

Ephesians 2:1-10
9am SMAS Service
(23.10.2011)

Today's epistle one I've chosen for the next service of Baptism and Confirmation rather than being the regular lectionary reading. It was rather difficult knowing what readings to have this morning because the set readings for today, at least the Gospel anyway, is the very one I want for next week's concluding talk in the series about what we give to God. If you've been here each week you would have heard me talk on giving Him our worship; giving Him our gifts/talents and giving Him our money; next week it is giving Him our hearts, minds, strength – that is, everything. Giving ourselves, our life.

But for this morning I want to look at what God gives us and that is clearly shown in the reading from Ephesians 2:1-10.

I wonder what went through Gadaffi's mind when he was captured. Knowing they would probably kill him? People say when they have a narrow escape that the whole of their life flashes before them don't they. I know that to be true from some narrow escapes that I have had. For myself it has been a flash of all those I love incorporating times together. It is amazing how much you can fit into a couple of seconds possible pre-death experience!

But I wonder if it would be those sorts of things that when through Gaddafi's mind? I was thinking about this when hearing news that those who captured him were saying that he was being transported and was killed in cross-fire rather than they shot him. We will probably never know the truth of how he died or even how he was captured. Was he caught cowering? That seems plausible and is what started my thinking. Was he cowering from the fright of what they would do to him? Most likely, yes. But could he have, in that moment of cowering, or of being transported, have been thinking about all he has done in his life? Could he possibly have felt a genuine remorse for the suffering he has caused. Or would it have only been about himself and what might happen to him. Would there have been any thought going on as to what divine judgement might await him for all of the bad things he had inflicted on others?

We will never know of course. But, and yes it is a very big but, if in that short time between capture and death Gaddafi had recognised Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, heartily repenting of

his sins in that newly found faith, he could be basking in the wonder of heaven. For most of us that is a shocking thought.

But it is a thought that this passage encourages. 'For it is by grace you have been saved through faith.' Paul is quite clear about it not being through works, that is what we have done. I first encountered this passage in depth just after I was 40. I had been selected to go and work as a youth leader on the Billy Graham Missions touring this country. We were called 'counsellors' and we had to undergo some training and bible teaching. This passage was the subject of one of classes. I can vividly remember being totally shocked by it. Having gone to church all of my life and firmly believing that I had to be a good person (with all that might entail!) here I learnt that what saved me, what gave me a place in the eternal Kingdom of God was, surprisingly, absolutely nothing to do with my goodness or what I might or might not have done. What saved me was God's grace through my faith in Him.

Now of course this does not give us permission to rush off and do something bad or hurtful to anyone because we are saved people who know Christ. Knowing Christ and being saved will influence the sort of person we are as we grow more Christlike. But it does quite clearly show us that it is God's amazing love and forgiveness of us. Us who really don't deserve His dying on the cross to pay our debts. And He gives it, we can't earn it, He gives it to those who have faith and trust in Him. **Amen.**