

## GOOD GOADS

BY PENN CLARK

A goad might be a sharp stick that one pokes cattle with, or a small stick used to continually tap them on the backside. They use them to move sheep or cattle along in the direction they want them to go. Sometimes, pastors and teachers use goads to do the same thing. It says this in Ecclesiastes 12:9-11:

*And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.*

Here is the same text taken from *The Living Bible*:

*But then, because the Preacher was wise, he went on teaching the people all he knew; and he collected proverbs and classified them. For the Preacher was not only a wise man but also a good teacher; he not only taught what he knew to the people, but taught them in an interesting manner. The wise man's words are like goads that spur to action. They nail down important truths. Students are wise who master what their teachers tell them.*

Proverbs and parables can act as goads. The fear of the Lord is a kind of goad. So is love and mercy. There are good goads and bad goads. Fear and condemnation are the worst goads to use. They will move people to respond, but then you have to use them continually, and to ever increasing degrees, as they will not bring about lasting change.

Instead of fear, we should move people with the fear of the Lord. When Jesus spoke to the seven churches of Asia, His words not only revealed their true condition and created the fear of the Lord in them, but what He said also included special promises that acted as incentives to overcome their condition.

He does however convict us. To do this, He uses truth or reality. The Holy Spirit can help us see our true condition like nobody else, which often brings us to our knees. We can see this at work in Saul of Tarsus as he travelled along the Road to Damascus, a light suddenly shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*"

He said, "*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.*" (Acts 9:5)

Jesus used the word *goads* here to reveal part of the process of how people come to repentance. Some teach that these were pricks of his conscience at work. That certainly applies, or it could also be the goad or sharp stick of conviction of what he had seen and heard at work within him, especially in the witness of Stephen in Acts 8.

**GOAD** GK 2759. *kentron*; from *kenteō* (to prick); a point (“centre”), i.e. a sting (figuratively, poison) or goad (figuratively, divine impulse):— prick, sting

As a pastor I have often seen people respond to conviction the way Saul did. It makes them mad. They vent their frustration by becoming violent or more hostile. Unsaved husbands will often act this way just before they surrender to Christ.

There are certain things that I do not believe God would not use to motivate us towards believing or obeying, such as fear and condemnation. Yet preachers will often resort to using these things to motivate their people Sunday by Sunday.

Jesus said that out of the abundance of our hearts our mouths speak (Matthew 12:34). This is also true of God Himself. If God is love and there is no fear in Him, how can He use fear and condemnation to motivate people? At the same time, the devil is condemned and is the accuser of the brethren. Condemnation comes out of the abundance of his heart. Listen to what the preacher uses to motivate people. Don't just listen to their words, but what their words are dipped in. If it produces fear or condemnation, you do not have to receive it as coming from the Lord.

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