
The Summation of All Things in Christ

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

From Darkness to Light (5:3-14) — Six Commands

As mentioned in the first lesson on this passage, we will be looking at this by focusing 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 wrath 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 light [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.'

THE FOURTH COMMAND

V. 8 — Walk as children of light, behave as children of light, live as children of light — ὡς τέκνα φωτός περιπατεῖτε [hōs tekna phōtos peripateite] — **THEY ARE TO LIVE AS IN THEIR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST** — As we have noticed, Paul tells us what the Lord has done then exhorts us to 'live accordingly;' for example, 'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.' (Eph 4:1) God has called us unto Himself, now we are exhorted to live according to that calling. Here Paul says we are light, now we are exhorted to live as 'children of light.' What

it means to 'walk as children of light' is explained in the next verses. **"If the readers are light, then they are to walk or live (cf. 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2) as children of light, a designation which contrasts with 'the sons of disobedience' in v 6. Their behavior is to conform to their identity.**" [Lincoln, 327] "Paul again repeats the command 'to walk' (4:1, 17; 5:2). The imperative is in the present tense to denote a habitual conduct for those who are children of light.... They are to walk as the children of light. The word [tekna], 'children,' has already been discussed at 2:3 (cf. 5:1) and connotes a close relationship to the parent. Since God is light (1 John 1:5) and believers are the children of God (5:1), they are to walk as children of God or light. As light reflects the glory of God, so should the believers reflect his glory because they are to be imitators of God.... Before conversion believers were darkness and hated the light (v. 8a; 2:1-3; cf. John 3:20). But light exposed them and they became the children of light. Since they are light, they should walk as children of light and hate the darkness." [Hoehner, 671f; see also O'Brien, 367]

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

For you were once darkness, but now you are light — ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκοτός νῦν δὲ φῶς [ēte gar pote skotos nun de phōs] — **POSITIVE MOTIVATION** — Paul had just given two negative motivations for believers to not live immorally: those who have such a lifestyle 'have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God' and 'because of their sin, the wrath of God comes upon them.' Paul now gives a positive motivation: 'because of the mighty change which God has wrought in our lives, walk as children of light.' **The fact of our conversion has practical implications for our present lives. The verb 'you were' is emphatic by position, as well as by the tense change from the present to the imperfect tense, emphasizing our past condition. "What fellowship has light with darkness?" asks Paul in another letter (2 Cor. 6:14) – the answer obviously implied being 'None!' For believers to be joint-partakers with the 'sons of disobedience' would be for the children of light to have fellowship with the children of darkness – a moral impossibility.**" [Bruce, 373]

'ONCE – NOW' SCHEMA — Paul expresses the difference in believers using a 'once – now' schema, a common form of contrast often used by Paul (e.g., in 2:1-10 believers were 'once dead in sin' but now 'alive in Christ'). The believer's conversion signifies a decisive change in the believer's lifestyle, illustrated in 4:20-24 as 'having put off the old man' and 'having put on the new man.' Here the imagery switches and the believer's change is from 'darkness' to 'light.'

