Chapter 19

The Present Infinitive

19.1 The Infinitive has the form "to do something", or "to be doing something". It is treated as one of the Moods of the Verb; it shows Voice (Active, Middle, Passive) and Tense, but does not take personal endings.

The Infinitive functions as a Neuter Verbal Noun.

1. As subject of a verb e.g. "To sing improves the voice."
2. As object of a verb e.g. "I like to sing." 
3. As a predicate complement e.g. "I have something to say."

Greek also uses the Infinitive with prepositions (where English might use a participle)
1. with ἐν τῷ - time at which to do something
2. with πρὸ τοῦ - before doing something
3. with μετὰ τοῦ - after doing something
4. with διὰ τοῦ - because (reason) to do something
5. with εἰς τὸ or πρὸς τὸ - purpose (in order) to do something
6. as a Genitive, with τοῦ - purpose (in order) to do something

In chapter 18 we met the Present Imperative, and learned that the Present Stem of a Greek verb implies a sense of continuing or repeated action. So the Greek Present Infinitive has the sense of "to be doing something". However, it is more usual in English to say "to do something" regardless of whether the action is continuous, repeated, or a single instance.

19.2 The basic pattern for the Present Infinitive Active is

STEM-εἰν

Contract verbs follow the same rules that we learned earlier

α + -εἰν = -αν 
ε + -εἰν = -ειν 
ο + -εἰν = -οιν

For λέγω, this becomes λέγειν to say, to be saying
For ἀγαπάω, this becomes ἀγαπᾶν to love, to be loving
For ποιέω, this becomes ποιεῖν to do, to be doing
For πληρόω, this becomes πληροῦν to fulfill, to be fulfilling
ζάω is slightly irregular ζῆν to live, to be living

19.3 Some verbs are generally followed by an Infinitive

θέλω - I wish (to do something)
μέλλω - I am about / going / intend (to do something)
ὀφείλω - I ought (to do something)
and three "impersonal verbs" - verbs which only take "it" for their subject
δεῖ - it is necessary (to do something) (from δέω - I bind)
ἐξέστιν - it is lawful / permitted (to do something)
πρέπει - it is fitting / proper (to do something)

Practice - until you can read and translate easily

1. ὑμεῖς ὀφείλετε λέγειν λόγους καλοὺς.
You ought to speak good words.
2. ἡμεῖς οὐ θέλομεν ποιεῖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πονηροῦ.
We do not wish to do the works of the evil one.
3. οὐκ ἔξεστιν τοῖς στρατιώταις βάλλειν τοὺς ἐλεύθερους εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν.
It is not lawful for the soldiers to throw (to be throwing) the free(men) into prison.
4. δεῖ σοι διδάσκειν τὰ παιδία.
It is necessary for you to teach the children.
5. οὗτοι οἱ τυφλοὶ θέλουσιν ἀναβλέπειν.
These blind men want to see again (receive their sight).
6. ἔξεστιν μοι ἀναγινώσκειν τὰ βιβλία; Is it permitted for me to read the books?
7. πρέπει ταῖς ἀδελφαῖς ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν; Is it fitting for the sisters to have authority?
8. οἱ ἄγιοι μέλλουσιν ἀναβαίνειν ὧστε Ἱεροσόλυμα. The saints are about to go up to Jerusalem.
9. ὁ μαθητής μέλλει καταβαίνειν ἐκ Ἱεροσολύμου. The disciple is about to go down from Jerusalem.
10. οἱ Ἡσυχαῖοι θέλουσιν προσκυνεῖν τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ. The Jews wish to worship God in the Temple.

19.4 Negation : The Infinitive is negated by μὴ (Remember, οὐ is only used with the Indicative)

Practice - until you can read and translate easily
1. ἐγὼ ὀφείλω μὴ ποιεῖν τὰ κακά. I ought not to do (the) bad things.
2. θέλεις μὴ καταλείπειν τοὺς ἄδελφον. You wish not to abandon the brothers.
3. οὗ θέλομεν καταλείπειν ταῖς ἀδελφαῖς. We do not wish to abandon the sisters.
4. οὐκ ἔξεστιν ὧστε διώκειν τὰς χήρας. It is not lawful for you to persecute the widows.
5. Παύλος θέλει μὴ συναναβαίνειν σὺν τῷ Μάρκῳ. Paul wishes not to go up with Mark.
6. Παύλος οὐ θέλει συναναβαίνειν σὺν τῷ Μάρκῳ. Paul does not wish to go up with Mark.
7. ὀφείλομεν μὴ καταλείπειν τοὺς πτωχοὺς. We ought not to abandon the poor.
8. δεῖ ὧμᾶς μὴ υπακούειν τοῖς δαιµονίοις. It is necessary for you not to obey the demons.
9. θέλομεν μὴ διακονεῖν τῷ πονηρῷ. We wish not to serve the evil one.
10. ὀφείλετε μὴ ἀγαπᾶν τὰ τῶν κόσµου τοῦτο. You ought not to love the things of this world.

NOTE : Sections 19.5 and 19.6 may be postponed until later in the course.

19.5 Consequence clauses : ὅστε with the Infinitive

The consequence of the action of the main verb can be shown by using ὅστε with an Infinitive and a noun in the Accusative. The nearest English equivalent is probably "causing him/her to do something" The Greek construction is rather different from the English - we just have to practice until it becomes familiar. The sentences below are modeled on constructions used in the New Testament.

Practice - until you can read and translate easily
1. ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔχει ἐξουσίαν ὧστε ἐκβάλλειν τὸν λαὸν. Jesus has authority (so as) to cast out the demons.
2. ὁ Ἰησοῦς θεραπεῖει τὸν τυφλὸν ὧστε τῷ τυφλῷ βλέπειν. Jesus heals the blind man so that (causing) the blind man to see.
3. οἱ Οχλοὶ θέλουσιν τῷ Ἱησοῦ ὧστε αὐτῶν εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβαίνειν καὶ καταβαίνειν. The crowds follow Jesus so he gets into a boat (so as to cause him to get), and so (as to cause him to) he speaks to them.
4. οἱ Πέτρος κηρύσσει τῷ εὐαγγέλιον ὧστε πιστεύειν τὸν λαὸν τῷ κυρίῳ. Peter preaches the Gospel, (with the result that) causing the people to believe in the Lord.
5. οἱ Χριστοῦ θεραπεῖει ἡμᾶς ὧστε ἔχειν ἡμᾶς ζωὴν καινήν. Christ heals us (causing us to have) so that we have new life.
6. οἱ ἄνθρωποι παραλυτικοὶ ἔστιν ὧστε μὴ περιπατεῖν αὐτῶν. The man is paralyzed (is a paralytic) (with the result that) so he does not walk.
7. οἱ Οχλοὶ αἰκονισοῦσιν τῷ Ἱησοῦ ὧστε πιστεύειν αὐτῶν αὐτῶς. The crowds listen to Jesus (with the result that) and they believe in Him.
8. οἱ Παύλος κηρύσσει ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ὧστε ἀκούειν τὸν λαὸν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. Paul preaches in the synagogue (so that the people hear) causing the people to hear the word of God.
9. ὁ Ἰησοῦς διδάσκει τοὺς ὄχλους ὥστε λαμβάνειν τοὺς πτωχοὺς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. Jesus teaches the crowds (causing the poor to) so that the poor receive the Gospel.

10. οἱ ἀπόστολοι μαρτυροῦσιν τῷ κυρίῳ ὥστε τοὺς ὄχλους πιστεύειν αὐτῷ. The apostles bear witness to the Lord causing the crowds to believe in him.

19.6 The Infinitive used as a noun: the "Articular Infinitive"
The Infinitive can be treated as a neuter noun, so it can have a neuter Definite Article. Greek has some idioms which are built from an articular infinitive with a preposition. They cannot be translated word-for-word into English - we just have to learn the equivalent English expressions - see Section 19.1

Don’t worry if these seem confusing at first. As you continue to read the Greek New Testament they will become quite familiar.

Practice - until you can read and translate easily

1. καὶ ἐν τῷ κηρύσσειν αὐτοῦ ὁ Ἰωάννης κράζει καὶ λέγει, ἐτανοιεῖτε! And in his (while he is) preaching, John cries out and says, "Repent!"

2. οἱ ἀπόστολοι µαρτυροῦσιν τῷ κυρίῳ ὥστε τοὺς ὄχλους πιστεύειν αὐτῷ. The apostles bear witness to the Lord causing the crowds to believe in him.

