

Dear saints,

Week three. Feeling weird yet? I am. I often wish for quiet in my life, but this kind of quiet wasn't what I was thinking of when I was making those wishes. This kind of quiet is.... wrong. I don't want to call it malevolent, but it is certainly unnatural, and making me second-guess what I prioritize in my life.

I hope all of you are well. There is a great deal of invisible pressure upon us, the fears, the uncertainties, the keeping track of family and friends, the hunger for good news and the disappointment when the news seems to all be bad. Claustrophobia isn't just the fear of physical enclosure, tight spaces, that sort of thing. This is a kind of emotional claustrophobia, if that makes sense. A perpetual vulnerability, a helplessness. We want to be safe, but we want to help. We want to protect our society, but we also want to protect our families and our own sanity.

But hey, maybe this is just life, right? Wrong. Life is like that, but life is also flawed, damaged by our sin, and we are suffering yet another reminder of this these days. Are you afraid? I am. In the face of fear, and all this stuff going wrong, we remind ourselves of what we have:

We have eternity: This world is passing away, and we with it. But God's Word does not pass away, and God's Word says that we belong to Him. As frightening as it is to possibly lose all we could, we will not lose our salvation or our God or our church. Life nor death nor angels nor demons will separate us from Him.

We have each other: You are all still part of each other, even if you cannot see each other. Our saints are well and praying for you, and you are praying for them. God is hearing those prayers. God is not gone, He is not angry with you, and He is not trying to hurt you. He is here with you through this time and He is with your brothers and sisters in this time. God pushes hard sometimes, but He's not picking on us, He's helping us (through suffering) live our Christian faith.

We have our country: It may not seem like it, and it certainly isn't the America most of you grew up in, but we still have homes, police, clean water, garbage disposal, and food. We may not have toilet paper or hand sanitizer, but we are still American, which means we are still free to love our neighbor and serve our community. I admit it's hard to find ways to do that with all the shortages. Everything everyone needs has been drained from the stores and back-ordered into the next century on the Internet. But we will find ways to help. If I hear of one, I'll let you know.

Remember Paul's words: I am content with weaknesses, illnesses, and sufferings, for when I am weak, then I am strong. God's power is made perfect in weakness. For your devotions this week, read and try to understand **2 Corinthians 12:1-10**. So much of what Paul says has been on my mind lately.

Status of the saints: All so far remain well, other than a few instances of the common crud (not the new bug). Supplies are holding up so far for our disabled and our shut ins. Many are lonely and bored. I encourage you again to reach out to each other for conversation, even if you have to shout on the phone. Some family members have contracted the bug or are in danger of it, and so continue your prayers for all those afflicted and those serving in dangerous positions.

During the difficult years I spent in Montana, I ran across a quote from something (it would take too long to explain what) that I kept pinned on my desk, and I only took it down once you all called me to be your pastor. It goes like this: **Though the time is dark, my faith shines.**

The time is dark, but our faith, you and I together, shines.

Pastor Fremer.