

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis
LESSON CV : FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT (5:3-14)

Ephesians 5:3 ~ 14 —

³ So that fornicacion and all vnclennes or coveteousnes be not once named amonge you as it be commeth saynctes: ⁴ nether filthynes nether folishe talkyng nether gestinge which are not comly: but rather gevyng of thanks. ⁵ For this ye knowe that no whormonger other vnclene person or coveteous person which is the worshipper of ymages hath eny inheritaunce in the kyngdome of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no man deceave you with vayne wordes. For thorow soche thinges cometh the wrath of God vpon the chyldre of vnbelefe. ⁷ Be not therfore companions with them. ⁸ Ye were once dercknes but are now light in the Lorde. Walke as chyldren of light. ⁹ For the frute of the sprete is in all goodnes rightewesnes and trueth. ¹⁰ Accept that which is pleasinge to the Lorde: ¹¹ and have no fellshippe with the vnfruitfull workes of dercknes: but rather rebuke them. ¹² For it is shame even to name those thinges which are done of them in secrete: ¹³ but all thinges when they are rebuked of the light are manifest. For whatsoever is manifest that same is light. ¹⁴ Wherfore he sayth: awake thou that slepest and stond vp from deeth and Christ shall geve the light. (Tyndale's New Testament, 1534)

³ But fornication, and all vnclennesse, or couetousnesse, let it not be once named among you, as it becommeth Saintes, ⁴ Neither filthinesse, neither foolish talking, neither iesting, which are things not comely, but rather giuing of thanks. ⁵ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, neither vnclene person, nor couetous person, which is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdome of Christ, and of God. ⁶ Let no man deceiue you with vaine wordes: for, for such thinges commeth the wrath of God vpon the children of disobedience. ⁷ Be not therefore companions with them. ⁸ For ye were once darkenesse, but are nowe light in the Lord: walke as children of light, ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit is in al goodnes, and righteousnes, and trueth) ¹⁰ Approuing that which is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ And haue no fellowship with ye vnfruitfull works of darknes, but euen reprove them rather. ¹² For it is shame euen to speake of the things which are done of them in secret. ¹³ But all thinges when they are reprovod of the light, are manifest: for it is light that maketh all things manifest. ¹⁴ Wherefore hee sayeth, Awake thou that sleepest, and stande vp from the deade, and Christ shall giue thee light. (Geneva Bible, 1599)

³ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴ Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. ⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them. ⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. ¹² For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are reprovod are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. ¹⁴ Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. (King James Version, 1769)

³ and whoredom, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴ also filthiness, and foolish talking, or jesting, — the things not fit — but rather thanksgiving; ⁵ for this ye know, that every whoremonger, or unclean, or covetous person, who is an idolater, hath no inheritance in the reign of the Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the sons of the disobedience, ⁷ become not, then, partakers with them, ⁸ for ye were once darkness, and now light in the Lord; as children of light walk ye, ⁹ for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, ¹⁰ proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord, ¹¹ and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of the darkness and rather even convict, ¹² for the things in secret done by them it is a shame even to speak of, ¹³ and all the things reprovod by the light are manifested, for everything that is manifested is light; ¹⁴ wherefore he saith, 'Arouse thyself, thou who art sleeping, and arise out of the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee.' (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

³ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴ nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, which is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them; ⁸ For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; ¹¹ and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; ¹² for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of. ¹³ But all things when they are reprovod are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light. ¹⁴ Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee. (Revised Version, 1885)

³ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴ nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them; ⁸ For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; ¹¹ and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; ¹² for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of. ¹³ But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light. ¹⁴ Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee. (American Standard Version, 1901)

³ But fornication and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not associate with them, ⁸ for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; ¹³ but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

⁽³⁻⁶⁾ But fornication and uncleanness, every kind of it, or covetousness, let it not be even named among you, just as it is befitting to saints, and obscenity and foolish talking or ribaldry, which things have not been seemly or fitting, but rather giving of thanks, for this you know absolutely and experientially, that every whoremonger or unclean person or covetous person, who is an idolater, does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and of God. Let no one keep on deceiving you by means of empty words, for because of these things there comes the wrath of God upon the sons of the disobedience. ⁽⁷⁻¹²⁾ Stop therefore becoming joint-participants with them ; for you were at one time darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. As children of light be habitually conducting yourselves ; for the fruit of this light is in the sphere of every beneficence and righteousness and truth, putting to the test and then approving what is well pleasing to the Lord. And stop having fellowship with the unfruitful works of this darkness, but rather be rebuking them so as to bring out confession and conviction, for concerning the things done in secret by them it is shameful to be speaking. ⁽¹³⁻¹⁴⁾ But all the aforementioned things, when they are reprov'd by the light, are made visibly plain, for everything that is being made plain is light. Wherefore He says, Be waking up, he who is sleeping, and arise from the dead, and there shall shine upon you the Christ. (Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation, 1961)

³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." (New King James Version, 1982)

³ But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴ and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them; ⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹² for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." (New American Standard Version, 1995)

³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a person is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible — and everything that is

illuminated becomes a light.¹⁴ This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” (New International Version, 2011)

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” (English Standard Version, 2016)

