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## **The Impressive Use of Parallelism in the Epistles of St. Paul**

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### **Abstract:**

Letter writing is an art adept by many scholars, writers, poets to convey their thoughts and feelings. The letters were skillfully written so as to pursue a research on their thoughts and written style. One such scholar of earlier times is St. Paul who wrote fourteen epistles addressing different audience of his time. The research aims to elaborately deal with one of the prominent technical devices Parallelism, one of the unique styles that he has employed to nail his thoughts. His letters have revolutionized and transformed the lives of many. The choice of the author is based on the fact that his letters impart values for life which affect eternity. The letters of Paul have great literary value which many have missed to see. Such an undertaking has brought to light the great spiritual stand, eminent scholarship and craftsmanship of Paul. The study focuses on the kinds of Parallelisms which St. Paul has used in his epistles like Synonymous parallelism, Antithetical parallelism, Synthetic parallelism and few minor parallelisms like Staircase parallelism and Chiasmus with apt examples.

**Keywords:** Parallelism, Synonymous, Antithetic, Synthetic, Chiasm, Staircase, repetition.

### **Abbreviations**

Rom.	Romans
1 Cor.	I Corinthians
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians

Phil.	Philippians
Col.	Colossians
1 Thess.	I Thessalonians
1 Tim.	1 Timothy
2 Tim.	2 Timothy
Philem.	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews

## **Introduction**

Letter writing is used by many eminent scholars, writers and poets to convey personal and social messages. Letters played a vital role in expressing one's thoughts in a refined and promising ways. One such writer is St.Paul who wrote letters to a group of people for refinement and to preserve their belief system. These epistles occupy a major part in the New Testament book which is the second part of the Christian Bible which has a collection of twenty- seven books written by different authors.

The fourteen epistles of Paul are addressed to a given individual or community. His epistles are Epistle to the Romans, First Epistle to the Corinthians, Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Epistle to the Galatians, Epistle to the Ephesians, Epistle to the Philippians, Epistle to the Colossians, First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, First Epistle to Timothy, Second Epistle to Timothy, Epistle to Titus, Epistle to Philemon and Epistle to the Hebrews.

Paul writes his epistle “on a different topic, in a different emotional state, to a different audience, and at a different stage in his life. Each of these will cause stylistic changes of varying degrees that are very difficult to quantify”. (Grivich) The technique varies according to the subject and the needs of the people to whom he is addressing. One of the styles that Paul adopts to write in his epistles is the use of words in different ways in different contexts. He emphasizes, “one theological point in one letter, but a different point in another, because of the different circumstances under which the letter was written. There are excessive similarities in Paul's letters. He speaks and writes on the same themes often, to many different audiences. It is not

surprising if the same word is repeated from time to time, but with changes to match the different circumstances”. (Grivich)

One of the figurative tools that Paul has used in his epistles is Parallelisms. Parallelism expresses ideas of equal worth with the same grammatical form. Thekkekara defines Parallelism as “balancing thought against thought, phrase against phrase, word against word.” (P.89) There are three types of Parallelism which are used by Paul. Synonymous or Repetitive parallelism, Antithetic or Contrasting Parallelism, Synthetic or Complementary or Progressive Parallelism. He employs minor parallels like Chiasm and Staircase parallels which add beauty to the work.

### **Synonymous or Repetitive Parallelism**

The Synonymous or Repetitive parallelism repeats the same idea in similar language. “juxtaposition of two or more ideas that are parallel in sense (P.78, Basset). The epistles of Paul have numerous Synonymous Parallelisms. Paul has adopted different varieties of techniques to make serious issues of life palatable to the readers. To quote, “For scarcely for a *righteous man* will one die; yet perhaps for a *good man* someone would even dare to die.” (Rom 5:7) But God died for mankind even when he had sinned. Such is the love of God whose unconditional love for the elect is highlighted as He says to Moses, “...I will have *mercy* on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have *compassion* on whomever I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15). In the above verses ‘righteous man and good man’ and ‘mercy and compassion’ are Synonymous parallels.

