

**Acts 9:1-6****Are you “kicking against the pricks”?**

<b>New Revised Standard Version</b>	<b>King James Version</b>	<b>Worldwide English (New Testament)</b>
<p><sup>1</sup>Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup>He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” <sup>5</sup>He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup>But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”</p>	<p><sup>1</sup>And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, <sup>2</sup>and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: <sup>4</sup>and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? <sup>5</sup>And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. <sup>6</sup>And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.</p>	<p><sup>1</sup>Saul was still very angry with the Lord's disciples. He said he would kill them. He went to the high priest. <sup>2</sup>He asked him for letters to take to the meeting places at Damascus. In this way he was given the power to catch any men or women disciples. He could tie them and bring them back to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>He went on his way. All at once, near the city of Damascus, a light from the sky shone around him. <sup>4</sup>He fell to the ground and heard someone say, `Saul, Saul, why are you troubling me?' <sup>5</sup>Saul said, `Who are you, Lord?' The Lord said, `I am Jesus. You are troubling me. <sup>6</sup>But get up and go to the city. There you will be told what you must do.'</p>

Did you know...

- Saul did not change his name to Paul after he converted. Saul is his Hebrew name; Paul is his Roman name
- Saul was a Roman citizen through his father.
- Paul refers to himself as a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee.
- When he was young, he studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, one of the most noted rabbis in history.
- The school he attended was noted for giving a balanced education, including classical literature, philosophy, and ethics.
- Paul was well versed in Stoic philosophy, as reflected in his writings.
- Paul had two relatives, Andronicus and Junia, who converted to Christianity before he did.
- Prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus, Saul appears in Acts 7 when those who stoned Stephen for blasphemy laid their cloaks at his feet and in Acts 8 when he went from house to house and dragged off men and women to prison for being followers of The Way.
- Saul was an ardent persecutor of The Way. After his conversion, the hunter became the hunted.
- While in Jerusalem he was accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple. Dragged out by an angry mob, he escaped death by surrendering to the Romans and claiming his protections as a Roman citizen, including his right to trial by Caesar.
- On the way to Rome he was shipwrecked on Malta. He was 60 by the time he got to Rome, where he spent two years under house arrest.
- It is not known if Paul was executed in Rome or died of old age.

## Acts 9:1-6

## Are you “kicking against the pricks”?

1. Verses 1-2: What has Saul been doing before this passage begins? Why do translators choose words like “murder” and “slaughter” to describe his activities? Is Saul free to do whatever he wants, or does he need permission? Who can grant such permission?
2. Can you think of any examples of this situation? Can you think of any social or political current events that mirror this situation -- even if it is not to the point of murder or slaughter in the physical sense, it might be in a metaphorical sense?
3. What, do you think, is Saul’s motivation? Separating the motivation from the resulting behavior, is the motivation ever valid? If so, what behaviors might be acceptable arising from this motivation? Are there cultural factors that influence your thoughts?
4. Verses 3-4: Can we assume Saul obtained letters from the high priest to achieve his mission? If so, how do you think Saul might be feeling on his way to Damascus?
5. Imagine you’re making a movie or setting a play. What is the setting? Who is with Saul? Where is Saul (on a horse, walking, being carried on a litter)? Is he alone or with others in an entourage?
6. What happens to Saul? How does he react? What does he hear? Do you think it is a loud booming sound, something softer and gentle, or something in between? How does Saul react to what he hears? What do you think those around him see and hear (verse 7 answers this question)? How might they react?
7. Verses 4-5: What question does Saul ask? What answer does he receive?
8. There is a phrase in verse 5 that appears in the interlinear, is translated in the King James, is left out of the New Revised Standard, and is probably misunderstood in the Worldwide English version.
  - a. Consider the interlinear: hard for you toward piercers to be kicking
  - b. Consider the King James: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks
  - c. Consider the following (from <http://www.gotquestions.org/kick-against-the-pricks.html>): “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks” was a familiar Greek agricultural proverb. It refers to an ox goad, a stick with an iron prick at the tip used to prod the oxen when plowing. Sometimes an ox would rebel by kicking out at the prick causing the prick to be driven deeper into its flesh. The more an ox rebelled, the more it suffered.

What might Jesus be communicating to Saul by using this proverb?

9. Are there times when God might appropriately have used this proverb regarding your spiritual journey?
10. Verse 6: What does Jesus tell Saul to do? How does this instruction relate to the proverb in the previous verse?
11. Although not included in these verses, what does Saul do? (See verses 7-8: The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.)