

Again and Again

We praise you, Lord Jesus, again and again.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. Hebrews 13:15

Be honest: Hasn't there been at least one morning when you came to the worship service thinking, "Not again." Have you ever dragged yourself into God's presence feeling you have nothing to say to him?

Of course we haven't run out of things to say to God. Or about him. But we may be overwhelmed by our circumstances. Or exhausted by the pace of our lives. Or preoccupied with the stuff of our lives. We come to worship distracted. That's one reason we must keep coming again and again. In worship, we remember who our God is and what he has done. Praise comes out of that remembering.

This song gives us plenty of reasons to praise God again and again. Choose all those that apply to you:

Who he is:

Lord of the manger	Lord of the cross
Our Savior	Our friend
Lord of all mercy	Lord of all joy
the One who walks beside us	the One who always will
Lord of all ages	Lord of all days
Lord Jesus	

What he has done:

gave us our freedom by the life he lost
lived among us
claimed the victory death can never destroy
gave us new life that never ends
his awesome love that guides us
loved us
called us friend

Add your own reasons to praise him:

Lord Jesus, I confess that I have failed to praise you at times, when you are always worthy of my praise. Forgive me for forgetting who you are and what you have done. Refresh my memory of you. Amen.

Your Grace Is Enough

Remember Your promise, O God.
Your grace is enough for me.

Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. Psalm 119:49-50

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
2 Corinthians 12:9*

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Psalm 103:2

Grace is a word that Christians toss around quite a lot, so let's be clear about its meaning. The Greek noun used in the New Testament is *charis* – the state of kindness and favor toward someone, with a focus on a benefit given to the object. God's kindness to us comes with benefits; this song enumerates some of them:

God's faithfulness	God's constant presence
God's patience	God's love and justice
God's leadership	God's salvation
	God's mercy

God's Riches At Christ's Expense – that's grace. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be opened so that you may know these riches (our inheritance) and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Ephesians 1:18-19) Peter put it this way: "His divine power has given us everything we need." (2 Peter 1:3)

If we were honest, many of us would have to admit our song goes more like this:

"Your grace (plus my good behavior) is enough."

"Your grace (along with the security of my bank balance) is enough."

"Your grace (and the number of friends I have) is enough."

But that's not what God has said. His word says, "My riches, bestowed on you by my kindness, are all you need." You may have to sing this chorus many times before you fully believe it. Go ahead, then. Praise the Lord. And don't forget a single benefit.

God, forgive me for underestimating the benefits of Your grace. I want to remember them now:

Wow. You have truly given me everything I need. Thank You! Amen.

Indescribable

You see the depths of my heart and you love me the same.
You are amazing, God.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat. The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19

He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit. Psalm 147:4-5

*Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.
Psalm 145:3*

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. Psalm 139:1

All these are the thoughts of King David, the boy shepherd who also wrote, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:1-4)

David was impressed by the cosmic God. A shepherd, he spent many hours face to face with the elements of nature; a man of power, he was in awe of such power on display. Yet David’s psalms also reveal that he was aware that within his heart was a cosmos of emotion and reason, ugliness and beauty, devotion and deceit. And God was intimately familiar with all of it.

“O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.” This is a terrifying realization. Were this the full extent of the truth, worship would be only cowering. But our God is not merely all-knowing or all-powerful. God is all-loving. This is the amazing truth that moves a worshiper to praise.

O Lord, when I think that you know everything about me, this is what makes me nervous:

Remind me that you love me. I want to believe this amazing truth. Amen.

In the Cross Alone I Glory

In the cross alone I glory,
nothing of my own to give -
only that which Christ has offered
for my soul that I may live.

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. Hebrews 7:27

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12

*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.
1Peter 3:18*

*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has
been crucified to me, and I to the world. Galatians 6: 14*

Paul's letter to the church in Galatia is perhaps his most urgent. He barely says hello before he begins scolding. "I am astonished," he writes, "that you are so quickly deserting the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all."

The gospel – or good news – of Christ was this: Grace, rather than law, makes us right with God. It was a radically different message for those familiar with Judaism's system of regulations and sacrifices. It seemed too simple, too good to be true. A group called the Judaizers sprang up and began following Paul on his missionary journeys. They took it upon themselves to "educate" the new converts, embracing Christianity, but adding that some rules – particularly circumcision – still must be observed. Their "Grace Plus" formula was what Paul called "no good news at all."

It is seductive to think that a little extra pious behavior on my part will give me better standing with God. But this is an affront to the gospel of Christ. "Never!" cries Paul. "Never will I boast about *anything* except that Christ died for me." The gospel of "Grace Plus" is prideful, and pride is the opposite of worship. Anytime I congratulate myself on my good behavior/good attitude/good works, I compete with Christ, who deserves the sole glory for accomplishing my salvation.

