

Resting on God's Shoulder

"May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you." Psalm 33:22

Have you ever watched a child fall asleep in the arms of a parent, especially in a noisy crowd like a sporting event or other large gathering? The sleepy child often falls asleep in the most precarious of positions with his or her head cocked sideways on the parent's shoulder, one arm hoisted around Mom or Dad's neck while the other dangles. It's an awkward position for both parent and child, but the innate relationship between the need of the child and the love of the parent instinctively leads the parent to shield the young dreamer from disturbances. Rest is available to the child as he or she trusts Mom or Dad's loving care.

I love the psalmist's use of the phrase rest upon us. It conjures up images of someone gently laying a soft, warm blanket across the shoulders of one who needs protection from the elements of wind, rain or excessive heat or cold. The phrase literally brings visible comfort, an audible exhale, a physical release, and relief from the daily barrage of stress, pain, burden, anger, hurt and disappointment. The other phrase that complements this is even as we put our hope in you. How amazing is it that the blessing comes in the action of hoping? Not before, not after, but during the act of trusting comes a blessing of rest. Another translation chooses the word mercy instead of rest. What an even greater gift when we think of rest in terms of mercy, for who doesn't need this gift?

As you consider this verse today, I'd like to invite you to pray this passage as a blessing for the people around you. It might sound something like this, "May your unfailing love rest upon (insert name here), even as she/he puts her/his hope in you. Amen." Not only will you be blessing someone, you will begin the powerful practice of praying Scripture.

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