

COME AS YOU ARE

THE FATHER WHO
EMBRACES THE FILTHY
AND THE FALLEN

FRANCIS
OTIENO

Come As You Are

The Father who Embraces the Filthy and
the Fallen

Francis Otieno

Come As You Are

© 2026 **Francis Otieno**

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the author.

Scripture quotations are taken from the **Holy Bible** (various translations as contextually appropriate). All rights to the respective translations remain with their copyright holders.

Cover Design by **Francis Otieno**

Self-Published

For permissions, inquiries, or distribution rights, contact:

author.francis.otieno@gmail.com

Dedication

To the weary soul who still believes they have to clean up before coming home—this book is for you.

May you discover, as I did, that the Father's arms are already open, and that grace runs faster than guilt ever could.

Acknowledgment

To my Heavenly Father—who found me, filthy and afraid, and called me *His*.

Every word in this book is a thank-you note written in awe.

To everyone who ever whispered, “*God can’t use me,*”—you were the reason this book
had to exist.

To my readers, friends, and prayer partners—your faith kept the pen moving.

To my fellow dreamers, preachers, and believers—keep reminding the world that grace
is not earned, it’s embraced.

And finally, to the lost, the tired, and the almost-gave-up—this story is proof that you are
not beyond reach.

You were never too far. You were always being led home.

About the Author

Francis Otieno is an Author, Computer Teacher, and IT Technician whose words flow with faith, honesty, and hope. Known for blending storytelling with deep spiritual reflection, he writes to remind people that grace is not for the perfect—it's for the present and the broken.

When he's not teaching digital literacy or maintaining computers, Francis spends his time writing stories and devotionals that speak to the heart of the human struggle—failure, faith, and the quiet courage of starting over.

His works often explore redemption, purpose, and the unrelenting love of God in the everyday lives of ordinary people.

Come As You Are is his tender call to return—to face God not as who you wish you were, but as who you truly are.

Francis lives in Kenya, where he continues to teach, write, and dream of a world made whole by grace.

Table of Contents

Introduction: *A Father Who Sees Beyond the Dirt*

Chapter 1: *The Filthy Hands That Still Build Altars*

Chapter 2: *When Shame Hides the Face of Grace*

Chapter 3: *The Myth of Being “Ready” for God*

Chapter 4: *The Prodigal’s Return: A Dirty Hug*

Chapter 5: *Grace That Doesn’t Flinch*

Chapter 6: *The Cleansing That Comes After Surrender*

Epilogue: *The Father’s Smile*

Author’s Note: *From One Broken Soul to Another*

Introduction

A Father Who Sees Beyond the Dirt

There comes a moment in every soul's journey when silence feels safer than prayer.
Not because you stopped believing, not because you stopped loving God, but because
you stopped believing someone like you could still be loved by Him.

It's that moment when your heart sinks under the weight of what you've done.

When the dirt on your hands feels permanent.

When your past plays in loops like an ugly song you can't mute.

When you fear that if you open your mouth, shame will be the only thing that spills out.

And so you whisper to yourself:

"I'll come back when I'm better."

"I'll pray when I'm clean."

"I'll face God when I'm worthy."

But here is the truth religion sometimes forgets to tell you:

Grace was never waiting for you to be better.

Grace was waiting for you to be honest.

Because God never asked you to bring perfection to His presence—He asked you to
bring yourself.

The trembling version.

The disappointed version.

The addicted version.

The struggling-to-believe version.

The hurting version.

The messy, contradictory, wounded, confused version.

The real you.

The one you've been trying to hide behind spiritual routines and polite worship.

The Gospel We Whisper Too Softly

Somewhere along the way, we turned the good news into mild news.

We reduced it to behaviour charts and moral checklists.

We made church a place for the polished instead of the honest.

But the Gospel was never meant to be whispered.

It was meant to be shouted:

You don't wash before you come.

You come — and He washes you.

When the prodigal son stumbled home, he didn't bring apology flowers or a spiritual résumé.

He brought the smell of pigs, the stain of rebellion, and a heart shattered enough to try again.

And the Father—holy, majestic, perfect—ran toward him.

He didn't flinch at the dirt.

He didn't hesitate at the smell.

He didn't hold His breath or hold His distance.

He embraced the filth before He removed it.

Because love like that refuses to wait for cleanliness.

A God Who Steps into What We Hide

The pages of Scripture are filled with people who should have been disqualified—but instead were drawn close.

A murderer turned deliverer.

An adulterer turned worship leader.

A prostitute turned ancestor of the Messiah.

A coward turned apostle.

A persecutor turned preacher.

Their stories weren't edited before God used them.

They were used as they were—messy, flawed, unfinished—and grace did the editing later.

God is not afraid of what you try to hide.

He walks directly toward the places you avoid.

He sees the parts of you that feel too broken to mention—and still, He calls you beloved.

For the One Who Thinks They Went Too Far

This book is for you—yes, you.

The one who thinks they ruined their testimony.

The one who feels too inconsistent to be close to God.

The one who deletes prayers before finishing them.

The one who wonders if Heaven is tired of their apologies.

The one who fakes smiles on Sunday but collapses inside at night.

This book is a reminder written in the ink of mercy:

You are not too dirty for the arms of a holy God.

You are not too far for the steps of a running Father.

