

The Gospel Herald

“As the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21)

For The LORD’S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS

by
Donald E. Martin, Sr.

Sadness and Gladness

These two words are at opposite ends of creature emotions. And how quick one can be changed to the other.

I journeyed to be with Brother Michael McInnis today at Grace Chapel in O’Brien, Florida; about a 2-hour trip from my residence south of his. After the meeting at Bro. Mike’s home church, we left hastily to make a meeting in Lanier County Georgia, a special meeting, as it was the funeral service for a dear brother in Christ Jesus whom we have come to love and appreciate. Deacon Ben Cowart of Adel, Georgia was divinely called from this time world this past week after a lengthy struggle with a disabling stroke over two years ago. Yet, bro. Ben never missed a meeting at his home church; Empire Primitive Baptist Church as long as he was physically able by God-given strength to attend which was much more than not.

Bro. Ben and the others of Empire Church had welcomed Bro. McInnis and me at our first visit nearly three years ago, as if we were old friends that had come along the way. In God’s determined purpose and sovereign will Bro. Ben Coward was instrumental in the church order in taking this sojourner that was at the time seeking a home among a people I love. I was in time received into Empire’s membership a couple years ago and was blessed to meet monthly during that time frame.

Bro. Ben knew within himself that his time was drawing near. I say that because he was putting his “house in order.” He had discussed his final request with Pastor/ Elder Clarke Lee of Empire Church. He requested that Pastor Clarke and Bro. Michael McInnis preach his Funeral. He had even chosen the songs to be sung in the meeting house and at the grave site.

He was preparing to cross over what appears to us mortals as the dark veil of mortal death. As our Almighty Father has ordered our steps and determined our days,

Bro. Ben's was brought to this life's mortal end. A man who was esteemed by all who knew him and his somber demeanor reflected the God that he loved and served faithfully in the Lord's church for many years.

As the casket was rolled into the humble meeting house and placed before the stand, there was hardly a seat to be found in the church where Bro. Ben had sat and sang the songs of Zion he loved so well, and groaned with blessed pleasure at the good news of the gospel of Christ when it was broadcast from the pulpit by the preaching gifts over time.

Pastor Clarke Lee opened with a song that Bro. Ben had pre-requested and then proceeded to speak of the reality of mortality's final end, speaking from scriptural account of the empty tomb when our Saviour defeated death and hell for the elect's sake. And the great and wondrous promises that those blessed to believe have to look forward to when death shall come our way.

Bro. McInnis, stood and called out the second of songs chosen by our departed brother, as the singers in house raised their voices in sweet unison, our sovereign Head was worshipped in song. Bro. McInnis had stated that when Bro. Ben had asked him to minister at his funeral, Bro. Michael asked, "what would you desire I speak on?" Bro. Ben at that time expressed, "Just preach CHRIST."

Bro. Michael quoted from Colossians chapter three "Christ is ALL"...and was blessed to lay before the attendees an impeccable discourse of the gospel of Christ ALL SUFFICIENCY. Yes, dearly beloved, I felt that Bro. Ben's request was surely fulfilled as Bro. Michael was blessed in his efforts.

Yes, dear ones, it is sadness that we experience when one dear to us is called away, yet when we are reminded that the monster death has no power over the heirs of divine grace, our hearts begin to turn from grief to the gladness of immortal hope. Our beloved Saviour said, "if it were not so, I would have told you".....But there is a mansion, not made with hands, in the realm of immortal glory that we can sing about and preach about all because Christ has promised that these things shall be, for HE changeth not, neither is there any shadow of turning with Him.....For he has gone to prepare a place for us.

At the conclusion of Bro. Michael's message from the pulpit, a prayer closed the meeting house service, and the beautiful wood-grained casket was ushered to the waiting hearse to make the short trip to the awaiting grave site. As the Family members and service attendees made their way to the grave site, those who would sing the "final song" gathered as the vocal instruments sang "Beulah Land," that marriage land that our Lord has prepared for his elect bride to inherit in that grand and final day.

Yes, dear Bro. Ben's mortal frame now lay silent in the cemetery yard among others of years gone by, until that grand and glorious day when there shall be a SHOUT, and

the voice of the archangel, and the trump of the Lord shall blast its triumphant sound and the dead that sleepeth in Jesus shall be raised in the newness of life immortal.

When we are blessed in time to fellowship close with one another, and when our Father's beckoning call shall come, we as those that have been blessed to rejoice in hope, shall be SAD for a season, till the gospel once again shall turn our hearts to being GLAD, for our hope is not in this world, but in that heavenly realm where our eternal destiny lies, to be with Christ in that NEW world without end.