

## CHAPTER 8



When I started studying the Bible, I remember looking at a paragraph and having difficulty locating the main idea(s). I am a visual person, and sometimes the words started to blend together.

So I started working on a new way to study my Bible. I would xerox a paragraph of the Bible, cut each verse into its phrases, and lay the pieces out in a way that made sense to me. I would put the main thought all the way to the left, and ideas that were related to that main point were placed under or over it. For example (Mark 8:34):

If anyone wishes to come after Me,  
he must  
deny himself, and  
take up his cross and  
follow Me.

In other words, those who want to be a disciple of Jesus must do three things: “deny,” “take up,” “follow.”

When I was done, I would xerox my reconstructed text and have something that visually helped me see the flow of the author’s discussion.

As the years passed, I became more sophisticated. I used color pencils! Eventually I used a Bible search program on the computer to get the actual text; I would copy it into my word processor and lay out the passage.

This process helped me more than almost anything else to study my Bible. It forced me to identify the main point (or points) and to see the flow of the author’s thought—how he moved from one main point to the next, and how he clarified the main point(s) by adding modifiers.

I eventually named this process “phrasing” because I found that it wasn’t normally helpful to break a sentence into every word (which is

done in grammatical diagramming). I would break the sentence into its phrases (or clauses) and found that I rarely needed to divide the phrases further. So when you see the examples of phrasing on the following pages, and if you have “baggage” from high school grammar classes, don’t freak out. This isn’t grammatical diagramming, although it uses grammar.

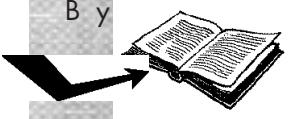
When I then started teaching phrasing to college and graduate students, I found that they too enjoyed the process because it helped them learn, for themselves, what the Bible was saying.

I also discovered that other people were doing the same type of procedure. They called it by different names—“sentence flow,” “discourse analysis”—but they too had learned how laying a passage out visually helped them see what the author meant.

Let me show you how it works.

On the following pages, the text that is boxed is illustration. Text that is not boxed is my discussion.

By



the way, why am I talking about phrasing in a text designed to teach you the basics of Greek grammar? My assumption is that you want to learn to use the language tools *in order to study* your Bible. After trying many other methods, I discovered that the tools are best learned while you are actually doing Bible study, or what is called “exegesis.”

Do you have to do phrasing in order to learn a little Greek? No. There are different methods of doing Bible study that are effective. But phrasing works best for me and for my students, and so it becomes the context within which I will teach you how to use the language tools.

Also, one of the goals for this textbook is to help you read good commentaries. While some good commentaries may not actually phrase the text, the essence of the commentary will be to discover the flow of the author’s thought and his main points. The better you become at phrasing, the more familiar a good commentary will feel.

Imagine that you have been asked to teach a Bible study on 1 Peter 1:2. How are you going to do it? How will you start?

Phrasing starts with two steps: (1) finding the beginning and the end of the passage, (2) and then breaking the passage into manageable sections. Let's walk through the process.

### **Step 1: Find the Beginning and the End of the Passage**

The biblical writers don't intend you to read a single verse in isolation from the verses around it. If you want to understand what one verse means, you have to see how it fits into its context. But which verses provide this context?

The key is to find the beginning and the end of the passage in which your verse occurs. If you are starting with the beginning of a book, the process is a little easier. You start with 1:1 and look for the end of the first passage. But if you are studying a verse somewhere in the middle of a book, it means you must find both the beginning and ending of the passage in which that verse occurs.



What is a "passage"? This is my word for the basic "story" that the author wants to tell us. For example, John 3:3 is part of the story of Jesus and Nicodemus, which is John 3:1-21. Romans 3:23 is part of the passage that summarizes justification by faith, which is Romans 3:21-26. In other words, a "passage" is all the verses that make up a complete idea. If your Bible has headings, a passage is the verses under one heading (as far as the editors are concerned).