³ πορνεία δὲ καὶ πᾶσα ἀκαθαρσία ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς πρέπει ἁγίοις ⁴ καὶ αἰσχροῦτης καὶ μωρολογία ἢ εὐτραπελία τὰ οὐκ ἀνήκοντα· ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία ⁵ τοῦτο γὰρ ἔστε γινώσκοντες ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης ὅς ἐστιν εἰδωολάτρης οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ ⁶ Μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς ἀπατάτω κενοῖς λόγοις· διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας ⁷ μὴ οὖν γίνεσθε συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν· ⁸ ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε ⁹ ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθωσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ ¹⁰ δοκιμάζοντες τί ἐστὶν εὐάρεστον τῷ κυρίῳ ¹¹ καὶ μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκάρποις τοῦ σκότους μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε ¹² τὰ γὰρ κρυφῆ γινόμενα ὑπὸ αὐτῶν αἰσχρὸν ἐστὶν καὶ λέγειν ¹³ τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐλεγχόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ φωτὸς φανεροῦνται πᾶν γὰρ τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστίν ¹⁴ διὸ λέγει Ἔγειραι, ὁ καθεύδων καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοι ὁ Χριστός (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

³ Πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πᾶσα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἁγίοις, ⁴ καὶ αἰσχροῦτης καὶ μωρολογία ἢ εὐτραπελία, ἃ οὐκ ἀνήκον, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία. ⁵ τοῦτο γὰρ ἴστε γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης, ὅς ἐστιν εἰδωολάτρης, οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ. ⁶ Μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς ἀπατάτω κενοῖς λόγοις· διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας. ⁷ μὴ οὖν γίνεσθε συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν· ⁸ ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε ⁹ - ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτὸς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθωσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ - ¹⁰ δοκιμάζοντες τί ἐστὶν εὐάρεστον τῷ κυρίῳ, ¹¹ καὶ μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκάρποις τοῦ σκότους, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε. ¹² τὰ γὰρ κρυφῆ γινόμενα ὑπὸ αὐτῶν αἰσχρὸν ἐστὶν καὶ λέγειν, ¹³ τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐλεγχόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ φωτὸς φανεροῦνται, ¹⁴ πᾶν γὰρ τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστίν. διὸ λέγει· Ἔγειρε, ὁ καθεύδων, καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοι ὁ Χριστός. (NA28 Greek New Testament)

From Darkness to Light (5:3-14)

Verses 3-5 cohere around a continued-action command: ‘let it not even be named’. Vv. 3,4 forms an antithetical form: ‘must not’ (even be named among you) ... ‘but instead’ (let there be thanksgiving). But it is not balanced; there are two sets of three vices contrasted with one virtue against them.

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking,

which are out of place,

but instead let there be thanksgiving.

Verses 5,6 underlines the prohibitions of vv. 3,4 (note v. 5 starts with ‘for’) by giving two severe warnings about the consequences to the immoral and the disobedient: exclusion from God’s kingdom and the experience of the wrath of God:

⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

(Note in v. 6 the attempt to justify their sinful behavior:)

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Since the consequences for those who indulge in sexual immorality are so dire (note v. 7 begins with ‘therefore’) believers are not to join in with them. The following coheres around the central admonition, ‘Walk as children of light’ (5:8c).

⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them;

An additional reason for this prohibition is given in v. 8a (note the connective ‘for’) by means of a contrast scheme: ‘you were formerly ... but now.’ Paul also introduces the metaphors of light and darkness:

⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Verses 8b-10 focuses on the light whereas vv. 11-12 focus on the darkness:

Walk as children of light

What it means to ‘live as children of light’ is given parenthetically in v. 9 with a triad of virtues and a participial clause in v. 10 about discovering what is pleasing to the Lord:

⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

As Paul focuses on the negative ‘darkness’, he again uses an antithetical form ‘have no fellowship with ... but rather’.

¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Paul gives another reason (note again the connective ‘for’):

¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

Paul adds the positive command to expose such deeds of darkness:

¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ^{14a} for anything that becomes visible is light.

Paul then gives a quote that makes a pointed appeal to the sinning believers:

^{14b} Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

SIX COMMANDS

I have struggled with the best way to present this. I have chosen to focus upon the six continued-action commands (present tense imperatives) within this passage:

v. 3 ‘be named’ — ‘let it not even be named among you’

v. 6 ‘be deceived’ — ‘let no one deceive you with vain words’

v. 7 ‘become’ — ‘do not become partakers with them’

v. 8 ‘walk’ — ‘walk as children of light’

v. 11 ‘have fellowship, participate’ — ‘have no fellowship with darkness’

v. 11 ‘reprove’ — ‘but rather reprove them’

Verse 7 appears to be a transitional verse, serving both what comes before and gliding into what follows. Here is a look at this passage, highlighting Paul’s continued-action commands (using Young’s Literal Translation as a basis):

³ **LET IT NOT EVEN BE NAMED AMONG YOU**, as becometh saints;

whoredom, and all uncleanness, or covetousness,

⁴ *also filthiness, and foolish talking, or jesting, — the things not fit —*

but rather thanksgiving;

[Why?] ⁵ *for this ye know, that every whoremonger, or unclean, or covetous person, who is an idolater, hath no inheritance in the reign of the Christ and God.*

⁶ **LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU WITH VAIN WORDS,**

[Why?] *for because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the sons of the disobedience,*

⁷ **BECOME NOT, THEN, PARTAKERS WITH THEM,**

⁸ **WALK YE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT,**

for ye were once darkness, and now light in the Lord;

[Parenthetical comment on the light] ⁹ *for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth,*

¹⁰ *proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord,*

¹¹ **HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF THE DARKNESS**

BUT RATHER EVEN REPROVE THEM, EXPOSE THEM,

[Why?] ¹² *for the things in secret done by them it is a shame even to speak of,*

¹³ *and all the things reprov'd by the light are manifested, for everything that is manifested is light; ¹⁴ wherefore*

he saith,

*'Arouse thyself, thou who art sleeping,
and arise out of the dead,
and the Christ shall shine upon thee.'*

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE RELATE TO PREVIOUS COMMENTS? — The passage begins with the conjunction 'but' which simply introduces a new set of moral exhortations; it should not be interpreted to imply contrast with the preceding context. Paul has just dealt with a number of miscellaneous sins (4:25–5:2) ending with a strong motivation: the believer is to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us (5:2). Paul now concentrates on two related themes:

Vv. 3-6 NEGATIVELY the avoidance of certain sins (predominately of a sexual nature) and a warning about those who practice them

Vv. 7-14 POSITIVELY the need to live as children of light. Note v. 7 provides the connection between the two themes.

