



ENDLESS GRACE

PRAYERS INSPIRED BY THE PSALMS



BY
RYAN WHITAKER SMITH
& DAN WILT



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GRACE**

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AND DAN WILT**



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❁ INTRODUCTION ❁

In the first verses of the first chapter of the book of Psalms, we are promised that a blessing awaits those who resolve to *meditate* on the precepts of the Lord (Ps. 1:2). The Hebrew word is *hagah*, which means to *ponder, imagine, mutter, study*. In an age of relentless busyness and nonstop information consumption, the notion of reading anything slowly and contemplatively is novel—but that is precisely what the Psalms (indeed, all of Scripture) invite us to do. To linger. To reflect. To allow the words to shape and form us over time.

We are called to meditate on the written Word of God through the day (Ps. 119:97) and the night (63:6), in the midst of oppression (119:23) and false accusation (119:78), as a means of guarding against temptation (119:9) and resisting anger (4:4)—that we might recall the works of the Lord (77:11–12), approach Him in worshipful reverence (119:48), ponder all His benefits (103:2), and remember His many mercies (25:6).

Endless Grace, like its companion volume, *Sheltering Mercy*, attempts to take that exhortation to heart, approaching the Psalms as literature designed for prayerful meditation. Both volumes emerged from times of private devotion as a means of engaging with Scripture in a thoughtful, creative way. As writers in different fields, our intention was to pray *along with* the Psalms—to respond to their hopes and fears, confessions and frustrations, with the same naked vulnerability with which the psalmists approached their songs of praise and lament.

The result is a collection of free-verse renderings—impressionistic poetry without the limitations of meter or rhyme. Think of these prayers as lyrical sketches of the scriptural landscape where we find ourselves sojourning. While these prayers attempt to follow the structure of the psalm with which they are resonating, they are not paraphrases or translations; rather, they are *prayerful responses*.

In our introduction to *Sheltering Mercy*, we spoke of the unexpected joy of finding that the whole body of Scripture has provided the content for these unapologetically Christocentric prayers. The Bible, after all, tells one overarching story, and Christ is the central figure of the narrative. In the words of C. S. Lewis, “This is one of the rewards of reading the Old Testament regularly. You keep on discovering more and more what a tissue of quotations from it the New Testament is; how constantly Our Lord repeated, reinforced, continued, refined, and sublimated, the Judaic ethics, how very seldom He introduced a novelty.”¹

1. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958; repr., San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2017), 30–31.

While these prayers are intended to be used primarily for personal devotion, we have heard stories of them finding their way into worship services, Bible studies, small groups, hospital rooms, nursing homes. As it turns out, there is not just one way to engage with these prayers. Read them in solitude, in company, at home, in a waiting room, from a stage, in whole or in part, in silence or in song.

However this book finds its way to you, and however you choose to interact with it, our hope is that you would encounter Christ in its pages and meditate, along with us, on His sheltering mercy and endless grace.

 PSALM 76 

YOUR NEW WORLD

Father God,
in Your mercy
You have chosen¹
a People,
a Family,
a Church—
that we might bear Your name
as citizens of heaven,²
children of New Creation.³

You have made Your home with us,
ushering us into the household of God—
to a kingdom unmoved and unshaken,⁴
to a feast unending.

You have triumphed over the grave,⁵
lifting us from deep darkness
to walk in Your everlasting light.

All instruments of death—
all that draws blood,
robs life,
steals innocence—
will be disarmed,
dismantled,
beat into shovels
and hoes
to till the soil of Your New World.⁶

Your peace is stronger than violence;
Your mercy fiercer than judgment.

1. 1 Pet. 2:9. 2. Phil. 3:20. 3. Eph. 2:19–22. 4. Heb. 12:28. 5. Rom. 6:8–10.
6. Isa. 2:4.



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All who stand against You—
godless forces,
seething and swarming on the horizon—
will buckle at the knees,
falling prostrate
before the Judge of all the earth.

Strength will seep from them.
Paralyzing fear will grip them.
Breath will escape from them.

They will see,
with startling clarity,
He whom they have opposed—
and their hearts will wither.