- 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,
- 1:2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.
- 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 1:4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,
- 1:5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.
- 1:7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
- 1:9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
- 1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,
- 1:11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.
- 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.
- 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus ...

You find the limits of the passage by reading and rereading the surrounding verses until the limits become apparent. You are looking for the natural breaks in the passage, where the author changes topics, even slightly. To put it another way, you are looking for a unifying theme that ties the verses together. Let the Bible tell you when the author shifts topics. Here are a few of the indicators that the topic has changed.

- Major shifts in the topic of discussion (e.g., Paul has stopped making one point and has gone on to another).
- Shifts in audience (e.g., Jesus stops talking to the Pharisees and starts talking to the disciples).
- Shifts of other types, such as moving from describing what Jesus did to relating what he is teaching.
- Changes in key words and repeated themes.
- Transitional phrases (e.g., “the next day,” “after this”).

This can be trickier than you think, and the temptation is to trust the chapter, paragraph, and verse divisions of your Bible. But none of these were part of the original Bible, and while usually helpful they can often get in the way. They can also rob you of the joy of exploring and deciding for yourself, and sometimes they are wrong.

Read the first part of 1 Peter (to the left) starting at 1:1 over and over. Where is the break, the end of the first passage? Go ahead and discover it for yourself. (I am working from the NIV translation.)

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You probably saw rather quickly that v 2 is part of the letter’s salutation that runs from vv 1-2. Once you have found the beginning and the end, write out your heading for 1:1-2. If you are not sure what to call it, make a guess; you can always change it later.

Writing out the heading is crucial: your goal is to get the main point out of each section and then to state that main point in the heading. I call this the “passage heading” as opposed to another type of heading we will meet in a few pages.

**Salutation**

- 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,
- 1:2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

## Step 2: Identify the Sections

The next step is to break the passage into sections. You do this by reading and rereading the passage you identified in Step 1 until the natural sections of the passage suggest themselves to you. You then label each section with the main point being made in that section. Writing out the section heading is crucial, just like writing out the passage heading, since the initial goal of phrasing (and exegesis) is to identify the main point. If you are not sure what to write, write it in pencil so you can change it later if necessary.

Don't be in a hurry to get into the details of the passage but take the time to get the *big* picture. So many times when studying the Bible we want to jump right in and see what this word or that phrase "means to me." That's where we are headed, but don't be in a rush. Take your time. God's Word is worth it. Be content to sit back and let the overall picture develop.

During this part of the process you may notice words and phrases that seem important, but you don't know what they mean. Don't stop now to look them up; we are concentrating on the big picture and the day's own trouble is sufficient. Let's concentrate on getting the big picture.

Don't be so concerned with the *meaning* of the verses. Concentrate on seeing the *structure* of the passage, the flow of the author's thought. Ask yourself how the different parts are related to each other. As you read and reread the passage, thinking primarily about structure, you will be surprised at how the passage starts to show you its structure.

Try this now with 1 Peter 1:1-2, before turning the page and seeing what I have done with it.



This is a different approach than many Bible study methods that recommend getting into the details right away. But I think the big picture is more important, and if you run out of time and can't do all your preparation for your Bible study or Sunday School class, it is much better to know the big picture than lots of details.

**Salutation***Writer*

1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

*Recipients*

To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

1:2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:

*Greeting*

Grace and peace be yours in abundance

What did you find? You can see my suggestions to the left. I decided that there are three main sections that identify the writer (“Peter”), the recipients (“To God’s elect”), and the greeting (“Grace and peace be yours in abundance”).

Let me say it again: what you are doing is learning to start your Bible study by breaking up the passage into manageable sections. Of course, you can always cheat yourself out of the joy of discovering the Bible’s meaning for yourself and look at a study Bible, or check out a commentary, or ask a friend. But along with losing the joy of discovery, what makes you think that the next time you need help there will be a friend nearby or a study Bible within reach?

