

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 457

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the promise of God in Ezekiel 36:26-27: **"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."**

Robert "Jock" McLaren was born April 27, 1902 and died March 3, 1956. He was a decorated Australian army officer whose courage in battle made him a legend during W.W. II. One famous episode in his remarkable career involved removing his own appendix in the jungles of the South Pacific. A local chieftain and his wife tore up bedsheets for bandages and made an operating table out of floorboards. McLaren took two large dessert spoons and bent them to serve as retractors. They were sterilized together with a pair of scissors, forceps, a needle, and a razor blade. Banana leaf fibre was used to stitch the wound. McLaren used a mirror over his abdomen to see where he was cutting. There was no anesthesia. The operation took four and a half hours and his recovery was quick as he had pried his muscles apart rather than cutting them. A few days later he fled into the jungle with his tommy gun, pistol and ammunition belt to avoid approaching Japanese soldiers.

Heart transplant surgery, by comparison, requires a team of doctors and can last up to 12 hours. An incision is made through the chest and the sternum is split and held apart during the surgery. A heart lung by-pass machine keeps you alive while your heart is being removed. Once the new heart is installed the by-pass system is removed. Sometimes the new heart requires an electric shock in order to start beating.

THE POINT IS, NOBODY CAN REPLACE THEIR HEART BY THEMSELVES!

Yet, a "new heart" is essential to our salvation! Jesus said: **"For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person."** (Mark 7:21-23) A bad tree cannot produce good fruit and a bad heart cannot produce good behavior. Our old heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). That's why we need a "new heart" and a "new spirit." This "new heart," of course, can only come from God!

The 12 step program has been successful in helping many recover from substance abuse. The first two steps in this program are: (1) Admitting your own powerlessness over your addiction. (2) Believing that there is a higher power that can help! One reason why the 12 step program is successful is that it recognizes the need for divine intervention. Conversion also requires divine intervention!

An expert may be able to identify a tree by a leaf, a seed, or a piece of bark, but the easiest way to identify a tree is by its fruit. Jesus said: **"By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."** (Matt. 7:16-20) In the real world, bad fruit is easily recognized!

Joshua Milton Blahyi was a Liberian warlord once considered by the *Daily Mail* to be the most evil man on earth. His claim to have personally murdered 20,000 people is impossible to prove, yet it is indisputable that during Liberia's 14 years of civil war, he became known as one of the most inhumane and ruthless guerrilla leaders in Africa's history. His crimes included child sacrifice, cannibalism, the exploitation of child soldiers, and trading blood diamonds for guns and cocaine. Blahyi even gave cocaine to soldiers as young as nine. Since he went into battle naked, his moniker became "General Butt Naked."

Blahyi claims that Jesus Christ appeared to him in a blinding light and told him that he would die unless he repented of his sins. He repented and is now consumed with glorifying Jesus. His change of heart is obvious! The incredible story of his transformation has been told in documentaries on PBS, CNN, BBC, and other media including the New York Times. Now he is the president of End Time Train Evangelistic Ministries with headquarters in Liberia. Joshua Blahyi Ministries are also headquartered in the United States. FYI - Blahyi was baptized into Christ by the late Doug Willis. Doug was an Australian evangelist and personal friend of our family.

Yes! By their fruits you will know them! It is obvious that something happened to this evil man that transformed him into a Christian evangelist who bears good fruit! The difference between his old heart and his new heart is as dramatic as the difference between day and night!

Yes! This promise is also for you! **"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce