

Acts 26:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Analysis

When we were all fallen to the earth—Unlike the accounts in Acts 9 and 22, Paul here emphasizes that his entire traveling company fell prostrate, not merely himself, underscoring the overwhelming divine power present.

In the Hebrew tongue (τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ, *tē Hebraidi dialektō*)—More precisely Aramaic, the common language of Palestinian Jews. Christ addresses Saul in his native tongue, making the encounter intensely personal.

Why persecutest thou me? (τί με διώκεις; *ti me diōkeis*)—The present tense verb reveals ongoing persecution. Christ identifies so completely with His church that to persecute believers is to persecute Him directly (cf. Matthew 25:40).

Hard for thee to kick against the pricks (σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν, *sklēron soi pros kentra laktizein*)—A Greek proverb about an ox kicking against the goad, injuring itself while resisting the farmer. Saul's persecution was self-destructive resistance to divine conviction, likely building since Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7:58).

Historical Context

Paul recounts his conversion before King Agrippa II (AD 60) in Caesarea. This is the third account of the Damascus road experience in Acts (chapters 9, 22, 26), each tailored to its audience. The 'pricks' metaphor was familiar to Greek audiences, suggesting Luke preserves Paul's actual rhetorical adaptation to Agrippa's Hellenistic culture. Stephen's dying prayer and testimony (Acts 7:54-60) likely planted seeds of conviction that tormented Saul until this confrontation.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What convictions have you been 'kicking against' that may be God's goad redirecting your life?
2. How does Christ's identification with persecuted believers ('why persecutest thou me?') shape how you view suffering for the faith?

Interlinear Text

πάντων	δέ	καταπεσόντων	ἡμῶν	εἰς	τὴν	γῆν	
all	And	fallen	when we	to	G3588	the earth	
G3956	G1161	G2667	G2257	G1519		G1093	
ἤκουσα	φωνὴν	λαλοῦσαν	πρὸς	με	καὶ	λέγουσαν	τῇ
I heard	a voice	speaking	against	me	and	saying	G3588
G191	G5456	G2980	G4314	G3165	G2532	G3004	
Ἑβραΐδι	διαλέκτῳ	Σαούλ	Σαούλ	τί	με	διώκεις	
in the Hebrew	tongue	Saul	Saul	why	me	persecutest thou	
G1446	G1258	G4549	G4549	G5101	G3165	G1377	
σκληρόν	σοι	πρὸς	κέντρα	λακτίζειν			
it is hard	for thee	against	the pricks	to kick			
G4642	G4671	G4314	G2759	G2979			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 21:40 (Parallel theme): And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Acts 22:2 (Parallel theme): (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

Acts 9:7 (Parallel theme): And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.