One of the nice aspects of phrasing is that if you run out of time after Step 2 and can’t continue, you at least have learned something that will help you teach the passage. You know the verses that make up the passage, the main point of the passage, the passage’s sections, and the main thought of each section. This provides a great context within which to discuss the verse in question.

### **Step 3: Identify the Phrases**

Now that you have identified the passage (Step 1) and its sections (Step 2), it is time to look at each individual section and divide it into its phrases.

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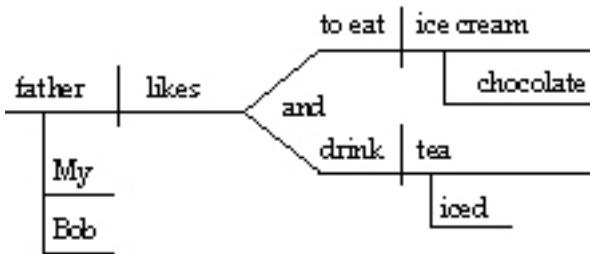
What’s a phrase? A phrase is an assertion, a proposition, something that means something. I am using the word “phrase” in a broader way than its grammatical usage. However, many phrases are grammatical phrases such as prepositional phrases, or adverbial phrases, or dependent and independent clauses. As you will see on the next page, many of the phrases I have identified are in fact grammatical phrases and clauses.

For example, if I said, “My father Bob likes to eat chocolate ice cream and drink iced tea,” how many assertions did I make? How many phrases are there? In one sense, I only made one assertion. But can you break it down into smaller assertions that have meaning?

Is “Bob” by itself a phrase? Not really. While it may name my father, it says nothing more. How about “to eat chocolate ice cream” and “drink iced tea”? Sure, these are two phrases that have meaning. They may not make complete sense all by themselves (they are dependent constructions), but they do mean something. What does my dad like? He likes (at least) two things: ice cream; iced tea.

Here is where phrasing and grammatical diagramming are different. In grammatical diagramming, every word is shown in its grammatical relationship, and you get something like what you see below. (I hope this doesn't bring back too many bad memories.) This is not what phrasing is, and if you subdivide your phrases too far, they lose their effectiveness.

### Grammatical Diagramming



### Phrasing

My father Bob likes to eat chocolate ice cream and drink iced tea.

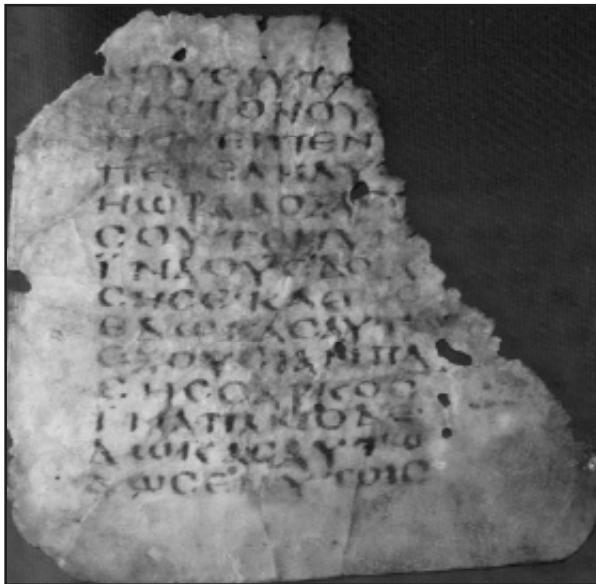
Let me explain it another way. In the sentence, "I want to go to the park but I must study first," how many words does it take until you have a phrase that has real meaning?

1. I
2. I want
3. I want to
4. I want to go
5. I want to go to
6. I want to go to the
7. I want to go to the park
8. I want to go to the park but
9. I want to go to the park but I
10. I want to go to the park but I must
11. I want to go to the park but I must study
12. I want to go to the park but I must study first.

While individual words have meaning, you don't really have a phrase that makes any sense until line 7. When you get to line 12, you realize that you have two phrases joined with the conjunction "but": "I want ..." and "I must ...."