NOT 'IN THE DARK / IN THE LIGHT' BUT 'YOU WERE DARK / YOU ARE LIGHT' — Paul is here highlighting that the change in believers is more than a mere change in their environment but rather a change in their nature itself. "It is noteworthy that Paul does not say, 'you were in darkness' or 'you walked in darkness,' but rather 'you were darkness.' Paul intentionally chooses this language to characterize the core of their being in their pre-Christian state. Their plight was much worse than they may have realized. They were not essentially good people who had stumbled or strayed off the path; they were in their very nature 'dark.' This takes us back to the way Paul described their condition earlier in the letter as 'dead in your transgressions and sins' (2:1) and 'not having hope and godless' (2:12). Darkness is thus another way of describing the pervasive impact of evil. In Romans, Paul can describe this in terms of the presence of sin that has spread to every person much like a terrible disease (e.g., Rom 5:12). Darkness and sin become the characteristic and defining condition of humanity. Darkness is also a sphere in which the unredeemed live. It is an area or domain in which the power, control, and influence of evil is compellingly felt. Paul unpacks this to some degree in Eph 2:2-3, when he speaks of unbelievers living under the control of 'the age of this world,' 'the ruler of the realm of the air,' and 'the lusts of our flesh' — the threefold form of evil influence that has been classically referred to as the world, the flesh, and the devil. Satan and his spirits hold sway over this dominion. Thus, Paul refers to them as 'the world powers of this darkness' (6:12). Note how Paul tells the Colossians that redemption means that Christ has 'rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves' (Col 1:13; see also Acts 26:18)." [Arnold, 328; see also Best, 488; Lincoln, 327; O'Brien, 367] "Therefore, darkness signifies sin, both its realm and power. Those who are in darkness must grope through life without the light of God's revelation (4:18). Their future will be a continuation of darkness but to an even greater degree. Interestingly, in this present verse Paul does not say that the believers were in darkness but that they were darkness itself, that is, the embodiment of darkness. As such, they were held in sway by the power of sin and approved of others who practiced sinful deeds (Rom 1:32)." [Hoehner, 670] "[N]ot merely 'in the dark.' So had the night of spiritual ignorance and sin penetrated them that they were, as it were, night itself, night embodied.... Again, not merely 'in the light.' The Divine Light of truth, holiness, and resulting joy, had now so penetrated them that they were, in a sense, light embodied; not seeing light only, but being light, and emitting it. Cp. Matt. v. 14." [Moule, 131]

in the Lord. — ἐν κυρίῳ [en kuriō:] — **TRANSFORMED DUE TO THE WORK OF CHRIST** — There was no qualifier with 'darkness' because all mankind is 'darkness' by their own doing, but not so with 'light.' "Paul announces to his readers here that because of their redemption, they are now 'light,' but he qualifies this with 'in the Lord.' It is only by virtue of their union with Christ that this decisive and monumental change of identity has taken place. They are now in a dynamic connection with the one who said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (John 8:12). As followers of Jesus who are now 'created in the likeness of God' (4:24), Paul calls believers to reflect their true nature in their daily behaviors. They should 'walk' in a way that is consistent with who they are in Christ (see 4:1, 17; 5:2, 15). Once again, the present tense is best interpreted as progressive and thereby indicates that this new lifestyle should be the regular pattern of their lives. Their new status as 'children of light' contrasts sharply with their former identity as 'sons of disobedience' (5:6b). Although their identity has changed, there has not yet been a complete and corresponding change in their conduct. This is the process of growth to maturity that Paul beckons them to engage in." [Arnold, 327; see also Best, 488; Hoehner, 671; O'Brien, 367; Moule, 131] "They have become identified with the light because of their identification with

Christ. In the Qumran writings, a rigorous acceptance of the law separated the sons of light from the sons of darkness. In Ephesians, it is being 'in the Lord' (cf. also 2:21; 4:1, 17; 6:1, 10) that distinguishes light from darkness." [Lincoln, 327]

THERE IS NO IN-BETWEEN — There is no partly-old / partly-new person; there is no twilight person, half-dark and half-light. People are either still clothed with the 'old man' or have put on the 'new man' (4:22-24). People are either 'dark' or 'light' (5:8). People are either sons of disobedience (2:2) and children of wrath (5:6). People are either 'dead in sin' or 'alive in Christ.' *There is no such thing as an 'almost Christian!'*

THE 'LIGHT – DARKNESS' CONTRAST IS COMMON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND OTHER ANCIENT RELIGIONS — *The contrast between the believer's past ('darkness') and their present situation ('light') was a common metaphor both in Scriptures and in extra-Biblical material. Darkness signifies ignorance, error, evil, sin, judgment, death, separation from God; the light signifies knowledge, truth, righteousness, holiness, salvation, life, union with God. "In Scripture the figurative use of light has two aspects, the intellectual and the moral. Intellectually it represents truth, whereas morally it represents holiness. To live in light therefore means to live in truth and in holiness. The figure of darkness has the same two aspects. Intellectually it represents ignorance and falsehood, whereas morally it connotes evil. The intellectual aspect of both figures pertains to what a person knows and believes, and the moral aspect pertains to way he thinks and acts.* In 2 Corinthians Paul speaks about the intellectual aspect when he says, 'The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' (4:4; cf. Rom. 1:21; Eph. 4:18). In Isaiah 5 the prophet speaks of both the intellectual and the moral aspects when he says, 'Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness' (v. 20). Both the teaching and the practice of those people were corrupt. Paul speaks of the moral aspect when he pleads with believers to 'lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light' (Rom. 13:12), and in the following verse he specifies some of the deeds of darkness: carousing, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, sensuality, strife, and jealousy. But everyone who belongs to God walks in light, both intellectually and morally. 'This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you,' John said unequivocally, 'that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin' (1John 1:5- 7)." [MacArthur, 206] Some **Old Testament** examples of darkness and light:

