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**AUNT BRITT**  
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Aunt Britt's something else. I mean, she's something else with an exclamation mark! She's always been one of my very favorite aunts; maybe, even, the favorite. She's different; in ever so many ways, different, and from my earliest recollections and remembrances of her I've loved her in spite of her difference. Maybe, even, it's been her difference that has drawn me to her in such a special and loving way.

I was just a little shaver when I became aware of her difference: I may have been six, or seven. There was a cousin, nearly the same age as I, whom I didn't like very well. Guess maybe you could say I nearly, if not altogether, hated him. I felt his mother gave him a lot more attention and love than mine ever gave me. So... well, in

a sense, I took my frustration and what I thought was lack of parental love out on my cousin. And Aunt Britt let me know how wrong this was.

Now don't get me wrong: I didn't beat up on Tyler nor knock him down and stomp him. Not at all. Oh (to be completely truthful though), there were times when I wanted to beat him up and knock him down. In God's eyes, I actually did the acts, for the Bible is quite explicit on the fact that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." But at least nobody (except God) ever got so much as a peek into my heart. So, naturally, I felt quite safe with my secret feelings and desires. You might even say that I felt smug about it.

Tyler's father died when he was a little fellow. It was a sudden and totally unexpected death, for nobody knew, or suspected, that Uncle Robb had a serious heart problem. I suppose that thought was the furthest from everybody's mind since Uncle Robb was still very young and was the picture and embodiment of perfect health. At any rate, when Tyler became fatherless and began receiving all kinds of attention and affection from relatives and friends, my frustration increased and so did my dislike for my cousin.

Tyler gave his heart to Jesus when he was a mere child. He got sanctified wholly shortly after his conversion and, truthfully, he was a little saint. He was gentle and humble and sweet and kind and as patient a being as one could ever hope to meet and find. All of Tyler's virtues only added fuel to my already seething frustrations.

We lived only a matter of thirty some minutes to drive apart so, naturally, we saw each other quite often. Instead of treating my cousin with kindness and love, I took delight in pinching him mercilessly. (When we were alone and no one else was around, I mean.) And my, what delight I had in making fun of him and demeaning him and calling him names!

"I'm praying for you, Evan," Tyler said to me one day while I was calling him names and trying to pinch him. (He learned soon enough not to get too near me when he became aware of my mania for pinching.)

"Save your prayers," I shot back. "I'm a Christian same as you are."

"I love you, Evan, and I'm praying for you." Tyler's eyes were great, deep pools of pity for me. He looked like a hurt or wounded animal as he spoke the words. It made me feel kind of ashamed of myself for treating him so unkindly and badly; but it gave me a heady kind of feeling too; like I was in control, and I was important. Very important. So the taunting, harassing and tormenting continued, year after year. Enter Aunt Britt!

I was in my mid-teens, and I had no idea that Aunt Britt was anywhere within a thousand miles of our home. But suddenly, there she was, standing on our front

porch and singing, "I've Been Delivered" at the top of her voice and smiling like the world was made of nothing less than sunshine and flowers and singing birds.

"Aunt Britt!" I exclaimed in disbelief, my mouth open wide in surprise.

"Evan!" she cried joyously, grabbing me and hugging me something fiercely.

"Are . . . are you . . . a . . . a ghost?" I gasped, trying to get free of her bear hug. "You're in Africa. I . . . I . . . mean. . . ."

"Was in Africa, dear boy. And, do ghosts give bear hugs?" she asked, laughing and crying simultaneously. "My, my, but you have grown, Evan. It's a good thing a missionary gets a furlough every so often, otherwise we'd lose all identity to each other. Now stand back and let me get a good look at you, dear boy," she added, pushing me arm's length away from her and exclaiming, "Hm! Hm-m."

"Do I measure up?" I asked, laughing as I watched this tiny bundle of energy and spiritual dynamite as she looked me over from head to foot.

"Physically, you amaze me, Evan," she remarked. "Already you are taller than your father -- my brother. But the spiritual growth, how is this doing? Have you grown as tall and as strong in your heart and soul as your body has grown? Has the inner man kept pace with the exposed exterior?"

"Hey, I profess to love the Lord, Aunt Britt. You know I do."

"This isn't what I asked, Evan, nor is it what I meant. I think you know this. Now, where is your mother? Your father is still at work, I would imagine."

"Yes, Dad's still working, and Mother went to the church to help the ladies. They're giving the place a thorough housecleaning. I mean, church cleaning. Did they know you were coming?"

"Not this soon, no. They knew I was due home for a furlough within three months. The church officials ordered us all home, however, due to the fighting and turmoil and unrest in the area in which our mission stations are located. Many of us wanted to remain, and die, if needs be, among those we love, whose lives have been so gloriously transformed by the power of God and the blood of Jesus. This was not to be, however, so here I am."

