

## The Heart of a Child

When I was more than six and less than 10, I would go to stay with my Aunt Grace frequently if my parents went away. My Uncle was in the service in WWII. It seemed (to me) to be very frequent but I loved to stay with my aunt. I had a wonderful bed that I loved and even though she was often at work I managed to just sit and read or talk to the woman next door. I could fix myself a sandwich for lunch and wait for my aunt to come home. As I grew older, I realized that my aunt and Uncle were sometimes strange (they wanted to give me a goldfish for my graduation, but I would have to buy the bowl) but I still loved them, and they were my favorites out of seven Aunts and seven Uncles not to mention the in-laws except for one other Aunt who I dearly loved. When my Aunt Grace was older, and my Uncle Harold had died my husband and I would go over to her home in Troy and take her out to lunch and to doctor appointments and sometimes just for a ride. One day while visiting her I was looking at her curio cabinet and she brought out a glass globe and asked me if I knew my Great Grandfather had been a glass blower. I replied that I had not. She told me he had done this piece. I looked at it and since he had died in the late 30's or very early 40's and this piece was very modern and looked to be factory made, I just said it was lovely but did not voice to her that I doubted very much my Great Grandfather had made it. I said it was beautiful. She then said something about I could not have it. I suddenly had a flashback from when I was a child and I would admire something and this aunt that I had dearly loved had said to me, "Yes it's beautiful but you are too poor to have something this nice." I sat down for a few minutes and then told my husband that we had to go. I was devastated and heartbroken at this memory. I knew that they were frugal with their money, but I never thought they were cruel. Then I remembered her giving me a beautiful pinafore. It was a sheer pinafore with colorful flowers embroidered on it and I treasured it. I would take it out and look at it and dream of a day that I could get a nice dress to wear under it but that never happened and eventually I gave it away to a clothing drive. God intervened in my life when I was 15 and taught me that I was valued, that I was loved by a savior, and that I could with his help overcome my beginnings. I got a job and paid to support myself. He put people in my life that taught me that I was accepted and how to live the life given to me. Thanks be to God. We all have our sad stories of hurt and anguish in our lives, but those things do not define us. Those things can be used to strengthen us, to give us purpose and to draw us closer to God. I forgave my aunt for her cruel remarks to that young child and although it wasn't easy, and I still can't understand the why. I know those remarks helped make me stronger and more independent and more determined to live a life knowing God's forgiveness in my own errors. My Aunt Grace was a strong independent woman, and I would rather remember that and the kindness she showed me as a child than her careless remarks.

Psalm 25:4-6 Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth, and teach me, for you are God my Savior and my hope is in you all day long. Remember O Lord, your great mercy and love for they are from of old.

Dear Lord, we thank you for this day. May we be a blessing to you this day and in this place. May we forgive others who may hurt us with careless remarks and may we remember our own remarks and seek forgiveness. Be with our church Lord, may we truly be the hands and feet of Jesus in this time and in this place. Be with our Pastor and bless his ministry and may we be a blessing to him as he is to us. Be with our families and where there is discord, bring healing and where there is love may it remain strong and faithful to your teachings. Be with our staff and leaders, give them wisdom, discernment, strength, and blessings. Be with our country Lord may we find peace, strength, and common ground among us and may we remember we share a history of strength in unity and love of this country. We thank you Lord for the gifts you give us, the blessing of each day and the blessing of each other. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson

