

Acts 26:14

"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Many might ask, "What is meant here when the Lord speaks to Saul about kicking against the goads"? Actually a goad was a short stick used to drive animals pulling a cart. It was pointed and sharp on the business end of the stick, and should the ox or mule disagree with the driver; the animal would push against the stick until pain would override the animals own will. Jesus was explaining to Saul, that his actions and plans were in direct disobedience to God's will, and that it was futile to continue down a path that would only lead to more pain. Verse 15, **"And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.**

Can you imagine the horror and shame that Saul must have experienced when he learned that the very sect that he was seeking to destroy, was indeed the "Way" to the Messiah. Saul was not an ignorant man; in fact he sat under Gamaliel as a student. He was a Pharisee, and highly trained in the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Like so many religious people of his day and ours, he was so concerned with traditions and the letter of the Law, that he missed the Messiah. Saul had been chosen and given the full authority of the religious leaders of his day, to go out and destroy this specific group of people who claimed that Jesus was the Messiah. Saul not only had been chosen, but he wanted this position as well. Saul hated the message concerning Jesus Christ, and he had absolutely no regard for the men and women who followed what he believed to be absolute and complete heresy!! Whether these people were imprisoned or killed was of no relevance to him, as long as their message was destroyed.

This same religious hatred is alive and well today in the church. It isn't very hard at all to find ministers, religious leaders and churches speaking ill or death over other believers. They as Saul are convinced that those who are different from themselves are heretics, and they need to be stopped. Perhaps they are aware that they in and of themselves cannot stop what they so adamantly oppose, so they speak death over it until everyone who hears their message will stand in agreement with them! In almost every neighborhood, town or city, followers of Jesus Christ are committing murder against other followers of Christ through character assassination. Like the Great Crusades, they are convinced that their message is as pure as the driven snow. But upon close examination of their hearts, one need not look long to see that it is not love that motivates them, but jealousy, pride, hatred, unforgiveness, and self-righteousness that drives them on. In two thousand years, the church has mastered separating itself from the rest of the body of Christ. In the days of Jesus, there was one church within each town; where as today we have countless churches, with many towns having several of the same denomination. We have separated ourselves to the point where we are losing our effective witness on the lost. Church, if Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, and you are speaking ill or are set on destroying another church or minister, can you not see that your words and actions are destroying the Body of Christ? What will it take for you and me to stop kicking against the goads??