

IV. Review: Tabula Rasa; Imperative Mood; Goads; Chastisement

Paul's Behavior Problem

The Neurological Explanation of Paul's Dilemma in Romans 7:14-Romans 7:25

IV. Review

1. Introduction

It is imperative that before we begin this last section of our study that we review the passages that have led us up to this point. We will center our review on the corrected and expanded translations of the passages we have studied plus the important principles which emerged from those studies.

In addition, we will note principles which we have encountered which help us orient to our human condition, among them being our study of the Theology of Neurology. We will bring all this together as quickly as possible but the review is necessary for two reasons: (1) so the example of the Santa Fé Trail will be more illustrative, and (2) so that you have a clear understanding of where all we have been in our study of imperative moods, child discipline, and the battle of wheel-tracks. We begin with the principle of:

Tabula rasa

Each of us are born with no thought of any kind circulating in our souls. Tabula rasa is a Latin term which literally means "*blank slate*." All babies enter this life completely defenseless and for good reason—they have no morals, no standards, no sense of right and wrong, and no authority orientation. If they were born with any sense, they'd rule the world and with Hillary Clinton's help they may well yet do so.

In order for children to enter into genteel society they must learn some manners, develop some enforced humility, and learn to submit to the wishes of their betters.

The first mission is order in the soul. Once established it is then the objective to instill principles which will maintain order for a lifetime. The only system of order which presents consistent standards which hold up over generations is Bible doctrine.

So, in order to inculcate biblical principles to children you must start at the beginning which means the first order of business is to save their souls.

Equipped with the first two power options, children may then be instructed in the mechanics of the Christian way of life contained in the imperative moods of the New Testament.

Imperative Mood

The imperative mood is the mood of volition. In ordinary communication the appeal is from one intellect to another but in the imperative one person's will address another.

The imperative expresses neither probability nor possibility, but only intention. The action expressed is to be realized by the exercise of the will of one person upon that of another.

There are four uses of the imperative mood in the Koine Greek. The positive imperative is where a person makes a direct, positive appeal to another.

Grammatically speaking, there is nothing in and of the command itself which indicates or implies that the request will be fulfilled. The imperative itself denotes only an appeal to another's will. This is why the imperative is referred to as the mood of volition.

The prohibitive imperative is used to express a negative command which prohibits the continuance of an act which is in progress. The imperative of entreaty does not convey the finality of a command, but has the force of urgency or request. The imperative of permission is issued with the understanding that the objects of the request are in willing compliance with the expressed desire. This means that this use of the imperative involves both consent as well as command.

It is apparent that the imperatives of command and prohibition are direct, one making a positive appeal while the other makes a negative one. There is no guarantee that there will be compliance with either.

In both the imperatives of entreaty and permission there is an increased expectancy of compliance due to the subject's faith in the integrity of those to whom he communicates. Again, there is no guarantee, but there is the assumption of there being a much greater probability of compliance. Whereas the imperatives of command and prohibition make a direct appeal to the volition, the imperatives of entreaty and permission make direct appeals to virtue. Whereas the first two uses make no assumptions, the final two do. Therefore, with the imperatives of command and prohibition, it is not uncommon to find attached to them penalty or punishment clauses for noncompliance.

There are three levels of divine discipline: (1) warning, (2) intensified, and (3) terminal. We have classified warning discipline by means of the term "*kicking against the goads.*"

Kicking Against the Goads

A definition from the **International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia**, s.v. "goad":

Usually, a straight branch of oak or other strong wood from which the bark has been stripped, and which has at one end a pointed spike and at the other a flat, chisel-shaped iron. The pointed end is to prod the oxen while plowing. The flattened iron at the other end is to scrape off the earth which clogs the ploughshare. Goads were kept sharpened by files.

An ox, left to his own inclinations, will drift and wander away from the furrow being ploughed. In order to keep him in the row desired, the farmer will apply the goad to his hind quarters, keeping him oriented to a straight and narrow path, so to speak.

Whenever the ox would stray, the farmer would guide him back in line with a prick from the goad. It was not uncommon for the ox to kick against the goad but such action always proved to be not only futile but also a harmful resistance. The farmer would simply push the goad more deeply into the ox's flesh until he complied with the mandate.

