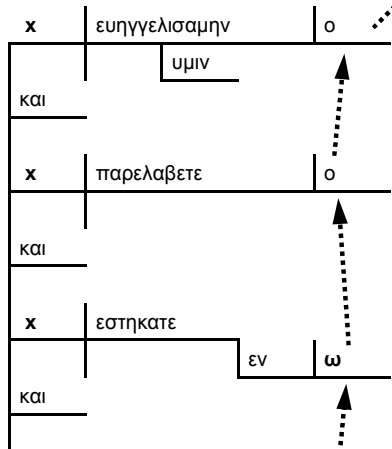
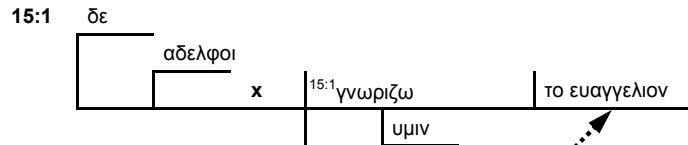


Diagram and Flow of Thought

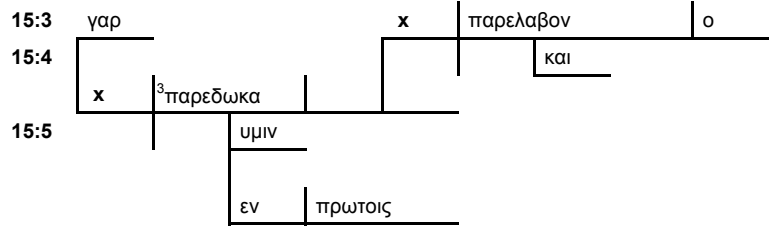
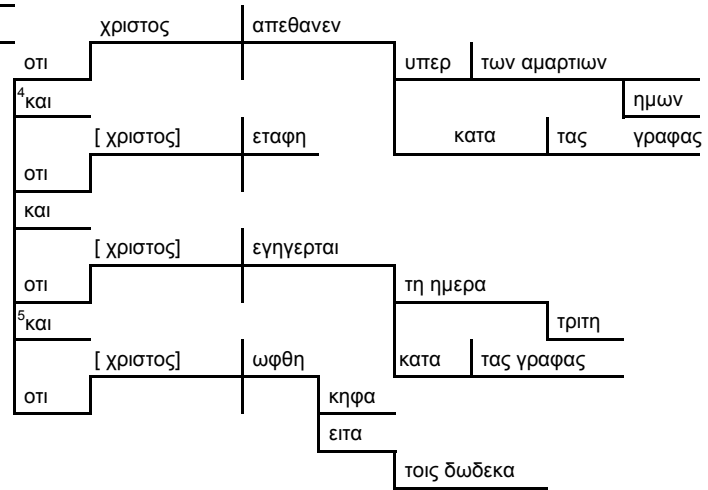
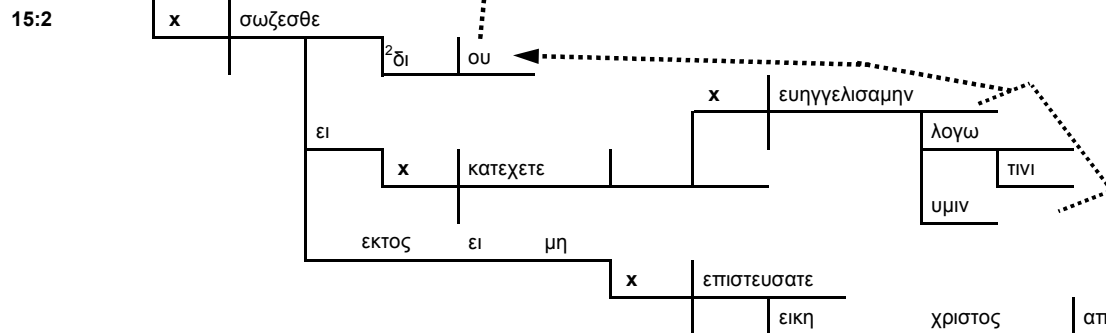


15:1-2. With "now" (δε), Paul leaves his teaching on spiritual gifts (chp's 12-14) and moves to the subject of the gospel with focus on its content, particularly on the resurrection (chp. 15). This saving gospel message the Cor's "received" = "believed" (vv.2, 11, 14, 17); Paul had also received it (v.3), then "preached" it = "delivered" it, (vv.1, 2, 3, 11, 14; cp. 12), and labored more to spread it (v.10), and "witnessed" to it (v.15). 15:1a states his objective: "make known the gospel message (το ευαγγελιον)." With four relative clauses, he shows the impact the gospel had and potentially continues to have in their lives:

(1) The first two relative clauses employ aorist tenses that speak of the event of his initial evangelistic thrust into Corinth. He preached/delivered and they received/believed his message (15:1b, 2, 11). For this reason Paul can elsewhere say they are sanctified (1:2), washed and justified (6:11).

