



A Gift For You

The phone call—the call everyone hoped for, and everyone dreaded—came at 2:00 am. “We have a heart for Brody*,” the voice said. Everyone hoped for the call because 12-year-old Brody had been on the heart transplant list for many days, and before long his condition would deteriorate to the point where he would no longer be considered a good candidate for a heart transplant. When that happened, he would be removed from the list, taking with it his last hope. But on this day, Brody and his family were about to receive an incredible gift—the gift of a new heart, the gift of a new life.

The Bible tells us that we are all in a situation more desperate than Brody’s, for more than this life is at stake. We have earned eternal death, because “The wages of sin is death,” (Romans 6:23) and “[We] all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). When we understand the original Greek in the latter verse, we realize how desperate our situation is. The Greek words translated “fall short” indicate a continuing action—we continue to fall short. Sin is not just about past actions, but about our continuing state of existence.

In good times, it’s easy to convince ourselves that this is not so. That we are really good people—not perfect, mind you—but not really evil. And then the neighbor gets a promotion and a raise we had hoped for, or buys a new car, and we discover envy in our hearts. Or we see a glamorous model or actress and wonder . . . well, let’s just say lust makes its presence known. Perhaps a car cuts in front of us in traffic, and we find a level of anger that surprises us. The more we honestly examine our lives, the more we see this is true.

As a young atheist and professor at Oxford described the experience, “For the first time I examined myself with a seriously practical purpose. And there I found what appalled me; a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion.” (C. S. Lewis,

Surprised by Joy) All this sin, we are told, proceeds from our sinful hearts. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil” (Luke 6:45). Indeed, it is our sinful hearts that hide our true sinfulness from us, because “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?” (Jer. 17:9).

And so we find that, like Brody, our hearts are the source of our problem. We are not going to get better. No regimen or treatment will help us—our defective hearts must be replaced or we will die. Brody had to go on a list and wait. No amount of money could purchase what he needed. If no one would give him a heart, he would die.

Our case is similar, but the Bible has wonderful news for all of us in this desperate situation. It tells us that such a gift is available: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Even better, there’s no waiting list, this replacement heart is available immediately, and once it replaces our own heart, we will not only continue to live, we will enjoy a different quality of life.

Everyone dreaded the call because the procedure involved serious risks. Before the healthy heart could be implanted, his own heart would have to be removed. Once surgery began, there would be no turning back. With all these thoughts in the back of their minds, Bill and Jill roused themselves in the predawn dark, preparing themselves and Brody for the fateful journey to the hospital. Once there, they saw their son wheeled off on a gurney.

We, also, must go through a kind of death first. Just as Brody had to allow surgeons to remove his own heart before a transplant, so we must give up on our natural heart. We must recognize that we need more than a touch-up here and there, more than a minor adjustment or correction—we need radical surgery. Nothing less will do.

This frightening risk provided one reason Brody and his parents dreaded the call that a heart had become available. And although Brody’s parents rejoiced at the opportunity for a better life for their son, another, more somber reality intruded. They recognized that the same event that gave them new hope had dashed the hopes of some other family. Brody’s chance at life came at the cost of someone else’s death.

Our opportunity for a spiritual heart transplant, for salvation from sin, for a better life here and now, and eternal life hereafter, also comes at the cost of a life. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Notice, Christ died for us not “when we were worthy,” or “when we obeyed God’s law perfectly,” or even “when we became aware of our need,” but “while we were still sinners.”

Brody’s heart was only going to get worse without a transplant. His desperate need made him eligible. And he had to depend on someone, somewhere, making a gift of a healthy heart. No hearts were available for purchase, and if they were, he and his family could not afford one. Once again, the same holds true for salvation: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23, emphasis supplied). So we find that the very verse that warns us that we have earned death, also announces the remedy as a gift.

The greatest, most valuable gift in all eternity. We need not get on a list, we need not wait. We can have it here and now, simply for the asking. We have seen the steps. Simply recognize your need, confess that you need this new heart, and ask God to give it to you. There is no magic formula, no set words. Just ask. Brody came through his transplant operation in high spirits. He not only had a new heart, he had a new life. But he had to learn how to live that new life. When we receive our new heart, we also need to learn how to live a new life. God has supplied the church, a community of others who have received new hearts, to help us learn to live that new life. You can find help in seeking a new heart, and in locating a church, by going to www.glowonline.org. Enjoy the gift!

*All the names have been changed.