Listen!
as all lands and seas,
fish and fowl,
and all manner of God-breathed things
hold their breath,
as the King rises in power,
a sword of justice in His fist—
to put an end to evil,
banish suffering,
make a new beginning
for the children of His covenant.

In that day,
will Your enemies not bow?
Will those who have cursed You
not confess Your lordship?⁷

As for me,
I will remain steadfast:
Daily kneeling.

7. Rom. 14:11.

Daily confessing.
Daily proclaiming—
for there is none like You⁸
in heaven or on earth:
a God so awesome in power,⁹
so approachable in intimacy,
so lavish in love.¹⁰

Amen.

8. Ps. 86:8. 9. Ps. 68:35. 10. Exod. 34:6.

 PSALM 77 

I REMEMBER

Father,
there are times when I fear
my voice¹ is not
loud enough,
bold enough,
true enough
to be heard by You,
the God Who Listens.²

Though I have courage,
faith,³
breath,⁴
intention—
joy escapes me.

In its absence
I am weak⁵—
heart-heavy,⁶
soul-starved—
yearning for a peace
only You can bring.

Restless,
I labor through the night,
pricked in spirit,
plagued by worry.⁷

In these long hours,
this insufferable silence,
I lose sight of all that is

1. Ps. 5:3. 2. 1 John 5:15. 3. Heb. 11:1. 4. Job 33:4. 5. Rom. 8:26.
6. Ps. 34:18. 7. Ps. 63:6–8.

good
and beautiful
and true.⁸

No comfort comes.
No solace descends.

Like You,
I am,
for the moment,
speechless.

Memories haunt me:
spectral visions of past consolations,
as evasive as the peace that eludes me.

I dig in the dirt,
searching for some forgotten truth
buried in sod and stone.

Once,
when I was weak,
did You not feed me with Your Word?⁹
When my love was cold,
my desires disordered,¹⁰
did You not brood over the chaos of my life?¹¹

I cling to faith:
a tenuous thread.

Have You forgotten me?
Have Your mercies come to an end?
Your promises come to nothing?

Who am I
to make demands of You?
To call You to account?

8. Phil. 4:8. 9. Ps. 119:50. 10. Inspired by Augustine, *Confessions* 4.10.15.
11. Gen. 1:1–2.

Remember,
O my soul,
the glory of the Lord.
That which I have seen,
I will see again.

I will walk once more
in the favor of God,
the blessing of God,
the power of God.

Who is like You, Lord?
Holy.
True.
Light undiminished.
Grace unabridged.

My heart was a locked room,
but You found Your way in.
I have touched Your scars,
seen Your face.¹²

Will I not see You again?

Remember,
O my soul,
the glory of the Lord.

Your power shakes mountains.¹³
Parts seas.¹⁴
Cuts covenants.¹⁵
Makes a way.¹⁶

At Your coming,¹⁷
oceans rush
and roar,

12. John 20:26–28. 13. Exod. 19:18. 14. Exod. 14:21–31. 15. Gen. 15:17.
16. Isa. 43:16–19. 17. Ps. 104:3.

skies bellow,
clouds spill rain;
all creation groans.¹⁸

And so I wait,
as covenant people do—
for a cloud by day,¹⁹
fire by night:²⁰
the leading of Your Spirit.

Amen.

18. Rom. 8:22–25. 19. Neh. 9:12. 20. Exod. 13:21.

 PSALM 78 

SANCTIFIED MEMORY

Father,
grant me a sanctified memory
to recall the things You have done
in the midst of human history—
things hidden from the foundation of the world,¹
made manifest in the fullness of time.²

May I,
with holy hindsight,
be one with all the saints before me,
as I tell Your story
again
and again—
that godly wisdom
be passed down,
generation
to generation.

In faithfulness,
You led the nation of Israel,
writing Your law upon their hearts,³
setting before them Life and Death,⁴
that they might flourish
in the land of their possession,
turning from the wickedness of their forebears—
from those who walked in defiance of Your truth,
who mocked Your wisdom.

May my heart be steadfast, O God.

1. 1 Sam. 2:8. 2. Gal. 4:4–7. 3. Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10–12; 10:16. 4. Deut. 30:15–16.