You are not too broken for a Savior who specializes in restoring ruins.

Your sin is not the headline.

Your shame is not the story.

Your failure is not your identity.

Grace is louder.

Love is stronger.

The Father's embrace is nearer.

My Prayer for You as You Read

As you turn these pages,

I pray that every barrier shame built will begin to crack.

I pray that every lie about God you inherited from pain will be unravelled.

I pray that you will dare—finally—to stop pretending you can clean yourself
and instead collapse into the arms of the One who cleans.

I pray that you will meet the Father not as an angry judge but as a running God with
dusty feet, arms open, robe flaring, love burning through the distance.

I pray you discover what the prodigal discovered:

You don't have to be ready to return.

You only have to be willing.

Come as you are—and watch what happens when a Holy God calls the filthy beloved
and refuses to let go.

Chapter 1

The Filthy Hands That Still Build Altars

There is something breathtaking—almost scandalous—about the way God lifts dirty hands and turns them into instruments of destiny.

The Bible is not a museum of perfect saints polished for display; it is a hospital of wounded souls wrapped in divine purpose.

If Heaven only used the spotless, Scripture would be an empty book.

But God keeps choosing the flawed, the fractured, the trembling—the ones society would never consider.

Grace has always done its best work in the unqualified.

When God Calls the Unclean

Consider Moses—not the heroic Moses we imagine, staff lifted high, Red Sea curling back in obedience—but the Moses who ran from his past.

A fugitive.

A murderer.

A man hiding from both Pharaoh and himself.

When God found him, he wasn't fasting on a mountain or worshipping in a temple.

He was herding sheep on the far side of his shame.

Yet God spoke from a burning bush not to condemn, but to commission.

David—the king, the poet, the man after God's own heart—was also the man who stained his throne with adultery and blood.

His hands wrote psalms, yes, but they also wrote a death sentence for an innocent man. And still, God refused to throw him away.

Rahab—the woman with a past the whole city knew—became the woman God trusted with the future of Israel’s spies. While religious people avoided her street, God wrote her name into the genealogy of Jesus.

Peter denied Jesus at the hour of greatest need. Paul hunted Christians like prey. Yet both became pillars of the faith.

If God only used clean hands, the Bible would have no hands left to use.

Why God Chooses the Broken

We often think holiness is the absence of filth—but holiness is the presence of God *in* the filth.

The wonder of the Gospel is not that God finds pure people to partner with, but that He takes impure people and claims them for Himself.

Holiness is not human perfection.

Holiness is divine possession.

God chooses those who know they are weak so that the world can see His strength.
He chooses those who know they are unworthy so that the world can see His mercy.
He chooses those whose histories are loud so His grace can sing louder.

The dirt on your hands doesn’t disqualify you—it simply proves you need the One who cleans, the One who calls, the One who claims.

Grace Turns Stains into Stories

In the hands of people, dirt disqualifies.

In the hands of God, dirt becomes the canvas of glory.

Every scar becomes a sentence in your testimony.

Every failure becomes fuel for compassion.

Every fall becomes a future altar.

When God touches your filth, it doesn't make Him dirty—it makes you new.

Jesus wasn't afraid of lepers.

He wasn't intimidated by demons.

He wasn't embarrassed by sinners.

He drew nearer to them than anyone else.

Because grace is only grace when it steps into the mess.

Altars Built from Ashes

In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites not to cut or polish the stones used for altars.

Why?

Because altars were never meant to impress—they were meant to be honest.

Uncut stones.

Uneven edges.

Raw, unshaped pieces stacked together.

That's us.

We try to polish ourselves before approaching God, but He says, *"Give Me the raw stones."*

Your altar doesn't need to be beautiful; it needs to be surrendered.

Maybe your altar is addiction.

Maybe it's heartbreak.

Maybe it's betrayal, anger, fear, or a mistake so deep you dare not speak it out loud.

Still, God says, *"Put it here. Let My fire fall on what you thought was unusable."*

In the kingdom, ashes are ingredients.
Loss becomes worship.
Regret becomes obedience.
Weakness becomes power.

The God of grace never wastes a broken piece.

The Hands of the Untouchable

When Jesus touched the leper in Mark 1, He broke every rule culture had built.
No rabbi touched a leper.
No holy man came close to disease.
Leprosy meant exile, shame, isolation—a living death.

But Jesus reached out *before* He healed.
Grace touched the untouchable.

Holiness is not fragile.
God does not catch your sin like an infection.
His purity overwhelms impurity.

Every touch of grace rewrites identity.

The leper walked toward Jesus as an outcast.
He walked away as a son.

Your Hands Still Have Purpose

Maybe your hands are shaking right now—from regret, guilt, exhaustion, or the fear that you’ve gone too far. But God is the Potter who specializes in reclaiming what others throw away.

The same hands that sinned can bless.
The same mouth that lied can preach truth.

The same heart that wandered can worship deeply.
The same life that broke down can build altars again.
Your purpose didn't die in your darkest moment.
Your calling didn't expire with your worst decision.
Heaven still sees value in the hands you are ashamed of.
Your filth doesn't scare God.
It attracts His mercy.

Prayer Reflection

Father, I come with trembling hands—hands that have built altars and broken promises,
hands that have reached for Heaven and fallen back into dust.

