

How to Outline

Outlining is something many of us learned in school. We read an article, and then we write down the main points in sequence – a kind of summary for each section or paragraph. Then we write down any sub-points that were made within that section or paragraph. We can do both at the same time as we go through what has been written, but I find that’s a bit confusing. If I do that, then I tend to make a sub-point into a main point or vice-versa, or I miss the break in thought.

So we’re going to write down all the main points first, and then go back to write down the sub-points under each one. For convenience, we’re going to assume that each chapter marks a break between main points. In other words, we’ll find one main point for each chapter. Then we’ll go back and put in the sub-points within each chapter. If necessary, we’ll go back a third time and put in any detail points. We may do a 4th level of detail as we go, but we never exceed three go-rounds. The thing to keep in mind is that we want each point to be *very* brief: a sentence or a phrase. If we were giving a speech, these would be our reminders or guidelines for what we want to say. We should be able to glance at our 3x5 card and grasp each point immediately. If we were memorizing, these would be the simple hooks that help us remember each part. They are not the whole part. We are creating a frame, not an entire building – again, be *brief*.

If you are going to outline with a text editor, double-space between each verse, and make a wide right margin. Print it out a worksheet so that you can mark it up. Or instead, you can do it “live” on the computer. What I do in MS-Word is to make a table with 2 columns. I cut and paste the bible text in the left column, and put my notes in the right column with a series of carriage returns all down the right column. That way I can put my notes beside the verse(s).

If you’re doing it with pen and pad, use a lined notepad to write down your main points. Keep about a half dozen lines between each summary line. That will leave you room for your sub-points and perhaps some detail points.

Have another lined pad handy to write down any questions you have as you read, or to list any words that you want to examine in greater detail later on in the week.

- Skim the entire text to get a feel for its overall message and where the main points are.
- Get a yellow highlighter and mark the key words, or repeated words.
- Get a blue highlighter and mark the key verse(s).
- Look for the following words and phrases that indicate a break in thought:
Therefore, Thus, Then, So then, If... then, Behold, For, etc.
Circle each one.
- Summarize each chapter in a single brief sentence at the top of the chapter.
- Once you’ve completed the main ideas, go back to look for sub-sections.
- Identify each break in thought with a line between the two verses.
- Write a summary sentence for that sub-section.
- Write out the Outline using the sentences you wrote down on the worksheet.
- Indent each sub-section; indent again for any detail points.

OK. Now I'm going to outline the *Book of Colossians* to give you as an example. There are no "correct" outlines. Everyone creates their own view or assessment of the essential points. In fact, if you outline the same book a year apart, your new outline may not match your old one. Outlining is simply a tool by which to grasp God's message for us, and a check against pulling the wrong message or principle out of a verse. The outline helps us see the trend of thought so that we establish the proper context for each verse in the book.

Begin with the Background and Overview

I'm going to begin by writing down what I know about the book. I want the author, audience, timeframe, and circumstances. I may have to do a little research to get that information. Then I'm going to write down what I think is the main theme of the book, what I believe is the key verse, and a list of any repeated words that I find while skimming it. It looks like this:

Author: Paul

Audience: new believers at Colosse, who are gentiles

Date: 60 AD

Location: Colosse is 100 miles E. of Ephesus

Circumstance: Paul is writing to new believers from prison in Rome

Issue or theme: You have been delivered in Christ who is pre-eminent in all things: keep that in mind, and act like it.

Key verse: 1:13-14. God has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. NKJV

Key words (up to 7): faith, flesh, mind, preeminent, know/knowledge/known, mystery

Repeated words or phrases: in Him, by Him, with Him; put off, put on

Now I'm going to write down my one-line summary for each chapter. All I want is the general idea, not a lot of detail. I'll do the sub-points after I finish these main points.

Chap. 1 – The Gospel you heard has changed your condition and produced fruit.

Chap. 2 – In Christ, you have been set free. Therefore, stay free.

Chap. 3 – Being in Christ, put off the old man, and put on the new man.

Chap. 4 – Participate in our mission through prayer, outreach, and interaction.

Here you see the entire book of Colossians in a nutshell. OK. I'm going back to the first chapter to identify two or more sub-points very quickly. I'm going to indent those points. Here I've put in the verse numbers so you know where I got them from. You don't need to do that unless you find it useful. I do it for myself, because sometimes I wonder where I got that particular point if I paraphrase a verse instead of quote it verbatim.

