

# 10. Third Declension

## Lesson in a Nutshell

**Third declension** nouns may be **masculine**, **feminine**, or **neuter** and have a stem that ends in a **consonant**.

First declension nouns are generally end in **α** or **η**, are usually feminine, and follow only one pattern.

Second declension nouns generally end in an **ο**, may be masculine or neuter, and follow two patterns which differ slightly from each other.

Third declension nouns end in a **consonant** and may be masculine, feminine, or neuter. They are in yellow below.

Noun Endings						
		Masculine (2nd declension)	Feminine (1st declension)	Neuter (2nd declension)	Masc / Fem (3rd declension)	Neuter (3rd declension)
Singular	<b>Nominative</b> subject	<b>ος</b> λογος word	<b>α or η</b> αρχη beginning	<b>ον</b> εργον work	<b>ς</b> σαρξ flesh	<b>—</b> φως light
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	<b>ου</b> λογου of a word	<b>ας or ης</b> αρχης of a beginning	<b>ου</b> εργου of work	<b>ος</b> σαρκος of flesh	<b>ος</b> φωτος of light
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	<b>ω</b> λογω to a word	<b>α or η</b> αρχη to a beginning	<b>ω</b> εργω to work	<b>ι</b> σαρκι to flesh	<b>ι</b> φωτι to light
	<b>Accusative</b> object	<b>ον</b> λογον word	<b>αν or ην</b> αρχην beginning	<b>ον</b> εργον work	<b>α</b> σαρκα flesh	<b>—</b> φως light
Plural	<b>Nominative</b> subject	<b>οι</b> λογοι words	<b>αι</b> αρχαι beginnings	<b>α</b> εργα works	<b>ες</b> σαρκες fleshes	<b>α</b> φωτα lights
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	<b>ων</b> λογων of words	<b>ων</b> αρχων of beginnings	<b>ων</b> εργων of works	<b>ων</b> σαρκων of fleshes	<b>ων</b> φωτων of lights
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	<b>οις</b> λογοις to words	<b>αις</b> αρχαις to beginnings	<b>οις</b> εργοις to works	<b>σιν</b> σαρξιν to fleshes	<b>σιν</b> φωσιν to lights
	<b>Accusative</b> object	<b>ους</b> λογους words	<b>ας</b> αρχας beginnings	<b>α</b> εργα works	<b>ας</b> σαρκας fleshes	<b>α</b> φωτα lights

Let's look first at the noun **σάρξ**. **Σάρξ** is a third declension, feminine noun. The stem of **σάρξ** is **σαρκ**. It is pretty easy to see how the endings are attached to **σαρκ** except in the nominative singular.

We would expect **σαρκς**

But instead we get **σαρξ**

Here is what happened: The **κσ** was changed to a **ξ**. If you think about it, this makes perfect sense. The sound a **ξ** makes is “**κσ**.”

**σαρκσ > σαρξ**

### Time Out



This the perfect opportunity to introduce you to the Square of Stops.

The Square of Stops is a table that tells you what happens when certain consonants collide. You can find it on page 6 of the Master Chart

## **Collision of Consonants The Square of Stops**

The Square of Stops is a nifty way to show how consonants collide to create new letters. For the most part, it is intuitive.

Square of Stops					
	unvoiced	voiced	aspirate	+ σ	+ θ
labial	π	β	φ →	ψ	φθ
velar	κ	γ	χ →	ξ	χθ
dental	τ	δ	θ →	σ	σθ

when aspirates are reduplicated they become unvoiced

If two letters collide in such a way that they sound like a third letter, Greek simply replaces the two colliding letters with the letter whose sound they make.

There are two primary letters which create this collision: **sigma** and **theta**.

## Addition of Sigma

**Labials** are made with the lips as in π, β, and φ.

Try pronouncing any labial plus sigma:

πσ, βσ φσ

Can you see why the result is a

ψ?

**Velars** are made in the back of the throat as in κ, γ, and χ.

Try pronouncing any velar plus sigma:

κσ, γσ χσ

Can you see why the result is a

ξ?

**Dentals** are made when the tongue touches the front teeth as in τ, δ, and θ.

Try pronouncing any dental plus sigma:

τσ, δσ θσ

Can you see why the result is a

σ?

The dental is dropped because it is so awkward to pronounce it before the sigma.

## Addition of Theta

Square of Stops					
	unvoiced	voiced	aspirate	+ σ	+ θ
labial	π	β	φ	→ ψ	φθ
velar	κ	γ	χ	→ ξ	χθ
dental	τ	δ	θ	→ σ	σθ
when aspirates are reduplicated they become unvoiced					

**Unvoiced** consonants do not engage the vocal chords. Try pronouncing π, κ, and τ and notice that the vocal chords are not used.

**Voiced** consonants engage the vocal chords. Try pronouncing β, γ, and δ and notice that the vocal chords are used.

**Aspirate** consonants involve the flow of air. Try pronouncing φ, χ, and θ and notice the flow of air.

Interesting, eh?

Here is the general rule: When you add θ to a voiced or unvoiced aspirate, it becomes the related aspirate. For example:

When a θ is added to the labials π and β, it becomes φθ. In other words

$$\begin{aligned} \pi\theta &> \phi\theta \\ \beta\theta &> \phi\theta \end{aligned}$$

When a θ is added to the velars κ and γ, it becomes χθ. In other words

$$\begin{aligned} \kappa\theta &> \chi\theta \\ \gamma\theta &> \chi\theta \end{aligned}$$

When a θ is added to the dentals τ and δ, it becomes σθ. In other words

τθ > σθ

δθ > σθ

If this is overwhelming right now, don't worry. We will have the opportunity to see this again and again. You will get the hang of it.



