

Preface to the Text

Welcome to the study of New Testament Greek. While I know that some of you have been eagerly anticipating this opportunity to acquire a valuable tool for your study of Scripture, I also know that there is a fair amount of trepidation surrounding the study of Greek. I hope that in the days and weeks to come you will return to this introduction, because some of it won't make much sense to you until you actually work with Greek and learn what it is like. Two things above all I want you to remember: Greek is hard and Greek is worthwhile. I am confident that each and every one of you can do the work involved in learning New Testament Greek, but it will take effort and cooperation. Some of you may have had bad experiences with language learning in the past. My hope is that you will put that behind you and prepare for a different kind of learning experience. The materials which I have created for your study are designed to help you along the way, but there are several things you need to know from the start.

Greek is not English. You know that, of course, and yet there is always the temptation to hope that, apart from a different alphabet and some different vocabulary, Greek is some kind of "code" for English. There are, of course, some similarities: a subject is still a subject, a prepositional phrase is still a prepositional phrase, etc. But basically you must accept Greek on its own terms.

One of the main ways in which Greek is different from English is that there are many more forms to learn. Take a basic verb like "swim." In English we can use the subject "I" or "you" or "we" or "they" with this same form. The only change necessary is that, if the subject is "he" or "she," we must say "swims." In Greek, however, the form of the verb changes to correspond to each of the different subjects. We will meet these forms in due course, but in general there are a couple of things to remember. (1) Greek likes to "re-cycle" word endings, so that when you learn something in one context you will likely see it again in another. Make this work for you! (2) It is more important to be able to recognize given forms when you see them than to be able to rattle off lists. The best way to accomplish this is to make good use of your homework exercises. By the time you are done with the work for a given chapter, if you have done it properly, you should know most of the material without the tedious memorizing of lists. Nevertheless, memorization is important and it is better to do it thoroughly at first than to do it half way and then keep playing "catch up."

A very important facet of Greek study, and one of the harder ones to get used to, is the need to be simultaneously precise and flexible. Let me explain. When you are deciding how to translate a given word, you must be precise about identifying the exact form and knowing the vocabulary root. But then you must be flexible, because the form may convey a variety of concepts and you must decide which one applies. Likewise the vocabulary root may represent a number of different English ideas, and again you must choose. There are also times when Greek conveys information in subtle ways which may not come across in translation. And there are times when, although you must choose one word for translation, the other possible meanings may color your understanding of a passage. All of this, by the way, is what people mean when they talk about things "getting lost in translation." Any translation you read represents someone else's choices, and all the other possible choices are no longer available to you unless you

have access to the original language. Some of this will become apparent very quickly and some will not apply until later, but it is a good idea to have an awareness from the start that translation is, in many ways, more of an art than a science.

This text is part of a set of materials designed to facilitate the teaching and the learning of New Testament Greek. It is intended to serve as a long-term reference tool. It is not a complete grammar book in that it does not include every possible use of various noun and verb forms. But it does set forth the basics. In addition to this text, the materials also include a workbook and study guide with answer keys and a CD for teachers and those who are working on their own. Both of these include their own separate introductions, so I will not repeat here what is said there. The title reflects my hope that these materials will be used in a wide range of settings: the traditional classroom at various levels, home schooling, review for clergy and classes within their parishes, and individual study.

The material has been developed in accordance with two standard reference texts. While these are generally more complicated than is helpful for beginning students, you will see them referenced occasionally. They are *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* by Daniel B. Wallace and *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker. Much of the terminology has been chosen to agree with the Wallace grammar book in order to provide a smooth transition to upper level work. Eventually you will probably want to acquire these reference works for yourself.

At the beginning of the course, you will find that chapters alternate between verb chapters and noun chapters. This allows you to begin immediately to work with short sentences. As we move on, other parts of speech are gradually added. At the very end of the course, you will find chapters dealing with the most complex material: participles, the subjunctive mood, infinitives, and the imperative mood. Each chapter includes a section entitled “preparing for the quiz” or “preparing for the exam.” This gives a summary of the important points to be remembered from the chapter, but it is not a substitute for reading each chapter thoroughly and learning the new material. I always suggest to my students that, before doing the workbook exercises, they re-read the chapter carefully. Especially in a regular classroom setting, it is impossible to pick up all the points in the chapter the first time around.

Throughout the text, you will find boxes enclosing various paradigms: the full forms of the new material to be learned. Rather than repeating all of these at the end of the text, I have provided a comprehensive index which includes references to forms. The table of contents also lists the material covered in each chapter. The combination of the index and the table of contents should enable you to quickly access any information you need.

The text, along with the accompanying workbook and study guide, represents my attempt to provide as clear explanatory material as possible. You will often find me saying, “Do this!” or “Don’t do that!” I have tried to point out those places which often cause difficulty and I have tried, as much as possible, to offer explanations in easy to understand language, though some technical terminology is necessary. I sometimes describe myself as a guide who has been over the territory many times and knows where

all the potholes and road blocks are. My intent is to guide you through and around these to an understanding of how the Greek language works. As you have already seen in this introduction, I often address you, the student, directly, rather than speaking in impersonal terms.

Finally, I would like to point out a couple of details about the text itself. (1) There are several appendices in the back. Your teacher (or the teacher's manual, if you are working alone) will point these out at the appropriate time and tell you how to make the best use of them. (2) Several years ago I made the decision to "frontload" the vocabulary. What this means is that the great majority of the vocabulary you are asked to learn appears in Chapters 1-27. After that point, most chapters do not have more than five or six new words to learn, and some have none at all. This is so that, as we move into the more complicated material and you are being asked to learn new verbal forms, you are not also being asked to add a lot of new words.

I really do owe this project to all my students. I began by creating additional exercises for them and just kept going. I especially thank all those who gave me the encouragement and gentle prodding to get the project published, especially Travis Hines who finally pushed me to get it done. It would take too long to list everyone and I'm sure I would miss someone. To anyone who provided any kind of encouragement, constructive criticism, challenge, or inspiration – thanks!

As the project has neared completion, there have been several who have made special contributions. Again, thanks go to Travis for all the time spent critiquing and proofreading the materials. I should also mention those whose sharp eyes helped catch and correct the many errors in the text, especially Gerry Clemmons, Roman Roldan, Martha Chambers, Larry Noyes, Kathleen Bushyager, and Kyle Tomlin. Thanks also to Lauren Larkin who provided a second set of eyes in correcting the proofs. And finally there is the small group who gave suggestions on the presentation of the material: Travis Hines, Martha Chambers, Larry Noyes, and Tara Jernigan.

Then there are a few individuals who made unique contributions: Tara Jernigan and her son Isaac who have been using the materials for home schooling, my colleague Rod Whitacre who has offered encouragement and suggestions, my college professor Ruth Pavlantos who got me started on the journey, and my husband Dwight who has been with me all the way.

Finally, I would like to thank Tom Costello and Word Association for helping me take the last step on the journey to publication.

I have enjoyed producing these materials over the years and my students claim that they have enjoyed using them to learn Greek. I hope that you will "complete our joy" by making good use of them and by making your own discovery of the adventure of New Testament Greek.

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