

Week of June 10-June 16

GOAD-KICKING

Scripture Reading: Read Acts chapter 26

In less than seven weeks from the writing of this devotional, the world's attention will turn to London, England, for the Olympic Games. Athletes from around the world will gather to test their skill and stamina against the competition. Gymnasts, runners, swimmers, wrestlers, boxers, tennis, volleyball, and basketball players, etc. will be competing during these games for the Olympic gold.

One of the events that you won't see at the Olympics, though, is "goad-kicking." Goad-kicking? What on earth is that? It's an activity Paul had tried doing prior to his conversion according to today's chapter reading: *"I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'"*

In the ancient world, to kick against the goads, was a well-known expression for opposition to deity. A literal goad was a pointed rod used to urge on an animal. When an animal kicked against a goad, it would prove painful to the animal. The goal was that the animal would eventually submit to the master rather than fight.

In Paul's case, he had been fighting Jesus, the Lord, for some time and kicking against the spiritual goads. His kicking probably started at the time of Stephen's death. Paul's conscience surely must have been pricked by the experience as he looked at Stephen's face and saw the glow of God's glory and as he witnessed the way Stephen died asking for forgiveness for his murderers. Instead of submitting, however, Paul fought the Spirit's conviction and tried harder to shut out the voice of God believing he was doing God's will. The more out-of-control he became trying to eradicate the Christian faith the more he was kicking against the goads. The battle finally reached its climax on the Damascus Road when Saul heard Jesus' voice of rebuke and realized that he had been fighting God. He stopped kicking and submitted to God's plan. He became an ambassador of the gospel, sent by Jesus to open the eyes of people and *"turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."*

Although we may not have had a Damascus Road experience like Paul, there are times in our lives where we, too, may find out that we have engaged in goad-kicking. Although the pain of God's goads is intended to produce a positive change in us (see Hebrews 12:11), we don't always see it that way, do we? Solomon sums it up well in Proverbs 19:3, *"A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD."* I think I would prefer to tune in to the Olympics to watch some real sports action rather than participate in a goad-kicking contest. Besides, I would rather have a chance to win God's gold medal, *"Well done, good and faithful servant,"* than gain a gold medal in goad-kicking. How about you?

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Examine your life to see if you have been doing any goad-kicking lately regarding God's will. Repent if necessary and pray for a yielded heart to submit to God's will for your life.

Take-a-way: *Goad-kicking is a dangerous sport. It's better to submit to God's will instead.*