

## 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 *μὴ γένοιτο* = "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. *μὴ γένοιτο* may it not happen By no means! God forbid!

2. The **Potential Optative**, used with *ἄν* 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 *ἄν* 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. *ἐφοβούμην μὴ γένοιτο* I was afraid (that) it might happen (lest it happen)  
*ἐφοβούμην μὴ οὐ γένοιτο* I was afraid (that) it might not happen (lest it not happen)

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

Note the characteristic *-οι-* of the Optative (replaced by *-αι-* 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-οίμην	STEM-σαιμι	STEM-σαίμην	STEM-θειήν
2	STEM-οις	STEM-οιο	STEM-σαις	STEM-σαιο	STEM-θειής
3	STEM-οι	STEM-οιτο	STEM-σαι	STEM-σαιτο	STEM-θειή
1	STEM-οιμεν	STEM-οίμεθα	STEM-σαιμεν	STEM-σαίμεθα	STEM-θειῖμεν
2	STEM-οιτε	STEM-οισθε	STEM-σαιτε	STEM-σαισθε	STEM-θειῖτε
3	STEM-οιεν	STEM-οιντο	STEM-σαιεν	STEM-σαιντο	STEM-θειῖεν

Verbs with Second Aorists use their Aorist Stem

Person	2 Aorist Active	2 Aorist Middle	2 Aorist Passive
1	ASTEM-οιμι	ASTEM-οίμην	ASTEM-θείην
2	ASTEM-οις	ASTEM-οιο	ASTEM-θείης
3	ASTEM-οι	ASTEM-οιτο	ASTEM-θείη
1	ASTEM-οιμεν	ASTEM-οίμεθα	ASTEM-θεῖμεν
2	ASTEM-οιτε	ASTEM-οισθε	ASTEM-θεῖτε
3	ASTEM-οιεν	ASTEM-οιντο	ASTEM-θεῖεν

For the -μι verbs, using δίδωμι as an example

Person	Present Active	Present Mid/Pass.	Aorist Active	Aorist Middle	Aorist Passive
1	δίδοιην	διδοίμην	δοίην	δοίμην	δοθείην
2	δίδοις	διδοῖο	δοίης	δοῖο	δοθείης
3	δίδοιη	διδοῖτο	δοίη	δοῖτο	δοθείη
1	διδοῖμεν	διδοίμεθα	δοῖμεν	δοίμεθα	δοθεῖμεν
2	διδοῖτε	διδοῖσθε	δοῖτε	δοῖσθε	δοθεῖτε
3	διδοῖεν	διδοῖντο	δοῖεν	δοῖντο	δοθεῖεν

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-σοίμην	STEM-θησοίμην	PSTEM-σοίμην
2	STEM-σοις	STEM-σοιο	STEM-θήσοιο	PSTEM-σοιο
3	STEM-σοι	STEM-σοιτο	STEM-θήσοιτο	PSTEM-σοιτο
1	STEM-σοιμεν	STEM-σοίμεθα	STEM-θησοίμεθα	PSTEM-σοίμεθα
2	STEM-σοιτε	STEM-σοισθε	STEM-θήσοισθε	PSTEM-σοισθε
3	STEM-σοιεν	STEM-σοιντο	STEM-θήσοιντο	PSTEM-σοιντο

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

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

**Practice** - until you can read and translate easily

1. τινὲς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι, οὓς ἔδει ἐπὶ σοῦ παρεῖναι καὶ κατηγορεῖν εἴ τι ἔχοιεν πρὸς ἐμέ . . .

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 καὶ πάσχοιτε διὰ δικαιοσύνην, μακάριοι. τὸν δὲ φόβον αὐτῶν μὴ φοβηθῆτε μηδὲ ταραχθῆτε.

But even if you do suffer for righteousness, (you are) blessed. Neither fear them nor be troubled. (1 Peter 3:14)
3. ὁ δὲ Παῦλος (εἶπεν), Εὐξαίμην ἂν τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ καὶ ἐν μεγάλῳ οὐ μόνον σὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντάς μου σήμερον γενέσθαι τοιούτους ὁποῖους καὶ ἐγὼ εἰμι.

