

Window & Mirror Study: Paul – Kicking Against the Goats

Acts 26:14 · Jesus' Direct Question · Paul's Inner Struggle

Key Verse

"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'" (Acts 26:14, ESV)

Historical & Cultural Context

A goad was a sharp stick used to prod oxen or livestock. When an animal kicked back, it hurt itself more. Jesus uses this metaphor to show Paul (Saul) that resisting God's direction was not only futile, but also painful.

Interpretations

1. The Holy Spirit Was Already Convicting Saul:

- Saul may have felt internal conflict and guilt even as he persecuted Christians.
- The witness of Stephen's death and the courage of believers could have troubled him.
- The goads could symbolize inner prodding by the Spirit that Saul was ignoring.

2. Saul Was Resisting Jesus and the Church:

- Saul's outward persecution was an attack on Jesus Himself.
- Jesus identifies with His Church: 'Why are you persecuting *Me*?'
- The goads could symbolize the growing resistance Saul faced as he tried to suppress God's kingdom.

A United View

Paul's retelling in Acts 26 shows he came to recognize both:

- He was resisting the Church (external goads).
- He was fighting conviction and truth (internal goads).

Jesus' phrase reveals the futility and pain of resisting God's will and His perfectly timed intervention.

Mirror Reflection

God knows exactly when and how to intervene. Paul wasn't seeking Jesus—Jesus came for Paul.

He doesn't sugarcoat it. Jesus' honesty exposes the pain Saul was already experiencing. This reminds us that even in rebellion, God's grace is pursuing us, and He knows the moment we're ready to see.

Journal Prompts

- What has God used as a 'goad' in your life? People, convictions, or circumstances?
- Have you ever experienced the pain of resisting God's direction?
- How does Paul's story encourage you about God's timing and directness?
- Where do you see God's grace even in your moments of resistance?