

Emma

Anticipation of an exciting future event can play a huge part in how we cope with day-to-day dramas of life. Emma was a very new Christian when her husband died. As far as she knew, he was not a Christian. Emma was a new Australian from England. After coming to Australia, Emma met Carlo and married him.

Their children attended the local Christian Brethren Sunday School and youth group. Her daughter became a Christian and, through her, Emma also became a Christian. Then tragedy. Her husband Carlo, a new Australian from Greece, died of a heart attack.

I took the service at Springvale Crematorium. Just a handful of people and the workmates of Carlo came. Suddenly Emma was very much alone. Following the funeral, we visited her every day at first, then every second day, then once a week for months. We gave her a Living Bible. Emma read the Bible every day. On one visit, she was so happy. "Look" she exclaimed excitedly, "this is me. Jesus knows I've tried so hard." Emma had been reading Revelation 3:8-9: "I know you well, you aren't strong, but you have tried so hard to obey. ... I have loved you."

Being Christian does not immune us from suffering, grief or persecution. The church in Philadelphia [modern day Alapehir, Turkey] was being hounded by a lying group of people who falsely accused them of being heretics. In this letter to the church in Philadelphia, Christ takes verses from Isaiah but reverses the roles of Jews and non-Jews (Isaiah 22:16-22). The followers of Jesus, Christians, are the people of God. Jewish unbelievers are the pagans who will come and acknowledge the love Jesus the Messiah has for the Church!

In the face of harassment, grief and trials, Christians are encouraged to look beyond the immediate, distressing as it is, to a future day. Jesus will protect all those who remain loyal to him. Faithful Christians will be rewarded when Jesus returns. "Each of the triumphant believers will be like a pillar in God's temple, secure in his presence forever. Through Christ, who has the key to life and death (see Revelation 3:7; 1:18), they will belong permanently to God, to the heavenly city and to their Saviour" Revelation 3:10-13. A bright tomorrow sheds light on today.