19.7 Sentences for reading and translation

1. ὁ προφήτης Ἡσαΐας µέλλει προφητεύειν τῷ λαῷ τῶν Ἰεροσόλυµων.
2. ὁ µαθητὴς θέλει ἀναγγέλλειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῖς πτωχοῖς.
3. οἱ πτωχοὶ θέλουσιν ἔχειν τοὺς ἄρτους.
4. ὁ Παύλος γράφει τὰς ἐπιστάλας ταύτας πρὸς τὸ οἰκοδοµεῖν τὰς ἐκκλησίας.
5. ἡµές οὐ λαµβάνοµεν διὰ τὸ µὴ αἰτεῖν ἡµᾶς.
6. ὁ Παῦλος εἴπεν, Θέλω ἀναβαίνειν εἰς τὴν Ἰερουσαλήµ.

19.8 Writing Practice: Write the Greek text several times, while saying aloud (John 1:1)

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. In (the) beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Review Section 5.5 if the last line seems confusing.
19.9 New Testament Passage for reading and translation: Matthew 12:1-4

In your Greek New Testament, read the passage aloud several times until you can read it without long pauses or stumbling. Then use the helps to translate it.

In this passage we meet two verbs for "eat", with stems "εσθι-" and "φαγ-".

The εσθι- stem implies continuous or repeated action, e.g. "I am eating"

The φαγ- stem implies completed or single action, e.g. "I ate"

ἐπορεύθη he went, travelled
( a past tense of πορευομαι - I travel)

tοις σάββασιν on the Sabbath

dιὰ τῶν σπορίμων through the grain-fields

ἐπείνασαν (they) were hungry
( a past tense of πεινάω - I am hungry)

ἠρξαντο (they) began
( a past tense of ἀρχοµα - I begin)

tίλλειν to pluck, pick
( the Present Infinitive of τίλλω - I pluck)

στάχυας heads (of grain)

ιδόντες "having seen" = "after they saw"  ("when they had seen this")

εἶπαν (they) said
( εἶπαν is a variant spelling of εἶπον - they said)

οὐκ ἄνέγνωτε have you not read
( a past tense of άναγινώσκω - I read)

τί ; what?  ( τί is the neuter singular Nom./Acc. of τίς - who? )

ἐποίησεν (he) did
( a past tense of ποιέω - I do, act, make)

τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως "the loaves laid out" - twelve loaves set on the altar each day

ἐφαγον they ate

ἐξὸν (was) lawful
( a past form of ἔξεστιν - it is lawful)

φαγεῖν to eat
( the φαγ- stem is not used for the Present Tense)

εἰ μὴ except

τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν µόνοις only the priests (Dat.) ( ὁ ἱερεύς - priest, µόνος -η -ον - only, alone)

19.10 Vocabulary to learn

ἄγω I lead

ἀναβαίνω I come/go up
( from ἀνά + βαιν- stem)

ἀναβλέπω I look up, regain my sight
( from ἀνά + βλέπω - I see)

ἀναγγέλλω I tell, report, proclaim
( from ἀνά + ἀγγέλλω - I tell)

ἀνάγω I lead up
( from ἀνά + ἄγω - I lead)

δεῖ it is necessary
( from δέω - I bind)

δέω I bind

διαβαίνω I cross over, come over
( from διά + βαιν- stem)

ἐμβαίνω I get into (a boat), embark
( from ἐν + βαιν- stem )

ἐξεστίν it is lawful, permitted

ἐσθίω I eat

θέλω I wish, want

καταβαίνω I come/go down
( from κατά + βαιν- stem )

καταγγέλλω I proclaim, make known
( from κατά + ἀγγέλλω - I tell)

κατάγω I bring down
( from κατά + ἄγω - I lead)

καταλείπω I leave behind, abandon
( from κατά + λείπω - I leave)
ὀφείλω I ought (to do something) (ὁ ὀφειλέτης - debtor)
πίνω I drink
πρέπει it is proper/fitting
προφητεύω I prophesy (from πρό + φηµί - I speak)
συγκαλέω I call together (from σύν + καλέω - I call)
συγκαταβαίνω I come/go down with (from σύν + κατά + βαιν- stem)
συνάγω I call together with - I travel with (from σύν + κατά + βαιν- stem)
συναναβαίνω I come up together with - I travel with (from σύν + ἀνά + βαιν- stem)
ὑπάγω I go away (from ὑπό + ἄγω - I lead)
πῶς ; how?, in what way?, how can it be possible?
τί ; what? (τί is the neuter singular Nom./Acc. of τίς - who?)
ὦστε that, so that, with the result that (with Infinite + Accusative)