But You are the God who touches the untouchable.

You turn dirt into destiny.

You make ashes holy.

So here I am—unpolished, imperfect, undone.

Take these hands again.

Wash them.

Use them.

Let them serve in ways I never imagined, not because I am worthy, but because You are willing.

Make my life a living altar—raw, real, surrendered—and let Your fire fall where my strength fails.

Amen.

Chapter 2

When Shame Hides the Face of Grace

Shame is a quiet assassin.

It doesn't roar; it whispers.

It doesn't strike; it seeps.

Where guilt says, *"You made a mistake,"*

shame hisses, *"You are the mistake."*

It is the oldest lie in the world—older than religion, older than language, older even than sin itself, because shame became the first veil between God and His children.

And its mission has never changed:

To make you hide from the One who came to heal you.

The First Hiding Place — And the God Who Refused to Leave

After Adam and Eve sinned, something shattered inside them.

The Bible says they heard the sound of God walking in the garden—the same footsteps that once brought joy—and they ran.

The Presence that once felt like home now felt like danger.

The voice that once felt comforting now felt exposing.

The eyes that once held love now felt like judgment.

But here's the twist:

God never moved away from them.

They moved away from Him.

Sin didn't make God distant.

Shame did.

And what did God do?

He went looking.

Not because He lacked knowledge, but because they lacked courage.

"Where are you?" wasn't a question of location.

It was an invitation back into relationship.

Shame hides.

Grace hunts.

How Shame Rewrites Identity

Shame is not content to remind you of what you did—it tries to redefine who you are.

It shows up in memories you can't shake.

It shows up in the silence after failure.

It shows up in the moments when you want to pray but feel too dirty to speak.

You try to worship, but shame pulls your hands down.

You try to read Scripture, but shame turns every verse into a mirror of what you hate about yourself.

You try to serve, but shame whispers, "*You don't deserve to be here.*"

Shame doesn't need to shout; it only needs to be believed.

It becomes the filter through which you view everything:

- Your value
- Your potential
- Your relationship with God
- Your place in the church
- Your future

Shame becomes the silent author of your spiritual life—and it always writes in the language of unworthiness.

The Woman at the Well — A Masterclass in Grace

In John 4, Jesus makes an intentional detour through Samaria.

Jews avoided Samaria the way religious people avoid scandal—but grace goes where religion refuses to go.

At that well stands a woman who has:

- loved wrong,
- been loved badly,
- lost count of the men who left her,
- and lost the will to show her face in public.

She comes at noon—the hour when the sun burns and no one else comes.

Shame schedules its life to avoid being seen.

But Jesus is already sitting there.

He doesn't wait for her to confess.

He doesn't wait for her to explain.

He doesn't wait for her to fix anything.

He opens the conversation Himself.

Grace always makes the first move.

He names her truth—not to expose her, but to free her.

And the same woman who hid from people now runs back to the town crying,

“Come see a Man who told me everything I ever did!”

The thing she hid became her testimony.

The shame she carried became the sermon she preached.

Grace transforms exposure into liberation.

The Weight You're Still Carrying Is One Jesus Already Carried

Shame convinces you that:

- you're too sinful,
- too inconsistent,
- too weak,
- too flawed,
- too damaged,
- too far gone.

But the cross says the opposite.

Jesus didn't just carry sin—He carried shame.

The mockery, the nakedness, the public humiliation—that wasn't random.

It was intentional.

He absorbed every ounce of shame your soul would ever feel.

He took the embarrassment you hide from.

He took the guilt that keeps you awake.

He took the regret that breaks your voice when you pray.

Shame chains you to what Christ already removed.

The cross is Heaven's loudest announcement:

"You don't have to hide anymore."

Grace Isn't Afraid of Your Darkness

Some people think God tolerates them.

No—He loves you fiercely.

Grace is not squeamish.

It does not retreat at your failures.

It does not tremble at your secrets.

It does not fold its arms at your weakness.

Jesus touched lepers.

He ate with sinners.

He defended the guilty.

He redeemed the ashamed.

He stepped into people's darkest corners and lit them up from within.

Shame tells you to hide your face from God.

Grace lifts your chin so you can see His.

Stop Hiding. The Fig Leaves Never Worked.

We all have fig leaves—the excuses, the routines, the busyness, the spiritual activity we use to mask our internal collapse.

But hiding never heals.

Pretending never purifies.

Distance never delivers.

If shame built the walls, grace is the hammer.

God doesn't want your edited version.

He wants the real you—trembling, tired, raw, unfiltered.

Because that is the version He died for.

Grace Doesn't Follow You into the Shadows to Drag You Out — It Sits with You Until You Can Stand

You think God is waiting for you to climb back to Him, but He is the Shepherd who climbs down into the valley, the Father who steps off the porch, the Savior who kneels in the dirt beside you.

He doesn't demand perfection before presence.

He offers presence until perfection is shaped within you.

Grace never rushes you.

It restores you.

And one day, you will finally see what He saw all along:

You were never too broken to come home—you were too ashamed to believe you could.

Prayer Reflection

Father, I've hidden in shadows You never asked me to enter.

I've carried shame You already carried.

I've let my failures speak louder than Your mercy.

Today, I hear Your footsteps again—not of anger, but of invitation.

