

The Gospel Herald

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

For The LORD’S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS

by
Donald E. Martin, Sr.

A sweet legacy of time gone by in remembrance of --- Elder J. Y. McCormick ---

(1918 - Deceased Sept. 3, 2005)

Fall of the year 1986

It was the best as I recall, a cool Fall Saturday morning, when Elder Robert Miles of Plant City, Florida and his beloved wife, Copal, drove about 45 minutes from Elder Miles’ home. Brother James J. Bowman and I followed in my automobile as we drove in the rural areas of Hillsborough County, heading for the Fellowship Primitive Baptist Church, sitting next to its historical cemetery which was established in the late 1880s.

We entered the little drive that brought us to the parking area between the meeting house and the eating shelter. As we exited our vehicles, a stately-appearing gentleman wearing a formal hat came to greet the arrivals. It was Elder J. Y. McCormick, an elder of God’s little flock that met every first Sunday and the Saturday before (at that time).

Elder Miles introduced me as Elder Donald Martin of St. Petersburg, Florida; Elder McCormick firmly shook my hand and we embraced in true, meaningful, fellowship as two brothers greeting in Christ’s name. Elder Fred Niekerk of central Florida was the pastor with Elder McCormick in the “Original Association of Mount Enon Primitive Baptists.” At that time, there were about four assemblies which made up the association.

Writer’s Note: I regret I must make the statement the “original” in relation to the Mt. Enon Association, since there are THREE Mt. Enon associations that split from the “original” assembly of believers who endorsed the historical predestinarian position.

Elder Niekerk, as well, was very cordial and expressed a kind and warm greeting. As we met the other folks who ventured into the meeting house, dear Ben Stanaland, a

sweet brother who had been a member of that assembly since he could remember, was always a ready to call out a song. Ben was in his early eighties then and was called on home some few years after our first meeting; but, if he was at the meeting, they were never without a song. The Lloyd's hymnal was the book of choice and how sweet the cords of human instruments collated together in sweet unison sounded as we sang those hymns of sovereign, ever-ruling grace and our Saviour's unending mercy.

The singing continued for the time allotted, then Elder Niekerk would call upon one to pray. Usually, Elder Niekerk would attempt to speak first, then Elder McCormick would follow. I never heard Elder Niekerk attempt to speak from the Holy Writ that God did not bless my soul with Spiritual food for a hungry pilgrim such as I.

I can see Elder J.Y. McCormick in my mind's eye as if today was the first day I met the man and heard him speak to God's people. This dear Brother had a kind and gentle demeanor, slowly seeking God's leading as he would pace the stand. Then, looking around in the assembly for a moment, he'd look down upon the pages of the Holy Book and begin to read a text. As his mind was caught up in the Spirit of the Almighty and God began to open the floodgates of the man's mouth, out would come a melodious eloquence of words that would cause one to lean forward in order not to miss a word he spoke. The dear brother had something to say to a poor hungry pilgrim like me meandering (yes, I mean meandering) around in Zion's property seeking a place to be accepted among the beloved. This man told me of a God that I read about and been taught in the scriptures: An unlimited God, a God who never tries, but ALWAYS succeeds, the God that saves sinners to the uttermost. Oh, how sweet the joyful sound to they who know of His all-sufficient grace and loving kindness.

I lost contact with some of those brethren in the early 1990s as Elder Miles was called away; Elder Niekerk was called home, and I was pastoring for 19 years in a "non-affiliated" Old School Predestinarian Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, and professionally employed requiring me to travel. Yet, in God's divine, sovereign, determined purpose, I heard about Elder J. Y. McCormick living and pastoring in South Georgia. I was beginning to attend some meetings up in that region as I moved to north central Florida, near Ocala (no PB Churches within three counties).

Elder Michael McInnis, of O'Brien, Florida (pastor of Grace Chapel, a Predestinarian Church) and I had known one another for over 27 years and recently renewed fellowship after not seeing each other for years. We have, since 2001, been doing some traveling and visiting to various meetings, and have enjoyed meeting and greeting many of the brethren. But, when I saw my ole Father in Israel, J.Y. McCormick at a meeting in South Georgia, a couple years ago - for the first time in 20 years - my heart leaped with joy. We hugged as two life-long brothers (which we are) were re-united. To meet his dear wife and have lunch, sitting and speaking of the brethren we have known, was one of the greatest moments in my life. God has now been pleased to call HIS beloved servant home. Yes, I miss these patriots of the past few generations. I knew

and loved Elder W. J. Berry, and his dear wife, Mabel, and their three sons, as well as Elder Robert Miles, sitting in his home talking of the scriptures, and now Elder J.Y. McCormick of Blackshear, Georgia.

In my final telephone conversation with brother McCormick about three weeks before God's beckoning call, I said, "My dear brother, don't you be a going out of here without hugging me good bye." He replied, "Well, Brother Martin, I don't know about that, it's out of my hands." Oh, how correct our dear brother is; IT IS OUT OF OUR HANDS.

NOTE: *I am currently Pastoring Fellowship Primitive Baptist Church in South Hillsborough County Florida where Elder J.Y. McCormick was pastor for 33 years, serving with Elder Fred Niekerk. Elder McCormick was called away September 3, 2005 as pastor and member of Mt. Zion Primitive Baptist Church in Blackshear, GA. I was called to be pastor at Fellowship Church in 2006.*

We meet on the first Sunday of every month and among the heritage of those which had founding fathers of that assembly from the years 1875.

Written 2009