

Chapter 60

The Optative

60.1 There are four "Moods" of a verb - the Indicative, Subjunctive, Optative, and the Imperative. These are described as "finite", because the endings "define" the person doing the action (First - I, we; Second - you; Third - he, she, it, they) Sometimes the Infinitive is also classed as a Mood, although it may be better to class it as a Verbal noun.

So far we have dealt with the Indicative Mood - used to indicate facts, make definite statements, or to ask questions, and with the Subjunctive - used when there is an element of doubt, and with the Imperative - used to give orders

Now we come to the Optative - used mainly to express a wish that something may, or may not, happen.

In the New Testament, the most frequently-occurring Optative is $\mu\eta\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ = "may it not happen", with the feeling "Oh Please, Please, may it not happen." translated in the KJV as "God forbid"

The Optative has five tenses - Present, Future, Aorist, Perfect, and Future Perfect.

60.2 Uses of the Optative

1. **To express a wish** that something may or may not happen. Because the Optative is expressing a wish for something to happen, or not happen, when used in direct discourse it refers to future time. Therefore the tenses do not indicate points along a time-line, but the state of the action. The Present tense has a continuing or repeating sense "May something always happen". The Aorist tense refers to a simple action "May something happen (once)". The Perfect refers to something being completed, with a permanent result "May they be in the state of having done something."

e.g. $\mu\eta\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ may it not happen By no means! God forbid!

2. The **Potential Optative**, used with $\acute{\alpha}\nu$ to express the opinion of the writer or speaker as to the future possibility or likelihood of an action. It may be translated by may, might, can, must, would, should etc. The Potential Optative may also be used in purpose clauses, result clauses, causal clauses, object clauses after verbs of fearing or effort, and dependent sentences.

3. **To express a command or exhortation** less forcefully than the Imperative.

4. Used without $\acute{\alpha}\nu$ in relative sentences, conditional sentences, purpose clauses, after secondary tenses in purpose clauses and clauses of fearing.

5. In **Indirect Discourse** (see Chapter 61), the Optative may be used to represent the Indicative or Subjunctive after secondary tenses. **Secondary**, or **Historic**, tenses are those used for past time - the Imperfect, Pluperfect, and Aorist expressing past time. Primary, or Principal tenses, are those used for present time - the Present, Perfect - expressing a present state of affairs, and those expressing future time - the Future and the Future Perfect.

When the Optative is used in indirect discourse the tenses do imply a period in time. This is the condition in which one might meet a Future Optative e.g. "He said that he wished that **they would do** something"

e.g. $\acute{\epsilon}\phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon\mu\eta\gamma\ \mu\eta\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ I was afraid (that) it might happen (lest it happen)
 $\acute{\epsilon}\phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon\mu\eta\gamma\ \mu\eta\ \sigma\upsilon\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ I was afraid (that) it might not happen (lest it not happen)

60.2 The tenses of the Optative : Only Aorist and Present Optatives occur in the GNT.

Note the characteristic $-\omicron\iota-$ of the Optative (replaced by $-\alpha\iota-$ in the Aorist)

Note also that there is no augment on the Aorist.

Person	Present Active	Present Mid/Pass.	Aorist Active	Aorist Middle	Aorist Passive
1	STEM-οιμι	STEM-οιμην	STEM-σαιμι	STEM-σαιμην	STEM-θειην
2	STEM-οις	STEM-οιο	STEM-σαις	STEM-σαιο	STEM-θειης
3	STEM-οι	STEM-οιτο	STEM-σαι	STEM-σαιτο	STEM-θειη
1	STEM-οιμεν	STEM-οιμεθα	STEM-σαιμεν	STEM-σαιμεθα	STEM-θειμεν
2	STEM-οιτε	STEM-οισθε	STEM-σαιτε	STEM-σαισθε	STEM-θειτε
3	STEM-οιεν	STEM-οιντο	STEM-σαιεν	STEM-σαιντο	STEM-θειεν

Verbs with Second Aorists use their Aorist Stem

Person	2 Aorist Active	2 Aorist Middle	2 Aorist Passive
1	ASTEM-οιμι	ASTEM-οιμην	ASTEM-θειην
2	ASTEM-οις	ASTEM-οιο	ASTEM-θειης
3	ASTEM-οι	ASTEM-οιτο	ASTEM-θειη
1	ASTEM-οιμεν	ASTEM-οιμεθα	ASTEM-θειμεν
2	ASTEM-οιτε	ASTEM-οισθε	ASTEM-θειτε
3	ASTEM-οιεν	ASTEM-οιντο	ASTEM-θειεν

