

Yeshua, could make the necessary payment for the sin that marked the sinner as completely guilty before the three-times holy God. To those who, like Abraham, put their faith in the Coming One, His payment for sin by His death was reckoned to their account.

Thus, God the Father fully accepted the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Yeshua, on behalf of all the elect as full payment for their sins. The proof of such acceptance was the resurrection, for by death Yeshua conquered “him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb 2:14).

Thus Yeshua, in willingly giving Himself to save us, stands as the supreme example of love, a love which we are to emulate as we seek to edify each other and to demonstrate to a watching world the power of God in redeeming His people to become more and more like His Son.

In committing ourselves to follow Paul’s inspired admonition and to “be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other,” we are to forgive as God forgave us, emulating the love of God with which we have been loved, a love which the Apostles define in their writings.

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1Cor 13:1–7)

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. (1Pet 4:8)

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions. (Prov 10:12).

“Covering sin” does not mean to pretend it does not exist or to fail to deal with it, but rather to refuse to multiply it through gossip, hatred, or any kind of retaliation, and to follow biblical principles (Matt 5:21–26; 18:15–19).

3–4 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Paul now makes a specific application to the life of the believer of the theological truths he has emphasized in the previous contexts. In

the previous chapter he admonishes his readers to live out the new life they confess to have in Yeshua by no longer living in accordance with the flesh. He admonishes us to “no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,” to cease emulating those who have “given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness” (4:18–19). He likewise exhorts us to “lay aside the old self,” to “be renewed in the spirit of your mind,” and to “put on the new self...created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (4:22–24). This means “laying aside falsehood” and each one “speaking the truth with his neighbor” (4:25), no longer stealing but doing honest work so as to have something to help those in need (4:28), doing away with “unwholesome speech” and being intent upon speaking in a way that “is good for edification” (4:29).

Now Paul “zeros in” on three behaviors that should not even be “mentioned” within a community of believers. These are immorality, impurity, and greed. When he writes that these “must not even be named,” he teaches us not only that such things could never characterize a true believer in Yeshua, but also that such things should not be part of normal conversations among community members—they should not even be “named” (μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω, *mēde onomazesthō*).

“Immorality” (πορνεία, *porneia*) is a broad term in the Greek which includes all aspects of unlawful sexual relationships and practices and is often used to describe “prostitutes” or “homosexuality.”¹ Sexual deviancy also characterized the pagan religions of the Greco-Roman empire in which sexual activities were a significant element. Thus, in a society where sexual deviancy was common, it is easy to see how the divine standards given in the Scriptures were easily “stretched” to fit the culturally acceptable “norms.” But from the very beginning, God ordained marriage as between one man and one woman, and He Himself demonstrated His purpose by bringing Chavah to Adam as those created in His image and fashioned for each other. To allow immorality to remain within the believing community is to mix things that essentially differ. Therefore Paul warns us not to allow any form of immorality to remain within our communities.

“Impurity” (ἀκαθαρσία, *akatharsia*) has the basic sense of “filthy” or “dirty,” and even “refuse.” It takes on a metaphoric meaning to describe the baseness of sexual deviancy—as that which entirely undermines God’s purpose for marriage. We encountered this same Greek word in 4:19 in the phrase “have given themselves over to sensuality

1 Liddell, Scott, Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, “πορνεία,” p. 1450.

for the practice of every kind of impurity (*akatharsia*). This term thus broadens the concept to include all manner of worldly activities that would promote even thoughts of “immorality” and “fornication.”

“Greed” (*πλεονεξία*, *pleoneksia*) describes “the state of desiring to have more than one’s due, i.e., greediness, insatiableness, avarice, covetousness.”¹ While *pleoneksia* was often used to describe the “very wealthy,” in our context it seems clear that Paul is describing an insatiable desire for things sexually related.

“Greed” (*pleonexia*), or covetousness in this context of sexual vices (cf. 1Co 5:10–11), may point to an insatiable desire for sexual indulgence. Paul here prohibits the entire range of immoral sexual behavior. In a culture where sexual perversions were rampant and where, for new believers, the lines between proper and sinful activities were difficult to draw, Paul wants to stress that greed for sex is not fitting for saints.²

...*as is proper among saints.* – That Paul states that such “immorality should not be even named among you” is simply an emphatic way of stating that those who confess Yeshua as their Lord and Savior should show their life of faith in Him through a life that exemplifies His holiness and thus to be utterly different than the society that is characterized as “the world.” The word “saint” (*ἅγιος*, *hagios*) simply means “holy,” and when applied to believers in Yeshua, it describes those who have been called into the family and kingdom of God through faith in Yeshua and thus are called to be separated from that which God hates.

