

WORD STUDY

“It is hard to kick against the pricks.” (goads, a cattle prod)

<http://www.gotquestions.org/amp/kick-against-the-pricks.html>

“It is hard for you to kick against the pricks” was a Greek proverb, but it was also familiar to the Jews and anyone who made a living in agriculture.

(When God tells Saul (Acts 26:14), "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," he is borrowing a verse from Euripides (Bacchae 795).)

An ox goad was a stick with a pointed piece of iron on its tip used to prod the oxen when plowing.

The farmer would prick the animal to steer it in the right direction. Sometimes the animal would rebel by kicking out at the prick, and this would result in the prick being driven even further into its flesh.

In essence, the more an ox rebelled, the more it suffered. Thus, Jesus’ words to Saul on the road to Damascus: “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

Of the better-known Bible translations, the actual phrase “kick against the pricks” is found only in the King James Version. It is mentioned only twice, in Acts 9:5 and Acts 26:14.

The apostle Paul (then known as Saul) was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians when he had a blinding encounter with Jesus. Luke records the event: “And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 26:14 KJV). Modern translations have changed the word pricks to goads. All translations except the KJV and NKJV, omit the phrase altogether from Acts 9:5.

The conversion of Saul is quite significant as it was the turning point in his life. Paul later wrote nearly half of the books of the New Testament.

Jesus took control of Paul and let him know his rebellion against God was a losing battle. Paul’s actions were as senseless as an ox kicking “against the goads.”

Paul had passion and sincerity in his fight against Christianity, but he was not heading in the direction God wanted him to go. Jesus was going to goad (“direct” or “steer”) Paul in the right direction.

https://av1611.com/kjbp/faq/holland_ac9_5-6.html

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Acts 9:5-6 - "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"

"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. 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."

The phrase from verse five, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," is in the Old Latin and some Vulgate manuscripts.

It is also in the Peshitta and the Greek of Codex E and 431, but in verse four instead of verse five. The passage from verse six that reads, "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him" is in the Old Latin, the Latin Vulgate, and some of the Old Syrian and Coptic versions.

These phrases, however, are not found in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts and therefore do not appear in either the Critical Text or the Majority Text. Yet, they are included in the Textus Receptus. On the surface the textual evidence looks weak.

Why, then, should the Textus Receptus be accepted over the majority of Greek witnesses at this point? Because the phrases are preserved in other languages, and the internal evidence establishes that Christ in fact spoke these words at the time of Paul's conversion and are therefore authentic.

Acts chapter nine is not the only place in Scripture where the conversion of Paul is established. In Acts 22:10 and 26:14 we have the testimony of the Apostle himself. There, in all Greek texts, the phrases in question appear.

Acts 22:10

And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

Acts 26:14

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

When the apostle Paul recounts his conversion he cites the words in question. It is certain that the Holy Spirit inspired these words which should be included at Acts 9:5-6.

We must conclude that these words were spoken when the event originally occurred. Although they have not been preserved in the Greek manuscripts at Acts 9:6, they have been preserved in the Latin manuscripts (ar, c, h, l, p, ph, t) as well as other translations (Georgian, Slavonic, Ethiopic).

The greatest textual critic of all, the Holy Spirit, bears witness to their authenticity by including them in Acts 22:10 and 26:14.