Do not let me be like those who see
but do not believe;
who witness
but do not profess.

Your glory was displayed before them!
They saw seas parted,⁵
Your presence in cloud and fire,⁶
water drawn from stone . . .⁷
but it was not enough.

They became bitter.
Resentful.
Unimpressed.
Unsatisfied.

You gave them food from heaven,⁸
opened streams in the wilderness,
provided for their every need—
and still they questioned Your goodness.

In the face of such faithlessness,
Your anger burned against them.⁹

*As for me,
may I be steadfast, O God.*

Like them,
I have fallen prey to apathy and indifference—
though You have moved heaven and earth
to save me,
clothe me,
feed me—
my life sustained by Your active grace,
Your intentional kindness,
Your sheltering mercy.

5. Exod. 14:21–22. 6. Exod. 13:21. 7. Exod. 17:1–6. 8. Exod. 16:11–35.
9. Num. 11:1–3.

All I have needed
You have provided:¹⁰
Breath.
Bread.
Light.
Laughter.

Creation is Your kindness, externalized.

Despite Your providence,
I have courted resentment,
fostered discontent.
Was it not for this reason
that You struck down those who scorned You?

Forgive me, Lord.

Still, they did not relent.
Their pride made fools of them—
made them blind to Your providence,
deaf to Your grace.

They invited destruction upon themselves.

Like them,
I have repented,¹¹
sought Your face,¹²
returned to Your mercy.

Like them,
my prayers were often empty words—
my promises hollow,
my faith spineless.

But in my faithlessness,
You have remained faithful.¹³

10. Inspired by a line in the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (1923) by Thomas O. Chisholm. 11. Mark 1:15. 12. Ps. 27:8. 13. Ps. 89:8.

In my brokenness,
Your blood has covered me.
You have grace for my fallenness,
mercy for my weakness.

Like all wayward saints before me,
I have wandered in desolate places,
choosing lostness over foundness,
drifting over belonging.

Have mercy on me, Lord.

If Your people could forget
their deliverance from Egypt,
when Your power was seen
in undeniable displays of glory—
all creation at Your command
as You rendered judgment over Your enemies—
miracles
and wonders,
plagues
and terrors—
then I, too,
am capable of forgetting
all You have done for me.

How often have You guided me to safety?
How often have You rescued me from ruin?

Your grace has made a way for me:
it has parted seas,
carved a path through the wilderness,
led me to a land of abundance,
to the mountain of Your presence.

But I have been reckless with Your mercy,
callous with Your commandments.

I have run after lesser gods,
driven by the lusts of the flesh and eye,
by the pride of life.¹⁴

While judgment once fell upon the disobedient—
curses
and captivity,
death
and darkness,
the consequences of their rebellion—
Your cross has spoken life over me.¹⁵
In Your mercy,
You have shouldered the weight of my sin,
borne my griefs
and sorrows,¹⁶
ransomed me from ruin.

Have You not chosen the low things of the world—
the meek,
the forsaken,
the despised¹⁷—
to bring about Your purposes?

You humble the proud,
exalt the humble¹⁸—
for You are
Lord of the Lowly.¹⁹
Defender of the Downcast.²⁰
King of the Contrite²¹—
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.²²

Grant me a sanctified memory, Lord,
that I might not forget Your abundant mercies.

Amen.

14. 1 John 2:16. 15. Heb. 12:22–24. 16. Isa. 53:4. 17. 1 Cor. 1:27–31. 18. Luke 18:14.
19. Matt. 11:29. 20. Ps. 43:5. 21. Isa. 57:15. 22. Matt. 5:3.

 PSALM 79 

TABLE OF MERCY

Lord God,
we have opened our
hearts,
minds,
bodies,
temples,
to the influence of idols.

*Have mercy on us.*¹

We have allowed
twisted intentions,
wayward wants,
destructive desires
a place at the table of mercy.²

Have mercy on us.

We have followed the spirit of the age:
amused,
allured,
coerced,
conformed.

Have mercy on us.

We have courted death,
wooded destruction,
offered ourselves up as lambs for slaughter.

Have mercy on us.