The application of Paul’s words to our own times and culture is obvious. The biblical norms which give clear guidance regarding what God describes as “moral” and “immoral” continue to be eroded in our day to the point where some who call themselves believers are allowing that which, in previous generations, would have been universally described as immoral. In our global, digital world, the accessibility of immoral, sexually explicit media is available as never before, and sets a very real trap for those who allow themselves to be snared by it. We do well to heed the Apostle’s inspired words and to set the standard high, “that there not be even a hint of sexual immorality”³ in our communities which name Yeshua as Lord and King.

... *and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting,* – “Filth-

1 BDAG, “πλεονεξία,” p. 824.

2 Klein, *Ephesians*, p. 134.

3 This is the NIV translation of the phrase in our verse.

iness” translates the Greek *ἄσυχρος* (*aisxros*), used only here in the Apostolic Scriptures and in the Lxx of the canonical books, only to describe the “ugly appearance” of the cows who came up out of the Nile in Pharaoh’s dream (Gen 41:1-4). The word was used metaphorically to describe that which is “socially or morally unacceptable, shameful, or base.”¹ In our verse the word most likely carries the sense of “vulgar speech.”²

This is paired with “silly talk” (*μωρολογία, mōrologia*), also found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. In this context, the word may carry more meaning than just “uneducated talk” but more than likely also carries with it a sexual aspect. It seems possible that this word may encompass sexually explicit “jokes” or “jests” which might be found in various drink-fests, etc. Thielman makes this suggestion:

In its context here in Ephesians, where talk of sexual immorality and debauchery is in the air, *μωρολογία* [*mōrologia*] may also carry connotations of the kind of nonsensical talk that emerges from people in attendance at banquets where drunkenness and sexual immorality were common.³

The word translated “course jesting” (*εὐτραπελία, eutrapelia*), once again, found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures, describes innuendos which often may carry veiled expressions that are recognized as sexually oriented.

...which are not fitting – All of these are the opposite (literally “out of place”) for what God intends to be the norm for His people, for the goal of our conversations together as believers in Yeshua ought to be for “edification,” i.e., for building each other up in the faith.

but rather giving of thanks. – We must make it our desire to give our Lord and Savior the glory and adoration He deserves by living and communicating in a way that honors Him. This does not mean that we avoid laughter and having a good time together. For surely we find in our mutual faith the very bedrock of what true community is which therefore results in true friendship as we bear each other’s burdens and love one another with the love we have experience from God Himself. This ought to be the norm to which we strive as we glory in the goodness of God and all that He has done and continues to do for us.

1 BDAG, “*ἄσυχρος*,” p. 29.

2 As the NET Bible translates.

3 Thielman, *Ephesians*, p. 330.

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 Messiah and God.

Paul now continues to explain why it is so important to recognize that when a person is called by God to exercise true, saving faith in Yeshua, there comes about a change in that which characterizes the believer's new life in Messiah. Thus, those things which characterize the world of the unbeliever, namely, "immorality, impurity, and greed" are "not even to be named" (cf. 5:3–4) within the believing community as though such things could ever be acceptable behavior among those who confess Yeshua to be their Lord and Savior. What is more, such sinful behavior should not be the topic of "silly talk or coarse jesting" (5:4), since the believer has been rescued from such sinful behavior through the very blood of Messiah shed on their behalf. So in verse five, Paul goes on to remind us that those whose lives are characterized by immorality and being self-centered are not part of God's family and therefore currently await divine judgment in the world to come.

For this you know with certainty – The opening line of our verse utilizes an interesting doublet in the Greek (τοῦτο γὰρ ἵστε γινώσκοντες) which, if taken word-for-word reads: "For this you all must affirm knowing..." Paul utilizes two different Greek words (οἶδα, *oida* and γινώσκω, *ginōskō*, both plural) having the sense "to know," in order to add emphasis. The first word, *oida*, is an imperative or command and the second word, *ginōskō*, is a participle. This combination may well emphasize that believers in Yeshua must "affirm to be true" that which one "always knows based upon the Scriptures," i.e., the teachings of the Prophets and Apostles. Perhaps a translation like "Be sure you all know this" may capture Paul's meaning, since it combines both the aspect of a command as well as that which is to be consistently upheld and acknowledged by the believing community.

...that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, – Once again, Paul is using these designations to describe the general character of a person. He is not teaching us here that one who has lived an immoral lifestyle, engaging in all manner of impurity, or one whose life was characterized by covetousness or even idolatry, are forever forsaken by God, for surely all who are sinners are cleansed and forgiven of their sin when they are granted repentance and saving faith in Yeshua and His work on their behalf. For Paul is not focusing in our text upon those who are outside of the body of Messiah, i.e., the *ekklesia* of which He is the head. Rather, Paul is teaching us here that those who have confessed Yeshua

as their Lord and Savior and who have therefore joined the community of believers and consider themselves part of the believing community, if they are truly born again, will never have a life characterized by immorality, impurity, covetousness, or idolatry.

