

The Instrumental

The instrumental is the case of means or instrument. It uses the same form as the dative and locative but is translated as υἱῶ “with a son,” or “by a son;” when used with the article τῷ υἱῶ “with the son,” or “by the son.” The word instrumental comes to the English from the Latin *instrūmentum* meaning “a tool,” “an implement,” “any means to an end,” and reflects the basic meaning of the case, namely, the case of means or instrument.

One of the great theological uses of the instrumental is found in Ephesians 2:8-9: **τῇ γὰρ χάριτι** ἔστε σεσωσμένοι δια πιστεως· Καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον. Οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ τις κουχησθῆται. (**for by grace** you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast). “By grace” is the instrumental of cause indicating the cause of our salvation, while “through” or “by faith” is the means of our salvation. The preposition δια expresses means “by the means of faith.” The source of our faith is given as a gift from God. To put it another way, our faith is seen as a gift and something that we on our own cannot produce. It is produced in our hearts by the agent that is God Himself. The ablative of source or origin with the preposition εκ informs us that the source is not out of us (οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν) nor out of works (Οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων) but from God alone. Dr. Wallace says “it would be better to translate it as ‘by grace’ or ‘on the basis of grace’ instead of ‘because of grace,’ since this last phrase might be construed as indicating only God’s motive, but not the basis of our salvation.”¹

¹ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 168

Uses of the Instrumental

Instrumental of Means. The instrumental of means indicates the means by which something is performed. It expresses the personal agent. This is the closest to the root meaning of the instrumental case. The translation uses “by,” “by means of,” or “with.” For example Matthew 8:16: Ὁσias δε ψενομενης προσήεγκαν αὐτῶ δαιμονιζομενους πολλους. Και ἐξεβαλεν τα πνευματα **λογῶ** και παντας κακῶς ἔχοντας ἐθεραπευσεν, (When evening came, they brought Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out spirits **by [means of] a word**, and healed all who were ill).

Instrumental of Cause. The instrumental of cause indicates the cause of the action. The translation uses “because of,” or “on the basis of.” For example Hebrews 2:15: και ἀπαλλαχη τουτους, ὅσοι **φοβῶ** θανατου δια παντος τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλειας. (And might deliver those who **because of fear** of death were all their lifetime subject to slavery).

Instrumental of manner. The instrumental of manner indicates the method by means of which an act is performed or an end is achieved. This use is frequently found with adjectives of the instrumental form. For example, 1 Cor. 11:5: πᾶσα δε γυνη προσευχομενη ἢ προφητεουσα **ἀκατακαλυπτῶ τῇ κεφαλῇ** καταισχυνει την κεφαλην αὐτῆς· (But every woman who [is] praying, prophesying **with the head uncovered** dishonors her head).

Instrumental of measure. The instrumental of measure is used when two points of time or space are separated by means of an intervening distance. It may also identify degrees of difference in space or time. The translation simply uses “by.” For example, Hebrews 1:4: τοσουτῶ κρειτῶν γενομέος τῶν ἀγγελων **ὅσῶ** διαφορωτερον παρ’ αὐτους κεκληρονομκεν ὄνομα. (having become **by so much** better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they).

Instrumental of association. The instrument of association points to the association of a second party. For example, Romans 15:27: εὐδοκησαν γαρ και ὀφειλεται εἰσιν αὐτῶν· εἰ γαρ **τοῖς πνευματικοῖς** αὐτῶν ἐκοινωνησαν τα ἔθνη, ὀφειλουσιν και ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς λειτουργῆσαι αὐτοῖς. (It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers [with you] **by means of your spiritual things**, their duty is also to minister to them in material things).

Instrumental of agency. The instrumental of agency indicates the personal agent by whom the action is accomplished. The translation uses “by,” or “through.” This is often expressed by use of the instrumental case without the addition of a preposition and the verb is always in the passive or middle voice. For example, Romans 8:14: ὅσοι γαρ **πνευματι** θεοῦ ἄγονται, οὗτοι υἱοι θεοῦ εἰσιν. (For as many as are being led **by [the] Spirit** of God, these are the sons of God).