

## **Brandon Sergey Kerr**

March 29, 2000 to January 30, 2012

Seven months ago I saw Brandon Sergey Kerr for the very first time. He was sitting in a school desk in Carinda's office. Her office is directly across from mine. My first thought was: what a handsome boy! With virtually no ability to communicate in English, it was with his smile that he spoke. It spoke loudly and clearly. I couldn't believe what "who" God had brought into our family.

They prayed. You prayed. We prayed and prayed that God would not send the Kerrs back without a child, and He answered our prayers. He sent us Brandon. This is the boy that God provided. He would be the son Tim would bring to our men's retreats. We would see him grow up here. I would be his pastor and eventual Bible teacher for a very long time.

And NOW he is gone into eternity! BUT why?

And we are all left with questions and lots of them. Why, God? Why would God let a beautiful eleven year-old boy die? Why, God, didn't You intervene? We want him back! Is he in Heaven? How can we know?

We would like answers to all these questions, and I am sad to tell you that I don't have ALL the answers. No one can provide answers to these tough questions, but I am going to share with you truth from the Word of God that I have found to be quite comforting to my soul these last six days.

#1 From Genesis 18:25, I am reminded that God, the Judge of all souls, always judges the right way!

#2 From Romans 8:28, I am reminded that I can "***know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.***"

#3 Job 2:10 But Job said unto his wife, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. ***What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*** In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

#4 Philippians 1:6 tells me that I can be confident of this very thing that ***he which hath begun a good work in Brandon will perform that work until the day of Jesus Christ.***

And this is what I know to be true: God began an amazing work in Brandon's life in some form or fashion when He moved Tim and Carinda to adopt. In fact, what I know is that Tim and Carinda provided a beautiful picture of Jesus. Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost, those who, because of sin, have been orphaned and in need of a heavenly family. Brandon was a picture of all of us in need of adoption into the family of God.

And nothing has changed Jesus is still seeking to save the lost.

God guided Tim and Carinda steps. They prayed. We prayed. Everyone prayed. And Brandon was God's answer.

Was God the Father beginning His work of calling Brandon to Christ? Listen to this truth.

***No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).***

Brandon was going to move from an entirely secular humanistic world and be dropped into a completely different world. In this new world, Christ was exalted—the gospel was preached. What was he thinking? How did he have such courage to leave, his *Babuskha* (his grandmother), and all that he knew behind on this adventure to a whole new world?

Other boys had said no to Tim and Carinda. Was this already evidence of God's grace working in Brandon? God knew why Tim and Carinda were

adopting a boy. Both were motivated by a desire to bring Christ into the life of a child who otherwise might not ever hear the gospel.

What a joy and shock it must have been to be immersed in a family that loved Brandon like Christ loved the church and they sacrificed so much so that one less boy would grow up without a Heavenly Father! Had he ever experienced such love and grace?

Was the experiencing of this love more of God's grace? Well, of course it was!

Brandon had already seen the harshness of life. He was born in a country that was previously part of the USSR. Now it was time for Brandon to experience the love of God.

Consider with me, for just a moment, the culture change. Two parents, three sisters, two sets of grandparents, uncles and aunts—wow. But wait, it doesn't stop there. Next Brandon meets teachers, Kim Baugus, Joey Kellet and Natasha Paschal, who are ALL over-the-top bananas for Jesus. They love him, pray for his salvation, and teach him all about the love of God and the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

On Wednesdays, the family rushes home to eat dinner and be back for AWANA. This is all new for Brandon. He has never seen such an emphasis on God and His Word. He struggles with this. He is a boy. He loves to play, and when he isn't playing, he wants to play some more. Mom struggles with this. She wants her boy to embrace the things of God. She shares her heart on her blog, and more people commit to praying for Brandon to come to Christ. Let me remind you:

Jesus promised: *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it (John 14:14).*

Imagine the first time Brandon held a Bible or sang his first hymn or song of praise to the Lord!

On Saturdays, he played soccer or basketball with coaches that loved Jesus. Now even in soccer there are devotions, and more God, and more Bible, and more about Jesus. Brandon loves basketball and this huge man who is teaching him to play basketball, and again Brandon knows that this huge man loves Jesus. Brandon must have begun wondering, “Does *anyone* not love Jesus?”

On Sundays, he is immersed in the Bible again in a Sunday school class. Norbert and Lauri White teach story after story, truth after truth, and then there is Powerhour with Ken and Linda Plain and others teaching him more truth.

It must have felt like drinking from a fire hose from Brandon’s perspective, at times.

Do you see what I am describing? He Who had begun a good work in Brandon was using parents, sisters, grandparents, teachers, and coaches all to draw Brandon to Himself in faith. Every Bible story was new. Some probably sounded silly for the first time. But this is all quite normal and to be expected from a boy that was being introduced to God—his Creator—for the first time.

Imagine growing up without a mother and father. And now you have a mother who washes your clothes for you and a dad who is the strongest man you have ever met. And boy—can Dad play sports!—is there anything dad can’t do? Imagine how good it must have felt to say for the first time, “I love you, Mommy!” “I love you, Daddy!”

I wonder if our heavenly Father ever tires of his children saying, “I love you Daddy!” For like Brandon, we who are in Christ by faith, have been given that same spirit of adoption whereby we too can cry, “Abba Father.!” (Roman 8:15)

Like Brandon, ALL are in need of adoption. No one is automatically a child of God. Sinners, of all races, ethnicities, countries, and ages must hear the gospel and believe the promises of God.

I want you to see the love of God. How could a boy like Brandon be expected to put his faith in Christ without God opening His eyes? And God moved in amazing ways to let Brandon see a sub-culture that loved him. Everyone loved him.

But Brandon wasn't baptized yet! And Brandon didn't make a glorious profession faith in front of the entire church or at Camp Anchorage! And, we don't know if Brandon ever asked Jesus into his heart! Wait a minute!

All the things that we look for to assure ourselves of conversion are not necessary for salvation. For by grace are you saved through faith (Eph 2.8).

Brandon was being taught the gospel nearly every day of the week.

All that is necessary for salvation is faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul describes what Brandon needed to believe to be saved.

*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)*

The Philippian jailor asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and the response was simple. "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved**" (Acts 16:31). Nothing more is needed. This belief changes a person, and Brandon was changing.

**I have in my hands three emails that all describe three different times**  
Let me share them with you.

Brandon was doing his best to reconcile all that he was learning here with the years of secular indoctrination from a communist country that taught him he came from monkeys. Of course he struggled, but struggles with your faith don't mean you are NOT saved.

REMEMBER the Apostle Peter.

At any given point in Peter's life—one might have thought he wasn't saved. Peter's confession of faith in Christ was the beginning of God doing a work in Peter, and I believe with all my heart that God began a good work in Brandon's life and the culmination of that good work will be finished at the day of Jesus Christ!

This idea that God made him was all new. He had to take it in. He had to process all of it.

Pastor Sean, how can you be so confident? I am confident because the Word of God does not allow me to think that **He** who begins a good work occasionally stops short of performing that work.

Let me close with the very words that the Apostle Paul would share with us if He were here.

*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

*Wherefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

There is only one way these words can be of comfort to you, and that is if you have professed faith in Christ as the One who died for your sins.