

Leaning On The Everlasting Arms – Is 43:1-4

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When I was growing up, we used to sing an old hymn titled, *Leaning On The Everlasting Arms*; The last **verse** of which went like this . . .

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.

And the **chorus** – *Leaning, leaning, Safe and secure from all alarms*

Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus, Leaning on the everlasting arms.

It's a great hymn; That expresses great truths; And great reminders of how we should *be*, and think, and act – for sure; Nobody would argue with that

➤ But here's the thing – it's easier said than done, isn't it? It is*****

Leaning on the everlasting arms of God, the grace of God, the love of God, the sovereignty of God – is easier said than done

Especially when you're in the thick of it; *Especially* when skies are bleak

Especially when death, or destruction, or sickness, or betrayal plague your soul

Or how about stress, or opposition, or poverty, or fightings within and fears without, or loneliness, or abandonment settle in?

Trusting God and leaning on his everlasting arms isn't so easy when darkness seems to hide his face

Which is why passages like this are food for our soul and fuel for life

B/c it reminds us of the goodness and graciousness of God, even in the midst of hard times; Let me show you what I mean (v1-4)

➤ [1] *But now thus says the LORD* [now, as opposed to the judgment and punishment he brought to bear earlier; now, as opposed to the difficulty and hardship they've been in], *he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel* [2 ways of referring to his people]: *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*

[2] When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. [3] For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

Cush was a region of NE Africa along the Nile, while Seba was somewhere along the Red Sea; 2 of the many people and places God could have cited to make his point

[4] Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.

➤ The Israelites were not only suffering for their sin in the *present*, but they were facing captivity in the future; Life was hard, and it was about to get harder

But right smack dab in the midst of it, God offers grace; And still does

Fear not he's saying, b/c there's grace; Or trust me, b/c there's favor – inexplicable and undeserved

That's the message here

When life's **hard** – trust God's **grace** (v1-4)

As in *lean* on it; Rest in it; Believe in it; Depend on it; Hold fast to it; Treasure it; That's what I mean by *trust* it; Embrace it as true, and let it support you

Just like I might embrace this stool in the middle of the ocean, and trust it to keep me afloat; That's the idea of trusting God's grace, and not fearing my circumstances

And we get a glimpse of that grace in the very first verse – Thus says the *LORD* who *created* you and *formed* you

He did what he didn't have to, when we didn't deserve it – by creating us as individuals, and forming us as his people

That's the *foundation* of his trustworthy grace; And then builds a virtual mansion on it Starting with . . .

• The grace of his **redemption** (v1b)

When life's hard – trust the grace of God's redemption; Just like he says in v1b – *Fear not, for I have redeemed you*

As in trust me, I've made you whole; I've restored your life

Or, more literally – I've bought you back from the bondage of your circumstances, and paid the debt of your sin; That's redemption

The Hebrew word for which, is “gaal”; And it was often used in a legal sense to buy back *land* that someone had sold to cover a debt . . .

Or, buy back a *person*, who had sold *themselves* into slavery to cover a debt

And the only one who could do the buying back – was a relative, a kinsman; Someone with whom the person in need, had a *relationship*

So a “goel”, a kinsman-redeemer, would “gaal”, the land or person, redeem them – by paying the debt that was owed, and so release them to live life to the full once again

The very thing God did with the Israelites of old who were slaves in Egypt . . .

The very thing he was *going* to do with the people in Isaiah's day; Referring to it with the certainty of the past tense – I have *redeemed* you . . .

And the very thing he's done for us in Christ – paying the redemption price for *our* lives, and releasing us from the grip of sin to live full and free for him

Don't forget that; When the difficulties of life threaten to enslave you, remember that you've been redeemed

When you're tempted to think of yourself as worthless, trust his grace – you've been bought with a price; And not with money, but blood – the precious blood of the Lamb Rest in that; Especially when life's hard

Second, trust . . .

• The grace of his **call** (v1b)

V1b – *I have called you by name*; IOW I've chosen you specifically; I've chosen you to be mine; I've chosen you for salvation

Over and over again you see it in the OT; Like in v10

“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant [my people] whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he [that I'm the true and living God, your Savior].

And the NT confirms it; Like in Eph 1 where it says that God chose us before the foundation of the world; And Rom 9 the same

Before we ever did anything to deserve it, or *could* do anything; And despite the fact that we've done plenty *not* to, God called us by name

- It's like President Roosevelt at the beginning of WWII when he met w/ General Patton and Admiral Hewitt, to charge them w/ the responsibility of invading North Africa They walked out of his office with a sense of having been *called* And it not only stoked their fire, but bolstered them when things didn't go well

That's grace; That despite the abandonment of everyone else who may *call* you names, God calls you *by* your name; God wants you when others don't Putting his hand on your life, and choosing to bless *you*, out of everyone else And the more you trust in that, the more the things of this earth will grow strangely dim, even when life's hard; Trust in the grace of his call

3rd, trust . . .

- **The grace of his grip (v1b)**

You are *mine* he says; My own possession

Just like he told the Israelites of old in Ex 19:5 – *You shall be my treasured possession* And tells us in **Titus 2:14** – [Jesus] *gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

And **1 Pet 2:9** says – *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession*

That's the grip of God's grace*****

Keeping us even when we sin; Even when we rebel; Even when we wander

Take a look at this testimony in that respect (**Rick & Julie Palmer**)

- That's the grace of God's grip
Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; Especially when life's hard, or doesn't seem fair, or falls apart all around you

But thankfully, he never lets go; Rick was saved as a JH student, and despite his

wanderings and rebellion, God never gave up his grip

That's grace; That's favor; That's God

"I've sought you, I've bought you, and I'm not gonna drop you"

My sheep hear my voice Jesus said, they hear my call – *and no one will ever snatch them out of my hand* [my grip] (Jn 10:28)

When life's hard, trust the grip of his grace; He's got you; And he's not letting go

4th, trust . . .

