

Ephesians 5:1-14¹

***Scripture divisions used in our series and various commentaries differ from each other.*

This is the reason for the occasional discrepancy between the verse range listed above and the notes given below.

C. Live in Love ([5:1-6](#))

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ²Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

³Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. ⁴Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. ⁵You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

⁶Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him.

Notes**[5:1](#)**

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do.—The conjunction *oun* [^{TG} <G3767>, ^{ZG} 4036] (therefore) functions as a resumptive inferential conjunction that goes back to [4:1](#) and [17](#) and denotes another application stemming from the first three chapters.

[5:2](#)

Live a life filled with love.—Lit., “and walk in love”—that is, “live in love.” The NLT's rendering makes this point.

pleasing aroma.—Or, “fragrant aroma,” words used frequently in the OT with reference to sacrifices that were acceptable to God (e.g., [Exod 29:18, 25, 41](#); [Lev 1:9, 13, 17](#); [Num 15:3, 5, LXX](#)).

[5:3](#)

Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you.—The Greek text has “impurity of any kind,” which means that the impurity is not limited strictly to sexual impurity but all sorts of impurity.

1. Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 16: Ephesians-2 Thessalonians, Philemon*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 99-106.

[5:4](#)

Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes.—“Obscene stories” may be better rendered “obscenity” (NIV, NRSV) because it is broader than just speech (the more limited word *aischrologia* [^{TG}<G148>, ^{ZG}155] is used in [Col 3:8](#)) and also can include conduct. It serves as a good transition from the previous verse.

[5:5](#)

You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God.—The Greek text introduces this verse with the conjunction *gar* [^{TG}<G1063>, ^{ZG}1142] (for) to indicate reason. The reason believers should not act like unbelievers is that, unlike unbelievers, they are going to inherit the Kingdom of Christ and God.

For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.—The Greek text simply reads “no immoral, impure, or greedy person, who is an idolater.”

[5:6](#)

all who disobey him.—This is a good rendering of “sons of disobedience.” This rendering is similar to the translation of the same expression in [2:2](#).

Commentary

To make application to the doctrines set forth in the first three chapters, Paul, now for the third time, uses *peripateō* [^{TG}<G4043>, ^{ZG}4344] (“walk”; [4:1, 17](#); [5:2](#)). Since the term does not appear until [5:2](#), a break could be made between [5:1](#) and [5:2](#), rather than between [5:2](#) and [5:3](#). However, the key to the division of this section of the book is not only the verb but also the conjunction *oun* [^{TG}<G3767>, ^{ZG}4036] (therefore), which is found in [5:1](#). God’s children are commanded to walk in unity ([4:1-16](#)), in holiness ([4:17-32](#)), and in love ([5:1-6](#)). This section is divided into two parts: the positive, walk in love ([5:1-2](#)), and the negative, abstain from evil ([5:3-6](#)).

In his concluding statement in [chapter 4](#), Paul had instructed believers to be gracious in the same way that God had been gracious in Christ. He now enjoins believers to become imitators of God as beloved children. Our status as his beloved or dear children, the objects of his love, is the result of the gracious way he has acted toward us, as described in the first three chapters. Paul exhorted believers, as God’s beloved children, to live in the sphere of love. Paul’s mention of the sphere of love is reminiscent of Christ’s command to the disciples in his farewell discourse, where he told them to love one another as he has loved them ([John 13:34](#); [15:12, 17](#)). Our model is Christ who, out of love, gave himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God. He willingly died on behalf of sinners, who had no love for him, and many, in fact, despised him. What a model! God was pleased with Christ’s sacrifice, which to him was a fragrant aroma. In the Old Testament many animal sacrifices, even when properly prepared, were not received by God as a fragrant aroma because the offerer had a wrong attitude and a heart far from him. In contrast, Christ willingly gave himself to be offered, and he did it to be a pleasant aroma to God. In the same manner, believers are enjoined to exhibit sacrificial love so as to be a sweet perfume not only to God but also to fellow believers ([2 Cor 2:14-16](#)). Christ’s love cost him his life. Should our love be without cost?