Okay, back to 1 Peter. You have identified 1 Peter 1:1-2 as a passage and have seen that it has three sections. Now, break the two verses into its phrases. When done, check my work on the next page.

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This fifth century uncial manuscript (see pg. 258), labeled 0301, contains John 17:1-4. It is located in Munster, Germany. The photo is provided by the Center for the Study of the New Testament (Dan Wallace, director). Used by permission of Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung.

**Salutation***Writer*

1:1 Peter,  
an apostle of Jesus Christ,

*Recipients*

To God's elect,  
strangers in the world,  
scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and  
Bithynia,  
1:2 who have been chosen  
according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,  
through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,  
for obedience to Jesus Christ and  
sprinkling by his blood:

*Greeting*

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

In “Section 1” (“writer”) Peter identifies himself by name and by office. In “Section 2” (“recipients”) Peter addresses them as “God’s elect” and follows with a series of descriptions. “Section 3” (“greeting”) contains the letter’s greeting.

#### **Step 4: Identify the Main Phrase(s) and Modifying Phrases**

Now comes the real fun. You have established the limits of the passage and its sections and have broken it down into its phrases. As you have been reading and rereading the passage, you have started to identify the main points and the secondary points, and have seen how those secondary points relate to the main. Now it is time to make a commitment as to what is the main point (or points).

Identify the main point(s) in each section and place its phrase furthest to the left. These “main” phrases will be stating the main points the author is making. Most likely a main phrase will have a subject and a verb, and in many cases the verb will be in the indicative mood (and not a subjunctive or a participle).

Indent the other phrases under or over the word they modify. Use extra spacing to separate subsections of thought. If you find it helpful, underline or highlight words or themes that run throughout the discussion. When done, recheck your passage and section headings to be sure they are right. You can see my work on the next page.



Many signs in modern Greece are written in both Greek and English. See if you can pronounce the Greek words on this sign in Corinth.

**Salutation***Writer*

1:1 Peter,  
 an apostle of Jesus Christ,

*Recipients*

To God's elect,  
 strangers in the world,  
 scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia,  
 Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,  
 1:2 who have been chosen  
 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,  
 through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,  
 for obedience to Jesus Christ and  
 sprinkling by his blood:

*Greeting*

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

To God's elect,

strangers in the world,  
 scattered throughout Pontus,  
 Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and  
 Bithynia,  
 1:2 who have been chosen  
 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,  
 through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,  
 for  
 obedience to Jesus Christ and  
 sprinkling by his blood:

Here is how I phrase 1 Peter 1:1-2. Are there other ways this passage could have been laid out? Sure. Since “elect” and “chosen” are the same thing, it would have been nice to align the phrase “strangers ...,” “according ...,” “through ...,” and “for ...” in a straight column so you could see that Peter is giving us four descriptions of who the elect are, as in the bottom example to the left. (Actually, there is no Greek behind the phrase “who have been chosen.” The NIV inserted it because they wanted the reader to understand that the following prepositional phrases modify the idea of “elect.”)

The two phrases “obedience to Jesus Christ” and “sprinkling by his blood” could have been placed under the preposition “for” (see bottom example to the left), but when a word has multiple objects, I like to add the extra space to the right of the word (e.g., “for”) so you can see that the following phrases are parallel (see top example to the left).

I also could have listed the five place names (“Pontus, Galatia ...”) in a column, and often I will do this for a series. It didn’t seem to make that much difference here.

### **Walk through 1 Peter 1:1-2**

Now that we have 1 Peter 1:1-2 laid out, let’s walk through the passage to see what Peter has to tell us. Here is your Bible study lesson.

Peter begins his letter with a three-part salutation. He first identifies himself by name and adds the qualifier that he is Jesus’ apostle.