'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?' (Ps 27:1)

'Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!' (Isa 5:20)

'In that day they will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened by the clouds.' (Isa 5:30)

'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.' (Isa 9:2; quoted in Matt 4:16, 'The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.')

'I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.' (Isa 42:6,7; quoted in Luke 2:32, 'A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.')

'I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them.' (Isa 42:16)

'Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans' (Isa 47:5a)

'Indeed He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."' (Isa 49:6; quoted in Luke 2:32, 'A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.' and in Acts 13:47, 'For so the Lord has commanded us: I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.')

'Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon his God.' (Isa 50:10)

'Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness! We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as at twilight; we are as dead men in desolate places.' (Isa 59:9,10)

'Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.' (Isa 60:1,2)

'Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! For what good is the day of the Lord to you? It will be darkness, and not light.' (Amos 5:18)

'Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.' (Micah 7:8)

Examples from the **New Testament**:

'You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.' (Matt 5:14-16; see also Mark 4:21; Luke 11:33)

'The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!' (Matt 6:22,23; see also Luke 11:34)

'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.' (John 1:4-9)

'And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.' (John 3:19-21)

'Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.' (John 8:12)

'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' (John 9:5)

'Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.' (John 12:35,36)

'I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.' (John 12:46)

'I will deliver you [Paul] from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:17,18)

'that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.' (Acts 26:23)

'The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.' (Rom 13:12,13)

'But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' (2 Cor 4:3-6)

'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?' (2 Cor 6:14)

'having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart' (Eph 4:18)

'that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world' (Phil 2:15)

'giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.' (Col 1:12-14)

'You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.' (1 Thess 5:5)

'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the

praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light’ (1 Pet 2:9)

‘This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.’ (1 John 1:5)

‘Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.’ (1 John 2:8)

Examples from **extra-Biblical material**, according to the commentators:

“Darkness and light were images commonly used in all ancient religions. The image is especially prominent in an entire document of the Dead Sea Scrolls that speaks of an impending end-time battle between ‘the sons of light’ (the faithful covenant people of God) and ‘the sons of darkness’ (the devil, his angels, and all of God’s human enemies) (see 1QM 1:1, 8, 11; 13:5, 15-16; 14:17). Some Jewish documents even use this image with reference to conversion to Judaism (Jos. Asen. 8:10; 15:13).” [Arnold, 328]

“As we have already indicated, the contrast of light and darkness was a widespread metaphor and represents two spheres of human existence.... In addition to the OT the NT writers were influenced by contemporary Judaism (1QS 3.20f, 24f; T Levi 14.4; 19.1; T Gad 5.7); it offered phrases very similar to ‘children of light’ (1QS 1.9; 2.16; 3.13, 24f; 1QM 1.1, 3) and its opposite ‘children, sons of darkness’ (1QS 1.10; 1QM 1.7; etc.). Granted the indebtedness of the NT for the light-darkness contrast to Judaism and the OT, the contrast also appeared regularly in Greek literature; it would thus have been easily appreciated by [Paul’s] readers. Yet since it is found in all strands of early Christianity, there is no reason to seek here a NT source outside Judaism; in any case by the time of Ephesians it was an established Christian contrast in relation to thought and behaviour and may have been used in the catechetical instruction of new believers.” [Best, 487f]