I come trembling, exposed, undone, but willing.

Pull me from the lies that buried me.

Heal the wounds I long hid from You.

Let Your grace rewrite every sentence shame ever carved into my soul.

Teach me to see myself through Your steady gaze—not condemned, but cherished; not filthy, but forgiven; not forgotten, but found.

Amen.

Chapter 3

The Myth of Being “Ready” for God

There is a quiet lie that has stolen more destinies than sin ever did—a lie that hides beneath good intentions, beneath spiritual anxiety, beneath the human obsession with performance.

It whispers softly:

“One day... I’ll be ready.”

Ready—as in clean enough.

Ready—as in holy enough.

Ready—as in done with mistakes.

Ready—as in consistent, disciplined, polished, guilt-free, and spiritually impressive.

But that day never comes.

And the tragedy is this:

The ones who believe they must be ready for God never actually come to Him.

Because readiness is a myth.

And the myth keeps you away from the only Presence that can make you whole.

The Lie of Later — The Lie That Delays Destiny

“Let me fix myself first.”

“Let me get my life in order.”

“Let me conquer this habit.”

“Let me break this cycle.”

“Let me become someone God can be proud of.”

Every “let me” is a chain.

Every “later” is a prison.

Every “not yet” is a wall between you and the One who tears walls down.

The enemy doesn’t need to make you fall—all he needs is to make you wait.

Because waiting for readiness is waiting forever.

You don’t delay God.

You delay healing.

You delay wholeness.

You delay joy.

You delay restoration.

You delay the embrace you were created for.

Jesus Doesn’t Call the Ready — He Calls the Ruined

When Jesus began His ministry, He didn’t go recruiting from the religious elite.

He didn’t walk into the synagogue and say,

“Who’s morally stable? Who has their life together? Who hasn’t failed lately?”

He went to the shoreline—to ordinary men in ordinary mess.

Peter smelled of fish and failure.

Andrew had dreams too small for destiny.

James and John had tempers that could split a church in half.

Matthew was surrounded by money but empty inside—a tax collector hated by his own people.

They weren’t ready.

They were reachable.

And that’s all grace needs.

Jesus’ invitation was simple, breathtaking, and scandalously liberating:

“Follow Me, and I WILL MAKE YOU...”

He didn't say, "Make yourself."

He didn't say, "Clean up first."

He didn't say, "Fix your life, then come."

He took responsibility for the transformation.

Your part is following.

His part is making.

You Don't Come to God Because You're Clean — You Come Because You're Drowning

Some people think sin is what keeps them from God.

No—sin is what qualifies you for His mercy.

Imagine a drowning man refusing a lifeguard because he's too wet.

That's what "I'm not ready for God" sounds like in Heaven.

You don't come because you are strong.

You come because you are sinking.

You don't come because you are worthy.

You come because mercy makes worth out of weakness.

The God Who Walks into Chaos, Not Just After It

When Jesus entered the boat during the storm, the waves were still raging.

When He walked into the home of Jairus, the little girl was still dead.

When He approached the tomb of Lazarus, the body was already decaying.

When He chose the disciples, their hearts were still immature.

God's timing is not after order—it is into chaos.

He doesn't wait for calm seas.

He steps into the storm before you have the strength to speak.

He doesn't wait for your soul to be quiet.

He sits with you in the noise.

He doesn't wait for your heart to be stable.

He holds you while it trembles.

He enters the ruins before you rebuild.

That's the gospel—a Savior who moves toward brokenness, not away from it.

Readiness Is a Myth — Willingness Is the Miracle

God has always used people who were willing, not ready.

Moses wasn't ready to speak—but he was willing to trust.

Gideon wasn't ready for battle—but he was willing to obey.

Mary wasn't ready to carry the Messiah—but she was willing to say yes.

The thief on the cross wasn't ready for repentance—but he was willing to whisper,
“Remember me.”

Readiness is about capability.

Willingness is about surrender.

And God works beautifully with surrendered people.

You Come Empty — And That's Exactly the Point

We think God wants:

- full hands,
- perfect devotion,
- clean habits,
- consistent prayer,
- flawless worship,
- steady obedience.

But God is most drawn to emptiness.

Empty hands have room to receive.

Empty hearts have space for grace.

Empty lives are canvases.

God doesn't need your strength—He needs your surrender.

He shapes the clay that is soft, not the clay that pretends to be stone.

A Child Running Home Covered in Mud

Picture this:

A child falls into a muddy ditch, clothes soaked, face streaked with dirt, tears mixing with soil.

He runs home—not to clean himself, but because he *can't*.

Would a good father say:

“Go wash yourself first before entering this house”?

No.

He would kneel, lift the child into his arms, and carry him inside.

He would wash the child himself.

That is how Heaven sees you.

You don't prepare for God.

You approach Him—and preparation happens in His presence.

Holiness Is Not the Entrance Requirement — It Is the Gift of Proximity

We get this reversed.

We think:

“I must be holy to come near God.”

God says:

“Come near Me—and holiness will come to you.”

You don't earn your way into purity.

You are purified because you dared to come close.

Holiness is not something you manufacture for God.

It is something He produces in you.

Stop Waiting for Your Life to Look Like a Testimony Before You Come

The testimony is not that you fixed yourself.

