

A Brother's Love

When I was very young, I would often run away. My brother Bill would come for me. No one else ever did except him, I even recall my mother saying, "You better go get her" with a kind of tired of it all tone to her voice. Bill would catch me (I wasn't a very good runner.) and walk me back home. Sometimes I would get a block or so away before he would patiently catch me. As he grew older, he had a bicycle, and he would give me a ride back. I always liked that. I think I always knew Bill would come after me. Bill joined the Army on his 17th birthday, my father had to sign for him to join, years later this would be revealed as one of the greatest regrets of his life. With this Bill would be able to provide an allotment check every month for my parents. Why Bill ended up being a source of support for them I do not know except that when he joined the Army my father was not working and was not looking for work. He worked for a construction company and the work was seasonal and he felt welfare was better than working in the winter. I loved my father, but his work ethic needed improving. Bill had been working delivering telegrams and was not making very much money and the Army would provide a steady income. When Bill joined the Army, and it came time for him to leave I was devastated but he wrote to me often. In his letters he told me he missed me and loved me and encouraged me to stay in school and to get an education. He was adamant about my education and had talked to me often about the importance of me staying in school. Bill had quit school on his 16th birthday the previous year and had learned the hard way about the value of a diploma. Bill came home on furlough in April. I did not want him to leave, home without him was for me, unbearable. I begged him to stay but he had to leave. I cried hysterically and had to be pulled from him as he left to catch the train back to his base. He was stationed in Balboa, Panama. In June we received a telegram that he was very ill. Then after two days another telegram that he had died. He had died of pneumonia as a complication of Kidney failure. He was sent home in a glass sealed coffin and even though I had refused to believe that this big brother had been taken from me, when I saw him, I knew he was gone. I entered a depression that lasted for 2 or more years. I prayed nightly to a God I did not know for death. When I awoke one night without the strength to lift my head, I felt that the death I had prayed for was finally here and went back to sleep happy that I would soon be with Bill. When I awoke in the morning I was surprised to still be in my bed, and only then did I call my mother and tell her I was sick. I had Polio. I was disappointed and asked God why am I alive? A voice said to me, "God wants you to live." It would take me two years before I would recover from the loss of Bill and would still have periods where I was depressed and lonely for that big brother, but I had him in my heart and he guided me and stayed with me in all things for years. It took me three years, but I finally walked into a church to learn about God, and I learned that God cried for Bill and me also and was not a vindictive God but a God of love. A God that took a young girl and gave her life and a future, a God that loved her from her birth, a God that gave her a brother's love that never left her and is still with her and has been with her for 88 years. Bill will be gone from us 76 years ago this week on my 88th birthday and there is still an empty seat at the table.

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; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither 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, we thank you for this day. May we fulfill the promise of each day, another chance to bring others to you. We ask that you be with those who are ill and those who grieve. Be with those who are suffering the horror of war in the Ukraine, and those that are suffering in our midst, be with those that hunger may we feed them, be with those who are without shelter may we give them safe havens. Be with those that seek your word, may we speak to them. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and be with him and Laura as they travel back to us. Be with our church Lord, may it be your church. Be with our Staff and Leaders, bless them as they work to make us better and to serve our church. May our church be a place for all of God's children. May we be the hands and feet of Jesus in this place and in this time. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson