

Chapter 1

[1.1 Grammar: The Final Frontier](#)

[1.2 Parts of Speech](#)

[1.3 Basics of the English Sentence](#)

[1.4 Main Sentences, Clauses, and Phrases](#)

[1.5 Conjunctions](#)

[1.6 Basics of Traditional Sentence Diagramming](#)

[Case in Point 1: The Grammar of Rom 5:8-11 \(NASB\)](#)

[Workbook Exercises 1](#)

1.1 Grammar: The Final Frontier

We speak every day unaware of the grammatical and syntactical rules that govern our language. Many of us may not remember the *parts of speech* that English uses (noun, verb, adjective, etc.). When one learns a new language, one must relearn grammatical terminology. This, however, has many benefits. Not only will we obtain a better command of our own language; we will also grow in our awareness of the communication process and how meaning is conveyed through word meanings, modifying relationships, and sentence structures. Thus, relearning English grammar along side Greek grammar will aid our interpretation of the Bible, whether we are using Hebrew, Greek, or English.

Throughout this textbook I will set English grammar along side Greek grammar in order to assist your learning of Greek grammar. Additionally, you may want to consult an introductory English grammar textbook. The ultimate goal, however, is not to become grammatical whizzes, but to learn Greek effectively so as to gain a confident and productive use of Greek in your ministry of the Word.

This present chapter will provide a basic review of English grammar. First, the parts of speech will be reviewed. Second, the basics of the English sentence will be highlighted. Third, the procedure for diagramming simple English sentences will be explained. Then, a set of examples will conclude the chapter.

1.2 Parts of Speech

The *parts of speech* are the basic building blocks of the sentence. Greek, like English, has many parts of speech. The English language is as an Indo-European language (see [Chapter 2](#) for a family chart of these languages). As such, it has been greatly influenced by many languages, including Greek. The two languages are very similar with regard to their parts of speech:

A. noun: a person, place or thing; e.g. *house*, *woman*, or *Jesus* (a proper noun)

B. pronoun: stands in the place of a noun. Many types of pronouns exist:

personal: *I, my, me, we; you, your; he, she, it, they, his, hers, their*

reflexive: *myself, yourself, herself, themselves*

demonstrative: *this, these; that, those*

interrogative: *Who? What? Why? Where?*

indefinite: *someone, anyone, a certain one*

relative: *who, which, what*

C. adjective: modifies a noun; it tells the reader more information about that particular noun; e.g. noisy cat, good woman, righteous man.

D. preposition: a word that begins a prepositional phrase. Common prepositions include the following: *out, of, from, through, for, along side, up (to), with, over, at, to*. These prepositions form prepositional phrases, which modify either a noun (hence, called *adjectival* use) or the action of the verb (called *adverbial* use). For example, *The woman in the house walked into the garage*. Consider also the prepositional phrases in Rom 5:2 (most Scripture quotations are either from the NASB or slightly altered from it to illustrate a point of grammar, unless otherwise noted): *Through Christ we have also obtained by faith our introduction into this grace*. In both examples can you identify which prepositional phrases are adjectival and which are adverbial?

E. verb: The verb explains the action or state of being in a sentence. Consider the verbs of Gal 3:11-12: ¹¹ *Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."* ¹² *However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them."*

F. adverb: modifies most often the action of the verb, but may also modify adjectives or other adverbs. For example, Rom 5:7: *For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.*

G. conjunction: connects sentences, clauses, or phrases in some logical relationship. For example, here are some common conjunctions: *and, but, however, therefore, for, because, if*. In Gal 3:11-12 above, the words and expressions *for, However, and on the contrary*, function as conjunctions.

H. interjection: an exclamation; e.g. *Wow!, Alas!, Behold!*

1.3 Basics of the English Sentence

- A. **The simplest English sentence must have both a subject and a verb**; e.g. *Jesus wept*. Even the command *Go!* has an understood subject (*You*) *go!* The subject may be a noun or a pronoun or any word that acts like a noun. Sometimes in English, and especially in Greek, certain parts of speech can act like nouns (adjectives, prepositional phrases, verbals [infinitives and participles]) and, therefore, can be the subject.
- B. **Some verbs transfer action from the subject to another noun**. These are called **transitive verbs**. Verbs that do not transfer action from the subject to another noun are called **intransitive verbs**. From the example above, the verb *wept* is intransitive. Some examples of transitive and intransitive verbs are given below.

transitive: *to hit, to put, to send, to visit*. Here are some examples: *He hit the ball. She put the pencil on the table. He sent the apostles. Jesus visited them.*

Note how the subjects act upon the other nouns. The verbs above describe this transference.

intransitive: *to walk, to sit, to laugh, to be*. Here are examples: *Peter walked (across the street). Julie sat (quietly). We laughed (together). He is good (good is an adjective).*

Note that some verbs may act either transitively or intransitively depending on the sentence: For example, *He walked* is intransitive and *He walked the dog* is transitive.