The testimony is that you came broken—and He met you anyway.

The testimony is not that you matured before approaching Him.

It's that He matured you *because* you approached.

The testimony is not that you overcame sin before seeing His face.

It's that His face gave you the power to overcome sin.

You are not the author of your transformation—He is.

You are not the sculptor—you are the clay.

You are not the healer—you are the healed.

Prayer Reflection

Lord, I've spent years trying to polish what was already cracked, trying to earn what You freely give, trying to fix myself with tools too broken to restore me.

But today, I see it clearly:

You never asked me to be ready—only willing.

So here I am, Lord.

Unprepared.

Uneven.

Unsteady.

But open.

Take me as I am.

Shape me as You will.

Call me as You choose.

Make me what I could never make myself.

Meet me in my un-readiness and turn it into Your masterpiece.

Amen.

Chapter 4

The Prodigal's Return: A Dirty Hug

He rehearsed his apology the entire walk home.

Every step was a battlefield between hope and humiliation.

The sun beat on his back, but shame burned hotter.

His clothes hung off him like regret.

His pockets were empty, but his heart carried a weight no famine could measure.

And the words...

the words twisted inside him like thorns:

“I’ve sinned...

I’m no longer worthy...

Just make me a servant...”

He wasn’t returning as a son.

He was returning as a beggar.

He thought he had disqualified himself from the family.

What he didn’t know was that he never left the Father’s heart.

The Father Who Waited Every Morning

The Bible doesn’t say how long the son was gone.

Weeks? Months? Years?

We don’t know.

But we know one thing:

The Father watched the road every morning.

He scanned the horizon the way a mother watches a hospital door, the way a shepherd counts sheep in a storm, the way Heaven watches Earth for the faintest whisper of “Father, I miss You.”

Love waits, even when logic says the child isn’t coming back.

Grace stands on the porch long after everyone else has gone inside.

The Father wasn’t shocked by the son’s rebellion.

He wasn’t surprised by the waste, the wild living, the pigpen.

He was only waiting for one thing:

A silhouette.

A shadow coming over the hill.

A movement in the distance.

A returning heartbeat.

The Scandal of a Running God

In ancient Middle Eastern culture, dignified men didn’t run.

Running required lifting your robe—exposing your legs—a humiliating gesture for a patriarch.

Running was for children, servants, and slaves... not fathers.

But when the Father saw His son—still far off, still dirty, still limping, still ashamed—He did the unthinkable.

He ran.

He ran like a child chasing joy.

He ran like a mother who found her lost baby.

He ran like someone who refused to let shame get the first embrace.

Grace is not slow.

Grace is not cautious.

Grace is not dignified.

Grace sprints.

Grace leaps.

Grace collides.

Religion might wait for you to reach the porch.

Grace meets you on the road.

The Embrace Before the Bath

The son's clothes still smelled of pigs.

His breath carried the taste of famine.

His hair was matted, his skin unwashed, his soul exhausted.

But the Father did not hesitate.

He didn't cover His nose.

He didn't lecture.

He didn't evaluate the level of filth.

He wrapped His arms around the boy's dirt.

He pressed His face into the smell of rebellion.

He kissed the cheeks still wet from regret.

The son began his speech—but the Father interrupted restoration with celebration.

Grace does not wait for repentance to finish before mercy begins.

The Father didn't say, "Go bathe, then come back."

He said, "Come here. You're mine."

Because cleansing always comes after the embrace—never before.

The Father Interrupted the Apology

“Father, I have sinned... I’m not worthy...”

But the Father wasn’t listening to shame.

He was listening to return.

He didn’t respond to the sin.

He responded to the son.

Before the confession even finished, the orders were already flying:

“Bring the best robe!”

“Put a ring on his hand!”

“Put sandals on his feet!”

“Kill the fatted calf!”

“Start the music!”

The Father wasn’t negotiating acceptance.

He was restoring identity.

The robe covered his dirt.

The ring restored his authority.

The sandals restored his dignity.

The feast restored his belonging.

Grace is not partial.

Grace is not hesitant.

Grace restores fully or not at all.

The Feast of the Found

The Father didn’t just forgive—He threw a festival.

Imagine the music starting.

Imagine the servants whispering, “He’s home.”

Imagine the whole estate lighting up with laughter, food, dancing, joy.

This wasn't a funeral of regret.

It was a resurrection party.

Heaven doesn't celebrate the perfect.

Heaven celebrates the returned.

The angels rejoice not when you get your life together—but when you take a single step toward home.

Grace turns repentance into rejoicing.

It turns return into revival.

Religion Stands Outside — But Grace Pulls You In

The older brother saw the festivities and folded his arms.

He measured righteousness by effort, not affection.

He wanted reward, not relationship.

He wanted justice, not joy.

But the Father came outside again—this time not to sprint, but to invite.

“Everything I have is yours.

But your brother was dead...

and now he's alive.”

Grace is not frightened by the presence of self-righteousness.

Grace is patient even with the proud.

But the lesson remains:

You can be in the house and still miss the heart.

Grace is not understood by those who believe they've earned it—only by those who know they never could.

You Are the Prodigal — And You Are the Embrace

Every one of us has run.

Every one of us has left home in some way: through pride, addiction, wounds, heartbreak, or distraction.

