retirement his interest in the Connexion was well maintained. His assistance in finance and service could be relied upon. When the end drew near he had no need to make haste. He calmly, trustfully, and triumphantly laid down his tools and went home to rest. His widow and family have great comfort in the assurance that "his end was peace."

References

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