Jesus, I confess that I have been practicing the gospel of "Grace Plus" in this way:

Forgive me. I am resolved to glory in nothing except the good news that you died for me. Amen.

Beautiful One

You opened my eyes to your wonders anew.
You captured my heart with this love,
'cause nothing on earth is as beautiful as You!

All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you. Song of Solomon 4:7

*And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
Matthew 3:17*

Think of the moment when you first fell in love. Your heart raced at the mention of their name. You looked for them everywhere you went. You thought of them constantly, thrilled at their company. Or, if you are a parent, remember the breath-taking first glimpse of your child. Was any face ever so beautiful?

"You captured my heart." "You are beautiful." This is the intimate language of a lover for their beloved, a parent for a child. It is also the language of worship – the expression of an intimate love relationship. God uses this language when talking about us. As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:5) The LORD takes delight in his people. (Psalm 149:4) Shouldn't we also delight in Him?

The gospel writers record several instances when God spoke this intimately about his Son. "This is my beloved Son," God said. "He is pleasing to me." That word "pleasing" is the Greek word *kalos*. It means "beautiful." "Look at my Son," God cries. "He is beautiful."

How must it thrill God's heart when we agree, "Yes, Jesus is beautiful. He is captivating. He has captured our hearts." Have you fallen in love with Jesus? Does your heart race at the mention of his name? Do you look for him, seek him out? Do you think of him constantly? Do you find ways to say, "I love you?"

In John's Revelation, Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for their good works and perseverance. "But you walked away from your first love," Jesus says. "Why? Turn back! Recover your dear early love." (Rev 2:4-5 TM) This is what happens in marriages sometimes. Over the years, we forget how to express that dear early love. "But I took out the trash!" a husband protests. "Don't you know that I love you?"

We can do good works for Christ that demonstrates our devotion. But there is no substitute for declaring, "You are beautiful! I love you!"

Jesus, you take my breath away. Forgive me if I have forgotten to tell you. I want to declare my love for you now. Here is what I want to say:

_____ . Amen.

Dwell

Dwell in the midst of us.
You can have your way.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Rev 21:3-4

He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:41-44

Worship can be dangerous. It's a dangerous thing to say to God, "Come and have your way." Here is the danger: John told us that whenever we ask for something that is aligned with God's will, God hears us, and we have it. When we say, "Come and have your way," God does.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," the angel Gabriel said to Mary. And Mary said, "Come and have your way." And the virgin was with child.

"You will have power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you," Jesus told his disciples, and God had his way with them in a mighty rush of fiery wind. And they spoke with words they didn't know, healed with power not their own; they prophesied and preached boldly until the known world was changed. And every one of them died for the sake of God's will being done.

We sense this danger whenever we go near God. His ways are not our ways, so there's no telling what he might do with us if we let him. We can smell the sweat and the blood and the anguish in the cry, "Not my will, but yours be done!" What makes us step back? Fear. The unknown. The cost. And pride, the opposite of worship. If God has his way, we cannot have ours.

When the great bending of mankind's will is accomplished and God dwells with his people, he will wipe away tears. There will be tears on our faces. We will have cried out in fear, in anguish, in joy and surprise. We will know then what we only know in part now: His way is perfect. His presence is beyond anything we could think to ask for.

God, when I sing these words, I am:

anxious *hesitant* *joyful* *fearful* *sincere*
 not sure I really want what I am asking for *doubtful it will really happen*
 relieved to give you control

Meet me where I am on the path to you. Give me a willing spirit and show me your way. Amen.

Lifesong

Empty hands held high, such small sacrifice.
If not joined with my life, I sing in vain tonight.
May the words I say and the things I do
make my lifesong sing, bring a smile to You.

Hallelujah!
Let my lifesong sing to You.

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD,
my Rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:14*

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Matthew 15:8

Let's pretend that on a beautiful Sunday morning, I showed up at your front door, with my guitar in hand and sang a little song:

Oh, darlin' I love you
You know it's true
Can't stop thinking of you
Can't live without you
Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah
I love you, yes I do.

Let's say that every Sunday – with few exceptions – I showed up at your doorstep. I even brought my band with me. I took the trouble to hook up a sound system. I practiced my song and got really good at it. My back-up singers learned harmonies. I sang with great feeling. The whole neighborhood could hear me. Over their coffee, your neighbors said to each other, “Wow, that sounds good. Must be love.”

But suppose that in between Sundays, you never heard from me. I didn't call. Didn't stop by. Never did a thing for you. Never made sure I ran into you or tried to get to know you. Never found out what you like or care about. In fact, you heard I was out with friends having a great time, apparently not giving you a single thought. Yet, there I was at your door, every Sunday, declaring my love.