Paul then informed believers that there should be no place in their lives for evil practices. To live like unbelievers runs counter to living in love. The self-serving vices in conduct and speech ([5:3-4](#)) are opposite of the self-sacrificing love spoken of in [5:1-2](#). In light of this, believers are not to participate in sexual immorality. The word *porneia* [^{TG}<[G4202](#)>, ^{ZG}4518] is translated “fornication” in some versions (KJV, ASV, NEB, NRSV) but more precisely “sexual immorality” in other versions (RSV, NASB, NIV). It is used of aberrant sexual conduct normally thought of as extramarital relationships ([Matt 5:32](#); [19:9](#); [15:19](#); [Mark 7:21](#); [John 8:41](#); [Acts 15:20, 29](#); [21:25](#); [1 Cor 7:2](#); [Rev 2:21](#); [9:21](#)), including incest ([1 Cor 5:1](#)). Furthermore, there should not be impurity of any kind among believers. This refers not only to sexual impurity but any kind of impurity of thought, speech, or deed. Neither should greed be a part of their lifestyle. Greed is the opposite of moderation, for it is selfishness to the nth degree. Due to the context, some think it has reference to sexual greed, which expresses itself in self-gratification at the expense of others. 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. However, it may simply be greed for material possessions used for self-consumption rather than being shared with the community of believers and dependence on the Lord to supply as the need arises. Paul exhorted believers that no such conduct should even be mentioned among God’s people. These negative exhortations against the sins of self-love are in sharp contrast to the love displayed in Christ’s sacrificial death noted in [5:1-2](#).

Paul’s instruction regarding the believers’ lifestyle includes speech as well as conduct. The first word, “obscenity,” can include both speech and conduct. It has the sense of that which is shameful, disgraceful, and base. The second term, *mōrologia* [^{TG}<[G3473](#)>, ^{ZG}3703], is accurately translated as “foolish talk,” with reference to futile talk that detracts from the issues of faith and does not lend to edifying discussion. The term *eutrapelia* [^{TG}<[G2160](#)>, ^{ZG}2365], translated “coarse jokes,” more likely refers to jesting that has gone too far and has become sarcastic ridicule that cuts people down and embarrasses others who are present. It is humor in bad taste—at someone’s expense. This runs counter to Paul’s injunction to build up one another ([4:29](#)). This does not mean that Christians must be humorless, but they must be controlled. These sins of speech are really inappropriate for those who call themselves Christians. In contrast, appropriate speech includes thankfulness to God for deliverance from sin, for gifts he has given to the church, and for each other. Hence, destructive speech should be replaced by edifying speech.

Continuing, Paul elaborated on the reason to refrain from evil deeds, emphasizing that those who are immoral, impure, or greedy will not inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. These are the same three vices mentioned in [5:3](#). However, in this instance, he further described the greedy person as an idolater. That which is coveted becomes the center of one’s life and is worshiped instead of the Creator ([Rom 1:23](#)); the greedy person has exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for a corruptible idol ([Rom 1:25](#)). This is idolatry. It is also a flawed perspective. For example, Esau was so covetous of the stew that he sold his birthright—a ten-minute transaction in exchange for a life’s inheritance! In [Galatians 5:19-21](#), Paul also stated that those who practice the works of the flesh such as immorality, impurity, and idolatry will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Likewise, [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#) also states that the unrighteous—the immoral, idolaters, thieves, and the greedy—will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The Corinthian believers were counted among such before they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.

The Kingdom of God has two aspects. In [Colossians 1:13](#) Paul had spoken of the present dimension, where believers have been delivered from the authority of darkness to the Kingdom of God’s beloved Son. Second, there is also a future dimension, where in the end times Christ will hand the Kingdom to the Father ([1 Cor 15:24](#)), which cannot be inherited by flesh and blood ([1 Cor 15:50](#)) but only by belief in the gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection ([1 Cor 15:1-4](#)). Therefore, the Kingdom of God is not for saints who have never sinned but for sinners who have become saints through redemption made possible by Christ’s supreme sacrifice ([1:7, 14](#); [2:4-10](#); [4:32](#)). Here in Ephesians Paul rightly addresses believers as those who have inherited the Kingdom of God.

Paul reinforced the truth of the believers' inheritance of the Kingdom of God by stating in [5:6](#) that believers must not be deceived by empty words because the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. The present tense in this verse describes God's wrath as coming on all those who disobey. As there are present and future aspects to the Kingdom, so also for the wrath of God. In Romans, Paul states that the present wrath of God is revealed from heaven ([1:18](#)) and that there is a future wrath for those who are hardhearted and who continue to store up wrath for the day of God's judgment ([2:5](#)). Consequently, those who practice these vices in the present day are not in the Kingdom of God and the wrath of God is on them. If they continue in unbelief they will never be a part of the Kingdom of God and will face the wrath that is stored up for the day of God's judgment.

