

**Psalm 127:2 (1984 NIV)**  
***The Gift of Sleep*<sup>1</sup>**

The promise in Psalm 127:2 declares: “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.”

This verse offers a powerful promise of security to us. Today, we have come to remember and honour the memory of one called home by God the Heavenly Father. In the words of the psalmist in Psa 127:2, we are reminded that our dear sister-in-Christ, Mdm Leong Foong Leng, is simply sleeping. We are not denying the reality of death; that death has indeed invaded our ranks today. It is not something we can or should ignore. In fact, it is not emotionally healthy to deny the death of a dear one.

But God’s grace in Jesus Christ is available to us for such times of grief and loss. However, God in Jesus Christ can only help us to the degree that we are willing to accept reality. Hence, the psalmist here is not trying to deceive us into avoiding reality. But through the beautiful imagery of sleep, he is pointing us towards the source of true rest. By using the word “sleep”, the psalmist is referring to a sleep that is much needed by all who have journeyed long and hard in life. When such a rest finally comes, it is indeed a gift from God in Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament often refers to death when speaking of sleep (Jer 51:39). Ancient Jewish thought often speaks of the one who has died as “he who sleeps with his fathers”. In the New Testament, the one who has died in the faith of Jesus Christ is called one who sleeps in Jesus Christ (1 Thess 4:14). Even Jesus Christ Himself describes the dead Lazarus whom He dearly loved as sleeping when He says in Jn 11:11—“I am going there to wake him up.” This is Jesus’ reassurance to us—that we who have believed and received Him into our lives will have eternal life in Him and with Him even when our earthly existence has come to an end.

In Psa 127:2 we are told that God the Heavenly Father “grants sleep to those he loves”. Yes, sleep indeed is a gift of love from God in Jesus Christ. When you are dead tired and your body cries out for rest, sleep is certainly a heavenly gift. What is encouraging for us to know is that God in Jesus Christ not only sends sleep as a gift, but also brings it to us personally. He gently touches the eyes of the one He loves, and offers the gift of sleep. And God in Jesus Christ has indeed granted our beloved sister-in-Christ, Mdm Leong Foong Leng, His precious gift of sleep. No more does she need to toil and labour; no more does she need to endure the pain of sickness; no more does she need to be alone and afraid—all because she is now asleep in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a funeral sermon.

Mdm Leong is now enjoying a restful and peaceful sleep. The cares and noises of this fallen, imperfect world will trouble her no more. God's gift of sleep for her is an expression of His tender love in Jesus Christ. He desires that she has rest and peace, and be relieved of all pain and suffering.

One other thing needs to be briefly reiterated—this sleep implies awakening someday. When Mdm Leong awakes from this gift of sleep someday, what she sees first is not the pain and suffering of this world. What she sees first when she awakes is Jesus Christ Himself. Indeed, Mdm Leong is now enjoying her gift of sleep, and anticipating the greater joy of meeting her Lord Jesus Christ when she awakes.

Dear family, relatives and friends of the late Mdm Leong Foong Leng, we are here not to pay homage to death even though we recognise its reality. Rather, we are here to celebrate God's gift of sleep in Jesus Christ for our departed sister-in-Christ, Mdm Leong. Death is not something that overcomes us from behind, but is a way for God to grant us this promise of sleep in Jesus Christ.

One of the most difficult things to do is to say farewell to someone very special. But God in Jesus Christ gives us the strength to do that when we place our trust and faith in Him. It is then that we see this sleep in Jesus Christ as really a way of claiming His eternal purpose—to be with Him forever for those who have believed in Jesus Christ.

And if Mdm Leong Foong Leng could speak to us now, her words must indeed be these—"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!" What a comfort this is indeed.

Let's pray: "Lord Jesus, we entrust all our time to you. In our waking and sleeping, help us to rest and find peace in you. We also entrust our dear one, Mdm Leong Foong Leng, into your hands as she sleeps in and with your peace, awaiting that day to awake in your presence. Help each of us who are living with fond memories of her to trust you as the source of sleep and even as the giver of life forever. We ask this in your most precious name. Amen!"