Peter then identifies to whom he is writing. His primary description is that they are the elect, Christians. He continues by explaining that this means they are strangers, scattered throughout five different areas in modern-day Turkey. (Although they still live on the earth, they are strangers to this land because they are elect.) But what is perhaps more significant is the following theological description of the elect. Their election was “according to the foreknowledge of God,” an election accomplished “through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,” and an election that has as its goal the “obedience to Jesus Christ” and made possible by the “sprinkling by his blood,” Christ’s death on the cross.

Peter then concludes with the actual greeting.

Can you see how much help phrasing can be? It helps you get started, rewards you with some understanding of the passage if you are short of time (after Steps 1 and 2), and helps you dig deeper into the passage and discover its primary and secondary points.

Let’s try the process again with another passage. Try to do the work on your own before seeing how I do it. We might as well check out the verses following Peter’s salutation. (1 Peter 1:3-21 is on the next page.)

- 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 1:4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,
- 1:5 who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.
- 1:7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
- 1:9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
- 1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,
- 1:11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.
- 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.
- 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- 1:14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.
- 1:15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;
- 1:16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”
- 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.
- 1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,
- 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.
- 1:20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.
- 1:21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead ...

### Step 1: Find the Beginning and the End of the Passage

Read through these verses to the left until you decide where Peter stops his discussion.

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It is a little difficult isn't it? Peter changes his topic several times, and yet each time the new subject is explicitly connected to the previous. Peter starts by describing our salvation, our new birth. Then he moves from rejoicing in that salvation to suffering because of that salvation (vv 6-9), to how the prophets wanted to see the salvation (vv 10-12), and on into how we should live in light of all this (vv 13-17).

The "therefore" that starts v 13 shows Peter is not starting a totally new topic, and yet Peter changes from discussing salvation (vv 3-12) to specifics on how that salvation is to show itself, so perhaps v 13 is a good place to mark the end of the passage.

### Step 2: Identify the Sections

While you were working on Step 1, you were also getting ready for Step 2. How many basic sections do you find in vv 3-12? Break the passage into its sections and put a heading with each.

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See if you can figure out what this poster is advertising.

**Salvation**

- 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 1:4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,
- 1:5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

**Salvation and Suffering**

- 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.
- 1:7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
- 1:9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

**Salvation and the Prophets**

- 1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,
- 1:11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.
- 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

**Step 3: Identify the Phrases**

There is still too much in vv 3-12 for one Bible study (but just the right amount for a three-part series). Let's work with just the first section, vv 3-5. Go through the passage and break it down into its phrases.

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It looks as if v 3 begins with the theme statement, and then Peter follows with a series of prepositional phrases and a few relative clauses. As you are dividing these three verses into phrases, you will be starting to get a feel for the main assertions of the section.

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1:3 | Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!<br>In his great mercy he has given us new birth<br>into a living hope<br>through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, |
| 1:4 | and into an inheritance<br>that can never perish, spoil or fade—<br>kept in heaven for you,  |
| 1:5 | who through faith are shielded by God's power<br>until the coming of the salvation<br>that is ready to be revealed in the last time.   |

**Step 4: Identify the Main Phrase(s) and Modifying Phrases**

Now it is time to identify the main point (or points). Move those phrases to the left, and the modifying phrases under the word they modify. Keep parallel phrases equally indented from the left margin.

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1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In his great mercy  
he has given us new birth

{1} into a living hope

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1:4

{2} and into an inheritance

that can never perish, spoil or fade—  
 kept in heaven for you,

1:5

who through faith are shielded by God's power  
 until the coming of the salvation

that is ready to be revealed in the last time.



By the way, this is great biblical theology. Saying "Praise God" is not praising him. That is not the biblical pattern. To praise God is to give him glory, to describe his character and proclaim his deeds.

The main affirmation of the passage is that we are to praise God. The reason for praising God is that he has given us new birth, and he did this because he is merciful.

