

To Die in Christ Was Gain for Michael

Michael Clarke

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Michael Clarke was born on May 6, 1964 and died on January 14, 2012. He is with the Lord. This is from Michael's Wedding on November 5, 2011

(Singing) *"not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross but is blessed if we trust and obey."*

[Pastor Kevin Williams]

Eternity, the next life, is forever. And the Bible says it's appointed unto man once to die, but after this, the judgment. [Hebrews 9:27] The date of our death has been appointed by God. We don't know when that is.

[Michael Clarke]

The most important part of that service was the sermon. Because that's when Kevin told you the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that truth is the fact that every single one of you has a soul that is eternal. And that soul, at death, will either go to Heaven or Hell.

[Pastor Kevin Williams]

And I know some of you are probably thinking, *"Oh, that's being kind of morbid, talking about death."* But I mean, think about this: Why is it, that when there's a great disaster, or some celebrity dies, you buy the newspapers, you turn on the media? Because you can't wait to talk about it, and give your opinion, and gossip, about someone else's death?

[Michael Clarke]

Heaven is to be with God for eternity in the heavenly city; if you go to hell, that's eternal torment. Now, Kevin explained to you how a loving God could send people to eternal torment. It's because He is a loving God that He has to punish sinners. God's love is infinite, and He offers it to every single one of you. And if you turn that love down, then you will go to hell, that's what the Bible tells us. But I can give every one of you also 2 pieces of very good news: One, every single one of you is made in the image of God. And two, God longs to run to you, put His

arms around you, cover you in kisses, put a ring on your finger, and invite you into His party. That is very, very important. To anyone here who is not saved, does not believe in Jesus Christ, you need to take that seriously. As Kevin said, I don't stand here as a righteous man, I have done many sins in my time, but Jesus took those sins away when He went on the cross and died. I would beseech every one of you, in love, to look to Jesus Christ. You need to do that. It's very, very important.

[Pastor Kevin Williams]

Let the one who wishes take the water of life the blessings of Christ, salvation in Him without cost. And if you receive the love of Jesus Christ, it is the best thing in the whole world. it's incomparable; your life will change.

[Michael's Testimony, recorded on November 28, 2010]

But I didn't believe there was any God, I didn't believe there was anything supernatural, I was an atheist, although I obviously thought Jesus was a good fellow. So I told my mom this and she said... So I started going to this church a couple of times. So I met with Steven, who was the associate vicar, and he said to me - I arranged to meet him some evening, I think it was before service, or one evening-- he told me a bit about Jesus, I think what he told me was that everyone's got a void in their soul, and if you don't fill it with Jesus, it will be filled with other things. And he also told me--well, I think this is what he told me, because I was still drinking and it was pretty hazy-- "we have a prayer you can pray, if you pray this prayer, give your life to Jesus, then you will be a Christian." So, as I said, there was no light in my life; I didn't see any future for myself, and I just thought, "Yes, I will do that."

And as a man of my word, I thought "I'm going to give myself to Jesus at this point." And in some ways, I did, I did give myself to Jesus at that point. He said, "Say this prayer." I said the prayer, I presume he gave me false assurance, and I went away, and within 3 days, I stopped blaspheming; within 2 months, I'd stopped drinking, and within maybe 2 years, I'd given up smoking as well. So my life did change, that was in 2002. So at that point, I was going to All-Saints, which is a charismatic Anglican church, and I'd also go to a church on a Sunday morning, which was a more middle-of-the-road Anglican church. And I stuck... I tried my hardest, I read my Bible, I prayed... I saw in my Bible that there was more, and at both of these churches, it seemed, to my thinking to get half of the truth. The charismatic church, they would tell you about the Spirit: "It's a deep Christianity, you've got to be born again," but they don't seem to live a pure and holy life, or at least try to, it seems to be very... you know, the Bible

says we know we're the children of light because we don't walk in darkness. [1 John 1:6] So they walked in a degree of darkness. It wasn't a full-on prosperity gospel, but it was some form of that. You can live this life, you don't have to... you know, it's all about the Spirit, you can live how you want, you know, do this and that. And at the other church I got more, "You've got to live the life of Christ, but there was no depth to it, there was no "You've got to be born again." And if all you have to do is come to church and live this kind of life, then you'll be alright. But I had a sense, I read my Bible, and I knew there was more to it than this.