Both relate back to his comments in 4:17-24. In 5:3 Paul mentions two of the sins found in 4:19 (which was not mentioned in 4:25-5:2). Paul also brings forth the contrast between the believers' former condition ('the old man' of 4:22, 'the darkness' of 5:8,11) and their present condition ('the new man' of 4:24, 'the light' of 5:8).

CHANGE FROM CHURCH-ORIENTATED TO GOD-ORIENTATED MOTIVATION — The motivation differs in this section than the previous. In the previous list of admonitions, the motivations given relate back to the believer's relationship with other believers, harming others within our churches:

'for we are members one of another' (4:25)

'so that he may have something to share with anyone in need' (4:28)

'that it may give grace to those who hear' (4:29)

'Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you' (4:32)

In this section however the motivation is the believer's relationship with God:

'For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God' (5:5 ESV)

'Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.' (5:6 ESV)

[Y]ou are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light' (5:8b ESV)

and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.' (5:10 ESV)

"Since 4.25 the dangers which might destroy community life have been in the forefront and have provided the motivation away from sin and towards goodness. Now God is introduced and, as we shall see, he becomes increasingly a felt presence in vv. 5ff. The ethic, no longer set solely in relation to the need for good community relations, is given a divine perspective, a return to the thrust of 4.17-24." [Best, 479]

THE FIRST COMMAND

V. 3 — **let it not even be named among you, must not even be named among you, should not even be mentioned among you, your lives should not be characterized by...** — μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν [mēde onomazesthō en humin] — The first command is literally 'let it not even be named among you' and may be understood in several manners.

• **Could this mean that these sins are to never be talked about, discussed or mentioned by believers?** — This is an extreme which is allowed by the grammar but not accepted by anyone of which I am aware. If this be the sense, would not Paul be violating his own command in this passage and violating it whenever this letter is read (either silently or aloud)? Paul could not have dealt with the sexual offenses of the Corinthian church if he had not been able to name them (1 Cor 5,6). In the centuries following the beginning of our churches those we call the Church Fathers continually referred to them, as have preachers throughout the ages. *"The injunction, 'let such things not even be named among you,' does not imply a mealy-mouthed refusal to call a spade a spade, after the fashion of some modern Bible versions (else the vices would not be named so plainly as they are in this and similar lists); it means rather that such unholy things should not be acceptable subjects of conversation among people whom God has called to be holy."* [Bruce, 369f]

• **Believers should never be accused of such sins** — This is an acceptable sense of what Paul is saying and without question is part of Paul's command. Clinton Arnold captures this sense well by translating the command 'your lives should not be characterized by...'. *"When Paul says that these practices should not even (lit.) 'be named' among*

God's people, he is saying something much more than that they should not be talked about or discussed. He is saying that an outsider who observes the daily behavior of Christians should never have an opportunity 'to name' one of these vices as characterizing the lifestyle of any member of the community. Or, similarly, that an insider may never see any fellow believer committing one of these sinful practices." [Arnold, 321] *"Paul is not saying that one cannot identify the sin when it occurs. Rather, he is asserting that these sins should be so universally absent from the body of believers that there should be no occasion to associate them with the church."* [Hoehner, 653]

● **These sins should not be a prominent part of our conversations** — While we agree with Clinton Arnold's emphasis, it should be added this could also be taken as a caution for too much thinking on these sins; note Paul later adds *'it is shameful even to speak of what is done by them in secret'* in v. 12. *"We may regard the sentiment either as an exaggeration or as an indication that unnecessary discussion of these sins concentrates attention on them; 'words are roads to deeds' (Chrysostom); it is often argued today that the showing of sex and violence on TV leads to yet more sex and violence."* [Best, 477] *"[B]elievers should not only shun these sins but also avoid thinking and talking about them. Clearly, such vices will be mentioned in lists as here, but they are not to become the subject of Christians' conversation. Thinking and talking about sexual sins 'creates an atmosphere in which they are tolerated and which can ... even promote their practice.'" [O'Brien, 360] "Believers' distancing from such vices must extend to their conversation. Presumably, the assumption behind this prohibition is that thinking and talking about sexual sins creates an atmosphere in which they are tolerated and which can indirectly even promote their practice.... What he is really attempting to discourage is sexual sin becoming the object of interest in conversation.... For those who are called to be holy, what is appropriate is a radical distancing from the gross sensuality and sexual greed of the surrounding world. Their conversation is to be distinctive and to avoid obscenity and foolish talk and coarse joking about sex. The one positive note in these verses is struck at the end, where thanksgiving is contrasted with the preceding vices and enjoined as the essential characteristic of Christian speech. Instead of the self-centeredness which characterizes sexual impurity, thanksgiving embodies a recognition of the Creator and his goodness."* [Lincoln, 322, 333] *"Not only were these sins to be avoided in fact, but to be shunned in their very name. Their absence should be so universal, that there should be no occasion to refer to them, or make any mention of them. Indelicate allusion to such sins should not soil Christian lips."* [Eadie, 370] *Conduct and conversation are very closely tied to each other; if all of our attention and thinking is upon sins such as these, is this not an indication of what is always on our minds?*

PROPER BEHAVIOR FOR BELIEVERS — Since Paul makes a similar comment in the following two verses, we will consider them both at this point. Note Paul uses two different words for *'fitting;'* in v. 3 the word is *πρέπει* [prepei] but in v. 4 the word is *ἀνήκουτα* [anēkonta]. The differences will be discussed below.

(v. 3) as is fitting for saints, as becometh saints, as is proper among saints, as is appropriate for the saints, as befits those who are holy — *καθὼς πρέπει ἁγίοις* [kathōs prepei hagiois] — **USED TO DENOTE CERTAIN BEHAVIORS AS ACCEPTABLE OR SUITABLE** — The word in v. 3 was a common term in both the Stoic ethics to mark certain behaviors as acceptable or suitable (see, for example, Epictetus [c. 55–136 AD], *Diatribes*, 3.2.16, 18; 3.21.4; 3.22.6; 4.1.8; Arius Didymus [1st century BC], *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, 5b2) and in many Jewish texts (for example, Sirach 32:3; 1 Macc 12:11). [cited by Arnold, 321; Best, 477, Lincoln, 316; MacArthur, 201] This word is also used 7x in the NT, here in 5:3 and in the following verses:

'But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.' (Matt 3:15 NKJV)

'Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?' (1 Cor 11:13 NKJV)

'likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness – with good works.' (1 Tim 2:9,10 ESV)

'But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine' (Titus 2:1 NKJV)

'For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' (Heb 2:10 NKJV)

'For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens' (Heb 7:26 NKJV)

(v. 4) which are not fitting, which are not appropriate — *τὰ οὐκ ἀνήκουτα* [ta ouk anēkonta;] — **USED TO EXPRESS NECESSITY, OBLIGATIONS, OR WHAT IS PROPER** — Like the previous word, this word was common amongst the Stoics and Jewish writers. As for the difference between this word and the previous, this word includes the sense of *'to reach up to, have come up to'* as one pyramid which did not reach up to the height of another or a wall which did not come up to a man's waist. This word is used 3x in the NT, here in 5:4 and in the following verses:

'Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.' (Col 3:18 NKJV)

'Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting' (Philem 8 NKJV); cp. also

'Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required' (Philem 8 ESV)

Thus we could read: *'It is proper for saints that these sins not even be named among you ... let there be no filthiness, foolish talk nor crude joking which do not come up to the standards of appropriate behavior.'*

'AS IS APPROPRIATE FOR THOSE SET APART FOR GOD, CHARACTERIZED BY HOLINESS' — *"Here the type of people who are in mind is specified by [hagioi] where the absence of the article places the stress not on membership of a group, 'the saints', but on a type of conduct which can be described as 'holy'.... Sexual sin, impurity and greed do not accord with holiness (cf 1 Th 4.3-7)." [Best, 477] "The absence of the article with [hagiois], 'saints,' places stress on the qualitative dimensions of the term, the holiness of those set apart for God, and serves as a reminder of believers' calling as that is depicted in 1:4." [Lincoln, 322] "Paul stresses that such conduct is utterly inconsistent with their new identity as God's chosen people. They are no longer Gentile sinners, but a new creation that is like God in righteousness and holiness (4:24).... His concern is that believers order their lives in ways that are consistent with their new identity in Christ as followers of the one true and holy God. Although the world may find a lewd 'turn of phrase' humorous and acceptable, it should have no place in the daily talk of God's people." [Arnold, 321, 323] "Were the apostle to say, Let despondency be banished, he might add, as becometh believers, or, Let enmity be suppressed, he might subjoin, as becometh brethren; but he pointedly says in this place, 'as becometh saints.' 'Saints' are not a higher class of Christians who possess a rare and transcendental morality – all genuine believers are 'saints.' The inconsistency is marked and degrading between the purity and self-consecration of the Christian life and indulgence in or the naming of those sensual and selfish gratifications." [Eadie, 370f] "Paul is speaking in general terms, namely, that vulgar conduct and speech often displayed by humans is inappropriate for believers.... Paul is referring to inappropriate conduct and speech that was pervasive in all cultures outside the believing community. Even in the present day, much of the language and conduct of unbelievers is inappropriate for believers." [Hoehner, 657]*

FIRST TRIAD OF SINS

Paul lists a triad of sins which are not to be named among the believers. Two of these sins were mentioned in 4:19 ('uncleanness, impurity' + 'covetousness, greed') and the third in 4:19 ('sensuality, lewdness') is replaced with 'fornication, sexual immorality.' These sins are what Paul later calls 'the deeds of darkness' (v. 11) and 'what is done in secret' (v. 12; it should be noted that while some may attempt to make a connection between sexual misconduct and physical darkness, this should not be pushed; prostitutes and mistresses are visited as regularly in daylight as at night. The darkness Paul speaks of is moral rather than physical.). Triads are common with Paul in Ephesians (1.18f; 3.6; 4.2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 17f, 19, 32; 5.3, 4, 5, 9, 19, cf the three sections of 5:22–6:9).

