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: Τοτε Ἡρῴδης λαθρα κάλεσας τους μαγοὺς ἥκριβωσεν παρ’ αὐτῶν τον χρονον τοῦ φαινομένου άστερος, (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 γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἕνεργης καὶ τομωτής ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μαχαίραν διστομον καὶ δικαιομένου ἄχρι μερίσμου ψυχῆς καὶ πνευματος, ἀρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν, καὶ κριτικος ἐνθομησαν καὶ ἐννοιών καιρος (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: ἀλλὰ ἐν παντὶ ἐδειχεν τὸ φθοριμένος αὐτῶν καὶ ἐργαζόμενος δικαιοσύνην δεκτος αὐτῶ 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). Aoist participles mostly convey the idea of “when” (at which time). An example is found in Acts 19:2: ἐπεγεν τε προς αὐτοὺς ἐν πνείᾳ ἡγίαν ἀλαβέτε πιστεύοντες οἱ ἐπὶ προς αὐτον ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ ἐπὶ πνείᾳ ἡγίαν ἐστιν ἰκοσμαν. (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: οὐδὲ δι’ ἄμιατος τραγων καὶ μοσχων καὶ μοσχων δια τοῦ ιδίου ἄμιατος εἴσηλθεν ἐφαπαξ εἰς τα ἁγια ἀιωνιαν λάθρωσιν εἰρθμένος. (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: Καὶ ἰδοὺ νομικὸς τῆς ἀνεστὶ ἐκπαιδεύοντον αὐτὸν λέγων διδασκάλη, τι ποιήσας ζησον αἰώνιον κληρονόμον (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: διὰ τὸ τούτῳ οὐν μᾶλλον ἐξήτουν αὐτὸν οὐ διούσα αὐτόν ἂν πετείνα, καὶ οὐ μονον ἐκεῖνον τὸ σαββατον, ἄλλα καὶ πατέρα ἰδιον ἐλεγεν τὸν θεὸν ἴσον εἰαυτὸν 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: ἀπεκρίθης ὃ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰπεν αὐτοῖς, πλανάσθη ἡμῖν ἐνδοτες τος γραφας μηδε την δυναμιν τοι θεου (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.” The conditional participle uses the word “if.” An example is found in Acts 15:29: ἀπεκρίθησα εἰσδολοθητον και ἀματος και πνευματων και πορνειας, εξ ὧν διαπρονετε εαυτους εν πραξετε. ἐπρωσθε (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 participle “if.” The concessive particle adds the word “although,” or “though.” An example is found in John 9:25: ἀπεκρίθη οὖν ἐκεῖνος ἐν ῥαιρει τὸν ὑπαρχων οὐκ ἀρπαγμι νηπιασατοτο το εισα θεο (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: και νῦν τι μελετή: ἀναστας βαπτίσαται και ἀπόλυσαι τος ἀματριας σου ἐπιστρεφειτε το θεον αυτου. (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: και ἤξεπιλησασθεν τη διδασκαλον αυτου τη διδασκαλον αυτου των γεροι ενσεννυσιαν ἐχων και ου δια αγαματεις. (And they were astonished at His teaching, for He was

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1 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: ἔκακενοι δὲ ἔξελθοντες ἐκήρυξαν πανταχοῦ, τοῦ κυρίου συνεργοῦντος καὶ τὸν λόγον βεβαιοῦντος διὰ τῶν ἐπακολουθοῦντων σημείων. (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: Ἡ ἁγαπή ἀνυποκρίτως. ἀποστυγγούτες το πονηρον, κολλάμενοι τῷ ἁγαθῳ, (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 is Rom. 5:11: οὐ μονον δὲ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχόμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δι’ ου ὑμᾶς τὴν κατάλαλγην ἕκαβομεν. (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” + φράζω “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.”

The finite verb eimi 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 ἡμᾶς, καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κοσμῷ εστὶν καρποφορουμένον καὶ αὐξάνομεν καθὼς καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν, ἀφ’ ἦς ἠμερας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἔπεγνωτε την χαριν τοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ (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: Καὶ ἦν διδάσκον το καθ’ ἠμεραν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς ἔζητον αὐτον ἀπολέσαι καὶ οἱ πρώτοι 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 γὰρ

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2 Daniel Wallace, p. 647
χαριτί ἐστε σεσώσμενοι διὰ πίστεως. Καὶ τούτῳ οὐκ ἔξ, θεοῦ τὸ δόρον (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 δὲ καὶ Ἰακεβόν καὶ Ἰωάννην ὀνόματι Ζεβεδαίου, ὅσιον κοινὸν τῷ Σιμώῳ ὁ Ἰησοῦς. μὴ φοβοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἄνθρωπου ἔσης ζωγράφων. (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: καὶ πάλιν ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθῶς ἐπ' αὐτῷ, καὶ πάλιν ἔγω καὶ τὰ παιδία αἱ μοι ἐδοκεῖς 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 πίστεων εἰς ἐμε, καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή, ποταμότερ εἰς τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ἐμερώσθησαν ἱδατος ἐζώντος. (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. An example is found in Matt. 9:18: Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος αὐτώς, ἰδοὺ ἄρχον ἐς ἐλθόν προσέκοψεν αὐτῷ λέγον ὅτι ἡ θυγατὴ μου ἄρτι ἐτελεστήν ἄλλα ἐλθον ἐπαθεὶς την χεῖρα σου ἐπ' αὐτήν, καὶ ἔσται. (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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3 Ibid., p. 655