

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

Psalm 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

ἵκουσα φωνὴν λαλοῦσαν πρὸς με καὶ λέγουσαν τῇ
I heard a voice speaking against me and saying G3588
G191 G5456 G2980 G4314 G3165 G2532 G3004

Ἐβραῖδι διαλέκτῳ Σαούλ Σαούλ τί με διώκεις
in the Hebrew tongue 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.