God discloses his secrets through the word of God and that it can be attained only by faith, “but now has been made *manifest*, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been *made* known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith” (Rom 16:26). The word ‘manifest’ is synonymous parallel to ‘made known’. Some of the striking Synonymous parallelisms are as follows as reflected in the words ‘seen and visible’. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are *seen* were not made of things which are *visible*.” (Heb 11:3) The Holy Spirit testifies about God. The word ‘speaking’ is paralld by the word ‘say’ in the following verse, “Therefore I make known to you that no one *speaking* by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can *say* that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor 12:3)

Paul is happy about the Philippians because of their generosity in giving to God, “Indeed *I have all* and abound. *I am full*, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, a *sweet-smelling* aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, *well pleasing* to God.” (Phil 4:18) ‘I have all’ is followed by ‘I am full’ and ‘sweet smelling aroma’ succeeded by ‘well pleasing’. Paul advises the Ephesians not to grieve the Spirit of the Lord but to imitate Christ, “And be *kind* to one another, *tenderhearted*, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.” (Eph 4:32) In the above verse ‘kind to one another’ is followed by ‘tender hearted’. He also advises them to walk in the way of the light guided by the Lord, “But all things that are *exposed* are made *manifest* by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light... “*Awake*, you who sleep, *arise* from the dead, and Christ will give you light”” (Eph 5:13, 14). ‘Exposed and manifest’; ‘Awake and arise’ are synonymous parallels.

Paul reminds the Ephesians about their previous ungodly life and recalls how they were saved from death to life. He uses the word ‘strangers’ to parallel ‘aliens’, “that at that time you were without Christ, being *aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel and *strangers* from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (Eph 2:12) Advising the Corinthians Paul uses Synonymous parallelism in the use of the words ‘bring to light’ and ‘reveal’, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both *bring to light* the hidden things of darkness and *reveal* the counsels of the hearts; and then each one’s praise will come from God.” (1 Cor 4:5)

‘Guide to the blind’ and ‘light to those who are in darkness’ and ‘instructor’ and ‘teacher’ are synonymous in the following verses. “and are confident that you yourself are a *guide to the blind*, a *light to those who are in darkness*, an *instructor* of the foolish, a *teacher* of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.” (Rom 2:19, 20) When there was a question raised whether the Israelites understand God’s love for them, Moses answers saying that, “...I will *provoke you* to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will *anger you* by a foolish nation.” (Rom 10:19) They were foolish people not understanding God’s love amidst of all the signs and miracles. Paul uses yet another Synonymous Parallelism in the succeeding verse, “You are all *sons of light* and *sons of the day*...” (1 Thess 5:5a)

## Antithetic or Contrasting Parallelism

Antithetic or Contrasting Parallelism is a thought stated in the first line which is strengthened by a contrasting thought in the second line. Speaking about the effects of sin and virtue Paul remarks that all who sin will reap their wages as death and all who are virtuous will gain life. But God grants eternal life as gift, “For the *wages* of sin is *death*, but the *gift* of God is eternal *life* in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 6:23) Paul symbolically uses the words ‘wages’ and ‘gift’ to explain ‘death’ and ‘life’. The same point is illustrated as he says, “For to be *carnally minded* is *death*, but to be *spiritually minded* is *life* and peace” (Rom 8:6). ‘carnal minded’ is contrasted with ‘spiritually minded’. Likewise ‘death’ and ‘life’.

God came to the world to bring peace between man and God. He has brought unity among humanity and that all have become one in the eyes of the Lord, “For He Himself is our peace, who has *made both one*, and has *broken down* the middle wall of division between us.” (Eph 2:14) ‘made both one’ is contrasted with ‘broken down’. “Now this, “He *ascended*” – what does it mean but that He also first *descended* into the lower parts of the earth?” (Eph 4:9) In the above verse, the Antithetical Parallelism is explicit in the use of the words ‘ascended’ and ‘descended’.

