Introduction

Many of us desire to walk in God’s purpose, but what happens when we resist it—intentionally or unintentionally? In the calling of the Apostle Paul, we find a powerful metaphor that reveals the pain and futility of fighting against God’s will.

> “We all fell to the ground, and 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.’ Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied.”
> *— Acts 26:14-15 (NIV)*

Let’s explore what this phrase means and how it applies to us today.

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1. Paul Was Not Spiritually Ignorant

Before his conversion, Saul (later Paul) was a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5), zealous for the Law and fiercely opposed to the

early church. Yet, Paul wasn’t ignorant of who Jesus was. He lived during Jesus’ time, heard the gospel from Christians, and witnessed Stephen’s death—one of the first powerful gospel sermons.

> “And Saul approved of their killing him.” — *Acts 8:1a (NIV)*
> “When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him... But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” — *Acts 7:54-55 (NIV)*

The phrase “they were cut to the heart” (Acts 7:54) suggests conviction—proof that they recognized the truth but rejected it out of pride and anger. Saul was deeply impacted by this event, even if he didn’t admit it.

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2. What Does “Kick Against the Goads” Mean?

A goad was a long, sharp stick used by farmers to prod oxen into movement. If an ox kicked against the goad, it would only hurt

itself more. Jesus uses this image to show Paul that resisting divine truth causes self-inflicted harm.

Theological Insight:

The goad represents God’s persistent attempts to guide and correct us—through His Spirit, His Word, and sometimes through suffering. Paul had been resisting these prompts.

> “Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle.” — *Psalm 32:9 (NIV)*

Just like stubborn animals need painful tools to obey, humans who resist God often experience unnecessary suffering.

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3. Resisting God Is Dangerous

Paul’s journey mirrors that of Balaam (Numbers 22). Though God told Balaam not to go and curse Israel, he insisted. On the road, an angel prepared to kill him, but his donkey—enabled by

God—saved his life.

> “The angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path... with a drawn sword in his hand... The Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and it said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?’” — *Numbers 22:23-28 (NIV)*

Lesson:

Like Paul, Balaam’s story is a warning: continued rebellion against God leads to destruction—unless grace intervenes.

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4. Two Responses to God’s Conviction

There are always two responses when God convicts the heart:

A. Softened Hearts:

At Pentecost, those who heard Peter’s message responded with repentance.

> “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said… ‘What shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized…’” — *Acts 2:37-38 (NIV)*

B. Hardened Hearts:

But those at Stephen’s stoning responded with rage instead of repentance.

> “They covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him…” — *Acts 7:57 (NIV)*

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5. Paul’s Transformation: A Lesson in Mercy

Despite Paul’s stubbornness, God intervened. Jesus met him personally, not to destroy him, but to redeem him. Paul went from a persecutor to an apostle—the greatest missionary of the early church.

> “But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me,

> the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience…” — *1 Timothy 1:16 (NIV)*

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6. Application: Are You Resisting God?

You may not be persecuting the church like Paul, but many resist God’s will in subtle ways—ignoring conviction, rejecting correction, or hindering the spread of the gospel.

> “Whoever is not with me is against me…” — *Matthew 12:30 (NIV)*

Opposing God’s work—whether through pride, fear, jealousy, or indifference—is like kicking against the goad. You may not see the pain immediately, but over time, it takes a toll on your spiritual, emotional, and even physical life.

Conclusion: Stop Fighting—Surrender

The message is simple but urgent: Don’t fight God’s purpose. If the Holy Spirit is convicting you—through Scripture, through people, or through your circumstances—listen and obey.

> “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...” — *Hebrews 3:15 (NIV)*

Paul and Balaam were shown grace in their resistance. But we’re not guaranteed that same delay in judgment. Let’s respond now—while mercy is still available.

Final Thought

To fight against God is to harm yourself. To surrender to Him is to find true life. Don’t kick against the goad.

Stay alert. Stay humble. Stay aligned with God’s will.

God bless you.

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