'ALL WE NEED IS LOVE...' — Paul just discussed the topic of self-sacrificial love, he now moves to that of self-indulgent sensuality. The Beatles were correct in 1967 when they sang the following:

*All you need is love
All you need is love
All you need is love, love
Love is all you need'*

The problem however when they and others in the world sing of love is that it more often than not relates to 5:3 rather than 5:2. "Whatever God establishes, Satan will counterfeit. Where God establishes true love, Satan produces counterfeit love. Counterfeit love characterizes Satan's children, those who are of the world, just as true love characterizes God's children, those who are citizens of heaven. In contrast to godly, unselfish, forgiving love, the world's love is lustful and self-indulgent. It loves because the object of love is attractive, enjoyable, pleasant, satisfying, appreciative, loves in return, produces desired feelings, or is likely to repay in some way. It is always based on the other person's fulfilling one's own needs and desires and meeting one's own expectations. Worldly love is reciprocal, giving little in the expectation of getting much. Speaking of that kind of love, Jesus said, 'For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?' (Matt. 5:46). The world claims to want love, and love is advocated and praised from every corner. Romantic love especially is touted. Songs, novels, movies, and television serials continually exploit emotional, lustful desire as if it were genuine love. Questing for and fantasizing about the 'perfect love' is portrayed as the ultimate human experience. It should not be surprising that the misguided quest for that kind of love leads inevitably to immorality and impurity, because that kind of love is selfish and destructive, a deceptive counterfeit of God's love. It is always conditional and is always self-centered. It is not concerned about commitment but only satisfaction; it is not concerned about giving but only getting. It has no basis for permanence because its purpose is to use and to exploit rather than to serve and to help. It lasts until the one loved no longer satisfies or until he or she disappears for someone else." [MacArthur, 199f]

But fornication, whoredom, sexual immorality — πορνεία δὲ [porneia de] — A familiar term due to our English 'porn, pornography.' Comes from a root meaning 'harlot' ('pornography' originally meant 'writings about harlots') and is even translated 'whoredom' by YLT. This has been historically translated 'fornication' (Tyndale, Geneva, KJV, RV, ASV, RSV, NKJV) but has been more recently translated 'sexual immorality' (NIV, ESV; NASV has 'immorality'). 'Sexual immorality' may be more accurate, depending upon how one understands 'fornication' which is usually limited to consensual sex between two unmarried people. But this word entails so much more. Clinton Arnold says **this word should be understood in the broadest possible sense of any kind of sexual activity outside of a committed marriage relationship.** [Arnold, 319]

The word is used in the following manners:

- **extramarital sex** — ‘And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’ (Matt 19:9 NKJV) ‘But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.’ (1 Cor 7:2 ESV)
- **sex with a prostitute** — ‘Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot (πόρνη [pornēs])? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot (πόρνη [pornē]) is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.’ (1 Cor 6:13-18 NKJV)
- **various sexual sins including homosexuality** — ‘And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers’ (Rom 1:28,29 NKJV)
- **incestuous relationships** — ‘It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father’s wife!’ (1 Cor 5:1 NKJV)
- **idolatrous / cultic sexual sins** — ‘Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell’ (1 Cor 10:8 NKJV; referencing Numb 25:1-9 where the sexual sins are tied to worshipping Baal of Peor; see also Rev 2:14, ‘But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.’)
- **Paul lists this as a work of our old nature** — ‘Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality’ (Gal 5:19 ESV)
- **the source of this sin is our hearts** — ‘For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.’ (Matt 15:19 ESV)
- **we must abstain from this if we are to be sanctified and in the will of God** — ‘For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality’ (1 Thes 4:3 NKJV) ‘Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.’ (Col 3:5 ESV)

“Illicit sexual activity was an enormous problem for new Gentile Christians to overcome in the early church. Adulterous relationships, men sleeping with their slave girls, incest, prostitution, ‘sacred’ sexual encounters in the local temples, and homosexuality were all a part of everyday life. There was not an accepted social standard with regard to sexual relations, although some Stoics spoke against the prevailing practices in Roman society because they represented a lack of control over the passions. Rampant sexual immorality in Graeco-Roman society was why the Jews had long been appalled at the behavior of the Gentiles in this regard and considered them ‘impure.’ The Mishnah even prohibits a Jewish woman from ever being left alone with a Gentile because he cannot be trusted sexually.” [Arnold, 320] “Contemporary sex madness has even found its way into the church. The influence of the lustful world has been so pervasive and the church so weak and undiscerning that many Christians have become convinced that all sorts of sexual excesses and impurities are covered by grace or can be rendered morally safe if engaged in with the right attitude – especially if some Scripture verse can be twisted to give seeming support. But immorality and impurity cannot be sanctified or modified into anything better than what they are, which is wickedness – a crime against the holy God and the loving Savior. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and 6:13-20 Paul shows that there is no place for that in the Christian life.” [MacArthur, 200]

and all uncleanness, all impurity, every kind of impurity — καὶ πάντα ἀκαθαρσία [kai pasa akatharsia] — “Although under the old covenant it was used to refer to various kinds of ritual impurity, Jesus pointed to the deeper issue of the corruption in the hearts of individuals, which renders them impure (Matt 12:34; Mark 7:20). There are a variety of thoughts and behaviors that constitute impurity under the new covenant, but sexual immorality is one of the most prominent. Paul explicitly links them in several contexts (Rom 1:24; 2 Cor 12:21; 1 Thess 4:7), and the connection may be implicit in Gal 5:19 and Col 3:5. The term was already used in contemporary Jewish texts for sexual impurity (see 1 En. 10:11; T. Jud. 14:5; T. Jos. 4:6). Paul uses the adjective ‘every’ (pasa) to emphasize every form of sexual impropriety.” [Arnold, 320] This word was discussed in 4:19. From lesson 21b: **every kind of uncleanness, impurity** – ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης [akatharsias pasēs] — Literally, ‘worthless material, waste, used of graves, decayed flesh.’ (Friberg’s Analytical Greek Lexicon) **BDAG**: ‘any substance that is filthy or dirty, refuse; figuratively, a state of moral corruption.’ “Uncleanness: The connexion of the Gr. word is mainly with fleshly impurity, and so probably here. But it is not quite confined to this; one passage (1 Thess. ii. 3) giving the thought rather of ‘impure motives’ in the sense of insincerity.” [Moule, 117] “[akatharsia], ‘impurity,’ in 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19. It is also used in polemic against false teachers in 2 Pet 2:2, 7; Jude 4. The term encompasses generally riotous and excessive living, but