D. Live in Light ([5:7-14](#))

⁷Don't participate in the things these people do. ⁸For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! ⁹For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

¹⁰Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. ¹²It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. ¹³But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, ¹⁴for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,

"Awake, O sleeper,
rise up from the dead,
and Christ will give you light."

Notes

[5:7](#)

Don't participate in the things these people do.—NLT omits the inferential conjunction *oun* [^{TG}<[G3767](#)>, ^{ZG}4036] (therefore), which marks a new section.

[5:8](#)

For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord.—Lit., "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."

[5:9](#)

For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.—The Greek text does not state that the light is within us but rather it speaks of the "fruit of light." Since there is no verb in this parenthetical statement, one needs to be supplied. NLT translates it as "produces."

[5:11](#)

worthless deeds of evil and darkness.—Lit., "unfruitful works of darkness." The rendering "worthless deeds" captures the idea well. It is not literally "deeds of evil and darkness" but rather "evil deeds of darkness," possibly indicating the source of evil deeds.

[5:13](#)

But... when the light shines on them.—This pronoun “them” is a reference to deeds and not to people, as in the previous verse, because the Greek text has “but everything exposed by light becomes visible.”

[5:14](#)

for the light makes everything visible.—Lit., “for everything that becomes visible is light.” This is difficult to translate. It means that everything that becomes visible is light and no longer darkness.

This is why it is said.—These words serve as an introductory formula that usually points to an OT passage. Or it could refer to a known Christian hymn that includes OT thoughts.

Commentary

This is the fourth of five sections delineated by the use of *peripateō* [^{TG}<G4043>, ^{ZG}4344] (“walk”; [4:1](#), [17](#); [5:2](#), [8](#), [15](#)) in conjunction with the inferential conjunction *oun* [^{TG}<G3767>, ^{ZG}4036] (therefore). Here, the inferential conjunction is found in [5:7](#) and the verb “walk” in [5:8](#). This section is divided into three parts or mandates: (1) Do not become involved with evildoers ([5:7-10](#)). (2) Do not become involved with their works ([5:11-13](#)). (3) Gain the approval of Christ’s light instead ([5:14](#)).

Because the wrath of God is coming upon those who disobey, believers are not to become partakers with them ([5:7](#)). The term *summetochos* [^{TG}<G4830>/A, ^{ZG}5212] (fellow participants) occurs only here and in [3:6](#), where, conversely, the believer is a fellow participant of the promise. The word denotes one who is a partner or an accomplice in a plot. In the present context the participation does not refer to the sins but to the sinners mentioned in [5:3-6](#) who are the objects of God’s wrath. Because believers participate in fellowship with the Lord and his saints, they are not to be fellow participants with sinners, who are going in the opposite direction. This does not preclude believers from associating with unbelievers but rather it precludes them from participating in their lifestyle. The conjunction *gar* [^{TG}<G1063>, ^{ZG}1142] (for) indicates that the reason for this is that Christians are changed persons who are no longer darkness but now are the light in the Lord ([5:8a](#)). The darkness signifies their status under the realm and power of sin before they believed the gospel. The light indicates their status as new persons who are his created workmanship ([2:10](#)), hence, “light from the Lord.”

Since they are light from the Lord, Paul exhorts them to live as children of light ([5:8b-10](#)). Previously they lived in darkness and hated light ([5:8a](#); cf. [2:1-3](#); [John 3:20](#)), but, exposed by the light, they became children of light who appropriately should hate the darkness. The qualities of the children of light are stated next in [5:9](#), which is parenthetical. It begins with the explanatory conjunction *gar* [^{TG}<G1063>, ^{ZG}1142] (for), which introduces the three things by which light is characterized. First is goodness, (*agathōsunē* [^{TG}<G19>, ^{ZG}20]), a term that is used three other times in the New Testament: (1) when Paul was convinced that Roman believers were “full of goodness” ([Rom 15:14](#)), (2) when Paul lists it as a fruit of the Spirit ([Gal 5:22](#)), and (3) when Paul prays that God would make the Thessalonians worthy of his call that they might fulfill every “good” desire ([2 Thess 1:11](#)). It is abstract and difficult to ascertain its meaning, but as the adjective *agathos* [^{TG}<G18>, ^{ZG}19] (good) has reference to moral and beneficial good ([2:10](#); [4:28-29](#)), so does this noun. This “goodness” is that which embraces generosity toward others. It is the opposite of the adjective *kakos* [^{TG}<G2556>, ^{ZG}2805], meaning “bad, evil, injurious” ([Luke 16:25](#); [Rom 12:17](#), [21](#); [13:10](#); [1 Thess 5:15](#); [1 Pet 3:9](#)). The second term, *dikaioṡunē* [^{TG}<G1343>, ^{ZG}1466] is normally translated “righteousness” and most likely in this context signifies righteous action or works. The third word, *alētheia* [^{TG}<G225>, ^{ZG}237] (truth) means reality or that which is actual as opposed to that which is false (cf. [4:21](#), [24-25](#)). In this context it depicts the idea of right acting or living as opposed to false living. These last two qualities are identified with the new person mentioned in [4:24](#).

