

*Eternity In Motion Series*

The Chiasms of The Apostle Paul

Broken Into Color Coded Parallelisms and Chiasms

The Book of Colossians

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### The Chiasms of Paul Introduction

In this book, you will find many very clear parallelisms and chiasms (or chiasmus). The way these chiasms have been cut out are by no means a statement of finality as to doctrine and intent of the author, but, rather, an attempt to unravel what may have been the author's desired effect. Parallelisms and chiasms were a seriously needed element of internal organization in ancient writings, which did not make use of paragraphs, punctuation, capitalization and other such synthetic devices to communicate the conclusion of one idea and the commencement of the next.

Chiasmus can be defined most simply as an inverted type of parallelism. This is where two thoughts might be mentioned and then they are repeated in reverse order.

For MY thoughts are not YOUR thoughts, Neither are YOUR ways MY ways, saith the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8)

If we look at this graphically, the simple chiasm takes on the form of a X:

a b  
X  
b a

The name chiasmus, derived from chi (X), the 22nd letter in the Greek alphabet. A couple examples from English are: "Old King Cole was a merry old soul, and a merry old soul was he", and "He who fails to prepare, prepares to fail."

Whereas in languages such as Greek, Latin, and English, chiasms are most often composed of two elements, *in Hebrew there appears to be no limit to the number of terms or ideas that may be employed.* An illustration of this with five elements is found in Psalm 3:7-8;

- a. Save me
- b. O my God,
- c. For thou has smitten
- d. All my enemies
- e. On the cheek-bone
- e' The teeth
- d' Of the wicked
- c' Thou has broken.
- b' To Yahweh
- a' The salvation.

A second example comes from Isaiah 60:1-3:

- a. Arise,
- b. Shine,
- c. For thy light is come,
- d. And the glory
- e. Of Yahweh
- f. Upon thee is risen
- g. For behold, dimness shall cover the earth
- g' And gross darkness the peoples.
- f' But upon thee will arise
- e' Yahweh
- d' And his glory shall upon thee be seen
- c' And nations shall come to thy light
- b' And kings to the brightness
- a' Of thy rising.

This can show why Chiasmus was attractive to the ancient Hebrew. First, chiasms are easy to memorize and would be useful since the Hebrew tradition was mainly oral. Second, chiasmus was in vogue. Just as 16th century English poets were fond of the sonnet, chiasmus seems to have been preferred by many of the ancient Hebrew writers. Third, the form can be very pleasing aesthetically.

Although the form was recognized and published as early as 1820 in London, it was not until 1854 in a study by John Forbes (*The Symmetrical Structures of Scripture*) that a full appreciation or understanding of chiasmus was developed. Nils Lund in 1942 published some of the rules that chiasmic forms followed. Three of these are particularly interesting for this study:

1. The center of the passage is always the turning point
2. Identical ideas will often be distributed so as to occur at the beginning, middle, and end of a chiasm but nowhere else.
3. There is often a mixture of direct parallel and inverted parallel lines in the same unit.

Others who have studied chiasmus in scripture insist there are no rules. In looking at these letters, it seems to me that Paul has left indicators, or clues, along the way to help us to most clearly divide the text according to his intent. Some of these clues are obvious, some are more obscure. The clues can be both identical words and or related ideas.

Ideally, it would be perfect to divide these structures exactly the way the Apostle Paul wanted them to be divided. With the absence of any corroborating historical record as to Paul's intent, these divisions can be used at least for dividing the text by themes for study, and at most, to see even more deeply the intent of our blessed brother, Paul, and the Holy Spirit.

Colossians In Chiasms 02/04/07

With Italics and Clues at End of Each Concept

NIV *Colossians 1:1*

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus *by the will of God*, and Timothy  
our brother, by God  
To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: *Grace and peace to*  
*you from God our Father.* grace given  
We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *when we pray*  
*for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of*  
*the love you have for all the saints--* prayer offered  
*the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you*  
*in heaven* love springing  
*and that you have already heard about in the word of truth,* already heard  
*the gospel that has come to you.* gospel came  
**All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing,** world growth  
**just as it has been doing among you** local growth  
*since the day you heard it* gospel came  
*and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from*  
*Epaphras, our dear fellow servant,* already heard  
**who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told**  
**us of your love in the Spirit.** love springing  
For this reason, *since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped*  
*praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will*  
*through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.* prayer offered  
And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and  
may please him in every way bearing fruit in every good work, growing in  
the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his  
glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, grace given  
and joyfully giving thanks *to the Father,* to God

*who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.* qualification

*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,* two domains  
*in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* bringing back

*He is the image of the invisible God,* God in flesh  
*the firstborn over all creation.* firstborn

*For by him all things were created:* all things created by him

*things in heaven* heaven powers

*and on earth,* earth powers

*visible* visible

*and invisible,* invisible

*whether thrones or powers* earth powers

*or rulers or authorities;* heaven powers

*all things were created by him and for him.* all things created by him

*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

*And he is the head of the body the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

firstborn

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,* God in flesh

*and through him to reconcile to himself all things,* bringing back

*whether things on earth or things in heaven,* two domains

*by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.* qualification

*Once you were alienated from God* alienated

*and were enemies in your minds* enemy of God

*because of your evil behavior* blemished

*But now he has reconciled you by* reconciled

*Christ's physical body* death

*through death* resurrection

*to present you holy in his sight,* reconciled

*without blemish and free from accusation—* without blemish

*if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved* friend of God

*from the hope held out in the gospel.* not alienated

This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. grace needed  
 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, flesh afflicted  
 for the sake of his body, which is the church in Christ  
 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- present full gospel  
 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, mystery hidden  
 but is now disclosed to the saints.  
 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is preaching gospel to everyone  
 Christ in you, Christ  
 the hope of glory. the hope  
 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone preaching gospel to everyone  
 admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, mystery revealed  
 so that we may present everyone perfect present full gospel  
 in Christ. in Christ  
 To this end I labor, flesh afflicted  
 struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. grace needed