But every return—even the smallest one—triggers a divine sprint.

You are the prodigal.

You are the one Heaven watches for.

You are the one the Father runs toward with reckless affection.

But you are also the embrace.

Because redeemed people become restorers.

Healed arms become healing arms.

Loved people love deeply.

Grace you receive becomes grace you give.

And the Father's hug becomes the way you hold others who are trying to find their way back home.

Prayer Reflection

Father, I have wandered more times than I can count.

I have chased lesser loves, built my own kingdoms, and found myself in places I never meant to go.

But today—even covered in the dust of my detours—I turn back.

Run to me again.

Embrace me while the dirt still clings.

Interrupt my shame with Your joy.

Cover me with Your robe.

Restore me with Your ring.

Lift me with Your love.

Teach me to live like a child at home in Your presence, and to welcome others the way
You welcomed me—with open arms, running feet, and a heart that refuses to judge.

Amen.

Chapter 5

Grace That Doesn't Flinch

There are moments when your own heart startles you.

A memory resurfaces.

A habit returns.

A thought you thought you buried comes storming back with teeth.

And in that moment—that split second of internal collapse—something inside you whispers:

“Surely God pulls away from this.

Surely He winces.

Surely this time He flinches.”

But He doesn't.

Not ever.

Not once.

Because grace doesn't flinch.

Grace has seen the worst of you and still decided you were worth dying for.

Grace has read your whole story—even the chapters you hide—and still calls you
“Mine.”

Grace is not fragile.

It is fierce.

The Gaze That Broke Peter — And Built Him Too

When Peter denied Jesus, it wasn't a private failure.

It was public. Loud. Shameful.

Three times he swore he didn't know the One who loved him most.

And then the rooster crowed.

But Scripture says something beautiful:

"The Lord turned and looked at Peter."

(Luke 22:61)

Not with anger.

Not with disgust.

Not with disappointment dripping like poison.

It was a look that Peter never forgot.

A look that didn't deny his failure—but refused to let that failure define him.

It was a gaze that said:

"I still know you.

I still choose you.

I still love you."

That one look broke something open inside Peter.

He wept bitterly—not because he was condemned, but because he was loved through a moment he couldn't love himself.

Grace holds your gaze when shame tries to make you drop your eyes.

The God Who Touches What Others Avoid

In Mark 1:40, a man with leprosy knelt before Jesus and said,

"If You are willing, You can make me clean."

The crowd recoiled.

Religion recoiled.

Culture recoiled.

Leprosy wasn't just sickness—it was social death.

But Jesus didn't heal from afar.

He didn't wave His hand from a safe distance.

He touched the man.

He touched what everyone else avoided.

He laid His hand on a body people refused to acknowledge.

Why?

Because grace is not afraid of contamination.

Holiness is not delicate.

The purity of God is not threatened by the impurity of man.

When His hand meets your shame,

He doesn't pull back—He pulls you close.

You Fear Being Fully Known — But God Already Is

Most people fear exposure more than sin.

We hide behind:

- rehearsed prayers,
- polished spirituality,
- carefully curated images,
- religious performances.

We show God our “good side” like we are taking a photo.

But grace cannot heal the version of you that you pretend to be.

God doesn't love the edited version—He loves the unfiltered one.

Before you confessed, He already carried it.

Before you apologized, He already forgave it.

Before you fell, He prepared a place for you to get back up.

Your secrets don't scare Him.
Your struggles don't surprise Him.
Your weakness doesn't exhaust Him.
He knew every detail when He chose the cross.

Grace Doesn't Excuse Sin — It Executes It

Grace is not passive.
Grace is not "Do what you want, God loves you anyway."
Grace is God staring sin in the face and saying:
"This ends today."
At the cross, Christ did not negotiate with sin—He executed it.
Every lash He took shouted: "Your shame has no hold."
Every nail hammered: "Your past has no power."
Every breath He struggled for whispered: "You are worth every drop."
Grace is not God ignoring sin—it is God destroying sin's claim on you.
Grace does not deny your darkness—it defeats it.

The Flinch Is in You — Not in God

When you fall, you flinch at yourself.
You recoil at your own reflection.
You replay your mistakes until your heart is numb.
But God sees the same fall and responds differently.
Where you see disgust,
He sees a child learning to walk.
Where you see failure,
He sees a story still being written.

Where you see dirt,
He sees destiny in process.

You pull away in shame.
He steps closer in mercy.

Learning to See Yourself Through the Eyes of Grace

The hardest part of healing is not believing that God forgives you—it's believing that you can forgive yourself.

Shame teaches you to stare at your scars.
Grace teaches you to stare at His.

Your scars remind you where you fell.
His scars remind you who lifted you.

Grace invites you to see:

- your flaws without fear,
- your wounds without running,
- your history without hating yourself,
- your weaknesses without giving up.

Grace is not shocked by what you did.
Grace is shocked you thought it could separate you from Love.

Grace Stays When Everyone Else Leaves

People may walk away when you fail.
Friends may distance themselves.
Family may not understand.
Community may misjudge.
Churches may mishandle.
Hearts may misunderstand.

But Grace—the real Grace—the Person of Grace—Jesus Christ Himself—stays.

He stays in the ruins.

He stays in the mess.

He stays in the relapse.

He stays in the relapse after the relapse.

