

Lent Day 21

Friday March 24, 2017

Reading: Romans 9:1-18

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.

Reflection

A number of years ago we lost my half sister to cancer, of course it was a very sad time but there was also joy involved. As I sent out a prayer request to my church I realized that I would normally have included a request that God would use that time to bring certain family members to faith in Jesus, but they were already there. God had answered my prayers for them which I had been praying for years. It was a happy moment. I continue to have people I care about on that list.

Paul is expressing something similar in this passage. He has a deep sense of love for ethnic Jewish people who have not received the gospel about Jesus their Messiah, maybe even rejected it. He loves them so much he can imagine a swap — he would give up his salvation if it meant theirs. He's not making that trade of course, it doesn't work that way. But his concern is there, at that level and he wants his readers to care too.

Lent is a time of introspection and self examination, but this isn't a call to be a group of naval gazers. We are a part of two communities: the Christian community and the non-Christian community. Our hearts for the non-Christian people should reflect God's own for those who are separate from him — deeply desiring their salvation. Lent is a time for concern and love.

Prayer

Father God, fill our hearts with love for our people and yours. Make our joy complete by bringing them to faith in Jesus. Amen.