- C. Transitive verbs, as stated above, involve the subject performing some activity with another noun. This other noun is called a **direct object (DO)**. The direct object is often acted upon by the subject. For example, *Peter healed the man*, and *He called the woman a disciple*. The direct objects are *the man* in the first sentence and *the woman* and *a disciple* in the second sentence. The *man* receives the action; he was healed. The *woman* was ascribed a status, *a disciple*. It should be noted that transitive verbs may have two direct objects, one external to the action (here *the woman*) and one internal or produced by the action (the name *disciple*). Another example of an internal direct object would be *She sang a song* where the *song* is produced by the action. In this case the direct object would also be a *cognate*, that is, derived from the same word root (*sang* ≈ *song*).

- D. Occasionally the action done by the subject is done *to* or *for* someone or something. The noun *to whom* and *for whom* an action is done is called the **indirect object** (IO). For example, *The man bought a bone for the dog and She gave the speech to them.*
- E. **Three parts of speech can function in a sentence as modifiers—adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases.** Each of these might function in the sentence to modify the subject, verb, direct or the indirect object by providing more specialized information about them. Therefore, modifiers are extremely important in interpretation because they give further description and clarification to any particular word in the sentence. Additionally, a word may have multiple modifiers. Consider all the modifiers in Rom 5:11: *And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation...*

1.4 Main Sentences, Clauses, and Phrases

Once we understand the parts of speech, we now know the main components of a sentence.

- A. **The Main Clause and Dependant Clauses:** A *clause* is any group of words having a verb in it, usually with a subject. The main sentence, which may be comprised of a subject, verb, modifiers, and objects, is called the *main clause*. The main clause is able to exist on its own and be grammatically correct. It can be spoken by itself and make sense. A *dependent clause* (also called a *subordinate clause*) cannot exist on its own and make sense; it must be understood with the main clause. In the two sentences below from Rom 5:6-7, try to identify the main sentence and dependent clause.

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

There are four clauses. The first and the fourth are dependent or subordinate clauses. The middle two are the main sentences.

First Clause= *For while we were still helpless,*

Second Clause= *at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Third Clause= *For one will hardly die for a righteous man;*

Fourth Clause= *though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.*

Thus, there are two types of clauses: main clauses and dependent clauses.

B. **Phrases:** A *phrase* is any group of words that belong together, but have no verb. From Rom 5:6-7 above, there are several phrases: *at the right time, for the ungodly, for a righteous man, for the good man.*

1.5 Conjunctions

Thus far we have learned terms that describe the basic English sentence: subject (S), verb (V), direct object (DO), indirect object (IO), and modifiers (M). But how do conjunctions function in the sentence? Basically, *conjunctions* link words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs and convey various semantic relationships.

- A. **Sometimes connections coordinate two more or less equivalent components;** e.g., *Peter and John went to the tomb.* Here two subjects are joined by *and*; thus we have what is called a *compound subject*. A *compound sentence* is when two or more main clauses are joined into one expression. For example, *They went to the tomb, but Mary left it.*
- B. **A conjunction may be used to connect two or more unequal parts.** This can be most easily seen in the following example: *She came to the tomb in order to see him.* Here, the subordinate clause *in order to see him* is initiated with the conjunction *in order that* linking the idea of *see him* with the main clause. The conjunction *in order that* expresses the semantic relation of *purpose* and thus explains the intended goal or purpose for which they went to the tomb. A sentence that has a subordinate clause is called a *complex sentence*.
- C. **Thus, conjunctions may be classified into two categories: coordinating and subordinating.** Coordinating conjunctions connect two or more equal components or sentences. Subordinating conjunctions begin and connect a subordinate clause to the main sentence. A few examples of each are given below:

coordinating: *and, but, either...or*

subordinating: *if, that, because, in order that, so that*

1.6 Basics of Traditional Sentence Diagramming

Who enjoyed sentence diagramming in grade six? Yet, for our purposes, sentence diagramming may be the key to unlock the major difficulties of Greek. The prudent student will diligently seek to understand how to diagram a sentence. Throughout this Greek textbook, there will be three diagramming methods presented. A basic approach to

Traditional Sentence Diagramming will be presented here and at [Chapter 5.3.E](#), [Chapter 9.4](#) and [Chapter 18.3](#); a Marking Method for navigating a Greek sentence in [Chapter 4.6](#); and a Semantic Diagramming Method in [Chapter 27](#) and [Chapter 28](#). Each has its place in the analysis of a Greek sentence. For beginners, I encourage the Marking Method.

