

Eph 5:3-4 Bad Conduct and Speech

But do not let sexual immorality and impurity of any kind.

After encouraging positive ways to imitate God in Ephesians 5:1–2, Paul transitions to condemn three areas which are sinful for believers. Paul is going to describe how not to live, if you are a Christian. The first term *porneia* can include any sexual misconduct. It is most often used of physical sexual behaviors, including premarital sex, adultery, prostitution and homosexuality—any “illicit sexual activity.” The NIV translates it “sexual immorality” since it includes all types of sexual behavior outside of marriage. Jesus did call lust adultery (Matthew 5:28), and adultery is a type of *porneia*. The New Testament consistently warns against *porneia*: **“The body is not meant for *porneia* but for the Lord”** (1 Cor 6:13). **“Flee from *porneia*. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body”** (1 Cor 6:18).

Figuratively, *porneia* can refer to spiritual unfaithfulness or “spiritual adultery.” In Revelation, “Babylon the Great” is pictured as a prostitute committing spiritual adultery. **“A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,’ which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her *porneia*”** (Rev 14:8). **“With her the kings of the earth committed *porneia*, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her *porneia*”** (Rev 17:2) This is spiritually cheating on God, our Lord, and Jesus, our Lord and Savior, our Groom, as we are the bride of Christ. Consider the impact of the choices of sexual immorality has had. Maybe your choices, maybe the choices of others, but think about what it has done to some of the relationships in your lives. Reflecting on how sexual immorality affects interpersonal relationships, families, and communities is crucial to understand that God challenges us, and commands us to uphold a higher moral standard and strive for holiness in our conduct.

The second word *akatharsia* ἀκαθαρσία means moral “impurity,” which includes any kind of impurity which defiles a person, degrades them, or makes them less than who God created them to be. Paul says, **“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.... For sin will have no dominion over you”** (Rom. 6:11, 14). Paul says that Christians have been **“set free from sin”** (Rom. 6:18). In this context, to be dead to sin or to be set free from sin involves the power to overcome acts or patterns of sinful behavior in one’s life, to be free of all kinds of impurity. Paul tells the Romans not to let sin **“reign in your mortal body,”** and he also says, **“Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God”** (Rom. 6:12–13). To be dead to the ruling power of sin means that we as Christians, by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection life of Christ working within us, have power to overcome the temptations and enticements of sin. Sin will no longer be our master, as once it was before we became Christians. Sin in our live, but instead have an overriding love for Jesus, and an increasing likeness to God in our thoughts as well as our words and deeds. The author of Hebrews tells his readers to **“lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely”** (Heb. 12:1) and to **“strive for ... the holiness without which no one will see the Lord”** (Heb. 12:14). James encourages his hearers, **“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only”** (James 1:22), and Peter tells his readers, **“Be holy in all your conduct”** (1 Peter 1:15). It’s unanimous—all the Bible’s authors say that we are to live holy lives, because we follow a Holy God!

or greed even be mentioned among you

The third term here, *pleonexia* means “covetousness, greediness.” The opposite of moderation, it is selfishness to an extreme degree. This is greed for material possessions to be consumed by oneself rather than sharing them with the community of believers and depending on the Lord to supply them as the need arises. Greed is a strong and selfish desire to have more of something, most often money or power. There are many warnings in the Bible about giving in to greed and longing for riches. Jesus warned, **“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”** (Luke 12:15). **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal... You cannot serve both God and money”**

(Matthew 6:19, 24b). Greed and a desire for riches are traps that bring ruin and destruction. **“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,”** and Christians are warned, **“Do not put your trust in wealth” and [let there be no] obscenity.**

The lifestyle of believers includes our speech as well as our conduct as Christians. The first inappropriate speech listed is *aischros aischrótes* means something which “causes shame, dishonoring” or which is “shameful, base, disgraceful. When we think of obscenity, then we mostly think of cussing—which is wrong because it gives us a bad witness before people, and denies the power of God in our lives to change us from who we used to be, in who we are now. They can sometimes resent us because we don’t join in, but it is better to be left out and excluded than to fit in, and lose your witness for Jesus!

And foolish talk

The word *morologia* *μωρολογία* means “silly, foolish, senseless talk.” It has reference not only to silly talk but also talk that may be empty and speculative. When it comes down to it, this kind of foolish prattle, and talk can be very dangerous. It often devolves into gossip, or speaking evil of people, or base things and language that we’ve just been discussing. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36 Matthew 12:34b-37

For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart. 35 The good person brings out of his good treasure good things; and the evil person brings out of his evil treasure evil things. 36 But I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Be careful of what comes out of your mouth—guard your tongue, because you will give an account of it, and any damage that it has caused, when you’re standing before God.

“nor sarcastic ridicule.”

People are so fond of jokes and ridicule that they will do anything to get a laugh. It most likely indicates joking that has gone too far, thus becoming sarcastic ridicule that cuts people down and embarrasses others. Believers should build up and not destroy, even in humor. This does not mean humor cannot not be used by Christians. However, it should not be employed at someone’s expense, or to lead them toward sinful thoughts. Humor can be controlled!

“which are inappropriate.” What is appropriate, fitting, and proper speech for Christians. Paul is speaking in general terms, namely, that vulgar conduct and speech often displayed by humans is inappropriate for believers.

but rather thanksgiving

“Thanksgiving” includes praise to God for himself, for his gifts, and for each other. We should give thanks for what God has done. Thank Him for salvation, the many blessings in your life, protection, provision, open doors, opportunities, and His gifts to us. I Chronicles 16:34--**Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!** I Thess 5:16-18--**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**