Chap. 1 – The Gospel you heard has changed your condition and produced fruit.

- A. Greetings (v. 1-4)
- B. The Gospel has been effective (v. 5-8)
- C. Therefore, we pray for you (v. 9-12)
- D. What God has done (v. 13)
- E. Who Christ is (v. 14-18)
- F. What Christ has done (v. 19-22)
- G. What you must do (v. 23)
- H. Paul's Ministry (v. 24-29)

Notice that these are still topical headings without much detail. For this particular book, the details will be recorded when I do the third run-through.

Let's finish the sub-points for Chapters 2-4:

Chap. 2 – In Christ, you have been set free. Therefore, remain free.

- A. Encouragements (v. 1-3)
- B. Cautions (v. 4-8)
- C. You are free because of Christ (v. 9-15)
- D. Therefore let no one judge or enslave you (v. 20-23)

Chap. 3 – Being in Christ, put off the old man, and put on the new man.

- A. You were raised (from the dead) in Christ (v. 1-4)
- B. Therefore put off the old (dead) man (v. 5-9)
- C. And put on the new (living) man (v. 10-17)
- D. Make it evident in your relationships (v. 3:18-4:1)

Chap. 4 – Participate in our mission through prayer, outreach, and interaction.

- A. Continue earnestly in prayer (v. 2-4)
- B. Walk wisely in the world (v. 5-6)
- C. We'll be staying in touch (v. 7-16)
- D. Pass on my words (v. 17-18)

We're at the third and final stage. If a fourth level of outlining is needed, then we're going to do it as we go through each sub-point now. We'll identify all essential details. This is the stage at which we want to use the repeated words and phrases because they can be easily seen in the outline. This is also the stage at which we get the lined notepad ready to write down questions we want to wrestle with, or to list words that need further study. And of course, we'll do those on the Sabbath because that day is set aside for it.

Things for my notepad are in bracketed in *italics* in this example. Some of this activity depends on your translation. In the NKJV, NAS, ESV, and NIV, Col. 1:12 says that God "qualified us;" the KJV says, "made us meet;" the WEB says, "made us fit." The word "qualified" doesn't sound right, because it suggests that we somehow merited the honor. So I did a word study to find out what the word actually means in Greek. Having done that, it seems that none of the translations do it justice. It should say that God "fitted" or "equipped" us. Interesting.

Chap. 1 – The Gospel you heard has changed your condition and produced fruit.

A. Greetings (v. 1-4)

1. from Paul and Timothy
2. from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
3. to the saints and faithful brethren at Colosse
4. we give thanks for you
 - a. for your faith in Christ
 - b. for your love of the saints
 - c. because of the hope stored for you in heaven
 - d. because you heard [and believed] the gospel

B. The Gospel has been effective (v. 5-8)

1. It is the word of truth that has come to you, and to the world
2. It produced fruit in you, as it has in the world
 - a. by hearing [*crossref - Rom. 10:17; Gal. 3:2,5*] and
 - b. by knowing: the grace of God in truth [*which word for “knowing”?*]
[*could this be worded, “by truly knowing the grace of God?”*]
3. Epaphras is your witness of this
 - a. he ministers to you on Christ’s behalf, and
 - b. he declares to us your love in the Spirit

C. Therefore, we pray for you (v. 9-11)

1. that you be filled with the knowledge of his will
2. in all wisdom and spiritual understanding
3. that you may walk worthy of the Lord
4. fully pleasing him
5. being fruitful in every good work
6. increasing in the knowledge of God
7. strengthened with might according to God’s power
8. Why? for all patience, and for enduring with joy (longsuffering)

D. What God has done (v. 12-13)

1. giving thanks to the Father who has [*equipped*] us
2. For what? to partake of the inheritance of the saints in the light
3. He has delivered us from the power of darkness
4. into the kingdom of the Son of his love

E. Who Christ is (v. 14-19)

1. In him we have redemption through his blood
2. the forgiveness of sins [*is forgiveness the same as redemption?*]
3. he is the image of the invisible God
4. he is the firstborn over all creation
5. by him all things were created
 - a. whether in heaven or on earth
 - b. whether visible or invisible
 - c. whether thrones or dominions
 - d. whether principalities or powers
6. all things were created through him and for him
7. in him dwells all the fullness of God

