

Paul: My life seemed to be jogging along quite comfortably until, in 2001, my wife Pauline was diagnosed with breast cancer. I had trained as a schoolteacher, married a lovely Christian and had three children whom we encouraged to go to church with us and to make their own commitment to follow Christ in their lives.

Pauline had surgery, radio- and chemo- therapies and after many months of debilitating treatment was free from the disease for several years. Life went on again almost as normal until eventually it reappeared in secondary sites including her liver. This was serious and I took early retirement in order to be with her for her final months of life. In fact, further treatment together with the prayers of faithful friends in the church and beyond, extended that time to eight years! We shared many new experiences together during those years, including several trips abroad and one even to Australia to visit distant family.

I was fortunate to have a life story that helped me through this testing time. I was brought up in a family where both my parents were Christians and attended church regularly and of course they took me along as well.

One of my early memories was the first time I did a Bible reading publicly in church – it was Isaiah 55 which begins in the King James Bible: *‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat ... without money and without price.’* I learnt even then about God’s salvation which is available free, without us thinking we can purchase it through any bargaining on our part. It’s without price and yet priceless!

I went on to attend a Crusader Bible class and was influenced by some charismatic leaders whose lives clearly demonstrated that their

faith involved far more than Sunday meeting attendance: it was fundamental to who they were and what they did and said day by day. It was at a Crusader camp that I made a commitment to give my life to Christ and begin the Christian walk that I have continued to this day.

It wasn't until 2012 that Pauline died peacefully in her own bed at home. She was not afraid of dying – she knew she would be with the Lord who *'leads all his faithful followers to streams of living water and will wipe away every tear from their eyes'* as it says in Revelation. The verse on her headstone reads: *'Now this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent'* (John 17:3).

It was not an easy time losing my wife and friend after 43 years of marriage, but the certain knowledge that life does not end with death on this earth but continues in a different but very real way with the God who not only created the world but creates, knows and loves each of us, has sustained me through the periods of sadness and loneliness.

The path for a Christian is not promised to be a bed of roses or be without hardship and pain, but as a Christian we can face these things with a confidence and peace which, as the Bible says, *'passes understanding'*.