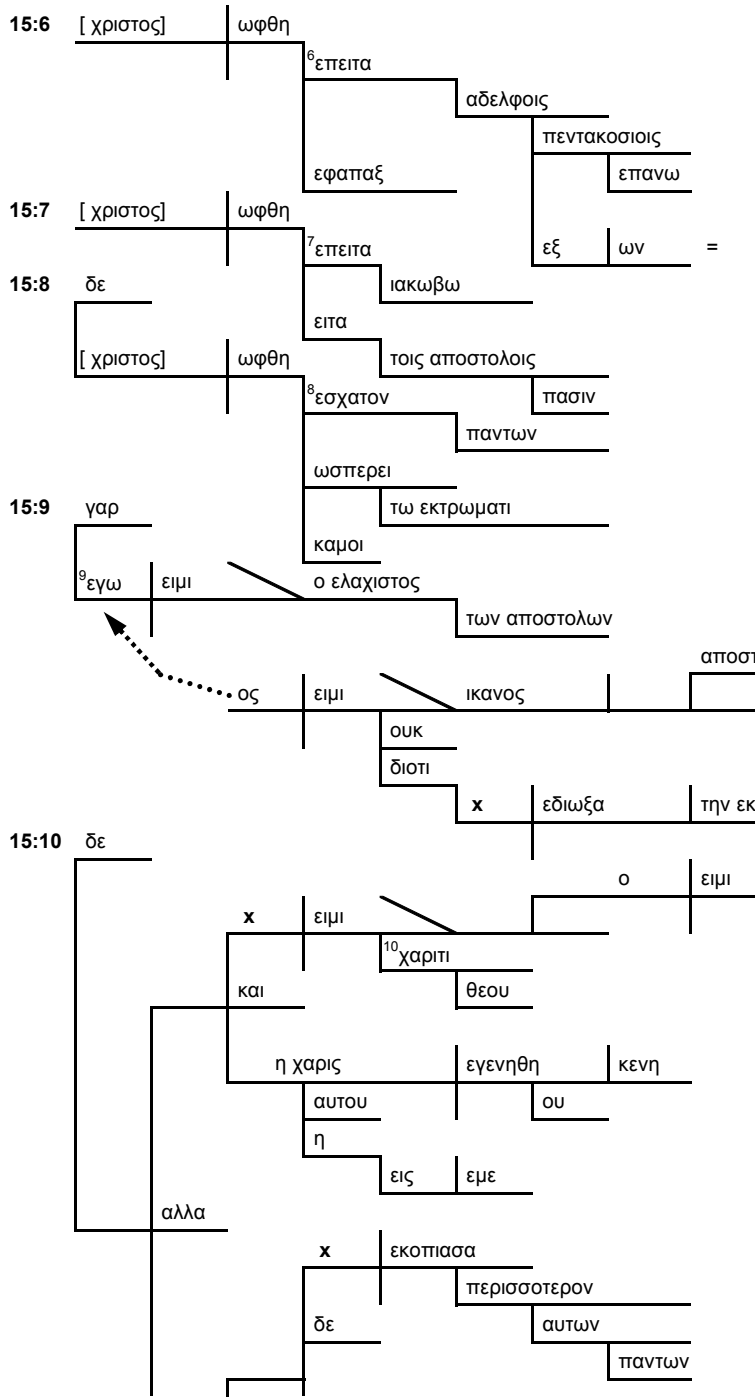
(2) The 3rd relative clause uses a perfect tense and, giving them the benefit of the doubt, he says they "stand fast" in the gospel message--their foundation remains firmly fixed (15:1c).

