

My Loved Ones:

God says in Deuteronomy 33:27, “The Eternal God is your Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

When loved ones, relatives, friends, other Christians, and even the world turns to us for comfort and encouragement in their difficult times, sometimes we can be at a loss as to what to say. One of the ways that God encourages us is telling us something good about Himself. One day, successful author, businessman, and devoted Presbyterian layman Anthony J. Showalter received news from two totally different friends about two different deaths of friends. What do you do when the grief strikes a blow twice in one day? Showalter used the above verse to comfort his friends.

In sending letters to his friends, he thought that this verse would be a great theme for a Christian song. Almost spontaneously, he began writing the words and music to the refrain of the famous hymn “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.” Anthony knew that he was no poet, and asked the help of his friend Elisha A. Hoffman, a fellow pastor and author of more than 2,000 gospel songs to help him with the stanzas.

I have to personally admit, that at one point in ministry a number of years ago, the song leader used this song 6 times in a 13-week period. I was beginning to get quick “fed up” with this song. But instead of focusing upon being “sick and tired” of this song, I thought that God really wanted me to meditate and start really living the truths found in this song. Admittedly, whenever I sing this today, I am reminded of my past personal difficulty with this song, but that God has great truths here for me. Here is a lesson for us all. Sometimes we sing songs that are all too familiar to us. Please don’t begrudge the familiar. Ask God to help you sing the words as from your own heart and life to Him as a testimony, and then practice the words in your life. Also, please be thankful for the unfamiliar songs that we try to learn from time to time, which helps keep things “fresh.”

We have many fears that can come upon us. Listen to the third verse: “What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms? / I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms... safe and secure from all alarms.” My friends, stop and meditate on those words there.

“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” assures us of God’s steadfast care and guidance, and assures us of peace as we enjoy intimacy of fellowship with Him. When the events of the day seem difficult, overwhelming or full of grief, apply the lesson of this song as you learn to rest and relax in His loving care. How about sharing the truth of Deut 33:27 with someone else today for their encouragement?

We love you and are praying for you today.