



December 16, 2020

Dear Friends,

As I look over the year and remember past holidays and Christmases surrounded by family and friends, I recognize how differently 2020 looks to each and every one of us. This year there has been many ups and downs. My year, just like many of yours, has been full of disappointments, fear, sadness, happiness, and health problems, but through it all, I have seen the hand of God protecting, healing, and watching over me.

At the onset of the shut-down when church services were restricted from meeting, my faith was shaken. I began to think of material things, about how I was going to make it without the support of churches. Finances were of great concern. Then, this verse, "Oh ye of little faith," reminded me that God is in control. God changed my mind and renewed my soul. He showed me that I needed to trust Him above all things. God has proven this to me over and over throughout this year. God opened my eyes to this when I had a new church begin supporting me – thanks Belmont Baptist! **GOD IS IN CONTROL!**

In January of 2020, I had an echo cardiogram, an angiogram, and a test result that showed that I had nodules on my thyroid. All testing was postponed in March due to COVID-19. In April and May more tests revealed that cancer was on the right side of my thyroid. On August 3rd, the surgeon removed the right side of the thyroid, but a week later, I was informed that I would need to undergo a second surgery to remove the rest of the thyroid and some muscle tissue. Since surgery, my hemoglobin dropped twice to a 5, which is dangerously low, revealing that I was losing blood. It took many tests to discover what was going on (including swallowing a camera to check my intestines.) I was given blood, iron infusions, and eventually, had a small procedure that took care of the rest of the bleeding. Through all of this, God has walked with me, holding onto me when I could not understand why my health and my faith were faltering. God is faithful to us even when we cannot be faithful to Him. He is in control; He is faithful, and His love is constant. God has shown me how to walk by faith in a new way. He has renewed my faith in Him.

I want to thank all of you who have been praying for me throughout this year – though all my hardships, tests, surgeries, and recoveries. I am much improved because God is control of my life and my health. Thanks for all of the prayers, cards, texts, and emails of encouragement. They lifted my spirits when I needed it most. I am thankful to you for your prayers and faithfulness.

May God bless each of you and your families.

Merry Christmas!

Your Missionary Friend,

Gayle Sparks