

## Uses of the Optative Mood

The optative is the mood of strong contingency. Like the subjunctive it is the mood of possibility, but the optative expresses a wish or a desire. The word optative comes to the English from the Latin *optātīvus* meaning “chosen [a wish].”

*Optative of wish or prayer.* The optative is the common usage of the verb for expressing a wish. An example is Rom. 3:3-4: τι γαρ; εἰ ἠπιστησαν τινες, μη ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργησῃ; μη γένοιτο. γινεσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής, πᾶς δὲ ἄθρωπος ψευσταί, “Ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου καὶ νικήσῃς ἐν τῷ κρινεσθαι σε. (For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? **May it never be!** Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: “That you may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged.” ). An example of a prayer is found in 1 Thes. 3:11: Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κυριὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς κατευθῆναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς (Now **may** our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, **direct** our way to you.).

*Optative of deliberation.* The optative is often used in questions where the speaker is pondering the meaning of a thing. An example is Luke 1:29: ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ διεταραχθῆ καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἶη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος. (But when she saw [him], she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this **might be**).

*Optative of possibility.* At times, the optative is used in conditional sentences to express a consequence in the future of an unlikely condition, as Dr. Wallace says, “*If he could do something, he would do this.*”<sup>1</sup> An example is Acts 17:18: τινες δὲ καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων καὶ Στοικῶν φιλοσοφῶν συνεβαλλόν αὐτῷ, καὶ τινες ἔλεγον, Τί ἂν θελοῖ ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λεγεῖν οἱ δὲ, Ξενῶν δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεῖσθαι εἶναι, ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελεῖετο. (Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, “What would **he wish to say?**” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,” because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.) Drs. Dana & Mantey write, “Expressed fully the example would read, *What would he wish to say, if he could say anything?* These optatives occur as the fulfillment of a condition which is implied, and in the great majority of instances we can supply from the context the implied condition.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace, p. 484

<sup>2</sup> Dana & Mantey, p. 174