In the following verses, the Antithetical Parallelism is clearly seen in the use of the words ‘first man Adam and last Adam’, ‘one man’s offense and one man’s righteous act’ and ‘one man’s disobedience and one Man’s obedience’, “And so it is written, “The *first man Adam* became a living being.” *The last Adam* became a life-giving spirit.” (1 Cor 15:45) Likewise, “Therefore, as through *one man’s offense* judgment came to all men, resulting, in condemnation, even so through *one Man’s righteous act* the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by *one man’s disobedience* many were made sinners, so also by *one Man’s obedience* many will be made righteous.” (Rom 5:18, 19)

The following are the two striking examples of Antithetical parallelism, “having *abolished* in His flesh the *enmity*, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to *create* in Himself one new man from the two, thus making *peace*” (Eph 2:15) is yet another example of Antithetical Parallelism. When Paul reminds the Ephesians of their old unholy life before they knew God, he uses striking words like ‘darkness and light’ in the following verse which is antithetical. “For you were once *darkness*, but now you are *light* in the Lord...” (Eph 5:8)

Man's good works are valued and testified only after he is dead. This is explained in the following verse, "For a testament is in force after men are *dead*, since it has no power at all while the testator *lives*." (Heb 9:17) The words 'dead and lives' are paralleled. To quote another example, Man, who believes and confesses Christ as his Savior, dies to his sin and begins to live his life for God. His sins are no more remembered, "For the *death* that He *died*, He died to sin once for all; but the *life* that He *lives*, He lives to God." (Rom 6:10) The greatness of salvation is highlighted in the above mentioned Antithetical Parallelism.

The following verse where Paul talks about the resurrection of the dead people on the day of Christ's second coming, Antithetical Parallelism that is used is outstanding, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is *sown* in corruption, it is *raised* in incorruption. It is sown in *dishonor*, it is raised in *glory*. It is *sown* in *weakness*, it is *raised* in *power*. It is sown a *natural body*, it is raised a *spiritual body*. There is a *natural body*, and there is a *spiritual body*." (1 Cor 15:42, 43, 44) Antithetically the words 'sown and raised', 'dishonor and glory', 'weakness and power' and 'natural body and spiritual body' are used.

Paul gives series of advices to discipline man. He advices the Romans to walk in God's ways and he says, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us *cast off* the works of *darkness*, and let us *put on* the armor of *light*." (Rom 13:12) Commanding the Ephesians to speak truth Paul opines, "Therefore, putting away *lying*, each one *speak truth* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." (Eph 4:25) He instructs the Thessalonians to lead a holy life, "For God did not call us to *uncleanness*, but in *holiness*." (1 Thess 4: 7) The Antithetical Parallelism is explicit in the use of the words 'cast off and put on', 'darkness and light', 'lying and speak truth' and 'uncleanness and holiness'.

Paul's effective use of Antithetical Parallelism is found in the following verses, "For we brought nothing *into this world*, and it is certain we can carry *nothing out*." (1 Tim 6:7) Paul advices the Ephesians to get rid of secret sins and to walk in the way of God, since all sins will be brought to light one day. So man should be wise and be careful as how to live his God-given life, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as *fools* but as *wise*." (Eph 5:15) Paul advices the Romans not to speak like fools even after knowing that God's anger will be revealed for all the sinful acts, "Professing to be *wise*, they became *fools*." (Rom 1:22)

The following series of verses are striking. Paul honors marriage life and he lays rules to lead a godly life. He advises the married man to behave in the following way, “For this reason a man shall *leave* his father and mother and be *joined* to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (Eph 5:31) He also instructs women as how to lead a sin free life and rules to be followed if her husband expires, “So then if, while her husband *lives*, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband *dies*, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.” (Rom 7:3) The examples of Antithetical Parallelism as reflected in the use of words like ‘leave and joined’ and ‘lives and dies’.

Paul encourages the Corinthians not to concentrate on this worldly temporary trouble which man sees, but to fix the attention on heavenly things which are eternal. To quote, “while we do not look at the things which are *seen*, but at the things which are *not seen*. For the things which are seen are *temporary*, but the things which are not seen are *eternal*.” (2 Cor 4:18) The words ‘seen and not seen’ and ‘temporary and eternal’ are antithetical parallels.

