



Dear Friends,

Last weekend, I read that Bill Hayden had died, aged 90. Hayden was a former Governor-General of Australia and Labor Party leader. As I read on, I came across this startling statement:

He was baptised as Roman Catholic in 2018. He told Catholic media at the time that “there’s been a gnawing pain in my heart and soul about what is the meaning of life”.

I was startled at this statement because Bill Hayden was the first Governor-General who at his swearing-in ceremony chose to make an affirmation rather than an oath on the Bible. Hayden was an avowed atheist.

This new information about Hayden raised a bunch of questions. I mean, getting baptised at 85 is pretty serious business when you’ve publicly declared yourself to be an atheist. Why the change of heart? Was it gradual or sudden? What would Bill’s atheist mates think of him getting all religious?

I did a Google search and came across a story about Hayden on the ABC website posted in 2018. It said there was a turning point in Hayden’s life four years earlier. He spent seven months in hospital after having a stroke, which gave Hayden a lot of time to think. His friendship with Sister Angela Mary Doyle over decades was also influential in his coming to faith. His turnaround wasn’t sudden.

Unfortunately, we know little about the content of Bill Hayden’s faith in Jesus. I would like to know more. But his story is a reminder to believers that the gospel of Jesus Christ is God’s power to change the human heart (Romans 1:16). That means no one is beyond Christ’s saving reach and it is never too late for a person to be saved.

It’s true that more people become Christians earlier than later in life. That’s why our church invests heavily in ministry to young people. But we should still expect God to save people in their busy middle age, retirement and twilight years. Some of you first put your trust in Jesus in your forties or fifties. Others of you knew Jesus in your younger days, wandered away for decades, and have now been brought back to him. I love hearing your stories of God’s grace in bringing you to Christ. I suspect you may have felt a “gnawing pain” in your heart before coming to Christ for the first time, or finally coming home. It was Augustine who prayed, “because you made us for yourself; our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” I know that was the case for me before I finally surrendered to Jesus.

So, keep asking the Lord to save your family, friends, neighbours and workmates who don’t know Jesus. And for those of you who first got to know Jesus later in life or have returned to him after being away for many years, share your stories with us, so that we can all be encouraged to pray and share the good news with our unbelieving friends and family.

God Bless,
Mark Adams