

Kicking Against the Goads

Joe Slater

Few of us have plowed with oxen – and aren't we thankful! If we had lived 150 years ago, when that was common, we would have a better grasp of what Jesus said to Saul of Tarsus: *"It is hard for you to kick against the goads"* (Acts 26:14).

A goad is a sharp instrument used to prod an unwilling ox, motivating him to move ahead. Upon feeling the sharp sting, the ox might kick in an almost instinctive attempt to defend himself. However, kicking against the pointed goad would only result in further pain from a self-inflicted poke. Resistance was counter-productive! Real relief would be found in submission; pull the plow, and the farmer will stop jabbing.

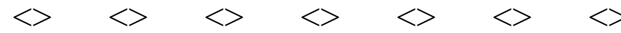
Saul of Tarsus had been resisting the gospel of Christ. He had heard Stephen's defense (Acts 7); but, rather than accept the truth, Saul resisted it, leading the mob which stoned that noble Christian.

Persecuting the church became Paul's stock in trade. There is no telling how many Christians he put on trial, seeking to beat, imprison, or kill them. But every time there would be an opportunity for the disciples of Christ to give their defense – and Saul would have to listen to the story of Jesus once again. God kept prodding him with the gospel, and Saul kept kicking against it. Finally, after being struck blind on the Damascus road and speaking with the Lord Himself, Saul stopped kicking. He submitted himself to Christ and became Paul the persecuted rather than Saul the persecutor.

Resisting God's will is still vain and perilous. Submission to God is the only sensible alternative. God loves us enough to prod us with His word to get us to go in the right direction. For example, He tells us what to do

to be saved. He tells us how to worship Him and serve our neighbors. He sets definite moral boundaries for our day-to-day lives. Sometimes we may not like what we read in the Bible. We may not understand that everything He tells us is for our own good. It may seem like the Lord is prodding us too hard. We want Him to stop poking us, so we stubbornly kick against His counsel. When we resist and "kick against the goads," we only hurt ourselves. But when we believe and obey His word, we find peace.

Are you kicking against the goads?



Dedicated to Mothers in the Homes

So long as there are homes to which

Men turn at close of day;

So long as there are homes

Where women are and children stay;

If faith and love and loyalty

Are found across those sills,

A stricken nation can recover

From its grievous ills.

So long as there are homes

Where fires burn, and there is bread

So long as there are homes where

Lamps are lit and prayers are said,

Though a people falter in darkness,

And nations grope,

With God Himself back of these little homes,

We still have hope.

Grace Crowell (via Voice of Truth International

But I Worked So Hard!

Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" (Matthew 7:22).

My friend, Gloria, was so excited. An avid quilter, she had just completed a quilt to enter in a competition.

Having misplaced the original guidelines that were to be met for her entry, she made inquiries. She then made the quilt according to what she was told. As it turned out, her measurements were woefully smaller than the original guidelines called for, thus her entry was rejected.

My friend was so disappointed, exclaiming, "But I worked so hard!" Certainly we understand the disappointment she was feeling. I asked if she had time to make a new quilt. But no, due to deadlines, materials, etc., it was too late.

While contemplating her dilemma I thought of some spiritual applications. One involves Naaman (II Kings 5), who was angry because things were not as he anticipated them to be; thus he exclaimed, *"behold I thought"* (v. 11). Life's great lesson is, quoting from an old Davy Crockett movie, "Be sure you're right and then go ahead." Of course God's word is filled with admonitions for us to do things God's way. *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). Just because we think something is a certain way does not make it so. God is the ultimate truth on any matter.

Secondly, there comes a point in time when it is just too late! (See Jesus' parable of the foolish virgins in Matthew 25). No doubt we can all recall experiences where we "missed the boat" by just minutes, or even seconds. But, regardless of the amount of time that elapsed, we missed it, period. End of discussion!

In life's experiences if we do it wrong, or wait too late, life goes on and we deal with it. But when it comes to things spiritual we must be both punctual and correct. If, at death, we have not followed the course which God has set there will be no more opportunities. Just like the quilt contest, there is a deadline. If the spiritual deadline is not met there will be no entry into heaven. Are you ready?

--Roy A. Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL) adapted