Therefore, the fruit of light consists in goodness with generosity, righteous actions, and real or transparent living. Light characteristically will expose that which is opposite of these qualities. It will not tolerate evil or falsity. Those in darkness are characterized by the opposite of the fruit of light: evil, wickedness, and falsehood.

Concluding the parenthesis ([5:9](#)), Paul finished his thought begun in [5:8b](#), that believers are to live as children of light by approving what is pleasing to their Lord. The word *dokimazō* [^{TG}<[G1381](#)>, ^{ZG}1507] means to test or scrutinize something or someone in order to approve that entity rather than testing with the possibility of failure in mind. This is analogous to [Romans 12:1-2](#), where believers are enjoined not to be conformed to this age but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds in order that they might approve what the will of God is. Approving what is pleasing to the Lord goes beyond the moral will of God because his moral will is revealed in specific commands, which do not need to be tested. Rather, it is to test the will of God in every aspect of life and to approve that which would be pleasing to him. The Word of God is a guide for this purpose. However, where specific situations in life are not directly addressed in the Scriptures, believers need to look for principles from the Scriptures whereby they might be able to make a choice or choices that will please the Lord. Although not mentioned here, as believers examine the Scriptures, they also need the enlightenment and enablement of the Holy Spirit to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. This will result in living as children of light.

Paul then emphasized that believers are not to be fellow participants with evildoers, nor are they to become involved with their works. Further, they are to expose those works ([5:11](#)). Believers are not to become involved with such activity because those works are too shameful even to mention ([5:12-13](#)).

Not only are believers to refrain from being fellow participants with the evildoers ([5:7-10](#)), but they also are not to become involved with their deeds ([5:11-13](#)), which have their source in darkness. In [5:8](#) Paul had reminded them that they were darkness but now they are light in the Lord. When they were darkness, they did the deeds of darkness, but now they are light and should not participate in the sins that come from the place to which they had previously been in bondage. Instead of participating in those evil deeds, believers are to expose them. This exposure refers to the deeds themselves, not the perpetrators. In [5:8](#) believers were not to participate with evildoers, but in [5:11](#) they are not to participate in their evil deeds of darkness. This is substantiated in [5:14](#), where Paul states that “everything,” not “everyone,” exposed by light becomes visible. Whose evil deeds are to be exposed? Although it is easy to assume that it refers to evil deeds of those in darkness, in this case it more likely refers to believers who are participating in the evil works of darkness. First, the context concerns believers. Second, Paul exhorts believers (not unbelievers) to refrain from participating in the works of darkness and to do the works or fruit of light. It is probable that some believers were participating in the works of darkness, making this injunction necessary. Third, the believers are not encouraged to reprimand those in the world but only those in the church (cf. [1 Cor 5:12-13](#)). In light of this, believers are not only to refrain from participation in the evil deeds of darkness but are also to help fellow believers who are found in such activity. This is done by exposing their works and showing them how their acts are inconsistent with light. In this respect, Paul reprimanded the Corinthians for not exposing the sin of incest that was being practiced by one of the believers in their church. Some commentators who argue that this exposure refers to unbelievers rather than believers participating in evil works of darkness also suggest that Paul was not referring to verbal exposure but rather exposure by example—that is, by maintaining a contrastive lifestyle consisting of deeds of light. It is difficult to imagine Paul instructing the Corinthians to remain silent and just live a good lifestyle, expecting evil to disappear. No, to expose evil deeds includes verbal rebuke.