## Back to Third Declension

Noun Endings			
		Masc / Fem (3rd declension)	Neuter (3rd declension)
Singular	<b>Nominative</b> subject	ς σαρξ flesh	— φως light
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	ος σαρκος of flesh	ος φωτος of light
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	ι σαρκι to flesh	ι φωτι to light
	<b>Accusative</b> object	α σαρκα flesh	— φως light
Plural	<b>Nominative</b> subject	ες σαρκες fleshes	α φωτα lights
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	ων σαρκων of fleshes	ων φωτων of lights
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	σιν σαρξιν to fleshes	σιν φωσιν to lights
	<b>Accusative</b> object	ας σαρκας fleshes	α φωτα lights

The neuter noun, φῶς, is built on the stem φωτ.

It is obvious how the endings are being attached except in the nominative singular and dative plural. Remember the Square of Stops?

When sigma is added to a dental, the dental is dropped (see p. 61 above).

τσ > σ

So φωτς becomes φως (nominative singular)  
and

φωτσιν becomes φωσιν (dative plural)

Square of Stops					
	unvoiced	voiced	aspirate	+ σ	+ θ
labial	π	β	φ →	ψ	φθ
velar	κ	γ	χ →	ξ	χθ
dental	τ	δ	θ →	σ	σθ

when aspirates are reduplicated they become unvoiced

Also, please notice that the nominative singular forms are often odd but the **genitive forms are always regular.**

If you want to find out in what consonant a third declension noun ends, look at the genitive singular form. Remove the noun ending (ος) and you will see the final consonant.

Some Greek students are terrified of third declension nouns. This is a problem because there are lots of them! There is no need to fear. Although they are not as consistent as first and second declension nouns, the patterns are fairly easy to see in context.



Here are examples of masculine, feminine, and neuter third declension nouns which play by the rules: ἄνθρωπος, γυνή, and ὄνομα.

Third Declension Nouns				
		Masc (3rd declension)	Feminine (3rd declension)	Neuter (3rd declension)
Singular	<b>Nominative</b> subject	ς ἄνθρωπος man	γυνή woman	– ὄνομα name
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	ος ἀνθρώπου of man	γυναικός of woman	ος ὀνόματος of a name
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	ι ἀνθρώπῳ to man	γυναικί to woman	ι ὀνόματι to a name
	<b>Accusative</b> object	α ἄνθρωπον man	γυναῖκα woman	– ὄνομα name
Plural	<b>Nominative</b> subject	ες ἄνδρες men	γυναῖκες women	α ὀνόματα names
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	ων ἀνδρῶν of men	γυναικῶν of women	ων ὀνομάτων of names
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	σιν ἀνδράσιν to men	γυναξιν to women	σιν ὀνομασιν to names
	<b>Accusative</b> object	ας ἄνδρας men	γυναῖκας women	α ὀνόματα names

Here are examples of some third declension nouns that do not perfectly follow the chart. However, notice the similarities.

		χάρις, ος, ἡ	πατήρ, πατρος, ὁ	ἱερεύς, έως, ὁ	γένος, ους, τό
Singular	<b>Nominative</b> subject	χάρις	πατήρ	ἱερεύς	γένος
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	χάριτος	πατρός	ἱερέως	γένους
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	χάριτι	πατρί	ἱερεῖ	γένει
	<b>Accusative</b> object	χάριν	πατέρα	ἱερέα	γένος
Plural	<b>Nominative</b> subject	χάριτες	πατέρες	ἱερεῖς	γένη
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	χαρίτων	πατέρων	ἱερέων	γενῶν
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	χάρισι[ν]	πατράσι[ν]	ἱερευσι[ν]	γένεσι[ν]
	<b>Accusative</b> object	χάριτας	πατέρας	ἱερεῖς	γένη

The best way to master third declension nouns is to read lots of Greek. And that is fun!



Let's practice our third declension with a sentence.

πίστις σώζει ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας τῇ δύναμει  
 faith saves men and women by the power

τῆς<sup>1</sup> χάριτος.  
 of grace

word	ending	case	function in sentence
πίστις	ς	nominative	subject
ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας	ας	accusative (plural)	object
χάριτος	ος	genitive	possession
δύναμει	ι	dative	indirect object

Noun Endings			
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	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	ι σαρκι to flesh	ι φωτι to light
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Plural	<b>Nominative</b> subject	ες σαρκες fleshes	α φωτα lights
	<b>Genitive</b> possession	ων σαρκων of fleshes	ων φωτων of lights
	<b>Dative</b> in, with, to, by	σιν σαρξιν to fleshes	σιν φωσιν to lights
	<b>Accusative</b> object	ας σαρκας fleshes	α φωτα lights

In this example, the Greek word order is similar to English so the translation is easy:

Faith saves men and women by the power of grace.

<sup>1</sup> Notice that we do not translate the article. Abstract nouns in Greek often have the article in Greek. We do not use in in English.



## Conclusion

So there you have it: The syntax and morphology of Greek nouns.

You may be blown away by this week. Do not be discouraged! As we continue on together we will see this over and over. You will learn to recognize these patterns and it will start to make sense.

If you have never studied a highly inflected language (where words change forms a lot) these ideas are completely new to you. No not worry if you find it difficult. That is normal!

We are developing uncharted areas of your mind. This is a good thing! Your brain is getting bigger. Pretty soon you will look like those really smart aliens on Star Trek.