One of the most brilliant uses of Antithetical Parallelism is when Paul explains his personal experience to show this love for Christ and the trouble he has undergone for the sake of Christ, “as *unknown*, and yet *well known*; as *dying*, and behold we *live*; as *chastened*, and yet *not killed*; as *sorrowful*, yet always *rejoicing*; as *poor*, yet making many *rich*; as having *nothing*, and yet *possessing all things*.” (2 Cor 6: 9, 10), “We are hard *pressed* on every side, yet *not crushed*; we are *perplexed*, but *not in despair*.” (2 Cor 4:8)

Paul is never worried about the worldly troubles that he underwent, since all things happen only for God’s sake. So he boldly says, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our *outward man* is perishing, yet the *inward man* is being renewed day by day.” (2 Cor 4:16) He gets infuriated with the attitude of the Corinthians who boast about themselves. To make them understand that all are vain, the great scholar humbles himself and speaks in an ironical way, “We are *fools* for Christ’s sake, but you are *wise* in Christ! We are *weak*, but you are *strong*! You are *distinguished*, but we are *dishonored*!” (1 Cor 4:10) One cannot miss the use of Antithetical Parallelism in the preceding passage as reflected in the words ‘outward man and inward man’, ‘fools and wise’, ‘weak and strong’ and ‘distinguished and dishonored’.

Paul illustrates on the working of spiritual law in the below verse, “For if you live according to the *flesh* you will *die*; but if by the *Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body, you



will *live*.” (Rom 8:13) Paul advises the Galatians to be spiritual, “For he who *sows* to his flesh will of the flesh *reap* corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Gal 6:8) In his attempt to convince Philemon regarding his slave Onesimus, Paul recommends to utilize him for the glory of God, “who once was *unprofitable* to you, but now is *profitable* to you and to me.” (Philem 1:11)

### **Synthetic or Progressive Parallelism**

Synthetic or Progressive Parallelism “involves the completion or expansion of the idea of the first part in the second part.” (Britannica) Many examples of Synthetic parallelisms are found in the epistles of Paul. In the following Synthetic Parallelism, Paul asks the Corinthians to be concerned about the eternal and imperishable life after death than to worry about the perishable temporary life on earth, “while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal”. (2 Cor 4:18)

Paul reiterating his view on God’s grace uses Synthetic Parallelism, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” (1 Cor 15: 10) One of the striking Synthetic Parallelisms is as follows. This explains Paul’s suffering for Christ. So he is ready to accept any kind of suffering for the sake of Christ, “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” (2 Cor 4: 8, 9) It is indeed a completion of a thought.

Describing about the new life with Christ, Paul explains one more Synthetic Parallelism, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor 5:17) Giving and receiving is a universal law which Paul states in Synthetic Parallelism cited below, “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” (2 Cor 9:6)

“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.” (Rom 2:12) In man there is always a battle in the mind, “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” (Rom 7:23) Paul vehemently urges the Corinthians to, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is

outside the body, but he who commits sexual immortality sins against his own body.” (1 Cor 6:18) He strictly instructs them on this aspect. “If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Cor 3:17) and once again, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”(Gal 5:13)

Thoughts on giving and sharing become powerful with the use of Synthetic Parallelism. Man must always be ready to do good works, “Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.” (1 Tim 6:18) Commenting on the cheerful giver Paul remarks, “Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.” (2 Cor 9:10)

The Synthetic Parallelism used to explain the view that Man has to abide by the rules and regulations of the Government is noteworthy, “Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” (Rom 13:2) Yet another example of the same is found in the verse where Paul addresses the Thessalonians. The Thessalonians received the word of God with great care, “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (1 Thess 2:13)

The following Synthetic Parallelism emphasizes the view that each one will be clothed according to his glory, “All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds.” (1 Cor 15:39) “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.” (1 Cor 15: 24) The above mentioned verse the idea of ‘end’ is expanded.

Paul acquaints the Romans of the significance of Christ giving His life, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.” (Rom 5:7) Commenting on the deliverance that man receives from God, “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.” (2 Cor 1:9,10)

God loves his creation, Gentile or Jew, "...As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (2 Cor 6:16b) Paul proclaims God's mighty power and faithfulness towards man, "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us – by me, Silvanus, and Timothy – was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." (2 Cor 1:19, 20) "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb 4:12) The Synthetic Parallelism as reflected in the following verse which highlights the importance of the word of God.