According to [5:12](#), these worthless deeds must be exposed because they are done in secret (the Greek word *kruphē* [^{TG}<[G2931](#)>, ^{ZG}3225] means that which is covered and not open to light) and are shameful even to mention. Doing deeds in secret does not characterize people who are light. Darkness conceals sins that must be exposed. These sins, done in secret and too shameful to mention, must not be allowed

to spread and encompass the community of believers. In this respect, Paul explained that these unfruitful works of darkness will become visible when exposed by the light ([5:13](#)). In the present context light refers both to believers ([5:8](#)) and their fruit ([5:9](#)). Continuing, Paul explains (*gar* [^{TG}<G1063>, ^{ZG}1142], “for”) that everything that becomes visible is light. Though it is difficult to explain Paul’s assertion, it seems that once the worthless deeds of darkness are exposed, they become visible, and once they are visible, they are light. To understand this it helps to remember that Paul is addressing believers and not unbelievers. If this had reference to unbelievers, then automatic conversion would be the logical outcome, since darkness confronted with the power of the light of Christian truth would automatically become light. This is not the case, however. He is addressing believers who have been engaged in the evil works of unbelievers. These works are to be exposed in order that the offending believers might produce the fruit of light, namely, goodness, righteousness, and truth ([5:9](#)).

[Verse 14](#) serves as a conclusion. Most think it is part of an early Christian hymn, possibly a hymn of repentance and encouragement that was influenced by [Isaiah 26:19](#) and [60:1-2](#). It portrays as asleep believers who participate in the unfruitful works of darkness and urges that they be awakened from the dead. Since most sleep is done in darkness, it is here used as a metaphor of works of darkness. In [5:5-6](#) believers were told that those who continually practice the works of darkness will not inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God but will receive God’s wrath. True believers will respond to exposure by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead them back and enable them to live a life consisting of the fruit of light—goodness, righteousness, and truth ([5:9](#)). In their spiritual awakening, Christ will shine upon them with approval.

The Complete Biblical Library

Ephesians 5:1-14²

5:1. [Verses 1-20](#) serve as one of the most beautiful descriptions of the Christian life that can be found in the Bible. Paul first instructed Christians to be "followers of God" or "imitators of God." The English word *mimic* comes from the Greek term for "followers" (*mimētai*). This word normally is used of imitating people ([1 Corinthians 4:16](#); [11:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#); [Hebrews 6:12](#)) and churches ([1 Thessalonians 2:14](#)). Here, however, it is used of the imitation of God, which is the loftiest endeavor that could ever be placed before a person.

The appeal sounds very reminiscent of Jesus' appeal to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5:48](#)). It is another way of saying, "Allow Christ to be your prototype." Just as growing from an infant into an adult consists of a long, gradual process, so the apostle told believers literally to "keep on becoming." There is no point in this earthly life when a person can afford to let up his effort in this matter. God's great love for His children makes it possible for them to constantly become more like Christ.

5:2. As believers do this, they will be constantly ordering their behavior in the sphere of love (*agapē*). Because "God is love" ([1 John 4:8](#), [16](#)), as believers imitate Him they will be living in a manner that manifests that same love ([1 Corinthians 13](#)). In the light of all that Christ did on the cross, that should not be too much to ask. That is what makes it possible for Christians to live lives of love. He acted not only as a priest but also as the very sacrifice himself. The Greek word for "sacrifice" (*thusia*) describes one who is innocent of crime shielding with his body the one who deserves the punishment. The expiatory character of Christ's death includes giving himself in our place as a sacrifice.

5:3. In the light of the wonderful sacrifice of Christ, Paul warned believers in [verses 3-7](#) to sever themselves completely from their former way of life. Obviously, he listed only some representative sins of people who were not walking in the sphere of the love of God. "Fornication" (sexual immorality) and "uncleanness" (any kind of impurity) were serious external sins in that day. However, the apostle considered "covetousness" (greed) just as improper for God's holy people. Any kind of sin is inconsistent with a life of love. God's love does not motivate us to sin!

5:4. "Filthiness" (obscenity) literally means "filthy language." "Foolish talking" is talk that is characteristic of fools, people literally with "empty heads." The first type of verbal sin mentioned here needs very little explanation, except to emphasize that it takes a concentrated effort to avoid it, especially if a person lives in a non-Christian family or works in an environment where this type of language is a way of life. Good, clean jokes certainly have their place, even among God's people. But there is a difference between a joke that merely helps to lighten the atmosphere with good laughter and one that borders on that which is coarse or base.

