

# To Kick Against the Goats

Rev. Dr. Peter D. Matthews



Figure 1 - The Damascus Gate around 1900 in Jerusalem, Israel. [www.goodfreephotos.com](http://www.goodfreephotos.com)

I sat here today pondering why certain people from the Council attacked my friend and brother in the Lord, Reverend Alan Colyer. I reflected upon the words of Jesus on the Mount of Olives when He delivered the 'Be Attitudes' sermons, where he said in Matthew 5:11-12 to the crowds:

**11** "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. **12** Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus said "you are blessed" when people insult you, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven". Whilst sometimes it is probably difficult to bear, we must be the salt and light and light to the town.

We must always remember the Psalms 37:23-26 that tells us the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. The Lord upholds him, protects him, and even his descendants are blessed on account of him:

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,  
And He delights in his way.  
Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;  
For the Lord upholds him with His hand.  
I have been young, and now am old;  
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,  
Nor his descendants begging bread.

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He is ever merciful, and lends;

And his descendants are blessed. (Psalms 37:23-26)

In our times of trouble or battle, we must never lose sight that God is always there in our midst. The Apostle Paul told the Roman Church in Romans 8:35-39 there is nothing that can separate us from God's love, not even a fiery attack from Council:

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? **36**(As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") **37**No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. **38**And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. **39**No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We must also consider for a moment for example when the community is gathered together in unity to rise up against the Council. Scripturally, God is with us, for Jesus said in Matthew 18:19-20:

**19**"Again, I tell you truly that if two of you on the earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. **20**For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them."

Therefore, when we gathered in the meeting on 28 April 2019, Holy Spirit was there with us, because when two or three are gathered together in His name, there "I am with them". I know many of us were praying during that meeting, therefore God stood with us.

There is also a lesson for those who persecute the men and women of God. Before Saul was converted, he was "*with every breath eager to kill the Lord's followers*" spewing all sorts of nastiness and murderous threats out of his mouth.<sup>1</sup> He went to the High Priest and managed to get documents for the arrest of Christian preachers in Damascus, to take them to Jerusalem in chains. On the way, he saw a light from heaven that shone all around him that blinded him, saying "**Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?**"<sup>2</sup>

Saul replied, "Who are you lord?"

Acts 9:5 tells us that Jesus replied, but as Paul retells the story in Acts 26:14 once he arrived in Damascus, he said that Jesus spoke to him in Aramaic. The translation is as follows: And the voice replied, "**And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the goads.**"<sup>3</sup>

The English word "goads" is Aramaic. For those who have not studied Babylonian Aramaic, the word מטרקא transliterated as goads from Act 9:5 means "sting", "lashing" unto death – to offer vain and perilous ruin. It is also found in 4 Maccabees 14:19 in reference to bees stinging to death as follows:

When it is time to build their hive, even the bees defend themselves against those who come too close. They sting like an iron dart anyone who comes near the hive, and fight even to the death. (4 Maccabees 14:19)

The ancient Greek philosopher Pindar (c518-438BC) wrote an interesting analogy using the word goads:

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<sup>1</sup> Act 9:1

<sup>2</sup> Acts 9:4

<sup>3</sup> Acts 9:5 King James 2000 Bible

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It is best to take the yoke on one's neck and bear it lightly; kicking against the goad makes the path treacherous. I hope that I may associate with noble men and please them. (Pindar Pyth 2:173)<sup>4</sup>

Pindar teaches from the Greek perspective that kicking against the goads will lead to a treacherous path (unto death), whereas we should seek to associate with noble and wise, godly men who would teach us the path of righteousness.

Essentially for us today it means, if you attack a man or woman of God, it will be either a Damascus Road experience by the grace of God, or if you refuse to yield, you will receive the “sting” or the “whip” – the lashings that Christ received before crucifixion. It is to bring you to a place of repentance, but if you choose not to repent, it will not stop at thirty-nine lashing – it will be unto death. The alternative is for the person to become “exceedingly mad” as Saul became irrational fighting against God himself. The fight is not just against men. It is against God himself. Saul’s zeal for retribution had clouded his judgement to such a degree that he had gone mad with rage. Fortunately, he chose repentance, and he rose to become a great leader in Christ. We must choose repentance every time!!! Everyone should ponder the ramifications of these Scriptures before attacking a man or woman of God – for you might just be fighting against God himself.

Always remember “*you are blessed*” when people insult you, “*Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven*”. It is their choice if they stand against you. God is willing to forgive, as long as they come with an apologetic heart. Pray for God’s grace and a Damascus Road experience, and maybe your prayers might turn them into someone great!

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<sup>4</sup> Pindar: Pythian 2, For Hieron of Syracuse Chariot Race ?470 or 468, Diane Aronson Svarlien, Ed., (1990) Perseus.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0162%3Abook%3DP.%3Apoem%3D2>