(3) The 4th relative clause does not express what "is," but what "may be." The present tense of "you are saved" denotes that through the gospel message an on-going deliverance from daily difficulties may be theirs. The "if" clause adds that this on-going deliverance is conditioned on their holding fast to the same message that Paul's team originally preached to them. Moreover, the "unless" clause denotes that on-going deliverance hinges on their having believed an accurate gospel message that includes the historical reality of the resurrection about which Paul expounds throughout chapter 15. The Corinthians need on-going deliverance from the myriad problems the apostle has had to address in this epistle for as 11:32 reveals, some of them, due to divine discipline, are weak, some are sick, and some sleep, i.e., have suffered the sin unto death.

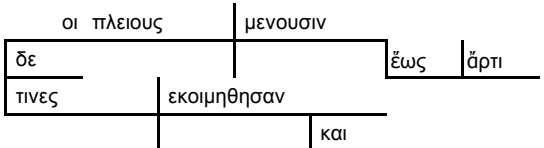


1 Corinthians 15:1-19

Diagram and Flow of Thought



15:3-5, which begin with "for" (γαρ), introduce an explanation of the gospel's content that he delivered to the Corinthians as of top priority (εν πρωτοις). The Greek may signify either "in the first place," or "of top priority." Both ideas merge here because what one considers a priority, he normally communicates up front.



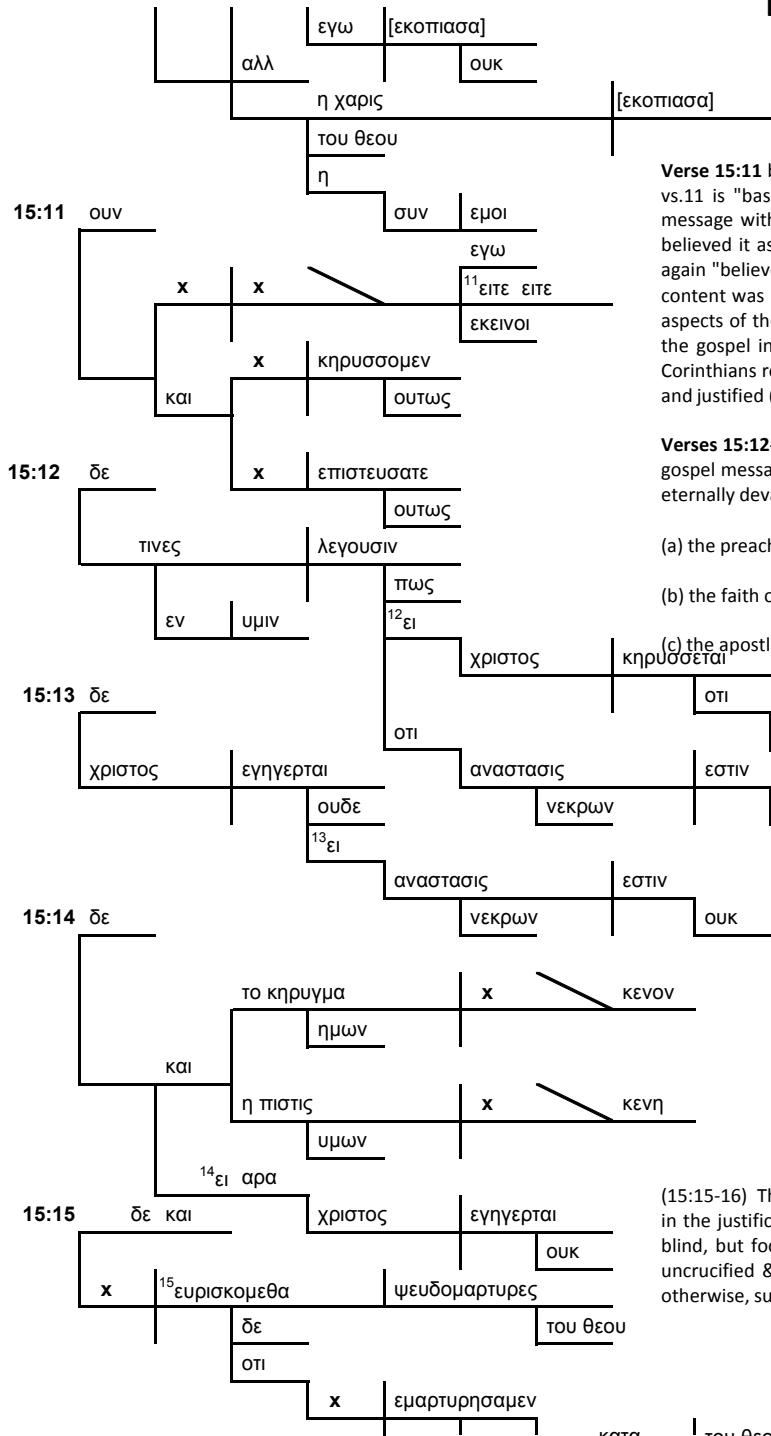
With four "that" (οτι) clauses, the apostle clearly delineates the content of his gospel message--a message that eternally saved them during his evangelistic thrust into Corinth and that may continue to save/deliver them as described above. What did he deliver/preach: (a) that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, (b) that Christ was buried, (c) that Christ was raised the third day according to the scriptures, and (d) that Christ was seen by Cephas, then the 12. Christ's death is according to such OT scripture as Isaiah 53; both there and here the theological implication of Jesus' death is revealed: *for our sin*. Isaiah predicted the Messiah's death would resolve the sin problem; Paul was compelled to preach it as an historical fact. Christ's burial validates His death. His resurrection, validated by His appearances, rounds out the saving work of God on behalf of the world that He loves.

