

Mastering New Testament Greek Textbook

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CHAPTER 19

Present Participles

You will be able to—

1. understand how the participle works in English and Greek as a verbal adjective, substantive, and adverb;
2. recognize and write the participle forms in the present active indicative paradigms;
3. translate present participle forms,
4. gain more practice in translating and working with Greek;
5. master ten more high-frequency vocabulary words; and
6. memorize Mat. 6:13b in Greek.

Introduction

In Greek, participles are used in much the same way as they are in English. Present participles are formed in English by adding “-ing” to the verbal form (e.g., walking). A participle is a verbal adjective.

The participle is a critical part of the Greek language. Care must be taken to recognize its forms. One must also know the diverse ways it is translated, whether as an adjective or as an adverb.

Verbal Adjective

A participle has both verbal and adjectival qualities. Participles are like verbs in that they are formed from several Greek tenses (present, aorist, perfect, and a few futures) and have voice (active, middle, passive). They can take direct objects like verbs and may be modified by an adverb or prepositional phrase (e.g., She found the child lying in bed).

Participles are like adjectives in that they have gender, number, and case. They may be used as an adjectival modifier or as a substantive.

Adjective or Adverb

A Greek participle may be translated adverbially or adjectivally. As an adverb the participle tells when, how, why, or in what circumstances the verb is functioning. The adverbial present participle points to and modifies the verb by using words like “while” or “when” (e.g., While surfing the web, he found that site).

A participle can also function as an attributive adjective. Connecting words like “who” or “which” will often be used to translate these types of participles (e.g., The man who is sitting is the chief). The participle here is translated like a relative clause (who/which + is . . .).

A participle can also function like a substantive adjective (The one who is sitting there is the organizer).

Participle as Adjective

You can tell when a participle is being used adjectivally because, as an attributive adjective, it will modify a noun or pronoun. It will usually come with an article, and the context will show which noun or pronoun the participle modifies. When translating a Greek present participle, we may use a simple English participle, which is usually a word ending in “ing.”

In the phrase “the man speaking,” “speaking” modifies “man” and indicates which man is being referred to.

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν σπαρείς (Mat. 13:19).
This is [the seed] that was sown along the path.

Notice the prepositional phrase inserted between the definite article and its participle (Wenham, Elements, 151).

A participle, like other adjectives, may be used as a substantive when it has the article and no modified noun or pronoun. In this case the participle acts as a noun. Often these will be translated with the helping words “the one (who is).”

ὁ λέγων ταῦτα ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ
the one saying these things in the temple

Participle as Adverb

A participle may be used as an adverb modifying the verb in some way. It usually does not take an article (i.e., it is anarthrous). Often an adverbial participle will be translated as a temporal clause. It may also be taken as causative (“because of loosing”), concessive (“although loosing”), or instrumental (“by loosing”) as well. One should note also if a participle is anarthrous it still may be attributive if it is close and grammatically attaches to a noun, or it may be a predicate use of the participle as a verbal adjective. So when a form is anarthrous it is ambiguous and context must help sort out which usage is being employed.

If the present tense participle is used, it refers to something that happens at the same time as the main verb (e.g., “while walking”). If an aorist tense participle is used, the action of the participle was before the action of the main verb (e.g., “after walking”). There may be exceptions to this. If a perfect tense participle is used, its action was completed, with continuing results (e.g., “after having walked”).

There are only twelve future participles in the New Testament, and they indicate action that is expected or intended (e.g., “before walking”) (Mounce, Basics, 262f.).

Participle Time

The time of the participle is relative to the time of the main verb. In present participles, the action of the participle may be simultaneous, prior to or subsequent to the action of the main verb: “While walking, he saw the heron.” Generally we will use the simultaneous reading “while.” Porter generalizes that when the participle precedes the verb in the order of the sentence it is often antecedent action (“after loosing”). If the participle comes after the main verb it is usually simultaneous (“while loosing”) or subsequent action (“before loosing”)(Porter, Idioms, 188). Note that the participle action matches the past tense of the main verb: both happen at the same time. In aorist participles, the participial action takes place prior to the action of the main verb: “After walking, he saw the heron.” The aorist may describe attendant circumstances, with action taking place at the same time as the main verb, although this is rare. The time of the happening is not the point in the present participle form. Rather aspect is the main feature with the present being used to foreground, denote process, immediacy, with the aorist being more wholistic, complete background form and with the perfect being a foregrounded state of being.