Remarking about grace and love respectively, Paul opines, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work." (Rom 11:6) Paul talks about the qualities of love, "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up." (1 Cor 13:4)

Paul says that people are the epistle of Christ, "you are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart." (2 Cor 3:3) The use of Synthetic Parallelism is brilliant in the following verse, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (2 Cor 1:3, 4)

### **Staircase or Climactic Parallelism**

Staircase or Climactic parallelism is a type of parallelism structured in which some word units are repeated from one line to the next, adding other words to extend or complete the meaning. An outstanding example of Staircase parallelism is the use of the words 'whatever things are' in the following verse, "Finally, brethren, *whatever things are* true, *whatever things are* noble, *whatever things are* just, *whatever things are* pure, *whatever things are* lovely, *whatever things are* of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy- meditate on these things." (Phil 4:8) God is the mighty God, "that at the name of Jesus every

knee should bow, of those in heaven, *and of those* on earth, *and of those* under the earth.” (Phil 2:10) The words ‘and of those’ is Staircase parallelism.

The following is the use of the words ‘do you’, ‘You who’ are examples of Staircase parallelism. Paul advises the Romans not be blaspheme the name of God in vain. So he attacks the Romans saying,

You, therefore, who teach another, *do you* not teach yourself? *You who* preach that a man should not steal, *do you* steal? *You who* say, “Do not commit adultery,” *do you* commit adultery? *You who* abhor idols, do you rob temples? *You who* make your boast in the law, *do you* dishonor God through breaking the law?” (Rom 2:21-23)

The use of the words ‘there is none’, ‘they have’ and ‘For what’ are effectively used in the following verses to emphasize that all are sinners and no one does good, “As it is written: “*There is none* righteous, no not one; “*there is none* who understands; there is none who seeks after God.” (Rom 3:10, 11) To cite another example, “*They have* all gone out of the way; *they have* together become unprofitable.” (Rom 3:12a) Man undergoes a spiritual conflict within him between the good and evil. To quote, “*For what* I am doing, I do not understand. *For what* I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” (Rom 7:15) The use of Staircase parallelism is remarkable.

The use of the repetition of the words ‘these He also’ explains Paul’s thought, “Moreover whom He predestined, *these He also* called; whom He called, *these He also* justified; and whom He justified, *these He also* glorified.” (Rom 8:30) The repeated use of the words ‘we are’ in the verse quoted below is striking as Paul comments that he can conquer anything through Christ even in the midst of sufferings, “As it is written: ...*we are* killed all day long; *we are* accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” (Rom 8:36)

The pathetic condition of the people of Israel is brilliantly portrayed with the use of the word ‘And how shall they’. To quote, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? *And how shall they* believe in Him of whom they have not heard? *And how shall they* hear without a preacher? *And how shall they* preach unless they are sent? (Rom 10:14, 15a) The repetition of the word ‘he who’ is Staircase parallelism as Paul elucidates about serving God with spiritual gifts. To quote, “... let us use it in our ministering; *he who* teaches, in teaching; *he*

*who* exhorts, in exhortation; *he who* gives, with liberality; *he who* leads, with diligence; *he who* shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Rom 12:7, 8)

Paul instructing the Romans to respect and to be truthful to the authorities uses Staircase parallelism, “*For he* is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; *for he* does not bear the sword in vain; *for he* is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” (Rom 13:4) An outstanding example of Staircase parallelism with the use of words ‘You shall not’ is seen in the following verse, “For the commandments, “*You shall not* commit adultery,” “*You shall not* murder,” “*You shall not* steal,” “*You shall not* bear false witness,” “*You shall not* covert,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”” (Rom 13:9)

The repetition of the words ‘not in’ is Staircase parallelism in the following verse. To quote, “Let us walk properly, as in the day, *not in* revelry and drunkenness, *not in* licentiousness and lewdness, *not in* strife and envy.” (Rom 13:13) The repetition of the words ‘He who’ and ‘and he who does not’ are effectively used in the cited below as Paul advises the Romans, “*He who* observes the day, observes it to the Lord; *and he who does not* observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. *He who* eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; *and he who does not* eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.” (Rom 14: 6)