- F. What Christ has done for you (v. 20-22)
1. the Father reconciled all things to himself by Christ
 2. Christ has made peace with the Father through the blood of his cross
 3. He has reconciled those who were once alienated and enemies
 4. in his body through death he made us holy and blameless in God's sight
- G. What you must do (for him) (v. 23)
1. continue in the faith
 2. be grounded and steadfast
 3. do not be moved away from the hope of the gospel
 4. hold onto the same gospel you heard, which is preached everywhere
- H. Paul's Ministry (v. 24-29)
1. he rejoices in his sufferings for them and for the church
 2. he has been entrusted by God with a long-hidden mystery
 3. the riches of its glory has been revealed to the saints
 4. it was given to Paul for the gentiles, to fulfill the word of God
 5. the mystery is **Christ in them** (the gentiles), the hope of glory
- Which is shared by the church – suggesting the Colossians too:
6. we preach Christ [*and him crucified* – 1Cor. 1:23]
 7. we warn every man and teach every man in wisdom
 8. so that we may present every man perfect in Christ
- Which is actually the ministry of Christ in his people
9. Paul labors according to Christ's mighty working in him

Well, that was quite a mouthful for the first chapter. Because I have outlined it, I can see there are two sub-themes under Paul's ministry (the church, and Christ). Rather than wait, I have organized and marked the grouping as it occurred to me. Having read the whole book to begin with, I realize that Paul is suggesting to them that, like him, they have been entrusted by God with this Mystery of Christ-in-us. That's why he switches from the personal pronoun to the plural. They too are now stewards, and must not depart from the truth, the specific truth of the Gospel, which they heard from Christ through Paul and then Epaphras. It is like a baton that is being passed on, or good seed that produces fruit after its own kind in the field (Matt. 13:24).

This is the premise for everything that follows in Chapters 2-4. To confirm it, I go back to my current outline of those chapters, and sure enough, that fits perfectly with the overall theme. The idea of Christ-in-us, and us-in-Christ, this unity of the Spirit and of the church, envelops these new believers at Colosse. Paul is subtly asking why they would want to depart from this fruit of Christ, from the vine of which they are now a fruitful branch (Jn. 15:5). Being instructed in the sayings of Christ, I think they know very well what Paul is saying between the lines. Now he is going to get specific about what has happened to them, and who they are in Christ, and what the effect on their lives is supposed to look like as Christ abides in them. This is great stuff!

The Larger Context

I just quoted Matthew 13 and John 15 to fill-in the content of Colossians. Was I right to do that? Have I violated any of the rules of interpretation in doing that? In today's seminaries, Biblical Theology (as distinct from Systematic Theology) is being taught in such a way that I would be

prohibited from using another book of the bible to explain the current text. I would be corrected or marked down for it. This is going to sound arrogant, but my professors would be wrong. They would be stepping away from two thousand years of biblical instruction, and common sense.

When we read the bible, we want to have the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) firmly in our grasp before we begin the journey through the rest of Scripture. They are the foundation of our understanding, just as they were the foundation of Paul's teaching. We begin with them, just as Paul began with them. His letters do not stand alone. He taught from what the other Apostles shared with him, from what the church as a whole knew to be true. Their content infused everything he said, and everything he wrote. Those teachings were a given and they formed the larger context of the entire New Testament. Revelation is impossible to understand unless you understand the Gospels. The OT is unfulfilled until we apply the NT. The NT explains the OT, and the OT points to the NT. It is a package deal. The wider context of every book of the bible is the whole bible. We cannot begin in the middle or at the end and expect to understand it, unless we first grasp who Christ is and what he accomplished on the cross. Who he is, and what he accomplished, is in point of fact, the Gospel, the *good* news. That's where Paul has begun his instructions to the Colossians.

Knowing what Paul said, and framing it in the form of an outline, is helping me to grasp its meaning for these new Christians at Colosse. I hope you can see and appreciate the progression of the outline that leads to a discovery of what it meant to the Colossians. The eternal principles that Paul employed in this letter have begun to reveal themselves. Once we have them, and understand them, we can begin to apply them to our personal walk with Christ. We can now finish the outline:

Chap. 2 – In Christ, you have been set free. Therefore, remain free.