How convincing would my song become? Would you look forward to it with delight?

Our love songs delight God only when joined with lives that evidence devotion to him – days of obedience, seasons of waiting, years of faithful seeking and following. Worship includes declaring with our lips, choosing with our hearts and proving it with our actions.

What is your favorite song of worship? How can you back up its words with your life this week?

Lord, let my whole life sing of my love to you. Amen.

I Bow Before You

Lord I will bow down on my knees
and I will praise You endlessly.

But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple. Psalm 5:7

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. Psalm 95:6

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:9-11*

The Hebrew word *shachah* and the Greek word *proskuneo* account for more than 80% of the appearances of the word “worship” in most English versions of the Bible. Both words mean “to bow down.” The Hebrew word *shachah* is used to describe the act of bowing or prostrating oneself, often before a superior or before God. It is translated by a number of different English words, including: “worship” (99 times), “bow” (31 times), “bow down” (18 times), “obeisance” (9 times), and “reverence” (5 times).

The Greek word *proskuneo* comes from the Greek words *pros*, “to” or “toward,” and *kuneo*, “to kiss.” It literally means to kiss the hand toward someone in token of reverence, and among the Orientals, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence.

The act of falling down is called “worship,” and reveals the heart of the worshipper – respect and honor towards the one being worshipped. Many cultures besides the biblical culture have the custom of bowing to show respect or honor. The Japanese and Chinese bow to those they respect. In the courts of Europe it was customary to bow (or for women, to curtsy) to those of higher rank.

This act of worship requires an important attitude: humility. Bowing is a visceral acknowledgement of place: God is great, and we are small. God is in charge, and we are not. We need to be reminded of this, and often.

“As surely as I live,” says the Lord, “every knee will bow before me.” (Romans 14:11) We will either humble ourselves voluntarily, or he will make us humble, but at some point in the course of history, every person will come face to face with the truth that God is in charge and we are not. He is our superior; he deserves our honor.

Let us begin now to practice the posture of eternity.

Make your prayer a physical act today. Go on your knees before God. Put your face to the floor. Feel your smallness. Acknowledge His greatness.

You are great, O God, and worthy of my respect. Amen.

Shine On

In all that's said and done and everything you do
just let your life glorify the One who shines on you.
I believe we worship Christ when we show the world His light.
Won't you shine on?

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

So...whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Much of worship music is “vertical”; in it we are speaking to God. This song is “horizontal”; we are speaking to each other. It's a song of exhortation; we are encouraging each other to the good work of glorifying God outside the walls of the sanctuary.

If we are not careful, our worship can be relegated to a “club member” activity that we do with other “club members” in our “clubhouse.” Then we go back to the “outside” world and live our “regular” lives, maybe humming a worship tune to ourselves or playing it in our cars in between stops. But God does not dwell in a clubhouse. God lives in us. We *are* the temple. (1 Corinthians 6:19) And the constant work of the temple is worship.

“Therefore,” Paul wrote in Romans 12:1, “I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – *this is your spiritual act of worship.*” The Message translation puts it like this:

“So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.”

Every act and thought hold potential to glorify God. How I eat – with gratitude, in moderation – can be an act of worship. How I respond to stress – with patience and self-control – can be an act of worship. How I do my work – with integrity and responsibility – can be an act of worship. How I prioritize my time, make my decisions, treat my possessions, care for my family – all these are opportunities for me to make much of God in the presence of others.

The temple doors are open, and the glory of God is on display. Shine on.

Lord, may my life be a temple with the doors flung open. Show me how to make every moment an offering of praise to you. Amen.

You Are Everything (Everything I Need)

You are the thirst. You are the stream.
You are the hunger living deep inside of me.
You are the food that satisfies.
You are provision for the journey of our lives.
You are everything.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Revelation 22:17

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 2 Peter 1:3

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:2) What a beautiful picture of worship, of a heart who knows well the object of its affection. Most of us have felt this way at some time. No one feels this way all the time. It is the nature of man to desire, but we do not always desire God.

The Bible tells us there is no one who seeks God on their own, not one. (Psalm 53:1-3) Left to our own devices, we will misplace our affections. We will long for and even get what we set our hearts on, but we will still be unsatisfied. We will fill our plates and still feel hungry.

Where, then, do we get a hunger and thirst for the One who will satisfy us? "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD." (Jeremiah 24:7) God is the source of everything we need; He even gives us the need of Him. He is both the thirst and the stream. He is both the hunger and the food. When we come as worshipers, it is because he has put it in our hearts to be there.

What are you hungry for?

validation	affection	solace
purpose	comfort	hope
rest	joy	success
laughter	protection	possessions
security	truth	justice

Oh, God give me an undivided heart, so that I may long for you. Amen.