

November 17, 2020
Washington, D.C.

Dearly Beloved,

Greetings to you saint in Christ Jesus. As these strange and isolating days press in even further, the elders wanted to write you in order to express our concern for you. Since you haven't gathered with us for most, if not all of the past eight months, we felt it necessary to call your attention to a few things.

When we became elders of this church we committed to God and to you that we would "shepherd the flock of *God* that is among (us)" (1 Peter 5.2). It is our prayer that you receive this letter in that spirit – shepherding you, a member of the flock of God among us.

God's word for you, beloved, is full of calls to rebuke and warn those among us to persevere in the faith (James 1.12). This is due to the predominance of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6.12), the deceitfulness of the world (Romans 12.2), and the lusts of the flesh (1 John 2.16). Time and again your precious Savior has warned you and me to "watch yourselves" and to "stay awake" (Luke 21.34, 36).

Casualties from those that didn't pay attention to these warnings lay bare all around us. From Demas (2 Tim. 4.10) to those college friends you thought would always burn for Christ, we find the world is as Jesus told us it would be, full of people implanted into different kinds of soils (Mark 4.1-20).

As we have spoken to you on numerous occasions, we understand the concerns that you have regarding the COVID-19 crisis. It is not the intention of this letter to provide you any amount of condemnation since there is *no* condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8.1). The intention here is to remind you of the triumvirate powers working against you as well as to provide some insight into what may be occurring in your life as a result of your not regularly gathering with us under word, prayer, and the Lord's Supper.

Precious saint, in the spirit of the apostle Paul's call to "examine yourself" we would ask you to do so in the following categories:

Heart: In what ways has this pandemic exposed aspects of your heart before the Lord? Jesus teaches us that "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6.45) and "the things that come out of a person are what defile him" (Mark 7.16).

Health: Based upon the evaluation of your heart, what does this indicate about your spiritual health? "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume...every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3.8-10).

Help: Evaluating the fruit, have you found yourself to be helping others in following Jesus? One of the great joys of our faith is to “make disciples” that delight in the supremacy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28.19). It is an essential part of that faith, then, to not only receive the word through livestream, Community Group, or personal study, but we have also been commanded and have covenanted with one another to help other people know and enjoy the Lord Jesus. How has that been going?

Habits: What kind of habits have you formed over the course of this Quarantine? Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4.7-8 to “*train yourself* for the purpose of godliness; for bodily training is just slightly beneficial, but godliness is beneficial for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” Here again we can also think of those calls of our Lord to “watch yourself”. What habits have changed over the course of the last 8 months? Do you find bad patterns have slipped in light of the ease of watching a livestream at home? Are your habits of exposure in your daily life consistent with your reasons for not gathering regularly? Do you think it will be difficult to re-engage in the patterns of holiness in the coming months?

Once again, beloved, we ask these things because we love you and are concerned for you. It would be much easier to not follow up, but because we committed to you and you to us, we want to do our part in caring for the welfare of your soul.

We would ask that you take the time to consider these matters above and speak with us on a follow up call in the coming week(s). In the meantime, know that we are praying for you and are thankful to be able to walk this portion of the journey in the wilderness with you. Soon enough we will be home, beloved. On behalf of the elders, we are...

Your Servants,

Nathan Knight