“Images of darkness and light occur frequently in connection with conversion (e.g., Joseph and Asenath 8.10; 15.13; Philo, De Virt. 179; Odes Sol. 14.18, 19).... In the Qumran literature, of course, this imagery is frequent and depicts two ways of life in relationship to God, not only in 1QM with its ‘War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness’ (cf. 1.1-16; 3.6, 9; 13.16; 14.17) but also in 1QS 1.9; 10; 3.13, 19-21, 24, 25. A similar ethical dualism of light and darkness is found in The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (‘Choose for yourselves light or darkness, the law of the Lord or the works of Beliar,’ T. Levi 19.1; cf. also 14.4; T. Benj. 5.3).” [Lincoln, 326f]

v. 9 — for — ὁ γὰρ [ho gar] — PARENTHETICAL STATEMENT — The whole verse is in effect a parenthesis (and is printed as such with all the translations I am using with the exception of Tyndale’s NT and YLT; the Geneva Bible, KJV, RV, ASV, RSV, NKJV, NASV, NIV and ESV each consider this verse a parenthesis), the purpose being both explanatory and confirmatory. It gives a reason for the previous injunction and enforcing it, the point being, *‘Walk as I charge you; for anything else would be out of character for one in the light and what is produced by light.’* Paul had exhorted them to walk as children of light, this parenthetical verse explains what it means to walk in such a manner. [Salmond, 356; Best, 489; Hoehner, 674]

the fruit of the Spirit / light — καρπὸς τοῦ Πνεύματος [τοῦ φωτὸς - NA28] [karpos tou pneumatos (tou phōtos – NA28)] — MANUSCRIPT DIFFERENCES — We have very rarely pointed out the minor differences between some of the manuscripts underlying our translations, but this one should at least be highlighted. The two readings are as follows:

‘the fruit of the Spirit’ (Tyndale’s NT; Geneva Bible; KJV; YLT; NKJV)

‘the fruit of the light’ (RV; ASV; RSV; Kenneth Wuest’s Expanded Translation; NASV; NIV; ESV)

Most of the commentators I have been studying supports the reading *‘the fruit of the light,’* the reasons being given are the better fit in the context, the manuscript support (see below), and that those copying the manuscripts probably mistakenly brought into the text Paul’s familiar statement from Gal. 5:22. I would like to add my personal observation that whether Paul originally said *‘light’* or *‘Spirit’* it does not make a substantial nor doctrinal difference, although I would think *‘light’* makes better sense in this context especially in light of the contrast found in v. 11: *‘And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.’* When Paul uses *‘the fruit of the Spirit’* in Gal 5:22, that stands in contrast with the works of the flesh in Gal 5:19.

For those interested in the details, this is from *‘A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament’* by Bruce M. Metzger, page 539f, published 1971 by the United Bible Societies:

“Instead of φωτὸς [phōtos, ‘light’] the Textus Receptus reads πνεύματος [pneumatōs, ‘spirit’] with P⁴⁶ D^c K Ψ 88 104 614 1739^{ms} al. Although it can be argued that φωτὸς [phōtos, ‘light’] has come in from the influence of the same word in the preceding line, it is much more likely that recollection of Paul’s reference in Ga 5.22 to ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος [ho de karpos tou pneumatos, ‘but the fruit of the spirit’] has led to the introduction of the word here. The reading φωτὸς [phōtos, ‘light’] is strongly supported by early and diversified witnesses, representing both the Alexandrian and the Western text-types (P⁴⁹ & A B D* G P 33 81 1739* it vg syr^p. pal cop^{sa, bo} goth arm eth Origen).”

The following is from *‘The Expositor’s Greek Testament: The Epistle to the Ephesians’* by Stewart D. F. Salmond, page 356, published 1988 by Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids MI:

“The reading of the TR, τοῦ πνεύματος [tou pneumatos, ‘the spirit’], which is that of such uncials as D³ K L, most cursives, Syr^p, Chrys., etc., must give place to τοῦ φωτός [tou phōtos, ‘the light’], which is supported by B & A D* G P, 67², Vulg., Goth, Boh., Arm., Orig., etc. The πνεύματος [pneumatos, ‘spirit’] is probably a correction from Gal. v. 22.” Salmond in the text footnote lists the following manuscript supports: “πνεύματος [pneumatos, ‘spirit’] D³ E² K L, etc., Syr., al., Chr., Thdrt., Dam., al.; φωτός [phōtos, ‘light’] & A B D E F G P 6, 10, 17, 67², 179, 213, al., It., Vulg., Syr., Ar.-erp., Copt., Sah., Eth., Arm., Marcion., Lat. Fathers.”