frequently has unrestrained sexual behaviour in view. As in Rom 1:24-32, the abuse of sexuality is highlighted in illustrating the degradation resulting from failure to acknowledge the Creator.... Sexual immorality may well be primarily in view, but again the reference is not limited to this; [akatharsias pases], 'all kinds of impurity,' are included." [Lincoln, 279] "This term has a long history of usage in the OT, where it is used to describe anything that is ritually unclean. It is used extensively in the LXX of Leviticus to refer to the various items deemed unclean, such as dead bodies, a variety of different animals (pigs, reptiles, etc.), and menstrual blood. It is parallel to the word 'common' koino,j [koinos], which is used of anything that is ceremonially impure. These ritual laws are no longer valid under the new covenant. Jesus revealed that the real problem lies in the hearts of individuals and that what comes out of the heart is what defiles people (Matt 12:34; Mark 7:20). Thus, Paul speaks of the lusts of the heart as leading to impurity (Rom 1:24). Impurity is also one of the fruits of the evil inclination, that is, the flesh (Gal 5:19; see also Col 3:5). Impurity is the opposite of the holiness that God seeks in the lives of people (1 Thess 4:7)." [Arnold, 283f; see also O'Brien, 323; Hoehner, 591] "[akatharsia, 'uncleanness'] also appears in vice catalogues (2 Cor 12.21; Gal 5.19; Col 3.5; Prov 6.16; Eph 5.3), sometimes in proximity to [aselgeia] (2 Cor 12.21; Gal 5.19); it is rare in classical Greek; in Leviticus (see especially ch. 15) it refers regularly to ritual uncleanness. Apart from this restricted use, in some of its scriptural occurrences its connotation appears to be sexual (especially Gal 5.19; Col 3.5) and this is also true when it appears by itself (1 Th 4.7; *T Jud* 14.5; *Barn* 10.8,18), though the reference may be more general (1 Th 2.3; Prov 6.16; Wisd 2.16; 3 Macc 2.17; *T Levi* 15.1). The phenomenon in which general moral terms are given a sexual orientation ('she is an immoral woman') appears in many cultures. There is nothing in the use of our two nouns to indicate a sexual orientation here. [pases] suggests a general meaning in respect of the second, 'every kind of impurity', though it could be 'every kind of sexual deviation'." [Best, 422f]

or greed, covetousness — ἡ πλεονεξία [ē pleonexia] — Same word as 4:19; from lesson 21b: **greediness, covetousness** — ἐν πλεονεξία [en pleonexia] — **THE WORD ITSELF DEFINED** — as defined by **BADG**, 'the state of desiring to have more than one's due, greediness, insatiableness, avarice, covetousness.' We tend to confine this word to the desire of money or property but this word includes much more than that. It is often connected with sexual impurity (1 Cor 5:11; 1 Thes 4:3-7 [a cognate of this word appears in v. 6]; Col 3:5; Eph 5:3, 5) but again, is more than what we would call sexual lust. Lightfoot, speaking on Col 3:5, says this word "never of itself denotes 'lust' while it is, of course, rightly used to denote the horrible grasp and plunder which lust involves." [Moule, 117, quoting Lightfoot] Alford says "It is self-seeking, or greed: in whatever direction this central evil tendency finds its employment." [Alford, 122] Chrysostom calls this vice 'the greatest cause of evils and the greatest evil'. [Lincoln, 279] **Therefore in essence in this verse, it refers to the unsaved as living in excess but never being satisfied; their insatiable self-centered lust for more makes them oblivious of the needs of others and of the consequences for others. One commentator gave the illustration of a downward spiral, a vicious circle where new and worse perversions must be sought to replace the old.** [Lincoln, 279; see also O'Brien, 323; Hoehner, 591f; Best, 423; Abbott, 133f; Snodgrass, 231; MacArthur, 171; Hodge, 184; Lange's, 162] **"The final prepositional phrase, 'with an insatiable desire for more', culminates this litany of features characterizing the self-seeking mind-set of the unbelieving Gentiles. This term, often translated 'greed' or 'covetousness,' indicates that such people are never satisfied with what they have. Jesus warned against this unrestrained appetite to acquire: 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed (pleonexias); a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions' (Luke 12:15). He taught that greed is one of the evils that comes out of the heart (Mark 7:22). Paul told the Colossians that it is one of the characteristics of the earthly nature and is something Christians need to fight against (Col 3:5; see also Eph 5:3; Did. 5:1)."** [Arnold, 284]

