

# Participle

A participle is a form of a verb that can function independently as an adjective. The word participle comes from the Latin *particeps* meaning “sharing,” “participating.” The Greek participle is said to be a declinable verbal adjective, meaning it has characteristics of both a verb and an adjective. As a verb, the participle has voice and tense. As an adjective, the participle is declined and agrees in gender, number, and case, with that which it modifies.

## Verbal Properties

The adverbial use of the participle expresses the how, when, why and on what occasion the action takes place.

1. Tense. Tense has to do with both time of action and kind of action. Kind of action is found in the participle itself. Time of action is derived from the main verb not the participle.
  - (a) Present participles reflect continuous action indicating action simultaneous with the main verb;
  - (b) Aorist and perfect participles indicates action which is prior or antecedent to the action of the main verb;
  - (c) Future participles indicate action that is following or subsequent to the action of the main verb.
2. Voice. Voice is the same as with the verb, namely, identifying the relationship of the action to the subject:
  - (a) Active means the subject is acting;
  - (b) Passive means subject is being acted upon;
  - (c) Middle means the action is returning to the subject, or acting on itself.
3. Modifiers:
  - (a) May have a direct object in the accusative;
  - (b) May have prepositional phrases, adjectives, etc.

## Adjectival Properties

The adjectival use of the participle agrees with the noun it modifies in: (a) gender; (b) number; and (c) case. It may function adjectivally:

- (a) attributively;
- (b) predicatively;
- (c) substantively (acts as a noun).

## Uses of the Participle

I. The Adjectival Participle. The adjectival use of the participle agrees with the noun it modifies in: (a) gender; (b) number; and (c) case.

1. *Attributive usage.* The participle can modify the noun in the attributive position with or without the article. An example is found in Matt. 2:7: Τότε Ἡρῳδῆς λαθρα καλεσας τους μαγους ἠκριβωσεν παρ' αὐτῶν τον χρονον τοῦ φαινομου ἀστερος, (Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them the time of the **appearing** star).
2. *Predicate usage.* The participle can be used like an adjective in the predicate position after a verb of being. An example is found in Heb. 4:12: Ζῶν γαρ ὁ λογος τοῦ θεοῦ και ἐνεργης και τομωτερος ὑπερ πᾶσαν μαχαιραν διστομον και δικνουμενος ἄχρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς και πνευματος, ἀρμῶν τε και μυελῶν, και κριτικος ἐνθυμησεων και ἐννοιῶν καρδιας (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.).
3. *Substantive usage.* The participle can function like an adjective when it is not accompanied by a noun. An example is found in Acts 10:35: ἀλλ' ἐν παντι ἔθνει ὁ φοβουμενος αὐτον και ἐργαζομενος δικαιοσυνην δεκτος αὐτῷ ἐστιν (But in every nation **the one fearing** him and works righteousness is accepted by Him).

II. Adverbial Participle.

1. *Temporal participles.* The participle can be used in a temporal clause. With this usage the temporal words “when, after, or while” are used at the beginning of the adverb clause. The specific adverbial word used is determined by the context, not necessarily by the tense of the participles. Present participles, however, most likely conveys the sense of “while” (during which time). Aorist participles mostly convey the idea of “when” (at which time). An example is found in Acts 19:2: ειπεν τε προς αὐτους· εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἀλαβετε πιστευσαντες οἱ δε προς αὐτον ἀλλ' οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκουσαμεν. (He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit **when you believed?**” So they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”). Heb. 9:12: οὐδε δι' αἵματος τραγων και μοσχων και μοσχων δια δε τοῦ ἰδιοῦ αἵματος εἰσηλθεν ἐφαπαξ εἰς τα ἅγια αἰωνιαν λυτρωσιν **εὔραμενος**. (and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered once into the holy place, **after obtaining** eternal redemption).