Translating Participles

The adjectival participle will often be translated by using the English participle (“-ing”) with some connecting words such as “who,” “which,” or “the one who” (e.g., The one speaking to me wrote the book).

Adverbial participles will often be translated in a temporal clause by using “while,” “after,” or “before” (e.g., After speaking, the teacher prayed). Adverbial participles may also indicate purpose (e.g., He went in order to find his car), be causative (e.g., He went because of loosing his car), or express means (e.g., by going early, he found a seat). For our purposes here, we will translate adverbial participles as temporal, “while loosing” (Stevens, New Testament Greek, 297f.).

Greek Present Participle

We will be learning the present active, middle/passive, and future participles in this lesson. Active participles are used when the word the participle modifies is doing the action (e.g., The man skating by is a friend).

The middle/passive forms should generally be translated as passive (on deponents, see below). A passive participle is used where the word modified receives the action of the participle (e.g., The man being stung by the bees ran for cover).

Remember that a middle/passive participle should be translated active if it comes from a deponent verb (e.g., ἔρχομαι becomes a participle as ἐρχόμενος and is translated as active).

Present Participle Forms

Present active participles are built from the present verb stem. In the masculine and neuter the sign of the participle (οντ) is added, followed by the third declension noun endings:

$\lambda\upsilon + \omicron\nu\tau + \omicron\varsigma = \lambda\upsilon\omicron\nu\omicron\tau\omicron\varsigma$

The present active feminine participle is formed by using ους as the sign of the participle, to which the first declension endings are suffixed:

$\lambda\upsilon + \omicron\upsilon\varsigma + \eta\varsigma = \lambda\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\sigma\eta\varsigma$

Middle/passive participles are formed using the present verb stem adding -ομεν as a middle/passive participle indicator and the second declension case endings for the masculine and neuter:

$\lambda\upsilon + \omicron\mu\epsilon\nu + \omicron\varsigma = \lambda\upsilon\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$

The feminine uses first declension endings:

$\lambda\upsilon + \omicron\mu\epsilon\nu + \eta = \lambda\upsilon\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\eta$

The participial forms are fairly easily learned. The difficulty is in knowing how to translate them. Here is a chart about present participles that may help:

	Adverbial participle has no Art. [while, because of, by]	Adjectival attributive has Art. before noun it modifies.	Adjectival substantive has Art. but no noun/pronoun to modify.
Present Active	while loosing	the loosing girl	the one loosing
Present Middle	while loosing himself	the girl loosing herself	the ones loosing themselves
Present Passive	while being loosed	the girl being loosed	the one being loosed

Present Active Participles

	3	1	3
Singular	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nom.	λύων	λύουσα	λῦον
Gen.	λύοντος	λυούσης	λύοντος
Dat.	λύοντι	λυούσῃ	λύοντι
Acc.	λύοντα	λύουσαν	λῦον
Plural			
Nom.	λύοντες	λύουσai	λύοντα
Gen.	λύόντων	λυουσῶν	λύόντων
Dat.	λύουσι(ν)	λυούσαις	λύουσι(ν)
Acc.	λύοντας	λυούσας	λύοντα

Present Middle/Passive Participles

	2	1	2
Singular	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nom.	λυόμενος	λυομένη	λυόμενον
Gen.	λυομένου	λυομένης	λυομένου
Dat.	λυομένῳ	λυομένῃ	λυομένῳ
Acc.	λυόμενον	λυομένην	λυόμενον
Plural			
Nom.	λυόμενοι	λυόμεναι	λυόμενα
Gen.	λυομένων	λυομένων	λυομένων
Dat.	λυομένοις	λυομέναις	λυομένοις
Acc.	λυομένους	λυομένας	λυόμενα

Rather than memorize these large paradigms, it is better to learn the nominative and genitive forms. Once you have those two forms in mind, the rest follow suit according to the normal 3-1-3 or 2-1-2 pattern. In short, the following is what you should be able to chant through.