"I'm glad you're home, Aunt Britt. It's hard enough to have one's favorite uncle buried over there: no need to have my favorite aunt lying beside him too. The guest room's ready for your occupancy. I'll help you with your luggage."

"Thanks, Evan. It's kind of you to help. As for your uncle, my beloved, deceased husband, it gives me great comfort to have him buried over there. This

was his wish and his request, you know. Although he is no longer beside me as I labor over there, it helps me greatly to know that he is nearby, even though it is in a grave. Many of the natives have given their hearts to the Lord since his burial in their land. 'He being dead, yet speaketh.' Our influence lives on and on, Evan; don't ever forget this."

**Influence!** The word hit home, finding its mark and sending a dagger of conviction into my being. I knew that influence could be either good or bad.

Tyler and his mother came over that evening. Aunt Britt was a friend to everybody and it seemed as though everybody liked her and wanted to see her and be with her whenever she was around. Her presence was wonderful. As usual, I resented Tyler's presence, and although I didn't say anything unkind to him my actions conveyed my feelings. I was relieved when my aunt and he went home.

Day followed day. Aunt Britt fit into our family like a hand fits into a glove. Tyler and my aunt were frequent visitors in the home. I became less cautious with my attitude toward my cousin and even less guarded with my words. I was dribbling the basketball one evening and putting the ball through the basket every single shot when Aunt Britt's petite form came suddenly into view.

"I wish you were as good at making Tyler's life pleasant and happy as you are at making baskets, Evan."

Her statement stopped me dead in my tracks. Instead of tossing the ball, I clutched it in my hands in a viselike grip. I was speechless. Aunt Britt didn't mince words. No indeed, she didn't. Not ever.

"You're jealous of Tyler, Evan. In fact, I sometimes have the feeling when I pray for you that you hate the dear boy. Can one be a Christian and hate? Can he? You know the answer; no need for me to tell you. I heard what you said to Tyler two days ago out in the yard. Why do you harass him like you do, Evan? And call him names?"

"Hey," I all but shouted, "can't a fellow have fun?" Aunt Britt may be tiny and dainty looking but for what one sees is not what one gets when Aunt Britt makes a point. To be frank and truthful, my aunt is intolerant toward sin and to sin and with sin. No cover-up or smooth-over with her. None whatever. She very definitely believes that, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; and whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

"Evan," she said, looking me full in the face and making eye contact with me, "all your life, practically, you have been jealous and envious of your cousin Tyler. From the time he was small, you have vented your carnal outpourings upon him. Yet he has remained sweet and unruffled and loving and kind to you. This is what holiness of heart does for one who is crucified with Christ and is dead to sin and

self and is cleansed from inbred sin. Don't you think it's about time you face up to the fact that a dead, dry profession isn't going to get you through those pearly gates into Heaven's pure and sinless city?

"I had hoped and prayed that during these years while I was away you would have changed and prayed clear through to salvation. . . ."

"But I told you I profess," I interrupted hastily. Sighing deeply, Aunt Britt cried tearfully, "Oh, Evan, Evan, don't you realize that a profession and the possession are two diverse and distinctly different things! Surely, you know this. Jesus died that you might have full salvation: a born of God heart experience, not a mere head knowledge. This cancer of carnality is destroying you, dear boy. One cannot be saved, even, and not love his brother. Stop playing games. You are deceived. Or are you? No, I don't believe you are deceived: I think you know the score between God and your soul, but I'm afraid that you're too proud and haughty and vain to admit that you have a deep spiritual need."

"Aunt Britt!" I exclaimed, feeling like she had completely "disrobed" my profession and pulled the secret cover off my heart for all to see what actually was inside. I felt exposed. Betrayed. Miserable. Never, and I mean never, had anybody spoken truer words to me.

"Think it over, Evan," she admonished tearfully before she turned and hurried away.

Think it over, she said. How could I help not to think it over!

A sudden wave of seething anger rushed over me: anger against my aunt. This was something I had never experienced or felt before toward her. Always, I had had only the highest regard and respect for her and, like I stated previously, I loved her greatly and deeply. This sudden anger toward her, now, frightened me dreadfully. I knew I was in deep trouble: deep spiritual trouble.

Giving the ball a toss on the lawn, I ran into the house and up to Aunt Britt's room. I found her on her knees beside the bed. I knew she was praying for me. My voice joined hers in prayer. I wanted to go to Heaven. I was sick and tired of professing and pretending and of not possessing.

I did business with God: real business. Soul-confessing, soul-searching, soul-emptying business. What a difference, when I confessed and repented and got everything fixed up and made right with God, and Tyler. Yes, what a difference!

For all eternity, I will thank God for Aunt Britt and her frankness to me. Because of her, I'm ready for Heaven; saved from all sin and sanctified wholly. And one more thing: Tyler's my very special, much loved cousin and my ideal of what and how a Christian should be.

**Thank you, Aunt Britt. I love you.**