He stays in the confusion.

He stays in the numbness.

He stays in the moment you think you're too far gone.

Grace stays because love doesn't flinch.

Prayer Reflection

Lord, You see every part of me—the parts I hide from others, the parts I hide from myself, and the parts I have tried to hide from You.

And still... You stay.

Thank You for the gaze that doesn't turn away, the hands that refuse to withdraw, the love that leans in when shame leans out.

Teach me to see myself through Your eyes.

Teach me to walk unafraid of my story.

Teach me to trust mercy more than memory.

Hold me in the places where I flinch, until grace becomes my reflex and love becomes my identity.

Amen.

Chapter 6

The Cleansing That Comes After Surrender

Cleansing does not come when you try harder—it comes when you finally stop pretending.

You cannot scrub away shame with effort.

You cannot wash guilt with self-discipline.

You cannot polish a soul that is bleeding.

Grace begins at the exact moment striving breaks.

When your knees hit the floor, your strength gives out, and you whisper through trembling lips:

“Lord... I’m done running.”

That moment—that collapse, that surrender, that inward collapse you’re embarrassed to admit—that is where cleansing lives.

Not in perfection.

In surrender.

The Exhaustion of Self-Cleansing

We spend so much of our spiritual energy trying to fix ourselves for God.

We promise resolutions we can’t keep.

We vow holiness we can’t sustain.

We build routines meant to make us righteous—and then we collapse under the weight of our own expectations.

Self-cleansing is a trap.

It is washing dirt with dirty water—you only smear the stain deeper.

You were never designed to cleanse yourself.

Your soul was not created to be its own saviour.

Every attempt to fix yourself without God becomes another layer of spiritual exhaustion.

But the moment you stop saying,

“I will do better,”

and start saying,

“Lord, I need You,”

something shift.

Cleansing begins where self-confidence ends.

Jesus Washing Feet — A Love That Kneels

On the night before His death—hours before betrayal, hours before abandonment, hours before the cross—Jesus did something shocking.

He knelt.

He wrapped a towel around His waist.

He poured water into a basin.

And the Creator of galaxies washed the feet of men who would fail Him within hours.

When He reached Peter, the fisherman recoiled.

“Lord... You shall never wash my feet!”

Peter thought he was being humble.

But Jesus saw pride disguised as reverence.

“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”

Peter didn’t understand:

Resisting grace is the quietest form of pride.

We think refusing help is holy—but it is simply self-reliance wearing spiritual perfume.

So Peter corrected himself:

“Then Lord —not my feet only, but my hands and my head as well.”

That moment is the blueprint of surrender.

Not edited strength.

Not spiritual performance.

Just open hands and undone hearts.

God Cleanses After Collapse — Not Before

We think God cleanses us after we get our lives together.

But Heaven has never worked that way.

God cleanses:

- the moment you break,
- the moment you exhale honesty,
- the moment your pride finally dies,
- the moment you whisper your truth instead of performing perfection.

He moves toward collapse, not away from it.

Grace is not intimidated by your fall.

Grace is attracted to it.

When you surrender, God does not polish the surface—He reaches into the roots:

- the trauma you never named,
- the habits you hate but can't break,
- the lies you swallowed as truth,
- the wounds you carry like shadows.

He cleans what you can't reach.

He rewrites what you can't erase.

He heals what you can't explain.

You are not being punished—you are being purified.

Letting Grace Do Its Quiet, Painful, Beautiful Work

Cleansing is not always gentle.

Sometimes it stings—not because God is angry, but because wounds must be opened before they can close.

Sometimes God exposes what you tried to bury.

He puts His finger on the places you refuse to touch.

He brings memories you thought you forgot.

He dismantles illusions you built to survive.

Not to shame you—but to free you.

God cannot heal what you hide.

But He can redeem everything you surrender.

The Holy Spirit convicts not to condemn, but to cleanse.

Conviction is God saying,

“Let Me wash what you refuse to look at.”

You Are Not Being Disqualified — You Are Being Detoxed

There is a difference between punishment and purification.

Punishment pushes you away.

Purification pulls you closer.

Punishment says, “You are unworthy.”

Purification says, “You are Mine—let Me make you whole.”

God is not removing you from His presence.

He is removing what ruins your peace.

You are not losing your identity—you are losing your chains.

You are not regressing—you are being reshaped.

You are not failing—you are being formed.

Holiness is not behaviour modification.

It is heart transformation.

Not self-made.

God-made.

The Peace That Only Clean Souls Know

When grace finishes its work, there is a kind of peace that settles over your heart—not the absence of struggle, but the absence of striving.

You are no longer trying to earn what was freely given.

You are no longer fighting to prove what grace already settled.

You are no longer running from God—you are resting in Him.

The noise of shame quiets.

The flames of guilt soften.

The waves of fear calm.

You realize something holy and liberating:

The Father never asked for a spotless child—He asked for an honest one.

He never demanded readiness.

Only return.

He never wanted performance.

Only presence.

You are clean—not because you washed yourself, but because you stopped running from the One who could.

Prayer Reflection

Father,

I surrender what I tried to fix.

I release what I tried to hide.

I open the doors I kept locked—the wounds I buried, the habits I feared, the shame I carried in silence.

Wash me with a love I cannot earn.

