

Kicking Against The Goats

Joe Slater

Before tractors were invented, farmers used oxen and other animals to pull plows and other implements. If a tired (or stubborn!) ox refused to pull, the farmer goaded him, jabbing him from behind with a sharp stick. Such unpleasant stimulation might prompt the animal to kick. However, if he succeeded in kicking the goad, it would only poke him harder and increase his pain. His wisest option was to move along pulling the plow.

Speaking to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, Jesus said, *“It is hard for you to kick against the goads”* (Acts 26:14). Saul had heard the gospel numerous times as the Christians he was persecuting gave their defense; but he firmly rejected it, growing ever more fierce in his opposition to Jesus. God was poking Saul with the gospel goad; Saul was kicking against it, unaware that he was only hurting himself worse and worse. The more he kicked, the more he hurt; and the more he hurt, the harder he kicked. At long last, Saul encountered Jesus, realized how wrong he had been, and became as dedicated to proclaiming the good news of Jesus as he had previously been to stamping it out.

God’s word often tells us things we may not want to hear. Whether it pertains to moral standards, the way of salvation, scriptural worship, or anything else, we can submit to God by faith to our eternal benefit, or we can rebel (kick against the goads) to our own hurt and eventual destruction. The wise course is to submit to God right away. Unfortunately, people can be as stubborn and (may I say it kindly) as dumb as an ox!

God doesn’t jab us with the gospel goad because He enjoys seeing us in pain. He is guiding us along in the direction He wants us to go. Of course that is the direction which is best for us. Only when we refuse to

move, or when we try to turn off some other direction, does He have to poke us with the gospel goad.

May each of us, like Saul, see our mistakes, repent of them, and zealously seek to obey the Lord’s word.

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GOD’S WORD AND THE COW LOT

Christians are to pray for all of those who have civil authority. The reason is so that we may live our lives without any outside disturbances and may have peace or tranquility within our own hearts (1 Timothy 2:1, 2).

I once bought forty-two bred heifers at half price because the young veterinarian who ran the test for brucellosis and pregnancy stirred them up so much that the disease indicators in their blood became elevated. One animal had to be disposed of, and the others were quarantined for four months and then re-tested by a state veterinarian. Calmness and peaceful behavior would have had a beneficial effect on the young cows, but the opposite caused problems.

This is true for Christians living in a sinful world. It is also true for the church, for a family, in the workplace, at school, or in a cow lot.

Meanness, bullying, cruelty, and malice obstruct peace and serenity. For this reason we are to pray for *“all men”* and *“all that are in high places,”* that we may have an undisturbed life serving God.

How long has it been since you prayed for the school board, teachers, city officials, state and federal officials, Congress, and the President?

--Joe Dale Wilson (Vernon, TX) adapted, via *Old Paths*

To Survive And Thrive . . .

[Editor’s note: The following comes from a list of numerous things the church must do in order to stop the decline it is suffering in many cases. The author is denominational, but his points are valid.]

We must abandon the entitlement mentality. The church is not a country club where you pay dues to get your perks and privileges. It is a gospel outpost where you are to put yourself last. Don’t seek to get your way with the music, temperature, and length of sermons. Here is a simple guideline: Be willing to die for the sake of the gospel. That’s the opposite of the entitlement mentality.

We must stop using biblical words in unbiblical ways. “Discipleship” does not mean caretaking. “Fellowship” does not mean entertainment.

We must stop shooting our own. This tragedy is related to the entitlement mentality. If we don’t get our way, we will go after the preacher, the staff member, or the church member who has a different perspective than our own. We will even go after their families. Don’t let bullies and perpetual critics control the church. Don’t shoot our own. It’s not friendly fire.

We must become houses of prayer. Stated simply, we are doing too much in our own power. We are really busy, but we are not doing the business of God.

--Thom S. Rainer (via thomrainer.com)