

Mary, My Sweet Grandmother

One hundred twenty-four years ago on March 2, my grandmother Edwards was born. She was quite a lady. Her father was a Civil War veteran and an old fashioned preacher. It is an amazing thing to live in such a modern era as we do, yet have these memories so indelibly inscribed in my mind from one like Grandma who lived much of her life in the horse and buggy days. February 27 marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of her home-going.

Both my grandfathers were gone when I discovered America, but my grandmothers were still here and had enough years left to highly influence me. I cannot think of another person in that generation who influenced me more than my Grandmother Edwards. We talk and pray much for an old fashioned, Holy Ghost, heaven-sent, sin forsaking, Jesus exalting, heart-felt revival. A great incentive to my prayers was the life and memory of Mary Satterfield Edwards. Like Mary, the mother of our Lord, my grandma was full of grace. With your congenial license, I would like to reminisce and make some practical application for all of us about this lady of grace.

1. She had a dramatic conversion.

My Great-Grandmother Satterfield, a Bible-believing, praying Methodist said to her daughter before she left for an evening out, “Mary, I don’t believe you’re telling me the truth about where you’re going tonight, but wherever you’re going, I am praying God will get a hold of you.” Well, Mary was going to a dance, a taboo in the home of Preacher Satterfield. Although Mary was at the dance God brought her under conviction and she left the dance floor to get a drink of water on the porch and while there, God broke her heart and she prayed for forgiveness and salvation. In her own words she said, “When I got up off my knees I got to shouting. I came back into the dance just shouting. God began to move in a wonderful way. Everywhere I turned people were crying and asking the Lord to forgive them. Finally they had to call a preacher in. He came and preached and before the night was over there were at least fifty people who were converted!”

Grandma lived in a day where people prayed and not only believed God for answers but fully expected answers. I am so thankful that Great-Grandma Satterfield “prayed the price” for my grandmother! I am reaping the benefit today! Paul said it like this: “*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved*” (Romans 10:1).

2. She loved everybody and taught us to do the same.

With all the hardships Grandma went through, she could have easily become bitter, but instead she became better. The adjective “sweet” describes her better than any word.

Grandma was reared in a very segregated South. I remember in my youth when we drove from our home in Washington how shocked I was to go to the grocery stores and see three doors in the restroom area labeled Men, Women and

Colored and I remember two water fountains with a sign above each one labeled White and Colored. A traumatic event happened in my grandmother's youth that gave her sweetness toward all people, especially the African. When she was a girl she backed up to the fireplace to get warm. My grandmother had very long, uncut hair and she got a little too close and her hair caught fire. In a panic she ran from the house and a dear sweet black lady saw her, surmised the situation in split second timing. The lady ran from her house with a quilt, caught my grandmother, wrapped her in the blanket and rolled her on the ground.

Years later if Grandma ever heard the least disparaging word toward the African as a person or group she quickly rebuked any spirit of prejudice with her testimony of how a black woman saved her life and she would not hear of any criticism toward anybody of color. According to the law of genetics, it took my grandmother's genes to make me who I am, so I can say I, too, am here because of a dear, precious black lady who saved Mary Satterfield's life.

3. She reared her children through hard times.

Grandma married my grandfather who already had two boys from a previous marriage and was quite a bit older than she. Then she birthed eleven more kids. She was quite a lady having reared thirteen children in hard times. She saw to it that they ate, had clean clothes, went to church and said their prayers at night. Recently I was talking to my Uncle Benny and he was telling me of the precious memories he had of his mama gathering all the kids around her as she sat in the rocking chair and prayed with them. She was thankful for what little they had and did not complain about what they did not have. It is truly amazing to see how well her kids did in the world once they were grown. When all the kids were grown, she was not through with her daily duties of motherhood, because my Aunt Ruby was a special needs child that never fully developed mentally and she lived with Grandma until she died. By the life she lived, she showed us that tough times don't last, but tough people do!

4. She lived a life of prayer.

My grandmother could not read or write. She did enjoy listening to an audio version of the Bible. She could tell time and what thrilled me is that she kept a picture of me beside her clock and she would estimate the time that I would be preaching around the country and she would pray for me. As a young preacher, I took that for granted. I sometimes say, when Grandma died, there seemed to be a lull in the work of God, but I got about twenty other people to pray for me and the power returned. I am reminded that Paul said, *"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak"* (Colossians 4:2-4). The great apostle was saying that without the prayers of other people, he would not have a door of utterance! I can certainly say the same. As an older preacher I now recognize more than ever if you don't pray for me, I will be handicapped in my ministry of the Word! So thank you for those prayers!

5. She had a great sense of humor.

My grandmother could be very stern, but oh, did she believe in having fun. In my memory I hear her laughter echo down the corridors of my soul. Allow me to illustrate:

Because of Aunt Ruby's demanding needs with her mental challenges and severe epilepsy, Grandma was pretty much housebound. After I surrendered to the ministry, she always wanted to hear me preach. The day came when I was preaching at Sharon Missionary Baptist Church in Benton, Arkansas and I asked Grandma if she would like to come. With a twinkle in her eye, she enthusiastically agreed. So as a young unmarried preacher I was most proud to have my grandmother and personal prayer warrior with me. It was a glorious meeting that night. The house was full and there were an abundance of decisions. After the service that night Grandma and I got into my car. It was very cold and we were leaving Benton to go back to her home in Sylvan Hills in North Little Rock. It was supposed to be about a thirty-minute drive. I got on the interstate and began to travel. We had a grand old time talking, laughing and just cutting up. We were having such a good time that I didn't notice the time. When I looked at the clock, I realized we had been in the car for over an hour on the four lane and that wasn't right. My fears were confirmed when I saw the exit for Hope, Arkansas. I was now in southern Arkansas! Someone had played a joke and at one of the Benton exits had exchanged the north sign for the south sign. We were now one and half hours from home! As I mentioned, it was cold and on top of that, I had a hole in the floorboard on Grandma's side and the cool air was making her even colder. In that old car there was a bench seat and I said, "Grandma, sit here next to me; you just put your feet right under the heater to warm you." Then to help her stay warm, I put my coat over her shoulders and put my arm around her and held her tight. Everything was fine until I realized we were coming through Little Rock at 12:30 on a Saturday morning and dating couples would be coming home. So as we approached the bright lights, I pulled my arm from around Grandma and I said, "Grandma, would you mind scooting over just as we pass through the downtown area, because this looks a little weird, you know, me being a teenager and you in your eighties at this time of the day. I mean, what will people think?" Grandma said with a cackle, "Let them think what they will think; I'm not moving." And she didn't. We came through downtown Little Rock in the center lane of a three-lane street. A couple pulled up on one side of us and another couple pulled up on the other side of us. Then as they peered in seeing my grandmother riding right next to me, Grandma reached over, grabbed my face and gave me a kiss followed by gleeful laughter. Then I started laughing. We got home at about one o'clock in the morning. Until Grandma died, whenever we got together we would laugh about our unique date night. How true, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine..." (Proverbs 17:22).

March 2, 1888 the Lord brought a wonderful young lady named Mary into the world. I know she certainly made my world a better and brighter place.

-Pastor Pope-

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