

## **Lent Day 23**

Monday March 27, 2017

### **Reading:** Romans 9:30-10:4

*2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.*

### **Reflection**

Paul knows what he's talking about here. In fact, this may be the most autobiographical thing he's ever written. We can see the Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, with papers in hand on the road to Damascus, ready to deal with these renegade Jews who had the audacity to claim that Jesus of Nazareth, a crucified, failed, would be Messiah, was in fact the Messiah! He had been groomed his whole life to deal with this menace and he was going to get the job done before these crazy people brought down the wrath of God on all of Israel again! Oh, was he zealous — he was breathing curses.

But, in a flash, everything changed. Suddenly the whole world was blotted out in a blaze of light which knocked Saul to the ground and a heavenly voice called out to him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Whether this was an angel of the Lord, or the Lord himself Saul didn't know but he knew he was on dangerous ground — literally. So, he asks the lead in question, "Who are you Lord?" Then the shocking response, "I am Jesus." These followers of the Way had claimed their Jesus had risen from the dead and now Saul was face to face with the risen Jesus. If Jesus was raised, that meant God had raised him. Israel's God had vindicated Jesus which meant Jesus was who he said he was, Messiah. Which also meant that Jesus had done as Messiah what he had said he would do, rescue his people Israel. Until then Saul had lacked knowledge.

Saul had had zeal but not according to knowledge, but once that knowledge came, his life and direction were transformed. He was now zealous for God, but according to knowledge. Which is why he zealously preached the gospel of Jesus to bring others to a saving knowledge of the righteousness of God, Jesus the Messiah.

How does this impact our lenten journey? We too run the risk of having zeal without knowledge. If our efforts are not centred around and point to Jesus — his death and resurrection — then they are mere good works meant to establish our own righteousness. Lenten renewal must always push us back to the forgiving, cleansing and empowering work of the cross of Jesus. We must be, like Paul, zealous according to knowledge, knowing that only the work of Jesus can make us God's own people.

### **Prayer**

Father, thank you for the knowledge of your good news in Jesus. Help us to come back to your cross every time. Keep us from the folly of trying to establish our own righteousness. Amen.