



ENDLESS GRACE

PRAYERS INSPIRED BY THE PSALMS



BY
RYAN WHITAKER SMITH
& DAN WILT



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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Introduction</i> | 13 |
| <i>Psalm 76</i> Your New World | 17 |
| <i>Psalm 77</i> I Remember | 21 |
| <i>Psalm 78</i> Sanctified Memory | 25 |
| <i>Psalm 79</i> Table of Mercy | 30 |
| <i>Psalm 80</i> The Seed of Your Planting | 35 |
| <i>Psalm 81</i> Wellspring of Praise | 38 |
| <i>Psalm 82</i> Justice at Last | 41 |
| <i>Psalm 83</i> The Good Fight | 43 |
| <i>Psalm 84</i> Restless | 46 |
| <i>Psalm 85</i> The Face of God in Christ | 49 |
| <i>Psalm 86</i> In Time | 52 |
| <i>Psalm 87</i> City of God | 56 |
| <i>Psalm 88</i> Hope beyond the Grave | 58 |
| <i>Psalm 89</i> The Love of Christ | 60 |
| <i>Psalm 90</i> A New Beginning | 66 |
| <i>Psalm 91</i> Abide in Christ | 69 |

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Psalm 92</i> | Song of My Life | 73 |
| <i>Psalm 93</i> | Everlasting God | 76 |
| <i>Psalm 94</i> | A Blight upon the Earth | 78 |
| <i>Psalm 95</i> | Wellspring of Worship | 82 |
| <i>Psalm 96</i> | Beauty and Grandeur | 85 |
| <i>Psalm 97</i> | The Lord Rules and Reigns | 87 |
| <i>Psalm 98</i> | New Songs | 89 |
| <i>Psalm 99</i> | Holy, Holy, Holy | 93 |
| <i>Psalm 100</i> | Holy Ground | 95 |
| <i>Psalm 101</i> | I Wait for You | 96 |
| <i>Psalm 102</i> | Wind-Scattered | 98 |
| <i>Psalm 103</i> | Praise Uninhibited | 102 |
| <i>Psalm 104</i> | Canvas of Creation | 106 |
| <i>Psalm 105</i> | God of the Story | 110 |
| <i>Psalm 106</i> | Counted among Them | 115 |
| <i>Psalm 107</i> | God of Zion | 120 |
| <i>Psalm 108</i> | Spectacle of Praise | 123 |
| <i>Psalm 109</i> | Rise to My Defense | 125 |
| <i>Psalm 110</i> | Adonai | 127 |
| <i>Psalm 111</i> | World of Wonder | 130 |
| <i>Psalm 112</i> | The Reward of Those Who Seek You | 133 |
| <i>Psalm 113</i> | Lord of Life | 135 |
| <i>Psalm 114</i> | Out of Slavery | 137 |
| <i>Psalm 115</i> | Gather Up the Praise | 138 |
| <i>Psalm 116</i> | Finished Work | 140 |
| <i>Psalm 117</i> | Be Praised! | 143 |
| <i>Psalm 118</i> | Your Kindness Has No End | 144 |

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Psalm 119</i> | The Word, the Wisdom, of God | 149 |
| <i>Psalm 120</i> | Sacred Benediction | 171 |
| <i>Psalm 121</i> | Keeper of My Soul | 173 |
| <i>Psalm 122</i> | Coming Kingdom | 176 |
| <i>Psalm 123</i> | When I See You | 178 |
| <i>Psalm 124</i> | Where Would I Be? | 179 |
| <i>Psalm 125</i> | Womb of the Spirit | 180 |
| <i>Psalm 126</i> | Uncontainable Joy | 182 |
| <i>Psalm 127</i> | Lord of This House | 184 |
| <i>Psalm 128</i> | The Way of Blessing | 185 |
| <i>Psalm 129</i> | I Have Confidence | 187 |
| <i>Psalm 130</i> | The Word of Your Promise | 189 |
| <i>Psalm 131</i> | In Your Arms | 193 |
| <i>Psalm 132</i> | Your Servant David | 194 |
| <i>Psalm 133</i> | So Very Good | 196 |
| <i>Psalm 134</i> | A Prayer for Those in Ministry | 197 |
| <i>Psalm 135</i> | Lord of Praise | 198 |
| <i>Psalm 136</i> | Glory Be | 201 |
| <i>Psalm 137</i> | Heart in Exile | 204 |
| <i>Psalm 138</i> | I Choose You | 206 |
| <i>Psalm 139</i> | Known by You | 209 |
| <i>Psalm 140</i> | Desecrated Place | 214 |
| <i>Psalm 141</i> | Endless Struggle | 216 |
| <i>Psalm 142</i> | A Listening Ear | 218 |
| <i>Psalm 143</i> | Word of Comfort | 220 |
| <i>Psalm 144</i> | Fit for the Fight | 222 |
| <i>Psalm 145</i> | The Way of Mercy | 225 |

Psalm 146 Lavish Grace 227
Psalm 147 My Joy, My Delight, My Song 229
Psalm 148 All Is Yours 233
Psalm 149 Gospel King 235
Psalm 150 Sheltering Mercy, Endless Grace 237

Acknowledgments 240

❁ 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.