Peter then specifies that this new birth has two results. The first is that we now have a living hope. But how was that hope made available? The answer is Jesus' resurrection. Notice from my placement that the prepositional phrase ("through ...") modifies the verb "given," telling us how it was given. But I wanted to show that "into a living hope" and "and into an inheritance" are parallel, both telling us something about our new birth. But they are separated by the prepositional phrase "through ...." This illustrates one of the problems with phrasing—words can get in the way. One solution is to number them as I have. (I always use curly brackets when I insert something into the phrasing that is not in the text. I don't want to confuse my words with God's!)

The second result of our new birth is that we have an inheritance. But it is not just any inheritance. It is an inheritance that can never perish. Why? Because it is kept in heaven for you. This illustrates another problem of phrasing, but one easily remedied. Due to the nature of how we construct discussions, the visual representation of the flow of thought keeps moving to the right. But eventually you will run out of paper, so I use a line to pull the discussion back to the left. The line should connect a word with what it is modifying. It is especially good to connect pronouns to their antecedents.

"Kept in heaven for you" isn't parallel with "that can never perish, spoil, or fade." It is telling you why our inheritance can never "perish, spoil, or fade." If I wanted to indicate this, I could have placed "kept ..." under "never," or I could have drawn a line under the phrase "perish, spoil, or fade" and drawn a second line from it to "kept." In other words, you can make your phrasing more or less specific, depending upon what you need to do in order to understand the passage.

Peter adds one last note to his description of "you." While we look forward to our inheritance in heaven, we live out our lives here and now shielded by God's power. How long will this shielding last? Until our salvation comes in its fullness. When will that be? "In the last time." It is ready right now and waits for the end of time.

Can you see how this simple process of working through the text, seeing its sections, and identifying the main affirmations can make such a significant difference in your Bible study? I hope so.

## Another Method

If you do not like working on a computer, you can always write out the phrasing by hand. This has the advantage of slowing you down, which is always a good idea in Bible study.

But what if you want to mark your Bible? Well, we can still follow the basics of phrasing, although you lose the advantage of visually seeing the passage. Here is a suggested procedure.

1. Divide the passage into sections (if necessary) by writing letters (for major sections) and numbers (for subsections) in the margin.
2. Underline or highlight the main clause(s).
3. Draw double slashes to separate the main phrases, and single slashes to separate secondary phrases.
4. Underline (in different colors) the repeated themes and words. Circle the major conjunctions.

### 1 Peter 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup>-Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>-and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>-who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

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Hopefully this gives you a brief look at how phrasing can help you take a portion of Scripture and begin to understand what it says.

Phrasing has a minimum number of rules because it is a personal exercise. What helps one person see the structure of a passage may not help another. What is important is that you adopt the basic approach and then modify it to suit your own tastes and needs.

One of the neat things about phrasing is that you can stop almost anywhere along the process and still have learned your Bible a little better. For example, if all you do is break a larger passage down into its sections, you are well along to learning the passage better even if you don't do the actual phrasing. If all you do is find the main point, it will keep you from emphasizing the details of the passage, which in itself is a significant step forward.

**Exercises**

Write out the phrasing for the following passages. Please copy the unmarked texts on the next page and use them, not your Bible, for the second and third exercises.

1. 1 Peter 1:6-9 and 1:10-12.
2. Do Steps 1 and 2 on Mark 2:1ff.
3. Phrase the rest of Colossians 1:9 through the end of the passage.
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 is a good passage to phrase.

**Mark 2:1ff.**

- 2:1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.
- 2:2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.
- 2:3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.
- 2:4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.
- 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."
- 2:6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,
- 2:7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
- 2:8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?
- 2:9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?
- 2:10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralytic,
- 2:11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."
- 2:12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"
- 2:13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.
- 2:14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.
- 2:15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him....

**Colossians 1:9ff.**

- 1:9 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.
- 1:10 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,
- 1:11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully
- 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.
- 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,
- 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
- 1:16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.
- 1:17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
- 1:18 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.
- 1:19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,
- 1:20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.
- 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.
- 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—
- 1:23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature ...