‘FRUIT’ IS A COMMON METAPHOR FOR THE OUTWORKING OF ONE’S LIFE — The word ‘fruit’ is often used literally as the fruit of the field but is also used metaphorically as the product or result of an action (whether good or bad) or as the outworking of one’s life. Literally:

‘Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. Then they told him, and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.”’ (Numb 13:26,27)

‘They also took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, “It is a good land which the Lord our God is giving us.”’ (Deut 1:25)

‘And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away.’ (Matt 21:19)

‘Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.... And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.’ (James 5:7; 18)

Used to describe children, the ‘fruit of the womb’:

‘And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”’ (Gen 30:2)

‘And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.’ (Deut 7:13)

‘Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”’ (Luke 1:42)

‘Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne’ (Acts 2:30)

Probably the closest to our use as a metaphor, it is also used to describe the fruit or product of an action:

‘They would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies.’ (Prov 1:30,31)

‘You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way, In the multitude of your mighty men.’ (Hos 10:13)

‘Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.’ (Rom 1:13)

‘Fruit’ was a common metaphor used to describe the outworking of one’s life; in this case light produces the virtues listed by Paul. Used as a metaphor:

‘And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ (Matt 3:10 || Luke 3:9)

‘You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.’ (Matt 7:16-20 || Luke 6:43f)

‘Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.’ (Matt 12:33-35)

‘He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year

also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'” (Luke 13:6-9)

‘But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.’ (Rom 6:22)

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.’ (Gal 5:22,23)

‘being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.’ (Phil 1:11)

‘Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.’ (James 3:18)

“The contrast in the fruit is linked directly to the contrast between light and darkness. The good fruit comes from the light; the light has produced fruit. While it is true that plants die if deprived of light, and this may be the underlying connection, we should be careful not to introduce modern botanical theory to explain the text. Light is a good quality in contrast to darkness and therefore is to be associated with good results.” [Best, 489f; see also Arnold, 329; Hoehner, 672f; O’Brien, 367f; Moule, 131; Bruce, 374]

“GOD DOES NOT ACCEPT US BECAUSE WE ARE GOOD, BUT GOD MAKES US GOOD BECAUSE HE HAS ACCEPTED US” — *As discussed in our last lesson concerning ‘the preservation / perseverance of the saints,’ good works flows out of our justification in Christ. Paul further supports that concept here by clarifying the three virtues which follow (the ‘fruit of the light’) are by-products of being believers and not a set of pre-requisites for finding acceptance with God.*

“Goodness, righteousness and truth, as the fruit of light, are supernatural characteristics, the result of God’s creative activity. Yet within the flow of Paul’s paraenesis, especially the imperative ‘Live as children of light’ (v. 8), the readers themselves are expected to demonstrate these Christian graces. Once again in this letter, divine activity and human response are carefully balanced (cf. Phil. 2:12-13).” [O’Brien, 368f] “These are the tests of true faith, of a true saving relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. A ‘decision’ for Christ, church membership, faithful attendance at worship services, being baptized, financial support of the Lord’s work, and many other such things are often used as evidence of salvation. The faithful Christian should do all of those things, but they are behaviors that are easily done in the flesh and are therefore unreliable in themselves as evidence. On the other hand, the three characteristics Paul mentions here are spiritual works that cannot be achieved in the flesh. The all reflects the perfection of the divine standard.... Without that fruit there is no evidence of the life of God. ‘Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing,’ Jesus warned, ‘but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they?’ (Matt. 7:15-16). Every person bears fruit of some kind. Those who are darkness bear bad fruit, and those who are light bear good fruit. The person, therefore, who does not bear some fruit of righteousness in his life has no claim on Christ. There is no such thing as a fruitless Christian. Where there is life, there is evidence of life, just as where there is death, there will be evidence of death. The child of light produces the fruit of the light and is called to increase in that production (Col. 1:10). A Christian can fall into sin, and when he does the fruitfulness of his life suffers. Righteous fruit cannot flourish from sin. But the complete absence of any fruit of goodness and righteousness and truth proves the complete absence of salvation (cf. 2:10).” [MacArthur, 209f]

PAUL LISTS THREE VIRTUES AS BEING THE FRUIT OF THE LIGHT — The list of the three virtues which make up the fruit of light has some parallels in the OT and other Jewish writings:

‘Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God.’ (2 Chron 31:20)