So I was searching, but I think actually I was probably on the road to becoming a weekend Christian. I took up my fishing again, I was doing good things, and I would have probably ended up... although I was clean. The Lord was merciful. I met Paul; Paul started coming to All-Saints church. And I recognized something in Paul, he was like me, he was interested in the Bible, and talking about the Bible, and trying to do things more. So, sometime later, Paul phoned me up on a wet Tuesday afternoon and says, "We're having a Bible study at our house tonight, a chap called Kevin is going to be talking. Would you like to come?" So I thought to myself, "No, of course I wouldn't like to come, I'd like to stay, and not bother coming out." Well, seeking for the Lord, like you do, striving for the narrow gate, I said "Yes, of course Paul, thank you very much for inviting me, I'll come." So I came, I went up to chapel, met Kevin, Kevin spoke, I think on the second or the first chapter of John. To be honest, I still had a lot of charismatic teaching in me, I didn't agree with everything Kevin said, but the thing that most touched me about when Kevin and some of you others came, was the sense of love in your life, and the sense of seeking after God, and living a life that would be pleasing to God. And I had not seen that anywhere else, and that got me interested. I wanted to know more, I felt there was something there. So, I carried on going bi-weekly to the chapel prayer meetings at Paul's, because I'd set up my own prayer meeting at this time with a couple of people, trying to encourage them, and trying to get, something going, some kind of... God's message really. True, although I was the blind leading the blind; I had no idea, and I was trying to lead them, I was learning from Kevin at this time, and the penny was starting to drop. and then Paul phoned me again, God bless him. Because I had been talking to Paul on the phone about things, and we had been talking about hell; Is there a real hell? or is it you just die? or things like that. And Paul said, "Kevin doesn't usually announce what's on the Friday Bible study, but tonight," and this was about 4 o'clock on Friday, "he's going to be teaching on Hell. Would you like to come?" So again I thought, "No, the last thing I want to do is go out to Middleton," but "Yes, of course I want to go!" You've got to go, you know, if you're searching for it, you've got to go.

So I went. And Kevin did preach on hell. And again, I was still thinking about it, and I

had this old teaching within me. But at the end of that, Kevin gave a gospel presentation, and he explained Charles Spurgeon's conversion. Now I can't remember what that verse was-- Kevin might tell you after-- but at the end of that, Spurgeon gave himself to the Lord. And he said that his heart was strangely warmed. Now I knew that had happened to John Wesley as well. And I had thought that when I was saved... So I just said to the Lord that night, "Lord, why can't I have that? Why can't I have that?" And at that moment, my heart was strangely warmed. That's the only thing that I can explain it as. My heart was warmed at that time. And then, sometime later in the night, I'm not sure if it was when I was driving home, or in bed thinking, but it happened again. It didn't happen on the tip of any great thought, but just, "Lord, can I have that?" And I didn't quite know what to say about it. I did tell Paul the next Tuesday when I went there, but I didn't tell anyone else. And I was still thinking, and still going to my prayer group, and what Kevin was telling me was becoming more and more true. What had actually happened to me earlier, I couldn't have become a Christian in 2002. You see, I thought I had. But I couldn't have been, because becoming a Christian is about belief. You've got to believe. And if you don't know the truth, the true truth, you can't really believe. Although I had gripped hold of Jesus at that point, because my life was a complete and utter mess. As I said, I'm not giving you theology or doctrine, I'll leave that to Kevin.

This is just my life story, and that's what happened. So coming up to, I think it was this week, it was building and building in me, I had been thinking about it. And then one morning, I can't remember which morning it was, the Lord just gave me a picture, He gave me a picture of people walking to the gas chambers, like with the Nazis. Although this time, there was no guards. There was no guards. All I had to do was step out of that line. I didn't have to go down there, I could just step out, that's all that was needed. And He gave me another picture, of being in prison, I was in prison, I was in the prison cell of my life, and I was trying to get out, and I was banging my head on the door, trying to get out, and I realized all I had to do was open it and walk down, there were no guards, all the gates were open. And I just walked out, and I realized, It is all as dust before Jesus, before Jesus Christ and His cross, it is all as dust. He had done it all for me. Even me, the greatest of sinners. He had done it. That's my life. I just said, "You know Kevin, in some ways-- I'd seen Jenny when she had been born again here, she was very confused but in some ways, it was just a great relief." You know, I had been banging my head on that wall for 8 years, or all my life.

So, that's my story. Can I just pray with you all, would that be all right, to finish? Lord Jesus, I thank you for everything. Thank you Lord, that you died upon that cross. For my sins, Lord, because I called out amongst the scoffers, Lord. My sins took you there, Lord. I just thank

you that you gave me life and forgave those sins. I pray, Lord, for all those who do not know you, Lord, that they too will step out of line, and receive your peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

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