A. **The word order in the typical English sentence is relatively standard:** subject (S), verb (V), direct object (DO), indirect object (IO). Modifiers (M)—such as adverbs, adjectives, possessives, prepositional phrases and the like—may be found anywhere in the sentence close to the word they modify.

S
V
DO
IO
M

An example: *The man* *sent* *the letter* *to the parents* *of his wife.*

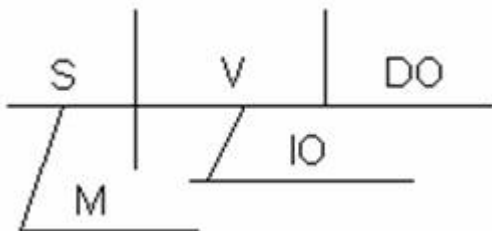
This word order is very important. To change the word order is to change the meaning altogether: *The letter sent the man of his wife to the parents.* In fact, this sentence is virtually nonsensical. While word order is very important to carry the basic idea in English, in Greek it is somewhat less important to communicate the *basic* idea. It should be said, however, that the variation in word order in Greek is *often* quite significant for conveying emphasis in meaning. The variable word order in the Greek sentence is often troublesome for the beginning Greek student.

B. **English does sometimes vary word order slightly.** These variations can be seen occasionally in questions, poetry, and proverbs.

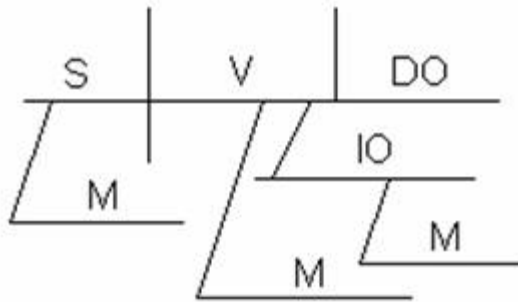
DO
V and S
IO

An example: *All* *have I put away* *for you.*

C. Before diagramming a sentence, one must first understand the sentence grammar and be able to identify all the sentence components. The most essential parts have been described above: **subject** (S), **verb** (V), **direct object** (DO), **indirect object** (IO), and **modifiers** (M). After finding these components, one puts them into this type of format:



Modifiers (M) are placed directly below whatever they modify:

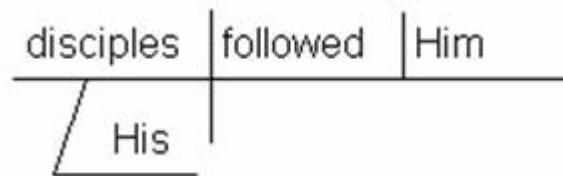


Example: Matt 8:23b *His disciples followed Him.*

Step one: Identify each component in the sentence:

M **S** **V** **DO**
His *disciples* *followed* *Him.*

Step two: Place the components in their appropriate place within the diagram.

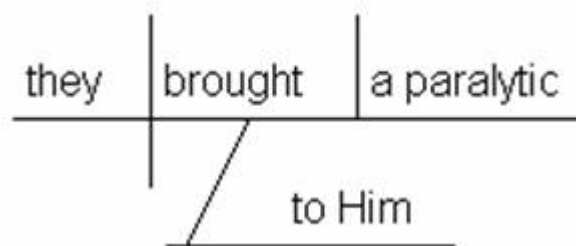


Example: Matt 9:2a *They brought to Him a paralytic.*

Step one: Identify each component in the sentence:

S **V** **IO** **DO**
They *brought* *to Him* *a paralytic*

Step two: Place the components in their appropriate place within the diagram.



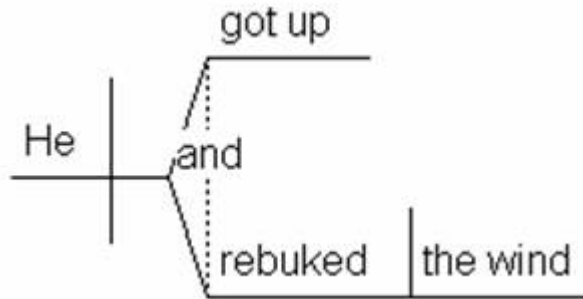
D. Diagramming two or more subjects, verbs, or direct objects, etc. (i.e., **compound components**) is easy. First, identify how each word is functioning in the sentence. Then diagram it as shown in the example below.