The confused Corinthians without understanding that God is one and all the ministers are His servants, divided among themselves, saying “...*‘I am of Paul,’* or “*‘I am of Apollos,’* or “*‘I am of Cephas,’* or “*‘I am of Christ.’*” (1 Cor 1:12) Paul makes them understand that Christ is not divided. The Staircase parallelism is ‘I am of’. A noteworthy example of Staircase parallelism with the use of the words ‘you are God’s’ is seen in the following verse as Paul states about the ministers of God who are involved in God’s ministry. Each minister is assigned a particular job to build the kingdom of God and will receive his reward accordingly, “For we are God’s fellow workers; *you are God’s* field, *you are God’s* building.” (1 Cor 3:9)

The wisdom of man is foolishness of God. God can destroy the wisdom of the wise and can bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Man cannot boast on his wisdom or understanding before God, “*Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the* disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Cor 1: 20) The repetition of the words ‘where is the’ is excellent in its context. A remarkable use of the words ‘the head of’ is

beautifully portrayed as Paul talks on the three fold unity between God, man and woman, "... *the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*" (1 Cor 11: 3)

The use of the words 'Was anyone called while' and 'Let him not' are brilliantly used in the following passage as Paul says that keeping the commandments of God is what matters, "*Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.*" (1Cor 7:18) The will of God and the will of man differ. Man wills according to the flesh so Paul comments, "*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful; all things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify.*" (1 Cor 10:23) The words 'all things are lawful for me, but all things' is striking.

Paul enlightens the Corinthians on the various assignments appointed by God in the church for them who work for the glory of God. "*Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?*" (1 Cor 12: 29, 30) 'Are all' and 'Do all' are examples of Staircase parallelism. He expands the same idea highlighting the spiritual gifts that is used by the congregation. The repetition of words 'to another' is remarkable. To quote,

for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, *to another* the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, *to another* faith by the same Spirit, *to another* gifts of healings by the same Spirit, *to another* the working of miracles, *to another* prophecy, *to another* discerning of spirits, *to another* different kinds of tongues, *to another* the interpretation of tongues." (1 Cor 12:8, 9, 10)

If man has all the spiritual gifts and does not have love, he is nothing.

*And though I* have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, *and though I* have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. *And though I* bestow all my goods to feed the poor, *and though I* give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Cor 13: 2, 3)

And again, speaking about Love he states, "Love suffers long and is kind; *love does not* envy; *love does not* parade itself, is not puffed up; *does not* behave rudely, *does not* seek its own, is not

provoked, thinks no evil. (1 Cor 13:4, 5) The most beautiful hymn on ‘love’ with the use of the word ‘and though I’, ‘love does not’ and ‘does not’ are cited in the above passage.

The scripture is evident that Christ died for the sins of man and rose for the salvation of man, “*and that He* was buried, *and that He* rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Cor 15:3, 4) ‘and that He’ is the example of Staircase parallelism. The man dead in Christ is like a seed that would sprout on the day of resurrection. The repetition of the words ‘it is sown’ and ‘it is raised’ are aptly used to express this notion. To quote, “*It is sown* in dishonor, *it is raised* in glory. *It is sown* in weakness, *it is raised* in power. *It is sown* a natural body, *it is raised* a spiritual body...” (1 Cor 15:43, 44a)

On the day of resurrection, God who took victory on death will question death, “O Death, *where is your sting?* O Hades, *where is your victory?*” (1 Cor 15: 55) Here, ‘where is your’ is used as Staircase parallelism. ‘I will’ is a repetitive parallelism that is used to highlight the relationship with God and man. So, “...As God has said: “*I will* dwell in them and walk among them. *I will* be their God, and they shall be My people.” (2 Cor 6:16) Paul along with Titus speaks about their conduct to the Corinthian church, “*Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?* (2 Cor 12: 18b) The words ‘Did we not walk in the’ is Staircase Parallelism which emphasizes Paul’s undoubting and bold nature about his conduct.