A. Encouragements (v. 1-3)

1. Know that Paul is in conflict for them [*“conflict?”* NKJV]
2. Be encouraged by that (a shared group experience)
 - a. knit together in love
 - b. attaining to a full knowledge of the mystery
3. In Christ, in God, all the treasures of knowledge are hidden [*stored?*]

B. Cautions (v. 4-8)

1. Do not be deceived by persuasive words
2. For I am there with you in spirit (watching over you, hearing of you)
3. Rejoicing at your steadfast faith in Christ [*you are* steadfast, right?]
4. As you received Christ, so walk in him
5. Be rooted and built up in Christ
 - a. be established in the faith as you were taught
 - b. abound in that faith with thanksgiving [for the truth it contains]
6. Beware of other [non-Christian] philosophies and vain deceits
 - a. they are from the traditions of men
 - b. they are from the principles of the world

C. You are free because of Christ (v. 9-15)

1. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form
2. Therefore you are complete in him

3. In him you were circumcised (marked as his)
 - a. by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh
 - b. by the circumcision of [being in] Christ
 4. You were buried with him in baptism, and raised with him from the dead
 - a. you were dead in your sins and uncircumcised flesh
 - b. you are made alive with him in the forgiveness of your sins
 5. How? By faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead
 6. The writ of charges against you was nailed to the cross
 7. Christ disarmed such principalities and powers [as death and the Law]
- D. Therefore let no one judge or enslave you (v. 16-23)
1. by dietary laws (food or drink)
 2. by ceremonial laws (festivals and sabbaths)
 3. by false worship
 - a. will-worship (KJV): asceticism
 - b. angel-worship
 - c. vision-worship (personal visions)
 - d. intellect-worship: the vanity of the fleshly mind
 4. by not holding fast to the Head [Christ - Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:15]
 - a. from [Greek *ek*: *out of*] Christ, the church is nourished
 - b. from Christ, the church is knit together
 - c. from Christ, the church grows – an increase from God [not men]

Chap. 3 – Being in Christ, put off the old man, and put on the new man.

- A. You were raised (from the dead) with Christ (v. 1-4)
1. seek those things which are above (heavenly)
 2. set your mind on things above, not on earthly things
 3. your [old] life ended
 4. your [new] life is hidden [*enclosed or draped*] with Christ in God
[“*along with Christ who is in God*”, or “*with Christ-in-God*”?]
- B. Therefore having put off the old (dead) man (v. 5-9)
1. Put off those parts of your flesh which are earth-bound
 - a. sexual immorality,
 - b. impurity,
 - c. passion,
 - d. evil desire, and
 - e. covetousness, which is idolatry. [idol-worship]
 2. These were causes for God’s wrath when you walked in them:
 - a. anger,
 - b. wrath,
 - c. malice,
 - d. slander, and
 - e. obscene talk from your mouth.
 3. Do not lie to one another, having put off the old self with its practices
[*don’t lie about putting them off? – or, is continuing the behavior a lie?*]

Let me ask you a question: Would you have put sub-point 3 under sub-point 2 as another detail line (f)? I don't see anything wrong with that – “having put off the old self” seems to repeat what the paragraph began with anyway – it doesn't really appear to be a different thought when you first read it. But *Paul* made it separate from the list. That makes me wonder why he did that. And so, by breaking it out into a different sub-point altogether, it stimulates a couple of questions – I put those questions on my lined pad for meditation (they're italicized in the brackets above).

If I were to expand on this verse, and take into account the whole of the letter, then I could make explicit what is implicit. I might want to word it this way: “Having put off the old self with its practices, don't lie to one another by continuing to practice these old habits. It's as if you were saying that you didn't really belong to Christ, as if you weren't in him, and as if he weren't in you. But that's a lie, because no one confesses Jesus Christ Lord except the Spirit moves him (1Cor. 12:3). You're in him, but you're *behaving* as if you weren't. That's the lie. Stop lying to yourself and to those around you. Behave like the child of God that you already are. Put off that old man with his corrupt practices. Put on the practices of the new man, because that's the truth of who you now are in Christ.” The value of outlining is that it forces me to consider such things.

