

Anomos

Romans 2:12-14 (ESV)

God's Judgment and the Law

¹²For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without **the law**, and all who have sinned under **the law** will be judged by **the law**. ¹³For it is not the hearers of **the law** who are righteous before God, but the doers of **the law** who will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles, who do not have **the law**, by nature do what **the law** requires, they are **a law** to themselves, even though they do not have **the law**.

INTERLINEAR

“The Law of”

460. anomós

Lexical Summary

anomós: Lawless, without law

Original Word: ἄνομος

Part of Speech: Adverb

Transliteration: anomós

Pronunciation: ah'-no-mos

Phonetic Spelling: (an-om'-oce)

KJV: without law

NASB: without the law

Word Origin: [adverb from [G459 \(ἄνομος - lawless\)](#)]

1. lawlessly
2. (specially) not amenable to (the Jewish) law

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

lawlessly

Adverb from [anomos](#); lawlessly, i.e. (specially) not amenable to (the Jewish) law -- without law.

see GREEK [anomos](#)

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: **460** *anómōs* (an adverb) – *lawlessly*, acting without God's light (the *written* revelation of the Bible). **460** (*anómōs*) particularly refers to pagan behavior (perspective). [See 458](#) (*anomia*).

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

adverb from [anomos](#)

Definition

lawlessly

NASB Translation

without the law (2).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 460: ἀνόμως

ἀνόμως, adverb, without the law (see ἄνομος, 1), without a knowledge of the law: ἀνόμως ἁμαρτάνειν, to sin in ignorance of the Mosaic law, [Romans 2:12](#); ἀπολλυσθαι to perish, but not by sentence of the Mosaic law, *ibid.* (ἀνόμως ζῆν to live ignorant of law and discipline, *Isoc. panegy. c. 10 § 39*; ἀνόμως ἀπολλυσθαι to be slain contrary to law, as in wars, seditions, etc., *ibid. c. 44 § 168*. In Greek writings generally unjustly, wickedly, as *2 Macc. 8:17*.)

Topical Lexicon

Overview

Strong's Greek 460 (ἀνόμως) describes action that takes place in a sphere where the written code of God's Law is absent or disregarded. Paul employs the adverb twice in [Romans 2:12](#), using it to draw a sharp line between sin committed without the Mosaic revelation and sin committed with it.

Biblical Usage

[Romans 2:12](#) reads, "For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law." The double use of ἀνόμως ("without the law") underscores two distinct yet equally serious classes of sinners:

1. Gentiles who sin apart from possessing the Torah.
2. Jews who sin while possessing it.

Paul's Argument in [Romans 2](#)

1. Universal Accountability. By pairing “without law” with “under law,” Paul affirms that sin brings divine judgment regardless of whether one has explicit Scripture. Creation and conscience leave no one excused ([Romans 2:14-15](#)).
2. Equality of Condemnation. Jews could not presume safety merely because they carried the Law ([Romans 2:17-24](#)). Gentiles, lacking the Law, could not plead ignorance. Both groups need the righteousness revealed in the gospel ([Romans 1:16-17](#)).
3. Preparation for the Gospel. The contrast between ἀνόμωζ and “under the law” sets the stage for the revelation that justification is “apart from the law” yet “attested by the Law and the Prophets” ([Romans 3:21](#)).

Historical Interpretation

Early church writers such as Chrysostom took ἀνόμωζ to show God’s impartiality: Gentiles perish not because they never received the Law but because they transgressed the internal witness given to them. Reformation commentators (Luther, Calvin) highlighted the word to demonstrate that legal privilege cannot save; only faith in Christ can.

Ministry Implications

- Evangelism. Mission work among unreached peoples must reckon with real guilt before God even where Scripture is unknown. ἀνόμωζ reminds believers that the gospel is urgent for all.
- Discipleship. Believers saved from “law-less” backgrounds often grasp grace keenly; churches should cultivate doctrinal depth so they grow beyond moral relativism.
- Apologetics. The term supports arguments for objective morality grounded in God’s character rather than societal norms, explaining why judgment is just even where biblical literacy is lacking.

Contemporary Application

In pluralistic societies, many live functionally ἀνόμωζ—outside conscious regard for God’s commands. [Romans 2:12](#) warns that ignorance is no shield against judgment and urges the church to proclaim Christ crucified and risen

as the sole remedy for every sinner, whether living with or without direct exposure to God's written Law.

Matthew 5:19

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these **commandments** and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

1785. entolé

Lexical Summary

entolé: Commandment, order, instruction

Original Word: ἐντολή

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: entolé

Pronunciation: en-tol-AY

Phonetic Spelling: (en-tol-ay')

KJV: commandment, precept

NASB: commandment, commandments, command, instructions, orders, requirement

Word Origin: [from [G1781 \(ἐντέλλομαι - commanded\)](#)]

1. injunction, i.e. an authoritative prescription

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

commandment, precept.