For the -μι verbs, using δίδωμι as an example

Person	Present Active	Present Mid/Pass.	Aorist Active	Aorist Middle	Aorist Passive
1	δίδοιην	δίδοιμην	δοιην	δοιμην	δοθειην
2	δίδοιης	δίδοιο	δοιης	δοιο	δοθειης
3	δίδοιη	δίδοιτο	δοιη	δοιτο	δοθειη
1	δίδοιμεν	δίδοιμεθα	δοιμεν	δοιμεθα	δοθειμεν
2	δίδοιτε	δίδοισθε	δοιτε	δοισθε	δοθειτε
3	δίδοιεν	δίδοιντο	δοιεν	δοιντο	δοθειεν

Tenses which do not appear in the GNT are given here for completeness, for when you read beyond the GNT

Person	Future Active	Future Middle	Future Passive	Future Perfect Passive
1	STEM-σοιμι	STEM-σοιμην	STEM-θησοιμην	PSTEM-σοιμην
2	STEM-σοις	STEM-σοιο	STEM-θησοιο	PSTEM-σοιο
3	STEM-σοι	STEM-σοιτο	STEM-θησοιτο	PSTEM-σοιτο
1	STEM-σοιμεν	STEM-σοιμεθα	STEM-θησοιμεθα	PSTEM-σοιμεθα
2	STEM-σοιτε	STEM-σοισθε	STEM-θησοισθε	PSTEM-σοισθε
3	STEM-σοιεν	STEM-σοιντο	STEM-θησοιντο	PSTEM-σοιντο

Perfect Active λελυκώς εἶην etc. - see Chapter 66 for the Optative of εἶμι

Perfect Middle / Passive λελυμένος εἶην etc. - see Chapter 66 for the Optative of εἶμι

Practice - until you can read and translate easily

1. τινες δε ἀπο της Ἀσιας Ἰουδαιοι, οὓς ἔδει ἐπι σου παρειναι και κατηγορειν εἰ τι ἔχοιεν προς ἔμε . . .

Some Jews from Asia, who ought to be present before you and bring charges if they have something against me. (Acts 24:19)
2. ἀλλ' εἰ και πασχοιτε δια δικαιοσυνην, μακαριοι. τον δε φοβον αὐτων μη φοβηθητε μηδε ταραχθητε.

But even if you do suffer for righteousness, (you are) blessed. Neither fear them nor be troubled. (1 Peter 3:14)
3. ὁ δε Παυλος (εἶπεν), Εὐξαιμην ἂν τῷ θεῷ και ἐν ὀλιγῷ και ἐν μεγαλῷ οὐ μονον σε ἀλλα και παντας τους ἀκουοντας μου σημερον γενεσθαι τοιουτους ὁποιους και ἐγώ εἶμι.

Paul said, "Would to God that, for small as for great, not only you but also all hearing me today might become such as I am.. (Acts 26:29)

(εὐξάιμην = Optative of εὐχόμαι - I pray, ὁποῖους = Accusative of ὁποῖος - "of such a kind as")
(εὐξαιμην ἂν τῷ θεῷ - "I could pray to God . . ." or "Would to God . . .")
4. αὐτος δε ὁ κυριος της ειρηνης δωη ὑμιν την ειρηνην δια παντος ἐν παντι τροπῷ.

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace through all times in all ways. (2 Thess. 3:16)
5. ναι, ἀδελφε, ἐγώ σου ὄναιμην ἐν κυριῷ.

Yes, brother, I wish to enjoy (something) of you in the Lord. (Philem. v.20)

(ὄναιμην = Second Aorist Optative Middle of ὀνίνημι - I benefit, enjoy)

