

Acts 9:1-20

Psalm 30

Revelations 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

Saul still breathing threats against the disciples, went to the high priest (government) to get letters to the synagogues of Damascus to give him permission to arrest those of the **Way**, whether men or women and bring them back to Jerusalem bound.

Saul was a Pharisee; they were a significant Jewish group known for their strict adherence to the Law, their belief in the resurrection, and their role in shaping the future of Rabbinic Judaism which continues today.

As he journeyed, he came near Damascus and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he asked, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*

I have always wondered why Jesus said that. It seems to make no sense. Most translations don't have this. It is left out.

**What does it mean? Kicking against the goads? Goads were long, sharpened sticks used to prod oxen when they were hitched to yokes. Not wanting to be jabbed again with the stick, the ox would kick against it. It would soon learn that it was better to accept the direction of the farmer than to "kick against the goad." The expression means that it is foolish and futile to resist God's will.**

I like to read with intention. Everything means something. Whether or not this is a change? Or an addition? I don't know. I do know, that having it there gives me an understanding of why this drastic and chaotic event had to take place for Saul. He appears to be a man on a mission, thinking he's doing the will of God or doing the right thing for his nation when in actual fact he's as stubborn as an ox, and doing the very opposite ... "Kicking against the goads."

He's had opportunity to get to know Jesus through messages and testimonies of the church of his day; those who were walking in the Way, like Stephen for example.

Acts 7 tells us; When Stephen was brought before the council all who sat in council, looking at him steadfastly, saw his face as the face of an angel. Then Stephen began to testify. He testified of Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, right on up to the event of the day. In verse 54, They (the council), **were cut to the heart** (the truth angered them instead of setting them free) ... Why? ... because they didn't **know** the truth. It's in the **knowing** that we find freedom ... and they **gnashed their teeth. (KICK)**

Stephen goes on to say; "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" **(KICK KICK)**. They cast him out of the city and stoned him.

The witnesses (of the stoning) laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. Why Saul? He was at the stoning of Stephen, overseeing the event it seems. He would have heard Stephen's words, as he knelt, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and Lord, do not hold this sin against them." (**KICK**) When Stephen had said this, he fell asleep. Saul was consenting to his death. (**KICK**)

Saul had a **hard heart** towards the gospel. He made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging men and women, committing them to prison. This caused the church to scatter, sending the gospel out. Everything means something. GOD does not waste tragedies.

Saul was not alone on the road to Damascus. The Bible tells us the men with him heard Jesus but did not see him. They led Saul by the hand, speechless. He was three days and three nights in darkness neither eating nor drinking. He was praying.

Ananias, a disciple in Damascus is given a vision from God. He is told to go and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. At the same time God has given Saul a vision of Ananias. God has chosen Saul.

I noticed something in this passage that echoes the gospel today. Just as Christ told Peter of his sufferings, God says he will reveal to Saul what he must suffer.

When Ananias laid hands on Saul, something like scales fell from his eyes, and he received his sight. Snakes have scales, the devil is a serpent. Saul had been held captive in his heart by the enemy of Christ and His followers. The devil. But GOD, set him completely free. No more kicking against the goads. He is now yoked with Christ and led by the Holy Spirit and **Immediately** he preaches the Christ in the synagogues.

Saul would eventually become one of the greatest missionaries of the gospel and write most of the New Testament. He would pen words like; I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Greater is He who is in me. To live is Christ, to die is gain. A 180-degree change.

Saul or Paul as he was also known, was completely changed through this encounter with the living Jesus. No more doing the religious thing, now he's doing the righteous thing. His whole life is intertwined with Christ to the point that he could say, "It's no longer I that liveth but, Christ that liveth in me.

Father, I pray that my life would be so wrapped up in Jesus that you can't tell where I begin, and He ends.

