

## Running Away

When I was young I would often "run away." The only problem was that I was under the impression that you had to actually run to run away. I was not a good runner, but off I would go, I wouldn't get too far when my brother Bill would catch up with me and bring me back. No one else ever came after me but Bill. Sometimes, when he was a bit older, he would ride his bike and give me a ride back home. I always knew he would come after me. When he joined the Army on his 17th birthday, I was upset but watched him go. He wrote me letters often with a great deal of advice and promises that he would take care of anyone who hurt me. Letters I still have. When he came home on furlough in April, the first time I had seen him since January, I did not want him to leave me again. Life was unbearable without him. He was my advisor, my confidant, the one who watched out for me, and I had missed him. When it was time for him to leave to go back, I cried and begged him to stay. I refused to go to the train to see him off. I did not know that would be the last time I would see him until July when his glass-sealed casket would come home to that same train station. He had died of pneumonia as a complication of kidney disease. I never physically ran away after that knowing there were none who would come after me, but I ran away in other ways. This time it was God who came after me. I had prayed every night for death and had polio instead. I realized I wanted to know more about a God who would deny me death to join my brother and then leave me alone. God sent me to a small church, and they took me in and showed me, not a vengeful God but a loving God. I came to realize that though my brother's body had failed him, God had not. I am so grateful to that little church that showed me a path that changed my life. I have strayed from that path since but always, God has brought me back.

Psalm 121 - I lift my eyes to the hills--where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip--he who watches over you will not slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you, the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm--he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Lord thank you for bringing us back when we run away, thank you for your forgiveness and mercy. Your love does last forever. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and be with him in all things. Guide and protect him. Be with our church with those who are ill and those who grieve. May they feel you at their side. Be with our staff and leaders, may they feel you guiding them. Help us to feed the hungry, not only those who need food and sustenance but those who hunger for your word and those who seek forgiveness and acceptance. We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen

Grace Epperson