From [entellomai](#); injunction, i.e. An authoritative prescription -- commandment, precept.

see GREEK [entellomai](#)

HELPS Word-studies

1785 *entolé* (a feminine noun derived from [1722](#) /en, "in," which intensifies [5056](#) /télos, "reach the end, consummation") – properly, "*in* the end," focusing on the *end-result (objective)* of a *command*.

[[1785](#) /*entolé* (a feminine noun) highlights the *nature* of a specific order (charge), i.e. its "in-context objective."]

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [entellomai](#)

Definition

an injunction, order, command

NASB Translation

command (2), commanded* (1), commandment (38), commandments (23), instructions (1), orders (1), requirement (1).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 1785: ἐντολή

ἐντολή, ἐντολῆς, ἡ (ἐντέλλω or ἐντέλλομαι, which see), from Pindar and Herodotus down; the Sept. often for נִצְוָה, in the Psalms the plural ἐντολαί also for דְּבָרִים; an order, command, charge, precept;

1. universally, a charge, injunction: [Luke 15:29](#); ἐντολήν λαμβάνειν παρά τίνος, [John 10:18](#); πρὸς τινα, [Acts 17:15](#); λαβεῖν ἐντολάς περὶ τίνος, [Colossians 4:10](#); that which is prescribed to one by reason of his office, ἐντολήν ἔχειν followed by infinitive, [Hebrews 7:5](#); ἐντολήν διδόναι τίνι, [John 14:31](#) L Tr WH; with τί εἶπη added, of Christ, whom God commanded what to teach to men, [John 12:49](#); ἡ ἐντολή αὐτοῦ, of God, respecting the same thing, [John 12:50](#).

2. a commandment, i. e. a prescribed rule in accordance with which a thing is done;

a. universally, ἐντολή σαρκικῆ (σαρκίνη G L T Tr WH), a precept relating to lineage, [Hebrews 7:16](#); of the Mosaic precept concerning the priesthood, [Hebrews 7:18](#); of a magistrate's order or edict: ἐντολήν διδόναι, ἵνα, [John 11:57](#).

b. ethically; α. used of the commandments of the Mosaic law: ἡ ἐντολή τοῦ Θεοῦ, what God prescribes in the law of Moses, [Matthew 15:3](#) (and R G in [Matthew 15:6](#)); [Mark 7:8f](#); especially of particular precepts of this law as distinguished from ὁ νόμος (the law) their body or sum: [Matthew 22:36, 38](#); [Mark 10:5](#); [Mark 12:28ff](#); [Romans 7:8-13](#); [Romans 13:9](#); [Ephesians 6:2](#); [Hebrews 9:19](#); κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν, according to the precept of the law, [Luke](#)

23:56; plural, [Matthew 4:19](#)); ; [Mark 10:19](#); ([Luke 18:20](#)); τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς, [Matthew 19:17](#); πορεύεσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς, [Luke 1:6](#); ὁ νόμος τῶν ἐντολῶν, the law containing the precepts, [Ephesians 2:15](#) (see δόγμα, 2). β. of the precepts of Jewish tradition: ἐντολαὶ ἀνθρώπων, [Titus 1:14](#). γ. universally, of the commandments of God, especially as promulgated in the Christian religion: [1 John 3:23](#); [1 John 4:21](#); [1 John 5:3](#); ἐντολὴν διδόναι, [1 John 3:23](#); ἐντολὴν ἔχειν, ἵνα, [1 John 4:21](#); ἐντολὴν λαβεῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, [2 John 1:4](#); τήρησις ἐντολῶν Θεοῦ, [1 Corinthians 7:19](#); τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ, [1 John 2:3](#); [1 John 3:22, 24](#); [1 John 5:2](#) (here L T Tr WH ποιῶμεν), 3; or τοῦ Θεοῦ, [Revelation 12:17](#); [Revelation 14:12](#); ποιεῖν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ, [Revelation 22:14](#) R G; περιπατεῖν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ, [2 John 1:6](#); of those things which God commanded to be done by Christ, [John 15:10b](#); of the precepts of Christ relative to the orderly management of affairs in religious assemblies, [1 Corinthians 14:37](#) R G L Tr WH; of the moral precepts of Christ and his apostles: ἐντολὴν διδόναι, ἵνα, [John 13:34](#); ἐντολὴν γράφειν, [1 John 2:7f](#); ([2 John 1:5](#)); τὰς ἐντολάς τηρεῖν, John ([John 14:15](#)); α; ἔχειν τὰς ἐντολάς καὶ τηρεῖν αὐτάς, habere in memoria et servare in vita (Augustine), [John 14:21](#); αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἵνα, [John 15:12](#), cf. [1 John 3:23](#). ἡ ἐντολή, collectively, of the whole body of the moral precepts of Christianity; [1 Timothy 6:14](#); [2 Peter 2:21](#); [2 Peter 3:2](#) (thus ἡ ἐντολή τοῦ Θεοῦ, Polycarp, ad Phil. 5 [ET]).