HOW DOES 'GREED, COVETOUSNESS' RELATE TO WHAT PAUL IS SAYING? — *While it would be incorrect to limit 'greed, covetousness' in this verse to money and power, it would also be improper to limit this to a sexual context. 'Greed, covetousness, insatiable desire' in all manners would fit the context. "Because the first two terms ('sexual immorality' and 'impurity') refer to sins of a sexual nature, some interpreters contend that 'greed' should be understood in this context as sexual greed. Thus, Lincoln interprets it as 'unrestrained sexual greed whereby a person assumes that others exist for his or her own gratification.' This view is clearly encompassed in the meaning of greed, but there is no adequate reason for limiting it to sexual greed here. It simply refers to the insatiable desire to acquire more and more, whatever the object. God's people are constantly warned about the dangers of the love of money, coveting, and every form of greed throughout the OT and Jewish literature."* [Arnold, 320f] **"The opposite of moderation, it is selfishness to an extreme degree.** The internal attitude is tied to the sexual immorality and impurity. Some think it has reference to sexual greed that expresses itself in self-gratification at the expense of others. It is certainly not an action of love and concern for the other person. Accordingly, the injunction in the tenth commandment against coveting one's neighbor's wife (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21) may be in mind here." [Hoehner, 652f] "Greed is inseparable from impurity. Every form of sexual immorality is an expression of the self-will, self-gratification, and self-centeredness of greed. It is by nature contrary to love, which is self-giving. Immorality and impurity are but forms of greed in the realm of sexual sin. They are manifestations of sexual covetousness and express counterfeit love (which is really hate, since love seeks the purity of others and is unselfish), masquerading as something beautiful, good, and rewarding. Because those sins seem so attractive and promising, spouses are forsaken, children are neglected, homes are destroyed, friends are disregarded, as no effort is spared to fulfill the desire to have the one who is lusted after—all of that in the name of love. Because of the strong sexual nature of human beings, sexual sins are powerful and can become perverted in unimaginable ways. If given free rein, sexual sins lead to complete insensitivity to the feelings and welfare of others, to horrible brutality, and frequently to murder — as news stories testify daily." [MacArthur, 200f]

SECOND TRIAD OF SINS

Verse 4 starts with a second triad of sins. All three of these words are 'hapax legomena' (meaning this is the only time the words are used in the Scriptures; the term comes from two Greek words 'once' + 'to say') and are rarely found outside in other writings. Some believe these three vices to be centered upon speech but as we will see, the first word is not necessarily limited to our speech.

V. 4 — neither filthiness, no obscene behavior, nor obscenity, nor shameful talk — καὶ αἰσχρότης [kai aischrotēs] —

This word has a long history of being translated 'filthiness' (Tyndale, Bishop's, Geneva; KJV, YLT, RV, ASV; RSV, NKJV, NASV, ESV). As defined by **BADG**, 'shame, disgrace, commission of something shameful.' Older commentators have rightly understood this to refer to 'conduct that is shameful, disgraceful and debased; obscene action or speech.' In Classical Greek it meant 'ugliness, deformity' and used as an adjective it meant 'causes shame, dishonoring, that which is shameful, base.' **While it is difficult to know what specific behaviors Paul had in mind when he wrote, the list could certainly contain not just shameful speech but lewd gestures, inappropriate touching, disgusting kinds of practical jokes.** [Arnold, 322; Best, 478; Lincoln, 323; Hoehner, 654f; Eadie, 371]

IS THIS LIMITED TO SPEECH? — In light of the following two words referring to speech, many understand this to be a reference to 'shameful speech' with the next two words possibly even being illustrations of such speech. But this word is often compounded with other words, one of them being 'shameful speech' as is found in Col 3:8. That being so, I think it an error to limit this to speech:

aischrologia = 'shameful speech' (Col 3:8)

aischrokerdeis = 'shameful gain' (1 Tim 3:3,8; Titus 1:7,11; 1 Pet 5:2)

aischrodidaktes = 'teacher of shameful things'

aischroprepes = 'shameful appearance'

nor foolish talking, — καὶ μωρολογία [kai mōrologia] — This combines two words, 'moros' = 'dull, foolish, stupid' (note we get our word 'moron' from this word) + 'lego' = 'speech, talk.' This is almost always translated 'foolish talking' (Tyndale, Geneva, KJV, YLT, RV, ASV, NKJV, NIV, ESV) although some of the newer versions use 'silly talk' (RSV, NASV) or 'stupid talk' (REB, NEB). **Since the context deals with sexual themes, the New Jerusalem Bible translates it 'salacious talk.'** Although quite literally 'the language of fools,' this is not referring to the way those of low intelligence or lack of education speak. This could include dirty talk of a sexual nature but would not be limited to such talk and would include speech wretched in itself and offensive to Christian decency. Considering 'the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing' (1 Cor 1:18) this could also include impious speech, or talk which is empty and speculative, cp. Paul's counsel to Timothy, 'Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness' (1 Tim 4:7 ESV); translated 'Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly.' by the New Living Translation. [Arnold, 322; Best, 478; Hoehner, 655; Eadie, 371; Bruce, 370f]

nor coarse jesting, smutty talk, dirty jokes — ἡ εὐτραπέλια [ē eutrapelia] — Of all the negative words Paul uses, this word is negative as determined by context but could have been understood in a positive manner. Aristotle understood this as a virtue, a witty way of talking that made for good conversation, a ready wit which is essential to social flexibility, the 'mean between buffoonery and boorishness' (*Ethica Eudemia*, 'Eudemean Ethics', 3.7.1234a.4-23; Aristotle lived 384-322 BC), although he also recognized there were negative connotations to the term (ibid., 4.8.1128a.14-15). The word is derived from a Greek word meaning 'to turn' and would correspond to our own idiomatic expression, 'to turn a phrase.' This was typically positive in ancient literature of Josephus and Philo in the sense of 'wittiness' or 'facetiousness' (Josephus, *Antiquity of the Jews*, 12.173, 214; Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, 1.361). **As used here by Paul it would be in a bad sense as 'some kind of inhumane or degrading jesting, often at somebody else's expense; crude or coarse joking; wit in connection with lewdness, a double-entendre; suggestive language; innuendos; humor in bad taste.'** **As some of the commentators have noted, even in humor believers should build-up and not destroy. Like anger, humor is to be controlled. "Two indications of a person's character are what makes him laugh and what makes him weep. The saint of God sees nothing humorous in obscene language or jests.... The gift of wit is a blessing, but when it is attached to a filthy mind or a base motive, it becomes a curse. There are quick-witted people who can pollute any conversation with jests that are always inconvenient (out of place). How much better it is for us to be quick to give thanks! This is certainly the best way to give glory to God and keep the conversation pure."** [Wiersbe, 44f] "Obviously, by context, in sense of immoral pleasantries, such as defiles some of the most brilliant pages of pagan literature, not to speak of Christian, so called; and such as terribly impregnates common talk in many strata and circles of society now. It must have been everywhere the fashion at Ephesus. The passage does not deal with the play of humour and wit in general. This is not forbidden in Scripture, and so far as it is the outcome of vigour, gladness, or (in the case of humour) tenderness, it may be quite in harmony with the strict piety of the Gospel. But to remain so it must be watched." [Moule, 128f; see also Arnold, 322; Best, 478f; Lincoln, 323; Hoehner, 655f; Bruce, 370f; MacArthur, 201f]