2. *Purpose participles.* The participle can be used to describe the purpose of the action of the main verb. Purpose participles use the words “to,” “in order to,” “for the purpose of,” “so that.” An example is found in Luke 10:25: Και ἴδου νομικὸς τις ἀνέστη ἐκπειραζὼν αὐτὸν λεγὼν διδασκαλε, τι ποιήσας ζῶν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω (And behold, a certain lawyer stood up **to test** him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to gain eternal life?”).
3. *Result participle.* The participle can be used to express the result of the action of the main verb. The result participle uses the words “so that,” or “with the result that.” An example is found in John 5:18: δια τοῦτο οὐκ ἄλλοι ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀποκτείνειν, ὅτι οὐ μόνον ἔκρινεν τὸ σαββατόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγεν τὸν θεὸν ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ. (Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, **with the result of making** himself equal to God.)
4. *Causal participle.* The participle can function to express cause of action of the main verb. The causal participle uses the words “because,” or “since.” An example is Matt. 22:29: ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς. πλανᾶσθε μὴ εἰδότες τὰς γραφὰς μηδὲ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ θεοῦ (Jesus answered and said to them, “You are deceived, **because** you do not **know** the Scriptures nor the power of God.)
5. *Conditional participles.* The participle can be used to express the condition of the action of the main verb. Dr. Young provides clarification as he says, “The conditional participle states a condition that, when fulfilled, issues into a certain consequence indicated by the main clause.”<sup>1</sup> The conditional participle uses the word “if.” An example is found in Acts 15:29: ἀπεχεσθαι εἰδωλοθυτῶν καὶ ἁματῶν καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε. ἔρρωσθε. (that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. From which, **if you keep yourselves**, you will do well.)
6. *Concessive participle.* The participle can express concession, being used with or without the concessive particle “if.” The concessive particle adds the word “although,” or “though.” An example is found in John 9:25: ἀπεκριθὴς οὖν ἐκεῖνος· εἰ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν, οὐκ οἶδα· ἐν οἶδα ὅτι τυφλὸς ὢν ἄρτι βλεπῶ. (He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner [or not] I do not know. One thing I know: that **although** I was blind, now I see). Phil. 2:6: ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπαρχὼν οὐχ ἄρπαγμου ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, (**Although he existed** in the very nature of God, he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped).
7. *Instrumental participle.* The participle can be used to express the means by which the action of the main verb is accomplished. The instrumental participle adds the words “by,” or “by means of.” An example is found in Acts 22:16: καὶ νῦν τι μελλεῖ; ἀναστὰς βαπτισαὶ καὶ ἀπολουσαὶ τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου ἐπιστρεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. (And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins **by means of calling** on His name).
8. *Modal participle.* The participle can be used to express the manner in which the action of the main verb is accomplished. The modal participle answers the question “how did the action take place?” An example is found in Mark 1:22: καὶ ἐξεπλησσοντο ἐπὶ τῇ διδασκίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἣν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς. (And they were astonished at His teaching, for He was

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Young, p. 155

**teaching** them as having authority). This participle answers the question: how did he teach? With authority.

9. *Circumstantial participle*. The participle can be used to express an action or circumstance that accomplishes the action of the main verb. Dr. Young suggests, “the best translation in English is to transform the participle into a finite verb of the same mood as the leading verb and insert “and” between the two verbal expressions. This usage of the participle is a idiom that has no exact English parallel. An example is found in Mark 16:20: ἐκεῖνοι δε ἐξελθόντες ἐκηρυξαν πανταχοῦ, τοῦ κυρίου συνεργούντος και τον λογον βεβαιουῶντος δια τῶν ἐπακολουθουντων σημειων. (But they **went forth** preaching everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs).
10. *Imperatival participle*. The participle can function like an independent verb as an imperative. An example is found in Rom. 12:9: Η ἀγαπη ἀποκριτος. ἀποστυγοῦτες το πονηρον, κολλωμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ, (Let love be without hypocrisy. **Hate** the evil. **Cleave** to the good).
11. *Indicative participle*. The participle can function like an independent indicative verb. An example is found in Rom. 5:11: οὐ μονον δε, ἀλλα και **καυχωμενοι** ἐν τῷ θεῷ δια τοῦ κυριου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δι’ ου νῦν την καταλλαγην ἐκαβομεν. (And not only that, but [we] also **rejoice** in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation).
12. *Periphrastic participle*. The participle can be used with a finite verb to form a compound tense called periphrastic (Greek περι “around” + φραζω “I explain”). Dr. Wallace says, “This participle is called periphrastic because it is a *round-about* way of saying what could be expressed by a single verb.”<sup>2</sup> The finite verb *εἰμι* is by far the most common verb used with an accompanying participle.
  - a. Present periphrastic. The present periphrastic is formed using the present of *eimi* with the present participle. This form expresses durative force. An example is found in Col. 1:6: τοῦ παροντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθως και ἐν παντι τῷ κοσμῷ ἐστιν καρποφορουμενον και αὐξανομενον καθως και ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμερας ἠκουσατε και ἐπεγνωτε την χαριν τοῦ ἐν ἀληθειᾷ (which has come to you, as it has also in all the world and it **is bearing fruit**, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth).
  - b. Imperfect periphrastic. The imperfect periphrastic is formed by using the imperfect of *eimi* with the present participle. This form expresses durative in force, but not always. An example is found in Luke 19:47: Και ἦν **διδασκων** το καθ’ ἡμεραν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ. οἱ δε ἀρχιερεῖς και οἱ γραμματεῖς ἐζητουν αὐτον ἀπολεσαι και οἱ πρῶτοι τοῦ λαοῦ, (And he **was teaching** daily in the Temple).
  - c. Perfect periphrastic. The perfect periphrastic is formed by using the present of *eimi* with the perfect participle. The sense of this construction is intensive with a consummative force. An example is found in Eph. 2:8: Τῇ γαρ

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Wallace, p. 647

χαριτι ἔστε σεσωσμενοι δια πιστεως· Και τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ, θεοῦ το δῶρον· (For by grace you **have been saved** through faith, and not of yourselves it is the gift of God).

- d. Future periphrastic. The future periphrastic is formed by using the future of *eimi* with the present participle. This form expresses the action as durative in future time. An example is found in Luke 5:10: ὁμοίως δε και Ιακεβον και Ἰωαννην υἱους Ζεβεδαιου, οἱ ἦσαν κοινωνοι τῷ Σιμῳα ὁ Ἰησοῦς. μη φοβοῦ απο τοῦ νῦν ἀνθρωπους ἔση ζωγρῶν. (and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you **will catch men**”).
- e. Future perfect periphrastic. The future perfect periphrastic is formed by using the future of *eimi* with the perfect participle. This form expresses the action as like the English future perfect. An example is found in Heb. 2:13: και παλιν εγω ἔσομαι πεποιθως ἐπ’ αὐτῷ, και παλιν Ἰδου εγω και τα παιδια ἃ μοι ἔδωκεν ὁ θεος. ( And again: “**I will put My trust** in Him.” And again: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”).

### III. Participle Absolute

The participle can function as a nominative absolute and a genitive absolute.

1. Nominative absolute participle. The nominative absolute participle functions as a substantive. An example is found in John 7:38: ὁ πιστευων εἰς ἐμε, καθως ειπεν ἡ γραφη, ποταμοι ἐκ τῆς κοιλιας αὐτοῦ ῥευσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος. (**The one that believes** in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water).
2. Genitive absolute participle. The genitive absolute participle functions adverbially. Its construction is unconnected with the rest of the sentence in that its subject – the genitive noun or pronoun is different from the subject of the main clause.<sup>3</sup> An example is found in Matt. 9:18: Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος αὐτοῖς, ἴδου ἄρχων εἰς ἐλθων προσεκυνει αὐτῷ λεγων ὅτι ἡ θυγατηρ μου ἄρτι ἐτελευτησεν ἀλλα ἐλθων ἐπιθες την χεῖρα σου ἐπ’ αὐτην, και ζησεται. (**While He was saying** these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.”) .

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 655