Paul ends both the epistles to the Corinthians with the greetings, “*Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*” (2 Cor 13:11b) The word ‘be of’ is Staircase parallelism. A striking example of Staircase parallelism with the use of the words ‘there is neither’ underlines the view that before the eyes of God all creations are one and the same, “*There is neither* Jew nor Greek, *there is neither* slave nor free, *there is neither* male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28) Paul is self-assured that he ministered for Christ and that he is sure of the crown of righteousness. So he boldly utters, “*I have* fought the good fight, *I have* finished the race, *I have* kept the faith.” (2 Tim 4:7) The parallels ‘I have’ is notable.

### **Chiasmus**

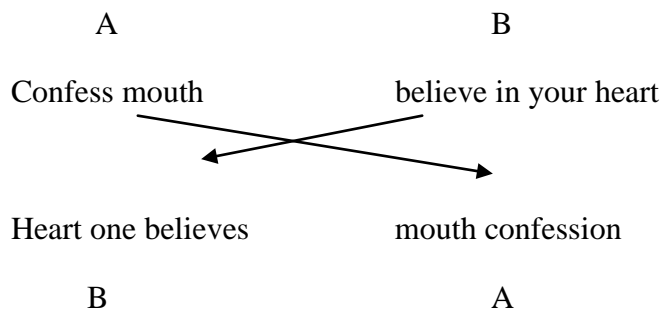
Chiasmus is “a rhetorical device in which two or more clauses are balanced against each other by the reversal of their structures in order to produce an artistic effect. (Literary Devices)

The following is an excellent example for Chiasmus from Romans chapter ten verses nine and ten when Paul speaks about the process that is involved in attaining salvation.

A that if you *confess* with your *mouth* the Lord Jesus  
 B and *believe* in your *heart* that God has raised Him from the dead,  
 C you will be saved. (v.9)  
 B For with the *heart* one *believes* to righteousness,

A and with the *mouth confession* is made to salvation (v.10 ) (Rom 10:9-10)

In the above verse, the order of arrangement of the words in A ‘confess with mouth’ followed by B ‘believe in your heart’ is completed with the pattern of B ‘heart one believes’ followed by A ‘mouth confession’. The lines parallel in the pattern of ABCBA. To illustrate,

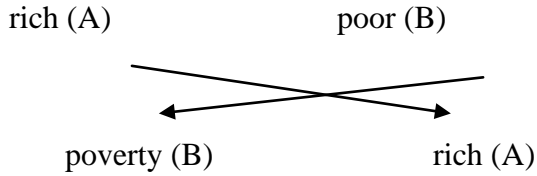


Another Chiasmus Parallelism that throws lights on the deepest love of God on mankind is seen in the succeeding verse.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 A that though He was *rich*,  
 B yet for your sakes He became *poor*,  
 B that you through His *poverty*  
 A might become *rich* (2 Cor: 8:9)

The word ‘rich’ in A is followed by ‘poor’ in B. The order is reversed in the next set with similar words as ‘poverty’ in B is followed by ‘rich’ in A.





Paul ends his first epistle to Thessalonians blessing them and praying for them to be purified and to be ready for the second coming of the Lord. The Chiasmus in the following verse is striking. The pattern follow ABCBA pattern. The word ‘God’ in A and the words ‘sanctify you completely’ finds its relevant meaning in the reverse order as it follows ‘preserved blameless’ in B and ‘Lord Jesus Christ’ in A. The verse is as follows

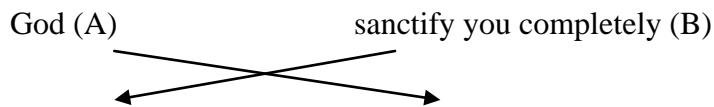
A Now may the *God* of peace Himself

B *sanctify you completely;*

C and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be

B *preserved blameless*

A at the coming of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. (1 Thess 5:23)



Preserved blameless (B) Lord Jesus Christ (A)

Paul says that it is through faith that man realizes that he is the child of God. As long as he does not realize who he is, he cannot enjoy the fullness of his authority. Paul illustrates this with an example, The Chiasmus pattern that is followed in the verses quoted below ABCDDCBA.