15:6-7 continue with no connective serving to add strong "corroborative verification" of the resurrection.....

from a diverse spectrum of eyewitnesses. Paul elaborates on Christ's multiple resurrection appearances because they irrefutably validate Christ's resurrection, which some Corinthians currently deny.

15:8-10 are Paul's personal testimony of having seen the risen Christ though unworthy of such an honor, of laboring more diligently than others by God's grace and enablement, which from context means laboring to preach a gospel message that includes Christ's death for sin and His resurrection--facts that give a believer in the One who died and rose the gift of forgiveness (cp. v. 17).

Diagram and Flow of Thought



Verse 15:11 begins with "therefore" (ουν), revealing that what he is about to infer follows from vss.1-10, i.e., the content of vs.11 is "based on the premises just delineated." Thus, because of the top priority nature of the content of the gospel message with its focus on Christ's death for our sins and resurrection, he preached this message as top priority and they believed it as top priority. The thought is reinforced by the double use of "so" (ουτως) that first modifies "preached" and again "believed" to denote the manner in which preaching and believing proceeded. Moreover, Paul is clear that this gospel content was not unique to his ministry, but preached by the other apostles (εκεινοι) as they communicated the top priority aspects of the gospel message. The Corinthians, and all audiences to which the other apostles preached, believed/received the gospel in keeping with the top priority nature of the content of the gospel identified in vv.1-4. It is *this* content the Corinthians received/believed so that Paul could elsewhere say that they are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1:2, cp. v.30), washed, and justified (6:11).