- C. And having put on the new (living) man (v. 10-17)
 - 1. which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator
 - 2. which resides in a place without distinctions or favoritism
 - a. no Greek or Jew
 - b. circumcised or uncircumcised
 - c. barbarian, Sythian [??]
 - d. slave or free
 - 3. which is an estate in which Christ is all, and in all – and
 - 4. Being God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, put on these things instead:
 - a. compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,
 - b. bear with one another
 - c. forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven you
 - d. above all these put on love,
 - e. let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. [*we were all called into one body, so the peace of Christ must naturally rule in our hearts? What does this mean?*]
 - f. be thankful.
 - g. may the word of Christ dwell in you richly, [*the verse says, “Let the word of Christ dwell” – is “let” actually there (i.e. permit or allow) – or is it the Greek verb tense showing possibility?*]
 - h. teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,
 - i. singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
 - j. do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
 - k. giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- D. Make it evident in your relationships (v. 3:18-4:1)
 - 1. Wives, submit to your husbands,
 - 2. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

3. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.
4. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.
5. Slaves, sincerely obey your earthly masters, fearing the Lord:
 - a. whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,
 - b. know that you will receive the inheritance as your reward.
 - c. You are serving the Lord Christ [not your master].
 - d. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done,
 - e. there is no partiality [*favoritism*].
6. **Col. 4:1** Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Notice that I've included 4:1 under Chapter 3. It seems to me that the chapter breaks at the wrong place. This isn't the only instance of this in our modern translations. Keep in mind that chapters and verses didn't exist in the original texts.¹ They are man-made. Sometimes they don't match the text's subject matter, either breaking a story in parts, or separating linked ideas. So don't feel bound by them. I sometimes suggest to my students that the verses be copied without chapter and verse markings, so that they are free to group them as they see fit, to divide them by idea rather than by an artificial divider like chapter and verse. Some commentators will remark about these "unfortunate" breaks, or they will point out that a verse at the end of one chapter actually belongs to the next chapter. I wanted you to know that it's not unheard of.

Last chapter:

Chap. 4 – Participate in our mission through prayer, outreach, and interaction.

- A. Continue earnestly in prayer (v. 2-4) [*translations vary – do a word study on v. 2-4*]
 1. Pray for us,
 - a. that God may open a door for our message
 - b. that we may declare the mystery of Christ
 - c. that I may make it clear as I should [*is that correct?*]

“Make it clear” is actually, “make-it-known.” The word for “make-it-known” is the Greek *phaneroo*. It means to reveal, or to make known what was a mystery. It means to make visible what was previously invisible. That fits better with “declare the mystery” but it would be redundant. Rather than follow the phrase “declare the mystery” with “reveal the mystery”, Paul has changed the emphasis. He not only wants to declare it, he wants to make it visible. He wants to demonstrate its truth. The mystery is Christ-in-us (Col. 1:27), including Christ-in-the-gentiles (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). How do we know Christ is in us? We demonstrate his presence in our grace-filled behavior. He is asking for prayer that his walk will match his talk. That's a prayer all of us should lift up to God every day.

¹ **CHAPTERS** were added by Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Caro between 1244 and 1248 A.D. He did this when he was preparing a concordance of the Bible. Before the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., the New Testament was divided into paragraphs which were different from our current divisions. The modern chapter divisions came about through Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris and afterwards an Archbishop of Canterbury. He put the modern divisions into place around 1227 A.D. Since the Wycliffe English Bible of 1382 this pattern has been followed.

In the New Testament, the **VERSE** divisions were first added by Robert Estienne in his 1551 edition of the Greek New Testament. In 1557, the first English New Testament with verse divisions were used in a translation by William Whittingham (c. 1524-1579). These divisions have been used by nearly all English Bibles since then. The first Bible in English to use both chapters and verses was the Geneva Bible in 1560.

Source: <http://www.answers.com/topic/chapters-and-verses-of-the-bible>

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Then there is the phrase “as I should” (NIV). It just doesn’t sound right coming out of Paul’s mouth. In other translations it reads, “as I ought to speak” NKJV, “which is how I ought to speak” ESV, or “in the way I ought to speak” NASU. I just find it hard to believe that Paul would be at a loss for words, or doubt how he ought to put something. Paul has never struck me as someone who needed to figure out how to phrase the Gospel, especially when he has so eloquently phrased it to the Colossians in this letter. So I want to have a look at the original Greek again. I don’t think it’s, “which is what I ought to be *doing*.” That’s what the NIV implies. The translators disagree on its English wording, so that drives me to the original text again.

