



"27 The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut 33:27)

God minces no words in relating His Power and His willingness to care for those who belong to Him. This clause of verse 27 above is terse, simple, and yet full of promise and power. Such strong and simple verses, when combined with God-honoring music, constitute an invincible testimony to those whose very being is centered in God. He will never fail to care for His own; after all, do we not have the promise of the One who bled and died for us: "***I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***" (Heb 13:5) If we COME to Him, He will NEVER LEAVE us or FORSAKE us. ***Never*** is Eternity! We depend upon God's loving care and Providence every day of our lives - more truly, every second. "***Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.***" (Psalms 55:22) His hand sustains our lives moment by moment. God saw in the eternal vapors of the past that no man could be with Him except there be a Savior - and God provided Himself a Lamb for the sacrifice. (Genesis 22:8) "***And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.***" (Isaiah 59:16-17) This speaks of the Coming of Christ as Redeemer.

The words of our hymn today (Leaning on the Everlasting Arms) remind us that in our most desperate sorrows and weakness, we shall not fall from God's protective arms. He keeps them outstretched always to defend us from any fall. "***And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders.***" (Deut 26:8)

Just a few miles south of Chatsworth, Georgia, where my grandmother lived, there is a small rural community of 673 souls named White, Georgia. About four miles north of this sleepy little village is, hidden by a railway overpass from view from the road, an old Methodist Church called Pine Log United Methodist Church. The church was constructed sometime before 1850. This old church has experienced some vivid

testimonies of the work of God in years past. In 1877, an evangelist was conducting revival there. On the last night of the revival, the preacher said, "O Lord, I have preached my heart out to these people to no avail. I have besought with pleadings. I have invoked the power of the Holy Ghost, but to no result.. If you will, Lord, reach down your mighty hand and shake this church to its foundations." Suddenly, there was an earthquake that did, indeed, shake the church to its foundations. Reports claim that all attendees were on their knees praying to the Lord for their salvation.....including the preacher. I have a photo of a large stone out front commemorating this event.

There was a second stone that commemorated another event that occurred about twelve years later (1889). A.J. Showalter, A Dalton (Georgia) businessman and lay minister was preaching another revival at Pine Log Church. He had just come from a revival in Alabama. While at Pine Log, he received the sad news that the wives of two men of his previous engagement had tragically died. While writing his condolence letter to comfort the two men, this verse came to mind: "*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*" It occurred to him that this would be an excellent theme for a hymn. He immediately sat down and wrote the music and the refrain for this wonderful hymn. He then sent it to a famous old friend. Dr. Elisha Hoffman, in Philadelphia to add lyrics and to publish which this famous hymn writer did. I am told that this hymn went around the world in just a short few months without the aid of telephone or radio. It is the only hymn that Showalter wrote, I believe. His old Office Supply business is still at the old location in Dalton, Georgia, but is now called 'Dalton Office Supply.' I went there with my father often while growing up.

LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS

*What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.*

*Refrain:
Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.*

*O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.*

Refrain

*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.*

Refrain

There is no greater joy or peace than that which comes from the certain knowledge that God is our refuge and strength. We are not left alone to battle the Dark Angel. God is with us with His mighty outstretched Arm. "*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*" (Phil

4:7)

Where is the Straight Way and the Narrow Way? It is illumined more and more to those who believe and seek Him: "*O how bright the path grows from day to day,*" and we have NOTHING to fear as Christ is "*a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*" "*What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms; I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,*

There has never been a people more zealously protected and cherished than those of God. "*Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.*" (Psalms 17:8) The "apple of God's eye is that little image that each of us make as a reflection in the very center of the pupil of His eye as He watches over us. "*He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*" (Psalms 91:2) If we place not our trust in God, who is left to trust? "*In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.*" (Prov 14:26) The baby that awakes, terrified, in the dark of night is quickly consoled by his mother's strong arms. The bleating lamb, lost on the mountain ledge, is quickly comforted by the Shepherds strong staff of rescue. God is always near you. Need you fear any gloom of night, or mountain storm? How can a baby not love its mother? How can a lamb not trust its shepherd? How can a Christian not love and trust His Lord and Shepherd even if the foundations of the earth are loosed?