

As If Asleep

God's Words:

Psalms 4:8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for Thou alone, O Lord, dost make me to dwell in safety.

Reflection:

Lots of things keep us awake: too big a dinner, that dull pain in our back, cats fighting outside our window, an unsettled argument with a friend, discomfort, anger, emotional upsets. And a sense of danger.

My father-in-law used to sleep through anything, but he did it by taking out his hearing aids. He also, unlike me, rarely worried. I tend towards worry, especially after dark. When my husband used to travel, the occasional evening alone was rather fun. I got to flip my own TV channels, eat whenever and whatever I wanted, read until midnight, and generally run my own life. I liked it. But turning out the lights brought a different mood. With darkness came hypervigilance. I startled at every strange noise. I felt alone; I felt vulnerable; I couldn't get to sleep.

Sleep is such a vulnerable state. There we lie – eyes closed, muscles relaxed, real world vigilance replaced by the world of dreams – completely unable to protect ourselves. If danger comes when we sleep, someone else must protect us. But what if, when awake, we also functioned “as if asleep”? What if, when awake, we also relied on someone else (like God) to protect us?

The psalmist could sleep because he knew that God, God alone, would protect him. God alone, without David's aid or effort. David slept peacefully because he felt no need to guard himself. The same should characterize us. We are no more vulnerable when asleep than when awake. I'm serious. Waking or sleeping, God alone protects us, without our aid and without our effort. I'm not saying give up on wisdom (it's okay to lock the door), and I'm not advocating foolish passivity, but we have no need to stress, no need to fear.

Here's my point: the same God who keeps us safe when we sleep also keeps us safe when we're awake. Daytime and nighttime, He surrounds us with Himself, standing between us and anything that would rob us of the good He intends for us. He does not require our hypervigilance at night (when it keeps us awake) or during the day (when it robs us of joy and saps our energy). The hypervigilant don't trust God; they try to replace Him.

Prayer:

Forgive me, Lord, for doubting your care and trying to do what only you can do. Forgive my sinful hypervigilance. I've been arrogant and wrong. I turn to you. Teach me, when awake, to rest “as if asleep.”