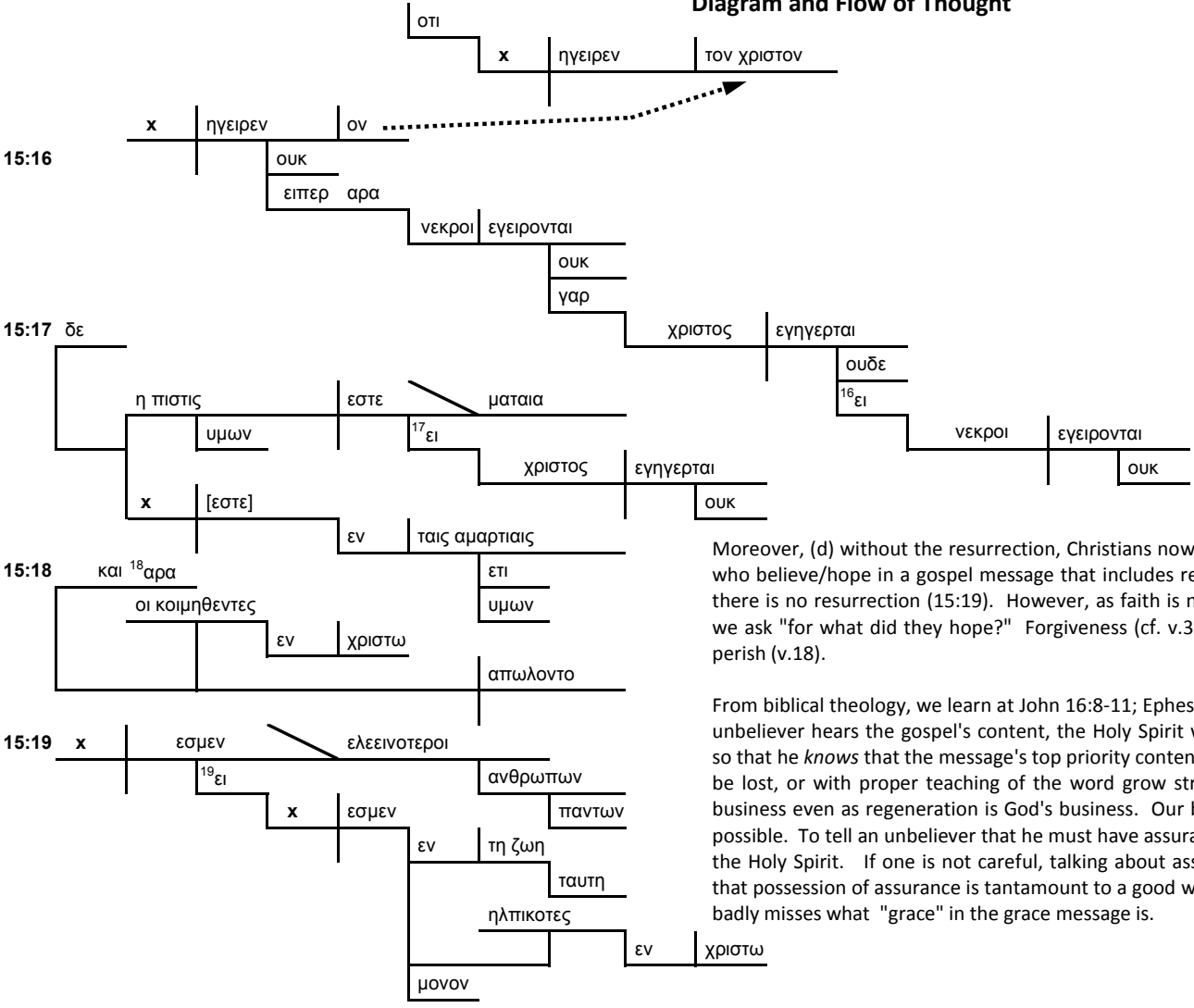
Verses 15:12-16 tackle head-on those in Corinth who deny the resurrection, especially in light of the content of the preached gospel message that has Christ's resurrection in a priority position (15:12). If Christ is not raised from the dead, temporal and eternally devastating consequences follow:

- (a) the preached message is an exercise in futility (15:14a),
- (b) the faith of those who believe the preached message that includes resurrection is vain (15:14b),
- (c) the apostles are false witnesses because they preach a gospel message with resurrection as a top priority.....

(15:15-16) The apostles' gospel message of Christ's death for our sins and resurrection, however, was not in vain. It resulted in the justification of those who believed its priority facts. In addition, the Corinthian's "faith" here (vv.14 & 17) was not blind, but focused on the gospel's content as demarcated in vv.1-4. The implication is that faith in the wrong object--an uncrucified & unresurrected Christ--is vain; thus, one's faith must be in the right object, a crucified & resurrected Christ, otherwise, such a believer is still in his sins, unforgiven.

1 Corinthians 15:1-19

Diagram and Flow of Thought



Moreover, (d) without the resurrection, Christians now dead are perished (15:18), and (e) believers who believe/hope in a gospel message that includes resurrection are objects to be greatly pitied if there is no resurrection (15:19). However, as faith is not blind so hope is not blind. In vss.15:1-19, we ask "for what did they hope?" Forgiveness (cf. v.3 with v.17), so that at death they would not perish (v.18).

From biblical theology, we learn at John 16:8-11; Ephesians 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:4 that when an unbeliever hears the gospel's content, the Holy Spirit will convince/illumine him of its truthfulness so that he *knows* that the message's top priority content is true (cf. Heb. 11:1). Such assurance may be lost, or with proper teaching of the word grow stronger. Illumination and assurance is God's business even as regeneration is God's business. Our business is to deliver the gospel as clearly as possible. To tell an unbeliever that he must have assurance to be saved intrudes into the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If one is not careful, talking about assurance to an unbeliever can suggest to him that possession of assurance is tantamount to a good work--a certain feeling he must produce--that badly misses what "grace" in the grace message is.