Present Active Participles

Nom.	λύων	λύουσα	λῦον
Gen.	λύοντος	λυούσης	λύοντος

Present Middle/Passive Participles

Nom.	λυόμενος	λυομένη	λυόμενον
Gen.	λυομένου	λυομένης	λυομένου

Future Forms

The future participle occurs only twelve times in the New Testament. It is used in situations where something is “purposed, intended, or expected” and can be either punctiliar or durative (Mounce, 262). We will describe how it is formed so you will be able to recognize it, but there is no need to memorize a whole paradigm for it. We will translate it “will be loosing” or just simply “loosing”.

In forming the future participle, a σ is added to the present verb stem, followed by the third declension participle endings for the masculine and neuter and by first declension participle endings for the feminine participles.

$\lambda\upsilon + \sigma + \text{οντος} = \lambda\upsilon\sigma\omicron\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$ $\lambda\upsilon + \sigma + \text{ουσης} = \lambda\upsilon\sigma\omicron\upsilon\sigma\eta\varsigma$
 $\lambda\upsilon + \sigma + \text{ομενος} = \lambda\upsilon\sigma\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ $\lambda\upsilon + \text{θησ} + \text{ομενος} = \lambda\upsilon\theta\eta\sigma\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$

Present Active Participle of εἰμί

	3	1	3
Singular	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nom.	ὢν	οὔσα	ὄν
Gen.	όντος	ούσης	όντος
Dat.	όντι	ούση	όντι
Acc.	όντα	ούσαν	όν
Plural			
Nom.	όντες	ούσαι	όντα
Gen.	όντων	ουσῶν	όντων
Dat.	ούσι(ν)	ούσαις	ούσι(ν)
Acc.	όντας	ούσας	όντα

Negating a Participle

οὐ is used for negating indicative verb forms. Participles are not considered indicatives so μή will be used to negate participles (e.g., The one who is not studying failed the test).

Translating Participles

Adjectival (+ art. [usually])

Attributive—modifies a noun or pronoun

The girl sitting there went to Gordon.

Substantive—no noun to modify. Add “one,” “who,” or “which”

The one sitting there went to Gordon.

Adverbial (no art. [often]) Add “while,” “after,” or “after having”

Present: While sitting there, she dreamed of Greek.
 Aorist: After sitting there, she dreamed of Greek.
 Perfect: After having sat there, she dreamed of Greek.
 Active: The one walking by is my friend (substantive).
 Passive: The one being taken away is my friend (substantive).
 After being seated, the owner came (adverbial).

Translation Examples

Τῇ ἐπαύριον βλέπει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν.
 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him (Jn. 1:29).

ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται· ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων
 The one believing in him is not judged; but the one not believing (Jn. 3:18)

καὶ ἦλθον εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ ζητοῦντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν.
 And they came to Capernaum seeking Jesus (Jn. 6:24).

Chant Present Active Participle (just be able to figure out the Mid./Pass.)

	3	1	3
Nom.	λύων	λύουσα	λῶν
Gen.	λύοντος	λυούσης	λύοντος

Vocabulary

ἀκολουθέω	I follow (90)
ἐνώπιον	before (94)
θάλασσα, -ης, ἡ	sea, lake (91)
κάθηναι	I sit (91)
καιρός, -οῦ, ὁ	time (85)
οὔτε	and not, neither/nor (87)
πίπτω	I fall (90)
πούς, ποδός, ὁ	foot (93)
προσέρχομαι	I come/go to (86)
προσεύχομαι	I pray (85)

Memory Verse: Review + Mat. 6:13b

καὶ	μὴ	εἰσενέγκης	ἡμᾶς
and	not	(you) lead	us
εἰς	πειρασμόν,	ἀλλὰ	ῥῦσαι
into	temptation,	but	(you) deliver
ἡμᾶς	ἀπὸ	τοῦ	πονηροῦ.
us	from	the	evil (one).