Topical Lexicon

Definition and Scope

ἐντολή denotes any authoritative directive issued by God or, by extension, by a legitimate messenger of God. While the term can describe civil or angelic orders ([Acts 17:15](#); [John 10:18](#)), its New Testament weight lies in moral and redemptive instruction stemming from the divine will. In the Synoptics it often parallels “Law” (νόμος) yet remains more specific, highlighting discrete mandates; in John and the Johannine Letters it points to the singular, all-embracing charge of faith and love that flows from Christ.

Old Testament Backdrop

The Septuagint uses ἐντολή for Hebrew מִצְוָה (mitzvah), stressing that Israel's covenant life pivoted on obedience. [Deuteronomy 6–8](#) repeatedly binds blessing to “keeping His commandments.” Against that backdrop the New Testament presentation of ἐντολή shows both continuity (God still commands) and fulfillment (commandments reach their telos in Christ).

Jesus Christ and the Fulfillment of the Commandments

Jesus neither abolishes nor lowers the divine standard. “Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do likewise will be called least in the kingdom of heaven” ([Matthew 5:19](#)). Yet He reveals their heart-intent, critiquing traditions that “set aside the commandment of God for the tradition of men” ([Mark 7:8–9](#)). At the cross He fulfills the righteous requirement of the Law ([Romans 8:3–4](#)) and becomes Himself the locus of obedience: “This commandment I received from My Father” ([John 10:18](#)).

The Commandment of Love

All ἐντολαί converge in two statements: “You shall love the Lord your God” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” ([Matthew 22:37–39](#)). “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” ([Matthew 22:40](#)). Jesus intensifies the second: “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you” ([John 13:34](#)). The measure is sacrificial, cross-shaped love; the arena is the community of believers, radiating outward to the world.

Apostolic Teaching on Commandments

Paul affirms the moral content of the Decalogue—“You shall not commit adultery... and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” ([Romans 13:9](#))—while refusing legalism as a means of justification. John, writing later, makes obedience the touchstone of authentic faith: “By this we know that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments” ([1 John 2:3](#)). Both apostles unite faith and love: “This is His commandment: that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another” ([1 John 3:23](#)).

Commandments and Salvation

Scripture never presents obedience as meriting salvation, yet neither does it permit a faith devoid of obedience. Grace produces “the obedience of faith” ([Romans 1:5](#)). Thus ἐντολή functions diagnostically—revealing sin when broken ([Romans 7:10–13](#)) and authenticating redemption when kept by Spirit-enabled believers ([1 John 5:3](#)).

Commandments and Discipleship

Jesus ties discipleship to command-keeping intimacy: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” ([John 14:15](#)); “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love” ([John 15:10](#)). The Great Commission culminates in “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” ([Matthew 28:20](#)). Ministry therefore includes articulate instruction, modeling, and Spirit-empowered practice.

Commandments, Law and Grace

[Ephesians 2:15](#) speaks of Christ abolishing “in His flesh the law of commandments in ordinances,” referring to the dividing ceremonial code, not the moral core. Hebrews contrasts a “former commandment set aside because of its weakness” ([Hebrews 7:18](#)) with the superior priesthood of Christ, yet still calls believers to obey God’s voice ([Hebrews 3:7–4:13](#)). The new covenant internalizes the ἐντολαί: written on hearts, animated by the Spirit ([Jeremiah 31:33](#); [2 Corinthians 3:3](#)).

Commandments of Men versus Commandments of God

[Titus 1:14](#) warns against “Jewish myths and the commandments of men who turn away from the truth,” echoing Jesus’ earlier censure. Every age must discern between man-made regulations masquerading as divine and the genuine ἐντολή revealed in Scripture.

Eschatological and Covenant Dimensions

Revelation portrays a remnant “who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” ([Revelation 12:17](#); [14:12](#)). Covenant loyalty,

expressed through persevering obedience, is integral to end-time faithfulness and witness.

Pastoral and Practical Applications

- Preaching: Exposit individual commandments in Christ-centered light, stressing both impossibility without grace and necessity as fruit of grace.
- Catechesis: Ground new believers in Jesus' summary of the Law, the Decalogue, and the "new commandment."
- Counseling: Use commands to expose idols, guide repentance, and chart paths of Spirit-led change.
- Corporate life: Shape church order ([1 Corinthians 14:37](#)), ethical standards, and mission strategy by explicit biblical commands rather than cultural trends.

Key Texts

[Matthew 22:36–40](#); [John 13:34–35](#); [John 14:15, 21](#); [John 15:10–12](#); [Romans 7:10–13](#); [Romans 13:8–10](#); [1 John 2:3–8](#); [1 John 3:22–24](#); [1 John 5:2–3](#); [Revelation 14:12](#).

Summary

ἐντολή embodies God's authoritative will, fulfilled in Christ, internalized by the Spirit, and manifested in love. Saved by grace alone, believers demonstrate genuine knowledge of God by gladly keeping His commandments, anticipating the day when obedience will be perfect and unending.