

GOD'S WORD IS LIFE

Key Greek Terms

Romans 12

1. Σῶμα (Sōma) – Body

Romans 12:1: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies (σῶμα) as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

- **Meaning:** The Greek word "σῶμα" refers to the physical body. In this context, it signifies the whole person—mind, soul, and actions. Paul uses this term to show that worship is not confined to religious rituals but is lived out in everyday life. Presenting our bodies as a "living sacrifice" means offering every part of our being in service to God. This resonates with the reality that our lives are not our own; they are shaped and sustained by God's grace in Christ.

2. Μεταμορφόω (Metamorphoō) – Transform

Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed (μεταμορφόω) by the renewal of your mind."

- **Meaning:** "Μεταμορφόω" means to be radically changed or transformed. It is the word from which we get "metamorphosis." Paul uses it to describe the inner transformation of the heart that happens by God's grace. This change is not about moral improvement or self-help but about dying to the old self and being raised to new life in Christ. The Christian life is one of ongoing renewal, where God is at work, according to baptism's promise, to reshape our minds and hearts to serve His will.

3. Νοῦς (Nous) – Mind

Romans 12:2: "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind (νοῦς), that you may prove what is the will of God."

- **Meaning:** "Νοῦς" refers to the intellect and moral reasoning, but it also encompasses one's entire mindset and worldview. Paul points to the renewal of the mind, a transformation that comes from God's work in us. The renewed mind sees life through the lens of the cross and resurrection, where God's grace upends worldly values of power and success and establishes a new kingdom of grace. This renewal moves us away from self-centered thinking and toward a life that reflects God's mercy and grace in Christ.

4. **Χάρισμα (Charisma) – Gift**

Romans 12:6: "Having gifts (χάρισμα) that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them."

- **Meaning:** The term "χάρισμα" refers to a gift or favor bestowed by God. In Romans 12, it points to spiritual gifts that are given by grace, not merit. These gifts vary among believers, yet all serve the purpose of building up the body of Christ. Under the cross, we understand these gifts as God's work through us, not something we control or use for our own gain. Whether in teaching, serving, or leading, every gift reflects the grace of God at work in us.

5. **Ἀγάπη (Agapē) – Love**

Romans 12:9: "Let love (ἀγάπη) be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good."

- **Meaning:** "Ἀγάπη" (agapē) refers to selfless, sacrificial love, but this is a love that belongs to God alone. This love is not something we generate or possess independently; it flows entirely from God to us, much like nourishment flowing from a vine to its branches. In Romans 12, Paul calls for this kind of love, but it is important to understand that we do not reflect agapē love through our own strength or effort. Instead, it is God's doing. As we are united to Christ, the true vine (John 15:5), His love flows through us and manifests itself in our actions.

6. **Συμμορφώω (Symmorphoō) – Conform**

Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed (συμμορφώω) to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

- **Meaning:** "Συμμορφώω" (symmorphoō) means to be shaped according to a pattern, and in the promise of baptism, this shaping is the work of God conforming us to Christ. Baptism unites us with Christ's death and resurrection, marking the start of our transformation, not by outward behavior but by the inner renewal brought by the Holy Spirit. Through baptism, we die to the world's values of power and self-reliance and are raised to live in the freedom and mercy of Christ. This ongoing process of being conformed to the cross is God's daily work in us, grounded in the promise of new life given in baptism.