It does indeed read, “as I ought to speak.” But here’s the fun part: “ought” is the Greek *dei*. It doesn’t mean “should” as we often think of “ought” in English. Instead, it means “must.” That fits much better – Paul is bound by God to declare this mystery, no matter what the cost. It is *necessary* that he do so. He isn’t asking for prayer about the words to say, or how to couch it. He knows that will come from the Spirit (Matt. 10:19-20). He’s asking for *courage* and *boldness* to do what he has been called to do. His life and freedom will continue to be on the line. We need to remember that Paul is a man of flesh and blood, with fears and doubts. Like us, he fights every day to overcome them. He can only do that by keeping his eye on the finish line, and struggling toward it in an eternal contest, looking at things above rather than earthly things. What he says to the Colossians is the conversation that he plays every day in his own head.

In the next section I also do a couple of word-studies, because I’m not sure what “seasoned with salt” means, or at least not how to do it.

B. Walk wisely in the world (v. 5-6)

1. walk [*progress*] in wisdom with regard to the outside
2. redeeming the time [*kairos: opportunities*]
3. your words [*logos*] always with grace
4. seasoned [*prepared?*] with salt [*So does this mean our words should be tasty and inviting? Or astute? It’s a figure of speech – the next phrase doesn’t suggest a neatly arranged and winsome presentation, but cautious and investigative*]
5. to perceive how you ought to respond to each one

C. We’ll be staying in touch (v. 7-14)

1. Tychicus and Onesimus will tell you about me and those with me
2. They will encourage you
3. Aristarchus says “hi”
4. Mark, whom you’ve heard about, is on his way.
5. So is Justus – these are the Jews in my company.
6. Epaphras who is one of your own
 - a. wrestles in prayer for you to be mature and assured
 - b. works hard for you and others in your region
7. Luke the physician says “hi”
8. Demas says “hi”

D. Pass on my words (v. 15-18)

1. to those in Laodicea
2. to Nympha and the church at *his/her* house

3. tell Archippus to fulfill his ministry
4. remember my chains [*for you*]
5. grace be with you [*is it "with," "among," or "between"?*]

If I didn't know anything about Greek prepositions, I probably wouldn't ask a question about the final phrase. You should know that translators are notoriously loose with Greek prepositions. As a consequence, we need to become somewhat familiar with some rules of Greek grammar. That's just so we know enough to ask questions. Changing a preposition can change the entire meaning of a verse. In English, for example, we are not saved *by* faith in Jesus Christ. Instead, we are saved *by* grace. We are saved *through* faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is the means by which we receive the *gift* of grace; faith doesn't cause our salvation, nor is it a condition we must satisfy in order for God's grace to be effective. Everything necessary for our salvation, and for God's grace to attach to us, was completed by Christ. We add nothing to it, and take nothing from it. We are recipients, not contestants.

So if you come across a preposition that sounds fishy, go have a look at the Greek. In this case, "Grace be with you," uses the Greek preposition *meta* for "with." The verb "be" is understood, but not present. Here's the rule of Greek grammar: when *meta* is used with the genitive (possessive) case, as it is used here, it means association or proximity. The "you" is plural. There is no verb, and so it's an implied imperative: *Grace with you!* It hints that grace should characterize us not only as individuals, but as a group. Paul is a collective thinker. The church, as the Bride of Christ, is always to be properly adorned, and beautiful to behold. Coming into her presence should be exciting and filled with anticipation. Grace will cause an external display of the Church's inner beauty. And so grace is to accompany us everywhere we go. It is the mark of those who are in Christ, those who have died and been resurrected with Christ, those in whom Christ now abides. That is Paul's message to the Colossians.

Isaiah 61:10-11 ¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments, And as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

I hope this lesson has been informative. Outlining is a useful first step toward understanding the message that God has for his people. It forces us to ask questions. It establishes the context in which we discover what each verse says, and what the book as a whole is saying. Having learned what it says, we are prepared to grasp what it meant to its audience. And knowing what it meant to its original audience, we can set about extracting the principles that governed their walk. With those principles firmly in hand, we are prepared to walk that same path ourselves, with Christ beside us, and with a great cloud of witnesses cheering us on. Praise God!