This method of training an ox to pull a straight furrow by narrowing his parameters became the source of the Greek metaphor, "*kicking against the goads.*" This metaphor was first used by the Greek classic dramatist Aeschylus in his play Prometheus Bound. It is the story of how Prometheus is disciplined by Zeus for stealing fire from the gods and giving it to man.

The message to Prometheus is that you can't fight the gods. Once their discipline is imposed it becomes useless and even harmful to fight against them just as it is useless for an ox to kick against the goading of the farmer.

Discipline is designed by the gods to bring wandering subordinates back into line. In this example we see the historical development of what was to become a famous Greek metaphor describing the futility of challenging the will of the gods. The effort of doing so was compared to the futility of an ox kicking against the goads of his driver thus causing, in addition to failure, increased pain.

The Greek word used by Aeschylus is the noun *kentron* and, according to Liddell and Scott, was used to describe the following: **Liddell, Henry G. and Robert Scott. Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. “kentron”:**

Any sharp point; the point of a weapon; to prick, stab, puncture, or punish; the sting of bees or scorpions, the spur of a cock, the quill of the porcupine; an ox-goad; a symbol of sovereignty. Metaphorically, to goad, spur, provide incentive.

The figurative use of the word can take two directions: pain and torment or inspiration and incitement. When the goad brings pain it means that the individual has strayed from the desired path and corrective action is sought.

To ignore the goads is to kick against them, intent on continuing the alternate course in opposition to divine will.

Those who possess a goad have the power to impose pain on their subjects. They also either possess the intrinsic authority to do this or have been delegated it by a higher power and authority.

Gerhard Kittel in volume 3, page 664, of his Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says:

The proverbial saying, "kick against the goads," is an expression of futile and detrimental resistance to a stronger power, whether it be that of a god, of destiny, or of man.

In Acts 26, Paul tells King Herod Agrippa II of Palestine about his salvation experience on the Damascus Road. While doing so, Paul quotes one of our Lord's comments to him at the time in which this word is used.

Acts 26:11 - ... being furiously enraged at them (the Christians), I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

Acts 26:12 - While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

Acts 26:13 - at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

Acts 26:14 - And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect of Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

Why does our Lord choose to use a popular Greek metaphor which has to do with bucking the tigers at Olympus or the Pantheon? Christ knew that Saul was classically educated at the University of Tarsus, and as a Roman citizen who spoke fluent Greek, would understand the implications of the metaphor in light of his hostile attitude toward the church.

Therefore, the Lord quotes a metaphor familiar to Saul in his unsaved status thus communicating in his vernacular the futility of taking hostile action against the God of Israel.

The goads are the wheel-tracks of righteousness which we ignore in favor of wheel-tracks of wickedness. This invites warning discipline from the true God of the universe, the pricks which come into our lives because of our “kicking against the goads.” Failure to respond to the goads results in intensified divine discipline which is the subject of Hebrews 12.

Correction through Chastisement, the Maximum Goad

Suffering imposed by the goads of God is designed as a motivation for us to adjust to God's better way. The Lord makes this clear in:

Deuteronomy 8:1 - All the commandments [**imperative moods**] that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers.

Deuteronomy 8:2 - And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart [**stream of consciousness**], whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Note: We are reminded here of the Latin axiom: *crescit sub pondere virtus*, "virtue increases beneath oppression."

Deuteronomy 8:5 - Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you [**mûsar: chastise**] just as a man disciplines [**mûsar: chastise**] his son.

God's efforts to correct the sinning believer through discipline, including chastisement, are designed to develop a vessel of honor with a capacity for escrow blessings.

Chastening comes to the believer as a part of God's instructive process. God loves His children and seeks to lead them lovingly into a lifestyle of right action. This is the subject of:

Proverbs 3:11 - My son, do not reject the discipline [**mûsar: chastise**] of the Lord or loathe His reproof.

Proverbs 3:12 - For whom the Lord loves He reproves, even as a father, the son in whom he delights.

We will never be judged for our sins but we are subject to chastisement because of a failure to utilize rebound. Such chastisement is the obvious result of our rebellion against the imperative moods of Scripture and our refusal to appropriate the grace recovery system.

God seeks to put down our rebellion through the chastening of divine discipline, much in the same way a father puts down a rebellious child through the chastening of the rod. The correlation between the two is clearly taught in Hebrews 12:5-Hebrews 12:13 which we studied exegetically.