6. εἶπεν δε Μαριαμ, Ἴδου ἡ δουλη κυριου, And Mary said, "Behold, the handmaid of the
γενοιτο μοι κατα το ῥημα σου. Lord, let it be to me according to your word.
(*Μαριαμ* is a variant spelling of *Μαρια* - both derived from the Hebrew "Miriam") (Luke 1:38)
7. ὡς δε ἤκουσαν τους λογους τουτους . . . When the High Priests heard these words
οἱ ἀρχιερεις διηπορουν περι αὐτων they were perplexed about them (and) what
τί ἂν γενοιτο τουτο. this might become (where this might lead)
(*διηπορουν* = Imperfect of *διαπορεω* - I am at a loss, cannot work out) (Acts 5:24)
8. (ὁ Φηστος εἶπεν,) Ἀπορουμενος δε ἐγω (Festus said,) "Being at a loss (as to) how to
την περι τουτων ζητησιν investigate (search about) these questions
ἐλεγον εἰ βουλοιτο πορευεσθαι I said (asked) if he wished to travel to
εἰς Ἱεροσολυμα κάκει κρινεσθαι. Jerusalem to be tried there. (see Acts 25:20)
(*ἀπορουμενος* = Present Participle Middle of *ἀπορεω* - I am at a loss, can't see the way through
ἡ ζητησις = question, dispute. from *ζητεω* - I seek)
9. Τί οὖν ἐρουμεν ; What then shall we say?
ὁ νομος (ἐστιν) ἁμαρτια ; (That) the Law is sin ?
μη γενοιτο. God forbid! (Rom. 7:7)
10. Αὐτος δε ὁ θεος και πατηρ ἡμων και May God our Father himself and
ὁ κυριος ἡμων Ἰησους κατευθυναι our Lord Jesus prosper our road (journey)
την ὁδον ἡμων προς ὑμας. to you. (1 Thess. 3:11)
(*κατευθυναι* = Aorist Optative of *κατευθυνω* - I straighten out , prosper a journey)

60.3 Sentences for reading and translation

1. αὐτος ὁ θεος της ειρηνης ἀγιασαι ὑμας. (1 Thess. 5:23)
2. Τί οὖν, ἁμαρτησωμεν ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμεν ὑπο του νομου ἀλλα ὑπο χαριν ; μη γενοιτο. (Rom. 6:15)
3. ὁ δε κυριος κατευθυναι ὑμων τας καρδιας εἰς την ἀγαπην του θεου. (2 Thess. 3:5)
(*κατευθυναι* = Aorist Optative of *κατευθυνω* - I straighten out , prosper a journey)
4. νομον οὖν καταργουμεν δια της πιστεως ; μη γενοιτο. (Rom. 3:31)
5. ὁ δε Μιχαηλ ὁ ἀρχαγγελος, ὅτε τῷ διαβολῷ διακρινομενος, . . . εἶπεν, Ἐπιτιμησαι σοι κυριος. (Jude v.9)
(*Μιχαηλ ὁ ἀρχαγγελος* - Michael the archangel)
6. Λεγω οὖν, Μη ἀπωσατο ὁ θεος τον λαον αὐτου ; μη γενοιτο. (Rom. 11:1)
(*ἀπωσατο* = Aorist Middle of *ἀπωθεω* - I push away, reject)
7. τινες δε . . . των φιλοσοφων . . . ἐλεγον, Τί ἂν θελοι ὁ σπερμολογος οὗτος λεγειν ; (Acts 17:18)
(ὁ φιλοσοφος - philosopher ὁ σπερμολογος - babbler)
8. ἐμοι δε μη γενοιτο καυχασθαι εἰ μη ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ του κυριου ἡμων Ἰησου Χριστου, δι' οὗ ἐμοι κοσμος ἐσταυρωται κάγω κοσμῷ. (Gal. 6:14)
9. αὐτοι δε ἐπλησθησαν ἀνοιας και διελαλουν προς ἀλληλους τί ἂν ποιησαιεν τῷ Ἰησῷ. (Luke 6:11)
(ἡ ἀνοια - wrath, rage, fury, stupidity *διαλάλω* - I discuss, talk about)
10. ἔλεος ὑμῖν και εἰρηνην και ἀγαπην πληθυνθειη. (Jude v.2)

60.4 Writing Practice : Write the Greek text several times, while saying aloud : Philippians 4:4-6

Χαιρετε ἐν κυριῷ παντοτε .	Rejoice in the Lord at all times;
παλιν ἐρω, χαιρετε.	Again I will say, "Rejoice!"
το ἐπιεικες ὑμων γνωσθητω	Let your gentleness be known
πασιν ἀνθρωποις.	to all men.
ὁ κυριος ἐγγυς.	The Lord (is) near.
μηδεν μεριμνατε,	Worry about nothing

60.5 There is no New Testament Passage for reading and translation.
The Practice Sentences have given a good over-view of the uses of the Optative.

60.6 Vocabulary to learn

κατευθύνω	I straighten out , prosper a journey)
πάρειμι	I am present, near, at hand
πληθύνω	I fill, fulfil
ταράσσω	I disturb, agitate
το δείπνον	supper, diner, feast
ὁ τρόπος	way, manner, way of life