A Now I say that the *heir*, as long as he is a *child*, does not differ at all from a *slave*, though he is master of all, (v.1)

B but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the *father*. (v.2) Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. (v.3)

C But when the fullness of the time had come, *God sent forth His Son*, born of a woman,

D born *under the law*, (v.4)

D' to redeem those who were *under the law*, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (v.5)

C' And because you are sons, *God has sent forth the Spirit of*

*His Son*

B' into your hearts, crying out, "*Abba, Father!*" (v.6)

A' Therefore you are no longer a *slave* but a son, and if a *son*, then an *heir* of God through Christ. (v.7) (Gal 4:1-7)

The Chiasmus pattern is as follows. The words in A 'heir', 'child' and 'slave' find the same words in reverse order at the end A' which states 'slave', 'son' and 'heir'. Likewise, the word in B 'father' finds its reverse order sequence in B' with 'Abba, Father'. The word 'God sent for His son' in C is found in C' with the words 'God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son' and finally the words 'under the law' in D is seen in the following D' repeating the same words.

A fascinating Chiasmus pattern ABCDEFEDCBA is seen in the following verse. Paul is happy about the Colossians and gives thanks to God since they remained strong in faith and for the love they show towards the ministers of God. Paul promises them that he would always pray for them.

A We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *praying always for you*, (v.3)

B *since we heard*

C of your *faith* in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; (v.4) because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven,

D of which you *heard* before in the *word of the truth* of the gospel, (v.5) which has come to you,

E *as it has* also in all the world,

F and is bringing forth fruit,

E *as it is* also among you

D since the day you *heard* and knew the grace of God in *truth*; (v.6)

C as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a *faithful* minister of Christ on your behalf, (v.7) who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. (v.8)

B For this reason we also, *since the day we heard it,*

A *do not cease to pray for you,* and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. (v.9) (Col 1:3-9)

An outstanding example of Chiasmus is found in Philemon. The entire book is Chiasmistic and Welch makes the figurative structure attractive and interesting. The following is the Chiasmus that follows the pattern of ABCDEFGHIJ and its reverse order is J'H'G'F'E'D'C'B'A'.

A Epistolary (1–3)

B Paul's prayers for Philemon (4)

C Philemon's love, faith and hospitality (5–7)

D Paul could use his authority (8)

E But prefers to make supplications (9–10)

F Onesimus a convert of Paul's (10)

G Paul has made Onesimus profitable (11)

H Receive Onesimus as Paul's own bowels (12)

I Paul retained Onesimus as Paul's minister in the bonds of the Gospel (13)

J Without Philemon's willing consent Paul will not require Philemon to take Onesimus back (14)

J' Perhaps the reason Onesimus left was so that Philemon could take Onesimus back forever (15)

I' Not as a servant but as a brother in the Lord (16)

H' Receive Onesimus as Paul's own self (17)



through faith. Welch makes the Chiasmus understandable in its compressed form as he quotes the epistle to Galatians chapter one to six. It begins with the ABCD and ends with DCBA pattern along with the central chiasm. The arrangement is systematically arranged in order. To quote,

A Prologue (1:1–1:12)

B Autobiographical Section (1:13–2:10)

C Justification by Faith (2:11–3:4)

D Arguments from Scripture (3:5–3:29)

E Central Chiasm (4:1–10)

D' Arguments from Scripture (4:11–4:31)

C' Justification by Faith (5:1–5:10)

B' Moral Section (5:11–6:11)

A' Epilogue (6:12–6:18).

## Conclusion

The study dealt with different kinds of Parallelisms that St. Paul used in his epistles in a detailed manner with appropriate instances. Nevertheless the use of Synonymous parallelism, Antithetical parallelism, Synthetic parallelism and few minor parallelisms like Staircase parallelism and Chiasmus have elevated the work to demonstrate it as a piece of literature making it interesting and understandable with the clever use of words. The use of Parallelism enhances the literary value of the epistles. His letters have been a blessing to millions who will testify to the fact that ‘private moment’ will be turned by his epistles into an ‘exalted experience’. They have revolutionized and transformed the lives of many. White comments, “Paul's letters were immediate and direct, addressing the needs of particular Christian communities, giving spiritual direction; they continue to have a universal dimension, a timelessness, in that what was true for the people of these communities continues to be true for people of contemporary times.” (Crain)

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