

Kicking Against the Goads

Ponder: Stubbornness in oxen and people

Scripture: “It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14, NKJV).

Before tractors were invented, farmers used strong animals like oxen to pull plows and other implements. If a tired (or stubborn!) ox refused to move, the farmer goaded him, jabbing him from behind with a sharp stick. Such unpleasant stimulation might prompt the animal to kick. However, if he successfully kicked the goad, he would only increase his own pain as the sharp point protruded further into his flesh. The ox’s best option was to move along pulling the plow!

On the Damascus road, Jesus told Saul of Tarsus, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14). Saul had heard about Jesus repeatedly as Stephen (Acts 7) and other Christians Saul was persecuting gave their defense. He firmly rejected it, growing ever more fierce in his opposition to Christ. God was poking Saul with the gospel goad! Saul was kicking against it, unaware that he was only hurting himself. The more he kicked, the worse he hurt; and the worse 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 previously had been to stamping it out.

God’s word often tells us things we may not want to hear. Whether it deals with moral standards, the way of salvation, Scriptural worship, or any other topic, we face a clear choice: we can submit to God by faith and be blessed, or we can rebel (kick against the goads) to our own hurt and eventual destruction. Wisdom leads us to submit. But sometimes we are stubborn – I say this kindly – dumber than an ox!

God doesn’t jab us with the gospel goad because He enjoys seeing us in pain. He is guiding us along the way He knows is best for us. Only when we refuse to move, or when we go in the wrong direction, does He have to poke us.

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