but rather giving of thanks, thanksgiving — ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία [alla mallon eucharistia] — **"Whereas sexual impurity and covetousness both express self-centered acquisitiveness, thanksgiving is the exact opposite, and so the antidote required; it is the recognition of God's generosity.... What is acknowledged as ultimate — God or some aspect of being in the**

world, such as sexuality or sensual gratification (cf. also Rom 1:21)?” [Lincoln, 324] “The expression ‘rather’ (alla mallon) marks a major distinction between the six characteristics that Paul wishes his readers to repudiate and the one hallmark feature that should be a part of the life of every believer.... ‘Thanksgiving’ (eucharistia) should thus be a characteristic of all believers. At first glance this may seem a rather odd way of summing up the Christian life in contrast to such behaviors as sexual immorality, obscene behavior, and dirty jokes. A word like ‘purity’ or ‘holiness’ might seem a better fit. Yet Paul understands gratitude to God not only as an appropriate response to the Father for his merciful and free gift of redemption, but also as a fundamental motivating force for aligning one’s life around his purposes and ethical demands. As Paul reflects on God’s grace to the Corinthians, he suddenly exclaims, ‘Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!’ (2 Cor 9:15). Later on in the present letter Paul appeals to his readers to ‘give thanks for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father’ (Eph 5:20; see also Col 3:16-17). He sums it up well to the Colossians when he says, ‘So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness’ (Col 2:6-7; see also 1 Thess 3:9).” [Arnold, 323] “Thankfulness to God will be expressed within the community in its worship (5.20) and daily life (1.16ff)... [T]he remainder of the letter shows it relates to what God has done for the members of the community in choosing them, forgiving their sins, raising them with Christ and making them into new people. Not sexual lust and covetousness, but thanksgiving is the fitting response to God’s goodness and is basic to Christian existence.” [Best, 479f] “In striking contrast (note the strong adversative [alla mallon], rendered ‘but rather’) to all forms of sexual immorality and obscene language, thanksgiving, the distinctive mark of Christian speech, is enjoined on the readers. Some writers have suggested that noble talk or truthful speaking would have been a more appropriate antithesis here. But thanksgiving stands over against the six preceding vices of vv. 3 and 4, not simply the vulgarity and obscene speech of v. 4, and it indicates a fundamentally different attitude: ‘Whereas sexual impurity and covetousness both express self-centered acquisitiveness, thanksgiving is the exact opposite, and so the antidote required; it is the recognition of God’s generosity’. Thanksgiving is almost a synonym for the Christian life. It is the response of gratitude to God’s saving activity in creation and redemption, and thus a recognition that he is the ultimate source of every blessing. All people, as God’s creatures, ought to render thanksgiving and glory to him, but fail to do so (Rom. 1:21; cf. the ‘ungrateful’ of 2 Tim. 3:2, which describes humanity in the last days). Christians, because of the grace given to them in Christ Jesus (cf. 1:3-14, 15-23), are to live out their lives with joyful thanksgiving. It should be the accompaniment of every activity, being the appropriate response of those who have been filled by God’s Spirit (Eph. 5:18-20), Here in v. 4 thanksgiving reflects a Christian attitude to sex that is antithetical to a pagan attitude with its immorality and vulgarity.” [O’Brien, 361]

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? — *As is proper and suitable for those set apart by the Lord to be holy, believers should never be accused of the following sins neither by those inside our Christian circles nor by unbelievers; indeed, these sins should not even be a prominent part of our conversations. None of these sins come up to the standard of appropriate behavior for those belonging to Christ:*

SEXUAL IMMORALITY in the broadest sense possible; including but not limited to extramarital sex, sex with a prostitute even in a religious cultic setting, homosexual sex, incestuous relationships.

ALL AND EVERY KIND OF IMPURITY which encompasses generally riotous and excessive living, including unrestrained sexual behavior.

GREEDINESS, COVETOUSNESS which is the insatiable self-centered desire for more, either sexual or otherwise, and never being satisfied.

SHAMEFUL, DISGRACEFUL AND DEBASED BEHAVIOR, FILTHINESS which could include but not limited to our speech, lewd gestures, inappropriate touching, disgusting kind of practical jokes.

DULL, FOOLISH SPEECH, this being not a reference to one’s intelligence or education but rather one’s morality; including but not limited to dirty talk of a sexual nature and possibly even impious speech.

CRUDE, COURSE JESTING OR SMUTTY TALK; being able to turn a phrase or situation into something dirty, degrading jesting often at somebody else’s expense, suggestive language, double-entendres and innuendos.

Whereas sexual impurity and covetousness expresses self-centered acquisitiveness, in striking contrast the believer is to be known by his thankfulness, acknowledging the Lord as the Giver of all blessings, He Himself being the ultimate desire of our hearts.