“‘If you will return, O Israel,” says the Lord, “Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved. And you shall swear, ‘The Lord lives,’ in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory.”’ (Jer 4:1,2)

‘He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?’ (Micah 6:8)

“5.9 does not contain three separate and distinct virtues which might appear in a catalogue, but three different ways of stating the nature of virtuous living. Not a virtue catalogue, they are also not the opposite of the three vices of 5.3, 5, nor can they be differentiated as obligations to self, others, or God. Each stands for the whole range of Christian virtue revealing different aspects of it.... The omission of love is interesting; would readers have taken this of sexual or other love unless it had been explained with a reference to Christ?” [Best, 490f] “Reflecting one’s new identity in Christ means demonstrating virtuous traits that are characteristic of God himself. The exercise of goodness, righteousness, and truth is pleasing to God, but how to demonstrate these in an appropriate way for each situation needs to be discerned.” [Arnold, 329] “Light characteristically will expose that which is opposite of these characteristics. It will not tolerate evil or falsity. Sinners, those in darkness, are characterized by the opposite of the fruit of light: evil, wickedness, and falsehood. The fruit of light consists in nothing but that which is good.” [Hoehner, 674f; see also Lincoln, 328; O’Brien, 369]

NO VERB IN THIS PARENTHESIS — The verse is literally, *‘the fruit of light in all goodness, righteousness and truth.’* The sense is *‘the fruit of the light consists in or is characterized by all goodness, righteousness and truth.’*

in all — ἐν πάσῃ [en pasē] — The ‘all’ carries its force to all three of the triad of virtues. The sense is *‘consists in or is*

characterized by every kind of goodness, every kind of righteousness, every kind of truth,' but Harold Hoehner comments that because this is used with abstract nouns, it is best to translate it 'all.' [Hoehner, 673] **"In all (i.e. every kind of) goodness and righteousness and truth."** [Abbott, 153]

goodness, — ἀγαθωσύνη [agathōsunē] — GOODNESS WHICH EMBRACES GENEROSITY TOWARDS OTHERS — **"'Goodness' (agathosune) is a trait that the Spirit endeavors to produce in the life of every believer (Gal 5:22). This is because God himself is good — all of the time — to his people. The psalmist exhorts the people of God, 'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good (agathos); his love endures forever' (118:1, 29 [117:1, 29]; see also Ps 73:1 [72:1])."** [Arnold, 329f] **"Thus, in general terms it has the idea of goodness or prosperity. With reference to the goodness of the Lord it conveys the sense of the Lord's generosity.** In addition to this verse it is used three other times in the NT, as follows: Paul is convinced that Roman believers are full of goodness (Rom 15:14), a quality of the fruit of the Spirit is goodness (Gal 5:22), and Paul prays for the Thessalonians that God would make them worthy of his call and might fulfill every 'good' desire (2 Thess 1:11).... **[T]he best translation is 'goodness' which embraces generosity towards others."** [Hoehner, 673f] "[Goodness], which does not occur in classical Greek, appears some fourteen times in the LXX and covers a wide semantic range, including beneficence someone has shown (Judg. 8:35; 2 Chron. 24:16), kind generosity (in this case the Lord's, Neh. 9:25, 35), moral goodness (Ps. 52:3), together with well-being and happiness (Eccl. 4:8; 5:10, etc.). Louw and Nida §57.109 render the word 'generosity'; it refers to 'the act of generous giving, with the implication of its relationship to goodness'." [O'Brien, 368; see also Best, 490; Lincoln, 328; Moule, 131; Bruce, 374] "[I]n the present passage Paul uses agathosune, which refers to moral excellence, to being good in both nature and effectiveness. Like agape love, agathosune goodness finds its fullest and highest expression in that which is willingly and sacrificially done for others. 'Always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men,' Paul told the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:15). In his next letter to that church the apostle prays 'that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power' (2 Thess. 1:11). This goodness that is a fruit of light is also a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)." [MacArthur, 209]