1. Inspired by the Jesus Prayer of liturgical tradition. 2. Luke 24:30.

Once we walked in victory,
but now we are lifeless:
possessing a form of godliness,
but denying its power.³

We are pitied,
parodied,
skewered,
scorned.

Have mercy on us.

In the midst of judgment,
is there hope for restoration?
Occasion for mercy?

Destroy that which destroys us, Lord.
Break that which breaks us.
Restore our communion—
the bread and the cup⁴
at the table of mercy.

For not one of us is without sin.⁵

Save us, O Lord,
from the sway of lesser loves.
May peace triumph over violence,
mercy over judgment.⁶

Forgive what we have been.
Sanctify what we are.
Order what we shall be.⁷

By the blood of the Lamb,
remember our sins no more.⁸

3. 2 Tim. 3:5. 4. 1 Cor. 11:23–26. 5. Rom. 3:22–24. 6. James 2:13. 7. From a historic prayer in the liturgical tradition. 8. Heb. 8:12.

We are a temple, desecrated;
a holy place in ruins,
haunted by the cries of the innocent.

Evil spreads its sickness
through every vine
and vein,
until every field
is a field of blood;
every valley
a Gehenna.

But nothing is hidden from You.⁹
All will come to light.

When You restore us,
when Your Spirit breathes
life into these bones,¹⁰
the nations will cry to You,
the seat of their desire,¹¹
and the temple of the earth
will be set free from its bondage
into the freedom of the glory
of the children of God.¹²

The prayers of the saints
are poured out before You:
a fragrant incense¹³
rising to Your throne.

Hear the cries of the righteous, Lord.
May those who turn their face against You,
who shun Your mercy,
defy Your way,
deride the children of Your covenant,

9. Luke 8:17. 10. Ezek. 37:1-14. 11. Hag. 2:7. 12. Rom. 8:21. 13. Rev. 5:8.

reap what they have sown—
while the heirs of Your promise¹⁴
venture deeper
and deeper
into the love of God,
ever praising You
for Your sustaining hand,¹⁵
Your endless grace.

Yes, Lord,
we gather once again
at the table of mercy
to tell what You have done.¹⁶

Amen.

14. Gal. 4:28. 15. Heb. 1:3. 16. Ps. 71:15.



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 PSALM 80 

THE SEED OF YOUR PLANTING

Father God:
Defender.¹
Guardian.
King of the Cosmos.
Lord of Heavenly Lights²—
Hear my prayer today.

Do not withhold Your goodness from me.³
Illumine this darkness,
that Your power and glory
might fall upon me once again.

Rebuild me.
Renew me.
Be gracious to me.
Shine upon me.
*Give me peace.*⁴

Once I walked in Your joy,
but now I am saddled with grief.
My prayers are empty words,
my songs, tuneless drivel.
For reasons unknown,
I suffer Your silence.

Rebuild me.
Renew me.
Be gracious to me.

1. Ps. 68:5. 2. James 1:17. 3. Ps. 84:11. 4. Num. 6:24–26.

*Shine upon me.
Give me peace.*

When I was a slave to sin,
You liberated me.⁵
When I was oppressed by darkness,
You drew me to Your glorious light.⁶

I was a dormant seed,
but You planted me in fertile soil:
watered me,
nurtured me,
that I might become a thriving, flourishing thing—
a towering oak
in an arid wasteland.

But now I am sapped of strength,
stripped of glory,
a cursed stalk
withering by the roadside.⁷

In my suffering,⁸
remember me, Lord;
remember who I am to You:
seed of Your planting,⁹
child of Your grace.¹⁰

May this howling darkness
know the fierceness of Your light.
At Your Word,
may these devils flee!¹¹

Let me know the touch of Your hand once again,
the steadying warmth of Your presence.
In crippling weakness,
be my strength.¹²

5. Rom. 6:5–6. 6. 1 Pet. 2:9. 7. Matt. 13:20–21. 8. John 12:24. 9. Matt. 13:23. 10. 2 Tim. 2:1. 11. Matt. 4:1–11. 12. Exod. 15:2.

Rebuild me.
Renew me.
Be gracious to me.
Shine upon me.
Give me peace.