- **The grace of his presence (v2a)**

Look at v2 – *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you*; It's a truth we see over and over again in these chapters; And no wonder; We're hard-wired for it

Created in the image of God as we are, we have a desire for relationship, a desire for community; And when things are hard, we *want* it; Nobody likes to suffer alone

So it's no wonder God meets us right where we need it

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you (2a)

"When you're about ready to drown, I'm there; When you sink to the bottom, I'm there;

When others can't be, I am"; That's the grace of God's presence

He's there; W/ you; No matter what; Everlasting arms and all; Waiting to be leaned on

Trust the grace of his presence, and trust . . .

- **The grace of his protection (v2b)**

The rivers *shall not overwhelm* you; The fire *shall not* burn you; *The flame shall not consume* you (2b); That's the grace of God's protection

With fire and flood as metaphors for hardship and difficulty of *all* kinds

And the point, is that God will protect

- Does that mean you'll never suffer, or never suffer harm? Not at all
As long as we live in a fallen world among fallen people, harm is always a risk
And as long as the Lord tarries, suffering is a certainty
For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake (2 Cor 4:11)

And Paul says in **Rom 8:35-37** . . .

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, "For your sake [God's sake] we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." IOW it's happening

Rivers are drowning us; Fire is burning us; Flames are consuming us

But is it of any *eternal* consequence? Does it do any *real* harm to our soul and **life**?

[37] *No* [Paul says], *in all these things* [fire, famine, flood, or hardship of *any* sort] *we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

We are *more* than protected by God's grace

Suppressed at times – yes; Diminished – yes; Beaten down – yes*****

But never out, and never alone

- I love the testimony and life of **Elizabeth Elliot** in that respect – pictured here in the 50's; As a follower of Christ, she's been an avid author and speaker for over 40 years And Isaiah 43:2 has been one of her go-to verses in life

Despite that fact that her husband of just 2 years, **Jim Elliot**, was murdered by the Aucas Indians as a 28 year-old missionary in 1956 . . .

And despite the fact that she was left to raise their **1 year-old daughter** by herself . . .

And despite the fact that she endured incredible hardship working in the jungles of Ecuador, with those **same people** for the next 7 years . . .

The very ones who murdered her husband

And despite that fact that her 2nd husband died of cancer 4 yrs after she married him . . .

And despite the fact she now suffers from dementia and the loss of her memory, and had to stop **speaking** in 2004 . . .

And despite the fact that she struggles with the vagaries of **old age** in a big way

Despite all that, she's found God to be completely faithful to his word, and continues to trust his grace, as found in this very verse; What a testimony, what an example*****

Trusting the grace of God's presence/protection, even when life's hard

If she can do it, you can too

Especially so b/c God's all-powerful; When life's hard, trust . . .

- **The grace of his power (v3a)**

The power to keep on; The power to overcome

For I am the LORD your God [he says in v3], the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

IOW I'm the one who's been with you for centuries now – *your God*

I'm the one who's *other* than you – *holy*; And I'm the one who's saved you

All of which means he's proven, and *more* than capable of extending his grace to our lives; "I've got the power; Trust me"; That's what he's saying

And you can; You can trust him to *change* your life or situation, and you can trust him if he doesn't – if he *doesn't* apply his power to relieve your hardship

Instead, supplying the strength to sustain you; And get you through; And grow you;

And shape you in ways only he *can*, and would; Trust him in that respect

And last, trust . . .

- **The grace of his love (v3b-4)**

When life's hard, trust the grace of his redemption, call, grip, presence, protection, power, and love

V3b-4 – *I give Egypt as your ransom [the redemption price for your life], Cush and*

Seba in exchange for you. [4] Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and

I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.

So great is God's love for those he calls, those he chooses – that he gives up others in order to protect and keep them

Sometimes removing them, sometimes punishing them, and sometimes destroying them

Like he did w/ the obstinate Egyptians as the Israelites escaped from 400 years of slavery

Or some of the people groups who opposed them as they journeyed through the Sinai

Or the sinful Canaanites who prevented them from entering the Promised Land

Some he removed, some he brought to their knees, and some he killed

Having made them in his own image, he devoted them to destruction, for the sake of his own

➤ That's love; The *same* love he showed in giving up his *Son* for us

What God did then with various *peoples*, he did at the cross with his Son; Only this time the price he paid was infinite

I give [Jesus] as your ransom; [My Son] in exchange for you; Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give [him] in return for you, [his life] in exchange for [yours].

That's the NT version; That's what the grace of God's love looks like *now*

Far more than a sinful group of *people*, he gave his one and only *Son*, who *bore* our sin

That whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life (**Summary**)

Lean on that; When life's hard, lean on the grace of God's love as shown in Christ

Lean on his everlasting arms, safe and secure from all alarms

Prayer – Lord, would you write these truths on our heart and mind, so that when life's

hard, we trust? We want to Lord, and we need to; Thank you for your amazing grace

Including the grace of being able to give; Use our tithes and offerings now to the utmost