righteousness, — καὶ δικαιοσύνη [kai dikaiosunē] — UPRIGHTNESS, DOING RIGHT IN RELATION TO BOTH GOD AND HUMANITY — **"'Righteousness' (dikaiosune) is an attribute of God that Paul has already mentioned as a characteristic of the new self (4:24). This attribute sets God apart from all other gods: 'And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me' (Isa 45:21). He is 'the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong (adikia), upright and just (dikaios) is he' (Deut 32:4). In fact, he does not rest in his righteousness, but promises to uphold his people with his 'righteous (dikaios) right hand' (Isa 41:10). One of the eschatological objectives of God is for all of his people to be righteous (Isa 60:21). Thus, Paul understands the believer's growth to maturity as entailing a progressive transformation from unrighteous behavior to righteous conduct (Rom 6:13)."** [Arnold, 330] "[Righteousness], a favourite Pauline term, is not used here in relation to saving righteousness but with ethical significance. Like [goodness] it is a somewhat general word, 'uprightness', living in accordance with a divine norm or God's will, seems an appropriate translation." [Best, 490] "Righteousness involves doing right in relation to both God and humanity." [Lincoln, 328; see also Hoehner, 674; Eadie, 381; Moule, 131; Bruce, 374] "The second result, or fruit, of our walk as children of light is righteousness and has to do first of all with our relationship to God. 'To the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness' (Rom . 4:5; cf. Eph. 4:24; Phil. 3:9). But righteousness also has to do with how we live. Those who are made righteous are commanded to live righteously, to present themselves 'to God as those alive from the dead, and [their] members as instruments of righteousness to God' (Rom . 6:13). Because Christ has given us His own righteous nature, we are to 'pursue righteousness' (1 Tim . 6:11). Because we know that Christ is righteous. John says, we also 'know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him' (1 John 2:29)." [MacArthur, 209f]

and truth — ἀληθεία [kai alētheia] — NOTHING FALSE NOR HYPOCRITICAL IN OUR SPEECH AND LIFESTYLE — **"'Truth' (aletheia) is an additional attribute of God that should characterize the speech and lifestyle of every believer. This understanding of God was an essential part of the monotheistic confession and commitment of the people of Israel. They worshiped the one living and true God. Consequently, God expects his new covenant people to live in accordance with truth and display it in their lives because they were created like God in truth (4:24)."** [Arnold, 330] **"The meaning probably lies in the area either of faithfulness, loyalty, sincerity, or of that which exhibits within itself nothing that is false or hypocritical; it does not mean being true to oneself or one's conscience, for both may be false; it might however mean being true to the new person (4.24)."** [Best, 490; see also Lincoln, 328; Hoehner, 674; Eadie, 381; Moule, 131; Bruce, 374]

v. 10 — finding out — δοκιμάζοντες [dokimazontes] — DISCERNING, DISCOVERING, FINDING OUT — This word is defined by BDAG as follows: "1. to make a critical examination of something. to determine genuineness, put to the test, examine.... 2. to draw a conclusion about worth on the basis of testing, prove, approve, here the focus is on the result of a procedure or examination. a. prove by testing, of gold ... b. accept as proved, approve (e.g., whom you consider qualified, 1 Cor 16:3; prove the genuineness of love, 2 Cor 8:8)" [BDAG Greek Lexicon of the NT] The Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon defines it as "(1) to assay or test metals, to see if they be pure; ... (2) of persons, to put to the test, make trial of, scrutinise, then, to approve ... (3) at Athens, to approve as fit for an office, and in passive to be approved as fit." [LSJ Lexicon] Kenneth Wuest translates it as follows: 'putting to the test and then approving...'. [Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation, 1961] Paul uses a form of this word in a passage with several similarities to this verse:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that you may prove** what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.’ (Rom 12:1,2)

