

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Kicking Against The Goats

Jerry Fite

Jesus had been observing the trying persecution of his people along with the leading proponent of incarcerating and putting Christians to death, a man named Saul. While Saul was in the midst of his trip of jailing more Christians, The Lord spoke the following words from Heaven: “*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goad*” (Acts 26:14).

While Saul had a clear conscience in his deadly work of contradicting the name of Christ (Acts 26:9), there were things prodding him which he resisted. The mental goad was moving Paul in a certain direction. What was pricking Paul? What was occurring that Paul could not ignore while he continued to breath slaughter upon God’s people?

The day Stephen outlined the history of the Jews, young Saul was no doubt nearby (Acts 7:58). He had to concur with Stephen’s recitation of events, but in the midst of the history, certain prophetic information may have remained with the conscientious Saul. Moses said unto Israel, “*A prophet shall God raise up unto you from among your brethren,*

like unto me” (Acts 7:37). Identifying the prophet was a matter of interest among the Jewish leaders. John, when asked, had denied that he was the prophet (John 1:21). Could the Jesus whom John was verbally preparing the way for be the prophet promised by God through Moses?

The truth could not be ignored. Jesus was the prophet promised by Moses. Near the temple, Peter connected Jesus with this prophet (Acts 3:20-24). How did God back the truth of this testimony? By miraculously healing a man lame from his mother’s womb (Acts 3:1-10). The force of fulfilled prophecy backed by the unmistakable power of God could not be successfully resisted for long by a man conscientious before God.

Observing the character of people as they faced their death by Saul’s vote was no doubt a moving moment for Saul. He was there looking over the garments as Stephen’s life was pummeled out of him with stones. Stephen claims to be seeing Jesus, the son of man, upon the right hand of God. One might at first dismiss this as an illusion, but he hears Stephen appealing to the Lord to receive his spirit, and graciously

say, “*lay not this sin to their charge*” (Acts 7:55-60). To die without doubt and without a vengeful spirit certainly weighed upon Saul’s mind as he continued to resist.

Our faith is founded on the truth of the Gospel and confirmed by the miracles that Saul and the Jewish leaders could not deny (Romans 10:17, Acts 4:16). The powerful goad of fulfilled prophecy will prod the mind in the direction of Christ, if that mind is like Saul’s—wanting to follow truth. One may resist, but it is hard to continue such reticence if one is conscientious like Saul.

Our godly character, especially those moments when it is being blasphemed, can prod an honest onlooker in the direction of truth. Replacing the expected vengeful spirit with the unexpected graceful forgiveness can weigh mightily upon the mind of those who lie about us. May we live and be willing to die like Stephen that we may cause those who see our good works in life and death to “*glorify God in the day of visitation*” (I Peter 2:12).