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)

( εὐξαίμην = Optative of εὐχομαι - 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. αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δῶη ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ.

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace through all times in all ways. (2 Thess. 3:16)
5. ναί, ἀδελφέ, ἐγὼ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κύριῳ.

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

( ὀναίμην = Second Aorist Optative Middle of ὀνύνημι - I benefit, enjoy )

6. εἶπεν δὲ Μαριάμ, Ἴδου ἡ δούλη κυρίου,  
γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου.  
( *Μαριάμ is a variant spelling of Μαρία - both derived from the Hebrew "Miriam"* ) (Luke 1:38)
7. ὡς δὲ ἤκουσαν τοὺς λόγους τούτους . . .  
οἱ ἄρχιερεῖς διηπόρουν περὶ αὐτῶν  
τί ἂν γένοιτο τοῦτο.  
( *διηπόρουν = Imperfect of διαπορέω - I am at a loss, cannot work out* ) (Acts 5:24)
8. (ὁ Φῆστος εἶπεν,) Ἀπορούμενος δὲ ἐγὼ  
τὴν περὶ τούτων ζήτησιν  
ἔλεγον εἰ βούλοιο πορεύεσθαι  
εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα κάκεῖ κρίνεσθαι.  
( *ἀπορούμενος = Present Participle Middle of ἀπορέω - I am at a loss, can't see the way through*  
*ἡ ζήτησις = question, dispute. from ζητέω - I seek* )
9. Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν ;  
ὁ νόμος (ἐστίν) ἁμαρτία ;  
μὴ γένοιτο.  
What then shall we say?  
(That) the Law is sin ?  
God forbid! (Rom. 7:7)
10. Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ  
ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς κατευθύναι  
τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.  
( *κατευθύναι = Aorist Optative of κατευθύνω - I straighten out, prosper a journey* )  
May God our Father himself and  
our Lord Jesus prosper our road (journey)  
to you. (1 Thess. 3:11)

#### 60.4 Sentences for reading and translation

1. αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς. (1 Thess. 5:23)
2. Τί οὖν, ἁμαρτήσωμεν ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμέν ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν ;  
μὴ γένοιτο. (Rom. 6:15)
3. ὁ δὲ κύριος κατευθύναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ. (2 Thess. 3:5)  
( *κατευθύναι = Aorist Optative of κατευθύνω - I straighten out, prosper a journey* )
4. νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ; μὴ γένοιτο. (Rom. 3:31)
5. ὁ δὲ Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος, ὅτε τῷ διαβόλῳ διακρινόμενος, . . .  
εἶπεν, Ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι κύριος.  
( *Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος - Michael the archangel* ) (Jude v.9)
6. Λέγω οὖν, Μὴ ἀπόσωτο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ; μὴ γένοιτο. (Rom. 11:1)  
( *ἀπόσωτο = Aorist Middle of ἀπωθέω - I push away, reject* )
7. τινὲς δὲ . . . τῶν φιλοσόφων . . . ἔλεγον,  
Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν ; (Acts 17:18)  
( *ὁ φιλόσοφος - philosopher ὁ σπερμολόγος - babblers* )
8. ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν  
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται καὶ ἐγὼ κόσμῳ. (Gal. 6:14)
9. αὐτοὶ δὲ ἐπλήσθησαν ἀνοίας καὶ διελάλουν πρὸς ἀλλήλους  
τί ἂν ποιήσαιεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ. (Luke 6:11)  
( *ἡ ἀνοία - wrath, rage, fury, stupidity διαλάλέω - I discuss, talk about* )
10. ἔλεος ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνην καὶ ἀγάπην πληθυνθεῖη. (Jude v.2)

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

Χαίρετε ἐν κύριῳ πάντοτε .	Rejoice in the Lord at all times;
πάλιν ἐρῶ, χαίρετε.	Again I will say, "Rejoice!"
τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω	Let your gentleness be known
πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις.	to all men.
ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς.	The Lord (is) near.
μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε,	Worry about nothing

**60.6** 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.

**60.7 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
τὸ δεῖπνον	supper, diner, feast
ὁ τρόπος	way, manner, way of life