

# GRACE

COMMUNITY CHURCH

February 19, 2021

GraceLife Church of Edmonton  
51529A – Range Road 262  
Spruce Grove, AB T7Y 1B3

To the Saints at the GraceLife Church of Edmonton,

May grace and peace be multiplied unto you in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The elders of Grace Community Church wanted to take time to write a word of encouragement as you all face this most significant trial in your life as a church. We want you to know that we stand with you, we support you, and we are praying for all of you as you suffer in a manner worthy of the Gospel (Philippians 1:27–30).

Though our own local and state governments have not gone to the extremes yours have, we find ourselves in the midst of our own legal battles for simply gathering as the Lord's people on the Lord's Day in obedience to the Lord's command. While we don't pretend to know the grief of seeing our pastor imprisoned, we do know something of the conflict you are in, and our hearts feel the burdens your hearts now bear. Your sorrow is our sorrow.

Please know that we could not be more proud of Pastor James for the stand that he has led you all to take. In the patient enduring of these sufferings, he honors Christ his Savior and magnifies the worth of His glory to the watching world. By continuing to gather each Lord's Day, you proclaim to your neighbors that obedience to Jesus brings more satisfaction to your souls than all those things the civil authorities can take from you. By counting all those things as loss—even your own freedom—you testify to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus your Lord. For Him, you can suffer the loss of all things and count them but refuse (Philippians 3:8).

Those who live in such way will know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Philippians 3:10). And though the suffering is bitter, the fellowship is sweet. On the path of suffering for righteousness' sake, there is communion with Jesus to be enjoyed. He was no stranger to suffering for the cause of righteousness. And when we go out to Him, bearing His reproach (Hebrews 13:13), He meets us in that suffering. In a unique way—a way we could not

experience in times of relative peace and ease—we enjoy an intimacy with the One who “while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). We encourage you, in this time of unique suffering, to pursue that unique fellowship with the Triune God—to rest in the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

We want to encourage you to bear up under this unjust suffering, patiently enduring the trial the Lord has ordained for you in this hour (1 Peter 2:19–20). Resist the temptation to repay evil for evil; rather, overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17, 21). Do not allow any root of bitterness to take hold in your hearts; rather, pray for blessings upon those who persecute you (Hebrews 12:15; cf. Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14). Do not be ashamed of your sufferings; rather, keep on rejoicing, glorifying God that you suffer in the name of Christ (1 Peter 4:12–16).

If there is any tangible, practical way we can serve you, please do us the favor of allowing us to support the needs of the saints (2 Corinthians 8:4; Hebrews 10:34). Our hearts are knit to your hearts; we are there with you in spirit. We long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:7–8). We are praying earnestly for James’ release, for Jacob’s protection, for your growth and sanctification, and, above all, for God to be glorified through this immense trial.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren.

The Elders of Grace Community Church

Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me;  
Fighting all day long he oppresses me.  
My foes have trampled upon me all day long,  
For they are many who fight proudly against me.  
When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.  
In God, whose word I praise,  
In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid.  
What can mere man do to me?  
– Psalm 56:1–4 –