Cleanse me with a mercy I cannot explain.

Reach the parts of me I cannot reach.

Heal the places I'm too afraid to touch.

Teach me that surrender is not defeat—it is deliverance.

Teach me that cleansing isn't my job—it is Your joy.

Make me whole in the quiet, in the breaking, in the washing, in the presence of Your endless grace.

Amen.

Epilogue

The Father's Smile

No thunder.

No earthquakes.

No blinding visions.

Just a quiet morning...

and a heart that had finally stopped running.

That's what grace feels like after surrender—not a parade, but a pulse of peace.

A stillness that settles in the places where shame once screamed.

A gentle warmth where fear once froze you in place.

When the prodigal came home, the Father didn't interrogate him.

He didn't make him list his failures.

He didn't demand explanations or conditions.

He simply ran.

A robe for the filthy.

A ring for the unworthy.

Sandals for the ashamed.

A feast for the forgotten.

Heaven's joy was louder than the prodigal's past.

And all of it—every robe, every ring, every note of the music—was a reflection of one thing:

The Father's smile.

The Smile That Melts Shame

You see, when God smiles at you, it isn't because He approves of everything you've done—it's because He knows who you truly are beneath the dirt.

His smile says:

“You were never disowned—only distant.”

“You were never unworthy—only broken.”

“You were never unwanted—only unaware of how loved you are.”

God's smile is not casual.

It is redemptive.

Powerful.

Restorative.

A holy fire wrapped in gentleness.

He knows:

- every night you cried alone,
- every failure that felt final,
- every prayer you swallowed instead of speaking,
- every temptation that bruised your soul,
- every step you've taken trying to come home.

And still... He smiles.

Not because you got it right—but because you finally let Him love you where you got it wrong.

The Celebration of the Returning Heart

Heaven doesn't celebrate achievements.

It celebrates surrender.

The robe wasn't for good behaviour.

The ring wasn't for spiritual consistency.

The feast wasn't for successful self-improvement.

They were symbols of *belonging restored*.

The Father was celebrating not what the son did, but who the son *was*.

Not a performer, but a child.

The table was full not because the son earned a seat—but because he accepted an invitation.

That is the Gospel's rhythm:

Grace initiates.

Mercy invites.

Love restores.

And Heaven dances.

Living Beneath the Smile

To live beneath the Father's smile is to finally rest.

To stop rehearsing failures.

To stop hiding wounds.

To stop trying to prove you deserve to stay in the house.

The Father's smile means:

- you do not have to reapply for grace every morning,
- you do not have to audition for love,
- you do not have to earn what was already freely given.

Your identity is not fragile.

It is anchored.

Your belonging is not temporary.

It is eternal.

When shame whispers, "You're not enough,"

Learn to answer softly:

"I don't have to be. My Father smiles at me."

That is wholeness.

That is freedom.

That is home.

The Light Returns

And so the story ends where it truly began—with a soul seen, held, and loved.

The night of hiding gives way to dawn.

Shadows retreat.

Tears dry on the edges of laughter.

The house smells of bread again.

The music returns.

The table is full.

And the Father—still watching, still smiling—whispers gently:

“Welcome home.”

Not just today.

Not just after repentance.

Not just after you get it right.

Welcome home... always.

Author's Note

From One Broken Soul to Another

I didn't write this book because I have mastered holiness.

I wrote it because I have wrestled with shame.

I wrote it because I know the feeling of avoiding prayer—not out of rebellion, but out of exhaustion.

I know what it feels like to show up to church physically, while your soul sits outside the door, convinced it's not worthy to enter.

I've stood at altars where my heart still smelled like failure.

I've knelt in prayer while memories whispered reasons God shouldn't listen.

I've felt the cold tremble of believing I had disappointed Heaven one time too many.

And yet...

Every time—every single time—God didn't flinch.

He didn't retreat.

He didn't step back in disgust.

He stepped closer.

He reached into the mud, not the mansion.

He whispered into the silence I thought was judgment.

He sat with me in places I believed were too dark for light.

He loved me in chapters I thought were too dirty for redemption.

And in those moments, I discovered something I had missed for years:

Grace isn't fragile.

Grace is fierce.

Grace fights for the parts of you you've given up on.

I wrote this book because someone else needs that truth.

You—the reader... yes, *you*.

The one who hides behind a smile.

The one who wonders if God is tired of forgiving you.

The one who prays quietly because shame muffles your voice.

The one who thinks your story is too stained for sacred hands.

I wrote this to tell you what I learned the hard way:

God doesn't wait for you to clean up before He comes close.

He steps into the dirt with you.

He cleanses you Himself.

He builds with you.

He restores you.

He breathes through your brokenness.

Your story is not too dirty for redemption.

Your sin is not the headline—His mercy is.

Don't wait to feel "ready."

You won't.

Don't wait until you become someone you respect.

Grace will create that person in you.

Just come.

Trembling.

Tired.

Honest.

Unpolished.

Unfiltered.

You.

When you stand before your Heavenly Father—filthy, sinful, unclean—you will not meet disgust.

You will meet delight.

You will meet a smile that melts shame.

A love that outlasts failure.

A grace that does not flinch.

The altar is still open.

The Father is still running.

And there is room for you—yes, you—right here.

— **Francis Otieno**