In our verse, Paul simply repeats the terms he used in v. 3, namely, “immoral” (πόρνῃ, *pornē*), “impurity” (ἀκαθαρσία, *akatharsia*), and “greediness,” (πλεονεξία, *pleoneksia*). “Immoral” denotes all manner of unlawful sexual relationships and practices. “Impurity” denotes all manner of worldly activities that would promote even thoughts of “immorality” and “fornication.” And “greediness” denotes the driving desire to have more than one’s due, and perhaps in our context, a driven desire for sexual pleasures.

...*who is an idolater* – It is not certain if this added phrase refers only to “a covetous man” or if it also applies to the “immoral” and “impure” person previously named in the verse. The Greek would favor the view that the designation “who is an idolater” specifically describes the “covetous person,” for one whose life is primarily characterized by covetousness has made himself or herself the center of all their desires which is, in itself, idolatry. Note the parallel in Col 3:5.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (Col 3:5)

Paul makes the same claim in his epistle to the Romans where he describes idolatry as exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man.

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures...For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Rom 1:22-23, 25)

As Hoehner states:

To covet is idolatry. That which is coveted becomes the center of one’s life and is worshiped instead of the Creator (Rom 1:23). The greedy person is willing to exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for a corruptible idol (Rom 1:25).¹

1 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 661.

Paul teaches us that greed in the form of the “love of money” is a pathway to all kinds of evil.

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1Tim 6:10)

And this is paralleled by the words of Eliphaz in Job in which he seems to indicate that some had forsaken the Almighty and put their hope and trust in gold and silver as their “god.”

If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; If you remove unrighteousness far from your tent, and place your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, then the Almighty will be your gold and choice silver to you. (Job 22:23–25)

...has an inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and God. – Here, once again, Paul affirms that eternal life with God is a matter of God’s grace in salvation and not something earned by righteous deeds, for an inheritance (*κληρονομία, klēronomia*) is not earned but is given by the family member who owns it and who designates it to another member of the family. For a believer in Yeshua to receive “an inheritance in the kingdom” is based upon the very foundation enunciated by Paul at the beginning of Ephesians, namely that believers are part of God’s family:

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:5–6)

Those who are predestined to be adopted as children into the family of God are those who, having exercised saving faith in Yeshua, have a sure inheritance in the “kingdom of Messiah and God,” and they show their rightful place as adopted sons and daughters in the family of God by their commitment and ability to live in a way that pleases their heavenly Father.

Conversely, those who join the local assembly of believers yet who secretly maintain their lust for immorality, impurity, and self-satisfying of the flesh, will stand before the Judge of all the earth and be revealed as impostors who will hear the resounding condemnation of the Judge, “I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawless-

ness” (Matt 7:23, cf. Ps 6:8). The fact that Matthew states in the previous verse,

Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?”

is a startling reminder that the visible “*ekklesia*” may contain many who make an outward profession of faith but whose hearts are untouched by the reality of God’s saving and life changing grace.

The combined phrase “kingdom of Messiah and God” is found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. Some have sought to make a distinction between “the Kingdom of Messiah” and “the Kingdom of God,” the former focusing attention upon the current reality of the Kingdom in that Messiah is now reigning on high, while the designation “kingdom of God” puts primary emphasis upon the future Kingdom in the world to come.

Surely both realities are true, that the kingdom of Messiah and God is established now within the body of Messiah, for the *ekklesia* Yeshua promised to build exists now and His rule and reign is manifested in the lives of those who are truly His. This Paul emphasizes in our text by using the present tense “has an inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and God,” indicating that those who are proven to have this inheritance are those whose lives are characterized by righteousness. Yet, there is the reality that we also await the fulness of the kingdom of Messiah and God when Yeshua returns, when the world to come is ushered in, and when sin and death will be no more. So the kingdom is both present and future. The present kingdom of Messiah and God is made known in our world when the gracious and loving rule of the King is seen in the lives of His people. Thus, the “kingdom of Messiah and God” are not two kingdoms or even two aspects of the same kingdom, but are simply that reality in which those who are truly born from above are given a new life and therefore show forth the rule of the King by the manner in which they live.

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

What are “empty words” (κενοῖς λόγοις, *kenois logois*)? They are words, thoughts, or conversations which produce nothing of value and even have no substance in meaning which would lead to the truth and there-