

The Goads of God

Acts 8:1-4

2/ 07/ 05

Intro

So far in the book of Acts we have seen the church being born in power, the growth of the early church and the power of the disciples as they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 7, however, things began to change. Stephen was arrested and after he made a fiery speech which accused the Jewish leaders of being murderers and betrayers, they had him stoned.

It is at this point, the church begins to go through a difficult time. It appears that a dark day has come and it is in grave danger.

But this is when we see the church become what God wants it to become. There are many lessons for us in watching the church as God directs through His sovereign hand upon them all.

In these verses, we will gain insights into learning to trust God's hand in our lives.

I. God Uses Difficult Times

A. Sometimes God causes, sometimes God allows

- Difficult times have come to the church; it is wonderful to see how God uses difficulties in our lives to accomplish what He desires.

Illus – God had told them that they would be His witnesses from Jerusalem... even to the remotest part of the earth.

- God is not the author of evil. He has given man freedom to choose to accept or reject Him. Men are the ones who choose to live by evil deeds.
- Sometimes bad things happen in our lives because of our decisions. They are the consequences we set in motion.
- Sometimes God Himself is bringing discipline in our lives because He loves us like a son or daughter.

Hebrews 12:5-7, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him, for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines...It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons;”

B. For some, it's the only way we'll change

- God uses difficult times to bring change in our lives.
- They remind us how much we need God, how weak we are without Him.
- They keep our eyes on the Lord.

Romans 5:3-5, “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured

out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

2 Corinthians 4:17-18, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

II. The Key is Completely Trusting God

A. Even when you don't understand

- Many times, when we get into very difficult situations, want to know why these things are happening to us.
- But God does not often give an explanation.
- There are have been so many people who let their faith become shaken when they don't understand why something is happening.

Deuteronomy 8:3, “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”

- It would have easy for the church to question why God was allowing such things to be

happening just when it seemed that everything was going so good.

Job 13:15, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; I will maintain mine own ways before him.”

B. Trust in His heart for you

- If we are convinced in our hearts that God is for us, that God desires to work good things into our lives, then we can stay steady in faith, even if we don't understand why something is happening.

Illus – I have a friend who is going through the trial of his life. He doesn't understand why these things are happening, all I can do is to encourage his faith and pray for him. But there will come a time when he will look at all this very differently; I am convinced of that.

Illus – When pastor Jon Courson lost his wife in a car accident, a scripture came to his mind. Chuck Smith called him at the hospital and gave him the same scripture.

Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”

Romans 8:31, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?”

C. Be steady in faith

- There is so much more joy in faith when we are steadfast in it.

Isaiah 26:3-4, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever...”

Illus - When the church in Acts 8 was scattered throughout Israel, they responded simply by going about preaching the Word of God. (verse 4)

- Take hold of hope, it is an anchor of the soul.

Hebrews 6:18-19, “...we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast...”

III. Don't Kick Against the Goads

- A goad is the same as a prod. It was used by farmers to get their animals to go in the right direction.
- God was directing the church, but He was also directing Saul, but Saul was kicking against the goads.
- We learn that God said this to Saul in **Acts 26:14.**

A. Don't resist what God wants to do

- God had been speaking clearly to Saul and to the other Jewish leaders, but they had been resisting what God was trying to say to them.

Illus – Stephen gave a powerful speech in Acts 7 that showed them that they had been resisting God for many generations.

Acts 5:39, “but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.”

- The word is applied to our lives as well. There is a wonderful place of teachability that receives what God wants us to receive.

B. Let God direct you with His Word

- If we do not kick against the goads, but desire God's direction in our lives, then we need to know that He uses the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to direct our lives.
- Let us not be like the horse or mule before the Lord...

Psalm 32:8-11 He will direct you with His eye upon you.

Illus – Let us desire to give Him the desire of His heart for us... David's mighty men listened to his heart.

1 Chronicles 11:17-18, David had a craving and said, “Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” So the three broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David;

Conclusion

God is for us and desires to do great things in our lives, if we could only trust Him completely and have a teachable heart.