“The verb has the dual idea of ‘testing’ and ‘approving’ and was applied to a wide variety of situations. Silver or gold, for instance, could be tested in a crucible and then approved as pure (e.g., Prov 17:3; 27:21). Paul told the Romans that the renewal of their minds would enable them to ‘test and approve what God’s will is’ (Rom 12:2). Here it has a similar idea of testing and approving, but probably more in terms of practical wisdom. The readers already know that the exercise of goodness, righteousness, and truth are the will of God and are pleasing to him. What they do not know is what that may look like in such things as their family relationships and how they treat members of the extended household, in the way they conduct themselves at work, and in how they choose to navigate living in a society where pagan religion is all pervasive.” [Arnold, 330] *“The verb [‘proving’] has the force of testing or finding out in the circumstances the ethically right course of action.”* [Lincoln, 328] *“After the parenthesis of v. 9 the main theme is now resumed with a participle which depends on the imperative of v. 8b. As enlightened people, believers need to behave in a way which pleases their Lord so that their lives will bear the fruit of goodness, uprightness and truth. [dokimazein] is a favourite Pauline term which he applies to God’s scrutinising and approving human beings (Rom 16:10; 1 Cor 11:19; 2 Cor 13:5ff; 1 Th 4:4; cf 1 Cor 9:27) and, as here, to believers determining how they should behave (Rom 2:18; 12:2; Gal 6:4; Phil 1:10; 1 Th 5:21).”* [Best, 491] *“The word [dokimazo] has in mind ‘to put to the test’ as testing witnesses for a trial. Along with this it means ‘to approve, sanction’ or ‘to approve after scrutiny as fit,’ for example, for the priesthood or for an office.”* [Hoehner, 675]

what is acceptable — τί ἐστιν εὐάρεστον [ti estin euareston] — *“The principal criterion for them is to discern and live in a way that is ‘acceptable’ to the Lord. Paul told the Corinthians, ‘we make it our goal to please (euarestoi) him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it’ (2 Cor 5:9). This is also the kind of sacrifice that Paul wants believers to make when they offer themselves up to the Lord for his service (Rom 12:2). Because of the rich array of blessings that God has showered on his people (1:3-14), there should be a strong motivation for believers to identify what would please him in every situation in how they live their daily lives.”* [Arnold, 330] *“The word [euarestos] is not used in classical times and is found only twice in the LXX where it speaks of the righteous person who is ‘pleasing’ to God (Wis 4:10) and of the request for wisdom from heaven to teach Solomon what is ‘pleasing’ to God (Wis 9:10). In the NT it is used nine times, eight times by Paul, and only here in Ephesians. In Romans Paul exhorts believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices that are ‘acceptable’ or ‘pleasing’ to God (Rom 12:1) and he urges believers not to be conformed to this age but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds in order that they might prove or test what the will of God is, that is, what is ‘pleasing, acceptable’ to him (v. 2). He tells the Corinthians that his aim is to ‘please’ God (2 Cor 5:9), the Philippians that their gift was pleasing to God (4:18), the Colossians that children are to obey their parents for this is ‘pleasing’ to God (Col 3:20), and he enjoins Titus to tell the slaves to be ‘pleasing’ to their masters (Titus 2:9). In the benediction to his letter, the author of Hebrews prays that God will equip believers with everything good that they might do God’s will which is working in them to do what is pleasing in his sight (Heb 13:21). With the exception of Titus 2:9, [euarestos] always has reference to pleasing God. One other time in the NT it is used in connection with the word [dokimazo], where the believer is instructed to prove that which is the acceptable will of God (Rom 12:2).”* [Hoehner, 676]

to the Lord. — τῷ κυρίῳ [tō kuriō] — **THE STANDARD FOR THIS TESTING: WHAT PLEASES CHRIST** — *“If decisions are to be made about conduct, criteria are needed on which to base them. Only one is stated here: whatever pleases the Lord. Paul has the same criterion in Rom 12.2 where he uses the same verb in relation to God’s will (cf Phil 1.10).”* [Best, 491] *“If the readers’ motivation is to please their Lord, then living as children of light will involve exercising a responsible freedom and developing an intuitive sense about how to act in a given situation.”* [Lincoln, 328] *“This goes beyond the moral will of God because his moral will is revealed in specific commands which do not need to be tested. It is to test the will of God for every aspect of life and to approve what would be pleasing to him. The Word of God is a guide for this purpose. However, certain situations in life are not directly addressed in the Scriptures. In such cases, believers need to find principles from the Scriptures whereby they might be able to make choices that will please the Lord. Although not mentioned here, as the Scriptures are consulted the Holy Spirit enlightens and enables believers to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”* [Hoehner, 676f] *“The Christian life, just as every other kind of life, is only healthy when it is growing. As far as the walk of the believer is concerned, the primary focus is to be a concern about continually trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. As we are obedient to what we know, our knowledge of the Lord and of His will increases and deepens. As we are faithful to the light, we are given more of this light.”* [MacArthur, 210]