

Infinitives

Chapter 11

Infinitives

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν
ὁ λόγος

Overview & the Article

Infinitives are **verbal nouns** and are found about 2,300 times in the NT. Like other non-indicative moods, the infinitive is negated by **μή** (not **οὐ**).

Because infinitives are verbal nouns, they often come with an **article** (which is always **neuter singular**). The subject of the infinitive is in the **accusative case**.

Infinitives Forms

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	Infinitive	Translation
Pres Act	λύειν	to be loosing
Pres Mid/Pass	λύεσθαι	to loose oneself to be loosed
Aor Act	λύσαι	to loose
Aor Mid	λύσασθαι	to loose oneself
Aor Pass	λυθῆναι	to be loosed

Perfect Infinitives

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Perfect infinitives are not common in the NT, only occurring 49 times (with about 30 different verbs).

Active	λελυκέναι	to have loosed
Mid Pass	λελύσθαι	to have loosed oneself to have been loosed

Notice: the middle or passive form drops the variable vowel.

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ὁ λόγος

Infinitives = Verbal Nouns

As a **noun**, an infinitive can function as the **subject**, **predicate**, or the **direct object** of a verb.

ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος

“As for me, **to live** [is] Christ and **to die** [is] gain”

The infinitives are subjects of predicate statements.

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Infinitives = Verbal Nouns

ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος

Because infinitives are verbal **nouns**, they may have **gender**, **case** and **number**. Infinitives are regarded as **neuter** and as **singular**.

Thus, infinitives may be modified by the **neuter singular** articles: **τό**, **τοῦ**, or **τῷ** (= **articular infinitive**)

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Infinitives = Verbal Nouns

As a **verb**, infinitives may take subjects, objects, indirect objects, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. The **subject** of an infinitive is expressed in the **accusative case**.

δεῖ **αὐτὸν ἀποκτανθῆναι**

“It is necessary that **he be killed**”
(Rev 11:5).

Adverbial Infinitives

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Complementary

An anarthrous (without an article) infinitive “completes” another verb. This is the most common use.

οὐδεὶς δύναται δυοὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν

No one **is able to serve** two masters
(Matt 6:24)

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Purpose

Communicates the goal or intent of an action or state expressed by the controlling verb. It may be communicated by and infinitive alone, εἰς τό + inf, πρὸς τό + inf, τοῦ + inf, or ὥστε + inf.

μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον

Don’t assume that I came **to destroy** the Law
(Matt 5:17).

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ὁ λόγος

Result

Communicates the actual or conceived result of an action or state expressed by the controlling verb.
It is usually expressed by ὥστε + inf.

ἔπλησαν ἀμφότερα τὰ πλοῖα ὥστε βυθίζεσθαι αὐτά

they . . . filled both the boats, **so that they began to sink** (Luke 5:7 ESV).

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ὁ λόγος

Temporal: Previous Time

The action of the infinitive occurs **before** the action of the controlling verb (μετὰ τό + infinitive).

μετὰ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee
(Mark 1:14).

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ὁ λόγος

Temporal: Contemporaneous Time

The action of the infinitive occurs *simultaneously* with the action of the controlling verb (ἐν τῷ + infinitive).

ἐν τῷ σπεῖρειν αὐτὸν ἃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν

As he was sowing, some seeds fell along the path
(Matt 13:4).

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ὁ λόγος

Temporal: Subsequent Time

The action of the infinitive occurs *after* the action of the controlling verb (πρὸ τοῦ or πρίν [ῃ] + infinitive).

πρὸ τοῦ σε Φίλιππον φωνῆσαι . . . εἰδόν σε

Before Philip called you . . . I saw you
(John 1:48).

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ὁ λόγος

Cause

Communicates the reason or ground for the action of the controlling verb, answering "Why?" (διὰ τό + infinitive).

οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς

You do not have because you do not ask
(Jas 4:2).

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ὁ λόγος

Means

Conveys the way in which the action of the controlling verb is performed, answering "How?" (ἐν τῷ + infinitive).

ὁ θεὸς . . . ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εὐλογοῦντα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἀποστρέφειν ἕκαστον ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν ὑμῶν

God . . . sent Him . . . to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways (Acts 3:26).

Substantival Infinitives

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Subject

Functions as the subject (or predicate nominative) of a finite verb.

τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος

to live is Christ, and to die is gain
(Phil 1:21 ESV).

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Direct Object

Functions as the direct object of a finite verb.

ὁ πατήρ . . . τῷ υἱῷ ἔδωκεν ζωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ

The Father . . . has granted to the Son **to have** life in Himself (John 5:26).

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Indirect Discourse

Used with verbs of speaking or perception to communicate indirect discourse.

Σαδδουκαῖοι . . . λέγουσιν ἀνάστασιν μὴ εἶναι

Sadducees . . . **say there is** no resurrection (Mark 12:18).

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ὁ λόγος

Explanatory

Further defines, clarifies or qualifies a noun or adjective.

ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι

He gave them the right **to be** children of God (John 1:12).

Independent Infinitives

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Imperative

Functions as an imperative (or hortatory subjunctive).

χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων

Rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15).

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Absolute

Functions independently of the rest of the sentence, having no syntactical relation to other words or phrases.

Ἰάκωβος . . . ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ χαίρειν

James . . . To the 12 tribes in the Dispersion. **Greetings** (Jas 1:1).