
Living in Isolation for fifty-five years - Challenges

I came to Port Augusta in South Australia newly married to someone who was not a Christadelphian. There were no Christadelphians in the area and having been baptised eight years earlier I was relatively a new chum to being in isolation. Life became a constant battle to maintain my faith and was not something I had thought a lot about before coming here. I was forced to daily assess my surroundings looking for ways to keep my faith alive with the inevitable challenges to the way I wanted to live in a world that had practically no knowledge or desire to please God or His Son. There are many nominal Christians here and I became painfully aware of their ignorance of the Bible or desire to live a Christlike life. I began to count it as a blessing in a way because I had taken so much for granted in my former ecclesial life.

God is not just in big congregations

I was young and impressionable but also feeling disconnected from many of my brothers and sisters. I could not have been more wrong as it turned out and I was able to get a clearer perspective of the reasons and methods that made up ecclesias and why it is so important to have a close and personal relationship to God and His Son. Looking back I can see the path that God was then mapping out for me. God was not just in big congregations but in small quiet places as well. Not having someone to share my faith became a gigantic loss to me and no one it seemed had even heard of Christadelphians and most seemed to lump us with other 'minor' sects. I knew that I had to arm myself with information to counter this pernicious idea. My husband could not and would not try to understand how important my faith was to me. From the start witnessing to my beliefs became an uphill battle.

I can only give a very sketchy outline of the next fifty-five years. I learnt early to appreciate just how precious and unique our belief system is. I am confident that God's Truth and the path outlined by our pioneers were on track. I reread Elpis Israel, a standard book about the Christadelphian faith, over a period of time and wrote copious letters to family and others who kept me in a clearer understanding of our basic beliefs to counter spurious doctrine and challenges that were inevitably thrown at me from those who were enemies of truth.

Sharing the Gospel

Not long after I came here a brother from the Enfield Ecclesia organised a Bible lecture here. This was followed not long after by the Israeli six Day War. Response to our leaflets and follow up talks was to develop what we might call the nucleus of the Port Augusta, Whyalla and Port Pirie Ecclesia. Port Augusta being central to these towns became the hub. Slowly the numbers grew and young families had children and our ecclesia grew. Families grew and local interest and relatives of the members accepted and were baptised. There were meetings started up in Whyalla and the combined ecclesia was formed and called The Spencer Gulf Ecclesia.

Things did change though as the years went by and families with teenagers decided to move to areas where they could associate with other young people. At one stage we had a Sunday school of over 20 scholars who were also getting correspondence lessons from Adelaide.

Looking back, I can see the hand of God enabling us, testing us, and directing us. Today we number six in members but four of us have outlived the allotted span of seventy years. Some of the

children of families who moved to larger meetings accepted the “Truth” but those who did not mostly drifted into the “World”. My two girls had Sunday school lessons to mid-teens but chose to move away from our teaching. They both married and had their own families. One of them moved to North Queensland but we still have the other daughter living close by. Some other Brethren and Sisters came to our area for short periods of time and there has always been someone even when it was just me for a short time. Whyalla also has never been without someone in the meeting by the Grace of God. When the Brother and Sister from Port Pirie left for Adelaide however, there was no one who answered to the title Christadelphian.

The blessing of the internet

This is a very sketchy outline of the last fifty-five years and I do know that there were Brethren and Sister whose work brought them here before I came. Country areas have been notoriously hard to maintain light stands because families need support. We live in a very different world and much closer to the return of our Master. The internet has broken down many barriers but for how long we can only hazard a guess. I can Zoom in to meetings. Bible studies and exhortation have been made available to me just at the click of my mouse into a Zoom room. Covid 19 caused lockdowns which made a lot of people reassess their relationship to God, His Son and their Brethren and Sisters. There are so many things to help us on-line. I have an online meeting once a week on Paltalk. God is here in isolation just as much as he is in large Ecclesias. Compared to how things were before I came here before today’s modern technology it is amazing. However, that said, nothing can replace our need to grow a stronger faith and have a more personal relationship to the Father, son and the faith that is so necessary to please Him.

God’s imprint

I look back at the footsteps in the sand and see the imprint made by God. He has taken very good care of me. He has educated me, tested me though not beyond my abilities to handle any trials so far, He has lifted me up when I have fallen down which has been often. He has blessed me far more than I deserve. I have found that most people out in the world like to be encouraged in their faith and those who don’t learn that my faith is very important to me whether they like it or not. You never know that what you say to someone today might be vital information for their salvation further down the track. God has placed us all somewhere for His purpose so we have to be ready for the opportunities that He undoubtedly gives to us every day.

As we look forward to the coming of the Master, and see signs along the way, we can be bold, we can speak out. We might be the only Bible they will ever read. We might be the only Brother or Sister of Christ they will ever meet. People notice how you live your life and how you handle your trials with patience and they appreciate your compassion and understanding when they are in sorrow or when you share their joy also. We do share a “Like Precious Faith” It makes us sad when we see the darkness and ignorance of many who are unbelievers as well as those who call themselves Christian but deny much of the Truth that Christadelphians share.

I have reached a stage in my life where I speak the Truth to all I meet and encourage everyone to read the Bible. I do not argue with them about “The Devil” “Heaven Going” or the “The Trinity” but tell them about how humans fail to do the right things, that Jesus is coming back to set up God’s Kingdom, and who God is and His Son who is our redeemer king.

God is our strength

So, there you have my story and I know there are many who could show that we are placed where we are for good reasons and God is our strength no matter what others think.

Audrey
