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February 16, 2018

Dear brethren in Christ,

Hello from central New York! Hope you all are doing well. We've had lots of snow here in the last month, but finally it seems it's getting warm enough to start melting most of it.

My letters to you have not been as frequent as normal since I'm very much involved taking care of Sonia. Frankly it's very difficult to know what to say. To sum up: Her condition continues to deteriorate. We're very thankful that her health was good enough that she could enjoy the holidays in December. However, in January, her condition worsened greatly, new symptoms of her cancer appeared, and she became unable to leave the house. And now in February she is showing weekly decline. She has chronic nausea among several other uncomfortable symptoms. She is much weaker and it is very difficult for her to walk. She rests or sleeps almost all the time now. We make sure one of us is with her at all times. Our boys have been very helpful in her care. Her pain is well managed at present with some strong medicines. We're so thankful for the people from Hospice that come to our house and tend to her needs. We are well taken care of by friends, neighbors, and brethren here. They provide meals for us almost every day. It's impossible to know how much longer it will be before she passes, but I suspect that it will be anytime within the next few weeks. Everything is in place for when that happens as all the important decisions have been made. I will notify you whenever the time comes that Sonia is free from this world.

Frequently I'm asked how I and the boys are doing. I am doing well under the circumstances. I have a lot of spiritual support here and am frequently encouraged by brethren from everywhere. It's comforting to know that many, including you, are regularly praying for us. I get lots of strength from studying God's word every day. Yes, the circumstance is difficult, but we've had lots of time to get ready for this. She's battled this cancer for 8 years. Yes, we will miss her greatly, but we will also be relieved that her suffering will finally end. She is ready to be with the Lord and that means everything to us. Our youngest son, Joshua, turned 17 in January. He is a junior in High School. The school is very aware of our circumstances as Sonia was employed as a cafeteria worker for over 10 years. Joshua's teachers know what is going on, and they haven't contacted me about any concerns they've noticed. In fact, his latest report card was very good as he made the honor roll once again. He participates often in the worship and does really well. Our older son, Samuel, who is 20, took this year off of college to be with his mother. He is working at the local grocery store to earn money for when he returns to college. I was told that the manager is impressed with his hard work. I frequently talk with Sam and Josh about their Mother and encourage them to talk about their emotions. On Valentine's Day, the boys made their own cards for Sonia and told her how they felt about her. That was a very good thing for all of us.

Of course all of this is very personal; and I would encourage you to likewise open up about your problems to others. It really helps to talk about things (and in this case, write about it). I know we're not the only ones dealing with adversity. My uncle Jim (Mom's brother) in Tulsa, OK, is now dealing with cancer, so this is a trying time for Mom. Please keep her and Jim in your prayers. Within the last month, several of my friends have been discovered to have cancer. A lot of us are going through the same things. Many others are experiencing adversity from things other than cancer. Know that you are loved and thought about and prayed for.

The congregation here is doing well. Everyone is growing closer to one another. There is a warmth here among the brethren that is so refreshing. I'm encouraged by the growth in knowledge and the eagerness to study together. Though my family is facing adversity, I'm using the circumstance to show the brethren how that in all things, we must humble ourselves, depend on God, and give Him the glory. And that's my prayer: that all glory goes to God, who loved us and gave His Son for us. Our God is a compassionate God, and His power will raise us from the dead. Praise the Lord!

Your brother in Christ,