**Isolated yet Unbound**

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Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. -Isaiah 26:3

"Why aren't you wearing your mask?" our anxious female chaplain asked my wife while being at the school premises that day. Everyone is getting health conscious nowadays, and I understand where our chaplain is coming from, especially with my wife's condition.

The mountain smoke has enveloped the skies again. The sky looked brownish red most of the time, but on some days, it looked more of a hazy orange. It has been a yearly activity for some people to burn their forests every summertime, in preparation for the coming rainy season. Aside from that, this COVID-19 outbreak brought crippling fears to many of us, to the point that it has disabled some of the usual activities in the cities and some neighboring towns. However, our lives in CAA have remained mostly the same.

Before the lockdown announcement, the students staying in the dormitories had already gone home. However, the teachers were still asked to stay, to finish some papers works and responsibilities. After an official announcement was made to refrain from gathering together, the school director decided to discontinue our morning devotional, which later on, led to staying at home and do house worship instead.

With what is happening right now, I decided to see past the negative things. These past few days, I was able to have more quality time with my wife. We weren't able to go home to the Philippines though, but these quiet times at home led us to more time of heart-searching and study. I was able to attend to my dying plants as well, which are now blooming once again even under the heat of the sun.

However, our outreach ministries were at a halt. We weren't able to visit some nearby small churches anymore, and the people here in school had been mostly at home, taking advantage of this quarantine time to spend some time with their families as well. My wife has been anxious these past days because of so many reasons, but I always remind her that God is in control of everything. I think no one isn't scared now. The future looks so dim and uncertain. Many things are going in our minds that would either lead us closer to God or take us away from Him. To navigate our minds to spiritual things, we would always watch online sermons and do evening worship. I feel like there are only two of us encouraging each other in this place, and we feel sad at times. But God's Word would always give us comfort. We continued with our separate personal devotions, and it was during these times that we've learned how the people in the old times experienced quarantine as well, yet their faith remained steadfast. My wife was reading the book of 1st Kings, where Elijah was sent to the brook Cherith for a while and was only fed with a raven. It was a sunny morning when she exclaimed at me from the outside of the house, "God will surely provide for His people!" Paul, in the prison cell, continued his devotions amidst the lurking dangers surrounding him. And can we forget John the Revelator, who in his time made a purpose of his quiet times with the Lord, and wrote the book of Revelation?

I know that what is happening right now-- the health crisis, the lockdown, the home quarantine, and the hunger, are all but a simulation of what is about to happen in the nearest future.

Is this the time to be overcome with our fears? We know that this is not yet the end. Let us prepare ourselves spiritually, for we know that a greater crisis is yet to come. We may not always be certain, but I have always told my wife, "The just shall live by faith."

Let us pray for healing for ourselves and for everyone in whatever aspect we need right now. Let us also pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to continually fill us. Also, let us pray Doi Suthep, a certain area here in Chiangmai, which is burning right now.