NIV Colossians 2:1

I want you to know how much I am struggling for you struggle  
 and for those at Laodicea, in Laodicea  
 and for all who have not met me personally. away  
 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, Paul encourages toward truth  
 so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, riches  
 in order that they may know know  
 the mystery of God, mystery concealed  
 namely, Christ, mystery revealed  
 in whom are hidden hidden  
 all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. treasures  
 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. Some argue toward deception  
 For though I am absent from you in body, away  
 I am present with you in spirit in Laodicea  
 and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. firm

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord,	
continue to live in him,	received Jesus
rooted and <i>built up in him</i> , strengthened in the faith	built up
as you were taught,	
and <i>overflowing with thankfulness</i> .	overflowing
<b>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive</b>	
<i>philosophy,</i>	held captive
<b>which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world</b>	
<b>rather than on Christ.</b>	on Christ.
<b>For in Christ all the fullness of</b>	fullness
<b>the Deity lives</b>	God
<b>in bodily form,</b>	in flesh
<b>and you have been given fullness</b>	fullness
<b>in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.</b>	in Christ
<b>In him you were also circumcised,</b>	held captive
<b>in the putting off of the sinful nature,</b>	putting off
not with <i>a circumcision done by the hands of men</i>	cut down
<b>but with the circumcision done by Christ,</b>	received Jesus
<i>having been buried with him in baptism</i>	under
and <i>raised with him</i>	disarmed old
<b>through your faith in the power of God,</b>	power of God
<i>who raised him from the dead.</i>	Stood for us
<b>When you were dead in your sins</b>	cancelled old
<b>and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature,</b>	sin in you
<b>God made you</b>	God made
<b>alive with Christ.</b>	alive in Christ
<i>He forgave us all our sins,</i>	sin forgiven
<i>having canceled the written code,</i>	cancelled old
<b>with its regulations that was against us and</b>	
<i>that stood opposed to us;</i>	stood opposed to us;
<b>he took it away, nailing it to the cross.</b>	power of God
<i>And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle</i>	
<i>of them,</i>	disarmed old
<b>triumphing over them by the cross.</b>	over



Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. wrong connection  
 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; truth shadows  
 the reality however, reality  
 is found in Christ. goal  
 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. delights in falseness  
disqualified for falseness  
 Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, unreality  
 and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. False shadows  
 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. right connection

Since you died with Christ you died  
 to the basic principles of this world, earthly  
 why, as though you still belonged to it, old position  
 do you submit to its rules: own volition  
 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!?" These are all destined to perish with use, body  
 because they are based on human commands and teachings. human command  
 Such regulations indeed false wisdom  
 have an appearance of wisdom, wisdom  
 with their self-imposed worship, human worship  
 their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, body  
 but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. forced  
**Colossians 3:1**  
 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. new position  
 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. earthly  
 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. you died

When <i>Christ,</i>	God in flesh
who is your life, <i>appears</i>	transformation
<b>then you also will appear with him in glory.</b>	glorification
<i>Put to death,</i>	
<b>therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature :</b>	old self
<b>sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.</b>	
<b>Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.</b>	brings wrath
<b>You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived</b>	old life
<b>But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these:</b>	new life
<b>anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.</b>	
<b>Do not lie to each other,</b>	brings wrath
<b>since you have taken off your old self</b>	old self
<b>with its practices</b>	
<b>and have put on the new self,</b>	glorification
<b>which is being renewed in knowledge</b>	transformation
<b>in the image of its Creator.</b>	God in flesh

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, *but Christ is all, and is in all.* all.

**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** on you

*Bear with each other* one body key

**and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.** peace key

*Forgive as the Lord forgave you .* unity key

**And over all these** over

**virtues put on love,** on

**which binds them all together in perfect unity.** unity result

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,* peace result

**since as members of one body you were called to peace.**

**And be thankful.** one body result

**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.** in you

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* all.

Wives, submit to your husbands, <i>as is fitting in the Lord.</i>	
Husbands, love your wives and <i>do not be harsh with them.</i>	Authority over wives
Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.	child language
Fathers, <i>do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.</i>	wrong
Slaves, <i>obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.</i>	earthly master
It is the Lord Christ you are serving.	temporary reward
Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.	quality of heart
Colossians 4:1	work at it
Masters, provide your slaves with <i>what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.</i>	work at it
	quantity of heart
	eternal reward
	heavenly master
	wrong
	child language
	Authority over slaves

**Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.**

*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message,* pray for us

**so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which**

*I am in chains.* chains

**Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.** proclaim

*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.* fulfill opportunity

**Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.** personal communication of Paul

**My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.** sends greetings

*(You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)* welcome him

**Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.** sends greetings  
comfort in workers  
comfort in workers

**Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus sends greetings.** sends greetings

**He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and**

**Hierapolis** welcome him

**Our dear friend Luke the doctor, and Demas send greetings.** sends greetings

**Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.** personal communication of Paul

**Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord.** complete opportunity

*I Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.* proclaim

**Remember my chains.** chains

*Grace be with you.* grace to you