Example: Mark 4:39 *He got up and rebuked the wind.*

Step one:

M	V	Compound V	DO
<i>He</i>	<i>got up</i>	<i>and rebuked</i>	<i>the wind</i>

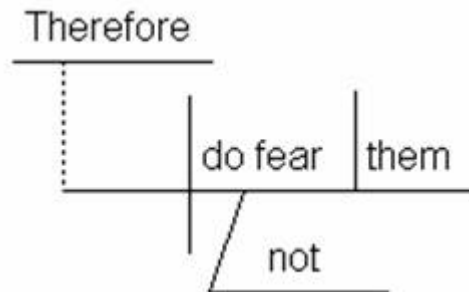
Step two:



E. Currently it would be valuable to learn how to diagram initial **coordinating conjunctions** (*And, Therefore, For*, etc.) and statements of **direct address** (usually set off by commas such as “*Brethren*,”). Both of these are elevated on platforms.

The initial coordinating conjunction platform is placed upon the subject line.

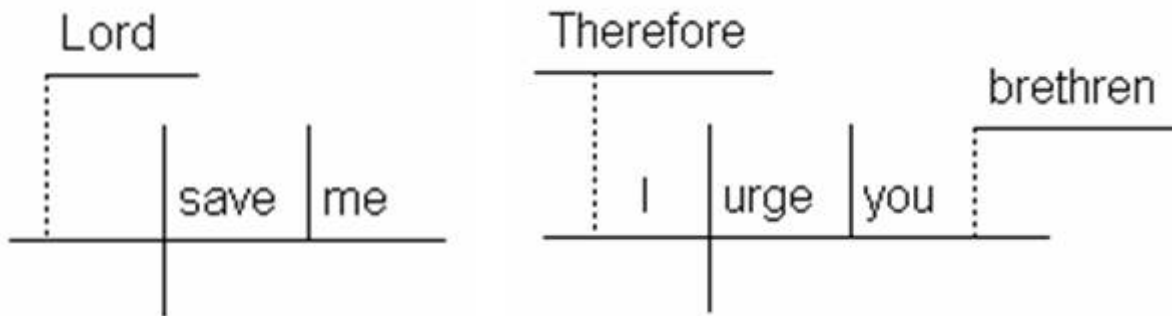
Example: Matt 10:26a *Therefore, do not fear them.*



The direct address platform is placed upon whatever part of the sentence grammar the direct address relates. Here are two examples.

Matt 14:30b "Lord, save me!"

Rom 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren,



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Case in Point 1: The Grammar of Rom 5:8-11 (NASB)

Here is the text of Rom 5:8-11.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, *having now been justified by His blood*, we shall be saved from the wrath of God **through Him**. 10 For if *while we were enemies* we were reconciled to God **through the death of His Son**, much more, *having been reconciled*, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God **through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation**.

Simply knowing the grammatical and syntactical functions of words, phrases, and clauses will go a long way in the analysis and interpretation of a given Biblical passage. To illustrate this, let's look at Rom 5:8-11 from the New American Standard Bible.

Essentially there are four main sentences (which are underlined). The first indicates that God is the active subject. In the next three sentences "we" is the subject; however, in the second and third sentences *we* is subject of future tense passive voice verbs—we shall be saved through the action of another. We are passive and receive from another! In fact, we are recipients of much (*Christ died for us*—v. 8) and virtually all of the verbs in the subordinate clauses (see *italicized* portions) relating to us are also passive in voice.

The real active agent throughout is Christ Jesus. **Christ's agency** (in bold) is emphasized throughout the paragraph especially with the prepositional phrases beginning with *through* and *by*. What has Christ done and accomplished for us? Well, Jesus demonstrates God's love for us by dying for us. His blood brings us justification. He saves us from God's wrath. His death reconciles us to God. His resurrected life will save

us. Finally, it is through our Lord Jesus Christ that we *exult* (literally *boast* or *glory*) in God.

Another angle by which to look at this passage is through *the five subordinate clauses*, most of which involve the time words *while*, *yet*, and *now*. There is a contrast between what we were when God demonstrated his love for us and what we now are. We were sinners and enemies of God. But, through the agency of Christ, we now are justified and have received reconciliation with God. We also await a final salvation. Here the message emerges how important and necessary this work of Christ is: We were sinners and thus enemies of God, deserving wrath (v. 9). We had a desperate need to be reconciled with God. Now through our Lord Jesus Christ we have this reconciliation and a future hope (see Rom 8:18-39).

As you learn NT Greek you will be able to more accurately analyze the sentence constructions of the NT authors and thereby better understand and apply their message.