 PSALM 81 

WELLSPRING OF PRAISE

Lord God,
my heart is a wellspring of praise.¹
Awed by Your glory,
humbled by Your goodness,
songs pour out of me:
endless hallelujahs!

Worship is remembrance:
sacred recollection
of Your power,
providence,
presence,
peace.

While the world busies itself with passing things,²
I will bless You
on this Remembering Day—
for You guide me on the path of life:³
in victory,
defeat,
toil,
rest.

Once I stood on the outskirts of Eden,
barred from the promises of God—
heavy-hearted,
weeping,
gnashing my teeth.⁴

In Your mercy,
You sought me out,⁵

1. Heb. 13:15. 2. 1 Cor. 7:31. 3. Ps. 16:11. 4. Luke 13:28. 5. Luke 19:10.

cradled me in Your arms,
brought me home.⁶

Now,
bound to Your Spirit,⁷
my strength is renewed⁸—
in test and trial
I am refined;⁹
sanctified in suffering.¹⁰

You speak to me
in the secret place:¹¹
*“Come away from lifeless loves,
from all that leaves you
hollow
and hungry.
Take My yoke upon you
and learn from Me,
for I am gentle
and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your soul.”*¹²

Fill me with Your Spirit, Lord.
Slake my thirst with the water of life¹³—
for I am made for covenant love,¹⁴
and my soul is restless
until it finds its rest in You.¹⁵

On my best days,
I am half-deaf,
half-dead:
peering through a glass, darkly.¹⁶

6. Matt. 18:12–14. 7. Song of Sol. 2:16. 8. Ps. 84:7. 9. 1 Pet. 1:7.
10. James 1:4. 11. Ps. 91:1. 12. Matt. 11:28–30. 13. John 4:10. 14. Deut. 6:5.
15. Inspired by Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1.1. 16. 1 Cor. 13:12.

I hear Your voice,
perceive Your presence,
and still I turn away.

Why do I resist Your embrace?
Run from Your grace?

I languish in
body,
mind,
spirit,
while You battle evil on my behalf—
routing darkness,
covering me with Your kindness,
sheltering me,
a sinner,
under the shadow of mercy.¹⁷

In Your patience,
You whisper:
*“Hear.
Heed.
Follow.
Feast.”*

In You, Lord,
are all the desires of my heart:¹⁸
my longings,
yearnings,
hopes,
expectations.

In You
and You alone,
my soul finds rest.¹⁹

Amen.

17. Ps. 57:1. 18. Ps. 37:4. 19. Ps. 62:1.

 PSALM 82 

JUSTICE AT LAST

Lord God,
the good world You made
has been ravaged by sin,
ransacked by wickedness—
a temple desecrated,
a garden choked by weeds.

Meanwhile,
You reign over the chaos of human conquest:
King of kings,
God of gods.

*How long will evil win?
How long will darkness spread its
veil of violence over the earth?*

In time,
justice will be done;
mercy will be the law of the land—
the poor exalted,
the captives freed.¹
No more harm will befall
those who have no strength,
no defense,
no voice.

But as we wait,
the rulers of earth wreak havoc.
Deaf to Your voice,
blind to Your face,

1. Luke 4:18–19.

they suppress the truth²—
spiraling into darkness,
dragging creation down with them.

If only they could know the high calling of humanity:
to be priests in the kingdom of God:³

Guardians of Grace.

Cultivators.

Creators.

Colaborers.⁴

Covenant-Keepers.

In their greed,
they have forfeited their calling.
Squandered their inheritance.

Lord,
May Your justice roll like the waves of the sea,
Your righteousness like a river⁵—
bright as crystal,
leading to Your throne.⁶

For from You
and through You
and for You
are all things⁷—
thrones,
dominions,
powers.⁸

You reign over all.
Beside You
there is no other.⁹

Amen.

2. Rom. 1:18–19. 3. Exod. 19:5–6; 1 Pet. 2:9. 4. 1 Cor. 3:9. 5. Amos 5:24.
6. Rev. 22:1. 7. Rom. 11:36. 8. Col. 1:16. 9. Isa. 45:5.