"Foolish talking" probably is the most difficult of the three verbal sins mentioned here to define. The apostle did not imply that people always have to be serious in order to please God. "Foolish talking" is empty or vain conversation which does not contribute to the spiritual maturity of individuals. Such "talking," as well as obscenities and coarse joking, are out of place for believers. Instead, Christians should constantly verbalize thanksgiving.

2. Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The Complete Biblical Library – Galatians-Philemon*, (Springfield, IL: World Library Press, Inc., 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 150-155.

5:5. This verse could be misinterpreted very easily to mean that a person who commits a single sin suddenly loses his relationship to God. The emphasis here is the same as in many other scriptural passages; that is, if a person can consistently practice sin without repentance, it is obvious the person does not know God any longer. People who can constantly practice immorality, impurity, greed, or similar sins, are giving priority to these sins rather than to God. That is probably why Paul called such a person "an idolater." Anything that becomes more important than God himself has become a "god."

5:6. [Verse 6](#) probably contains a warning against some kind of gnosticism which held that such practices as the apostle Paul condemned here were irrelevant to spiritual life, because they related to the body only and not to the spiritual nature of a person. Many of the Gnostics believed all matter was evil. Because the human body is matter, according to them, it also is evil. Some of them practiced extreme asceticism in order to control the "evil" body, while others went to the opposite extreme and practiced extreme licentiousness. Because the body supposedly was evil, whatever a person did with it would not influence him spiritually.

Paul warned against being deceived with such empty words. The term for "vain words" (*kenois logois*) literally relates to words without reality or substance. Listening and succumbing to this kind of suggestion is not only dangerous, it also brings the wrath of God upon those who practice this kind of lifestyle.

5:7. Paul's advice was not to partake with them. Because the construction here is a present imperative prohibition, it literally means "stop becoming partakers with them."

5:8. Again we see a definite contrast between the past and the present. Because these believers had been delivered from their former spiritual darkness, they were not to be content with living in some ambiguous twilight. Probably much of this section, from [verse 8](#) through [verse 14](#) is based upon Jesus' statement about himself ([John 8:12](#)) and His followers ([Matthew 5:14](#)) being the "light of the world."

5:9. Just as the rays of the sun help cause plants and flowers to grow, so the light of the Lord should bring to life in believers the qualities mentioned in this verse. Because God is good in the ultimate sense of the word, if a person allows His will to become important in his life, God's goodness will be reflected in him as well. "Righteousness" or "justice" basically means to do that which is right. The light of God should cause believers to treat other people fairly or with justice.

"Truth" normally is defined as "that which conforms to reality." Of course, the problem is determining what is reality. The Bible makes it clear that Christ is the personification of truth ([John 14:6](#)), and the Bible is the written expression of that truth ([John 17:17](#)).

5:10. "Light" comes from the Greek term *phōtos* from which we get *photography* and several other terms. It is a very common expression in the Bible, normally depicting the drastic difference between "what is acceptable unto the Lord" and what is characteristic of a life of practicing sin.

5:11. According to this verse, Christians have two basic obligations with respect to sin: have nothing to do with it and "reprove" it. The idea contained in the first obligation is literally "stop participating with people who practice sin." The second obligation is even more drastic, because sinners usually do not like the light turned on when they are practicing evil in darkness.

5:12. The writings of Paul always emphasize the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but never more evidently than here. Some of the sins committed by people under cover of darkness were so abhorrent to Paul that he hesitated even to mention them.

5:13. Societies may change, and methods of committing sin may change, but one truth does not change. When sin is exposed to the light of God's truth, something drastic happens. People who allow the Bible to have access to their lives will become very uncomfortable if they are practicing sin. The Holy Spirit is extremely faithful in reproofing the world of sin ([John 16:8](#)). In other words, He proves the world, or nonbelievers, wrong about their attitudes toward sin, righteousness, and judgment. He seeks to bring them to the realization that the sacrifice of Jesus is the only sacrifice given for the sins of mankind.

5:14. This verse could be a loose paraphrase of [Isaiah 26:19](#) and [60:1](#), or Paul could have been quoting an early baptismal hymn or some poem familiar to his readers. The metaphor is that of the morning, when the darkness of night is dispelled by the rising of the sun. The idea expressed in the Greek language literally is to "stand up out of the dead ones."