

# GOD'S CALL

## Major themes in the Scriptures

### The Holy Spirit (9)

### The fruit of the Spirit

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the ninth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

When we are born again, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. In order to know God's power for spiritual development and service, the Lord Jesus Christ baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. However, this does not mean that we have become spiritual and good in our character. To develop this, we need to nurture the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

We have seen in the record in **Acts 2** that in the event of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the people, when the Lord Jesus baptized His disciples with the Holy Spirit, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Many people may think that being filled with the Holy Spirit means that they are spiritual or their character is good in the eyes of God. But this may not be so. Sometimes it is so; at other times it is not. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a spiritual experience, but it does not necessarily mean that the character is transformed.

When we eat food, we may say, "I am filled. I am filled with food." We may enjoy the eating. We may feel quite full with the food. But soon after that, the food may pass out of our intestinal system without much of it being absorbed and we may be weak and malnourished.

In the spiritual realm, it is also true. We may experience the power of the Holy Spirit; we may be filled with the Holy Spirit and it may be a very enjoyable experience. God may seem so real to us, the spiritual realm may seem so very meaningful to us. But soon after that, we can walk in the flesh. We can go our own way. We can be spiritually poor and not truly transformed.

However, if we respond well, then the fruit of the Spirit will be formed in us and we grow to become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ: that is, Christ will be formed in us.

In the physical realm, it is the same thing. When we eat well and we digest the food properly, we absorb and it becomes part of our body, then we will benefit from it and our body can become healthy.

What then is the fruit of the Spirit? This is of very great importance in our lives and it is central in what God seeks to do in us.

**Galatians 5: 19-23**

- 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,
- 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,
- 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

We see that the fruit of the Spirit is contrasted with the works of the flesh. To appreciate what the fruit of the Spirit is, it is helpful for us to have some understanding of the meaning of the works of the flesh.

We notice from the list of areas that the apostle Paul refers to in describing the deeds of the flesh or the works of the flesh, he mentions areas that point in a certain direction: Basically we can say it is a self-centred way of life, independent of God, based on the desires and inclinations of the natural body and very readily subjected to the influence of the evil one.

These are characteristics of the works of the flesh: immorality, impurity, sensuality –living by emotions, personal pleasures rather than what is truly good in the eyes of God.

Idolatry, sorcery: worship of the powers of darkness, association with them, living by their influence and what they may be able to do – instead of worshipping God – being affected by the powers of darkness.

Enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger are aspects of the self-centred life, concentrating on what we want rather than being concerned about what is good and beneficial for others.

There is loss of self-control and seeking one's own way in disputes, dissensions, factions. Envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these: living by feelings and emotions rather than by meaning – what is truly good.

“...and things like these” – this is not a complete list but an indication of the kind of direction of the deeds of the flesh, or the works of the flesh: that is how the life of the flesh is manifested.

When we live our lives on our own without concentration on who God is, what is in His heart; without depending on Him; without seeking Him; without trusting Him; without being prayerful, then these are the aspects that will readily manifest.

In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are manifestations of moral goodness of character, the fruit that comes about when our lives are transformed to be like God. It is a description of positive, good moral qualities in the context of faithfulness to God, of faith, trusting in God, walking with Him; and a life that will have a positive influence on others.

When we look at the meaning, we can understand that the fruit of the Spirit basically refers to the moral character of God.

We should develop to become like God in His being: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We know that the moral character of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same. But as God reveals Himself to us, He does show to us some difference in emphasis; and appreciation of this can also help us to recognize major areas that we should concentrate on if we want to develop the fruit of the Spirit.

**Matthew 5: 48**

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect..."

So we are called upon to be morally perfect like God the Father.

We must think of who God the Father is and we want to be like Him. One major primary aspect of the moral perfection of God that is presented to us, that comes through very strongly and clearly is: divine love – “For God so loved the world...”

God is the One who initiated the creation of the universe, the creation of man. He is the One who initiated the event of the cross. Why? Because of love: He created us in love; He sent His Son into this world in love. “For God so loved the world...” His love was pure. His love was so great that He was prepared to go through such intense suffering to bring about the event of the cross, the mission of the cross.

If we want to develop the fruit of the Spirit, we must never forget that we must develop this kind of quality of love: divine love.

And that is why the apostle Paul spent so many verses in **1 Corinthians 13** to tell us what love is. Love is far greater than all the things that we may be able to do or the spiritual gifts that we may have. Without divine love, we are just a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. It is just emptiness; there is nothing that we can really accomplish without true divine love.

So it is good for us, when we seek to develop the fruit of the Spirit, to ask ourselves: The things that we do, what we pursue, are we motivated by divine love? Do we really care for God’s kingdom because of its moral and spiritual value? Do we care for the well-being of people for their good rather than what we can get out of it? Are we preoccupied with the true meaningfulness, the impact of pure spiritual love? So that is a very major primary aspect of the character of God.

However, as we think of God primarily coming through to us as divine love, let us never forget **Hebrews 12: 29** also tells us that our God is a consuming fire. We must not think of the love of God as if He will only be gentle with us, He will always help us no matter how we live. God is a God of holiness and He is also a consuming fire. He will destroy what is evil. He takes His stand against all evil. He will judge sin.

So we must never take for granted the love of God. It is pure love, but it is also absolute holiness.

**Galatians 4: 19**

My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you--

The apostle Paul was very burdened for the people he helped who became Christians: people like the Corinthians, the Galatians. He saw that their lives were not what they ought to be, their character was not developed as they ought to have done. And he said: "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you".

He laboured so hard to present the gospel to them, to urge them to repent, to come to God. And they did. But when he saw that they were not developing well, he was very burdened and saddened. And he was again in labour. He wanted to ensure that Christ would be formed in them.

So we are to develop the moral character of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us as the image of God, the moral perfection of God, full of grace and truth. A primary characteristic of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is grace. He left heaven in all its glory to come into this world of darkness and sin and evil to suffer under the hands of men, the attacks of the evil one, in order to save us.

Grace: He need not have done so but He was prepared to give up His rights, what belonged to Him, in order to come into this world to save us, to give to us the very best, what we could otherwise never have been able to receive. How great is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ!

If we want to develop the fruit of the Spirit, let us ask ourselves: Does grace form a major aspect in the manifestation of our lives, our character?

How far are we prepared to go in terms of truly helping others in their need? Yes, we may be willing to give a little bit here and there. What if it really costs us? What if it is really painful? What if it is really embarrassing, it is very difficult, we suffer? Would we still want to contribute, to give? Or we hold back, we calculate: How much I give, how much will I receive? If I suffer so much, what will I get in return?

Is this the way that we live our lives? If so, then we are not manifesting the character of God the Son.

We need to learn a life of grace: that we care, we love, we give not because we have to, not because of what we can get out of it, but because it is good, it will be helpful for others, it will be meaningful in the kingdom of God.

And He is full of truth: He is the revelation of God; He is the image of God; He shows to us who God is.

He is the perfect revelation of God: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father". God's perfect revelation of His being comes through to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, lived out as a perfect Man, so that we can understand more clearly the moral perfection of God.

God in Spirit, in His infinite greatness is difficult for us to fully fathom. God came into this world as the perfect Man helps us to know who God really is in a manner that is easier for us to understand, to appreciate, and also to become like Him. We are to follow in His steps. The way He conducted Himself shows to us what is in the heart of God.

If we want to understand who God is, what is His will, what are His ways, we need to look at the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way and the truth and the life.

So divine grace and revelation of the being of God comes through to us in the Person of God the Son: at great sacrifice, pain and suffering. In order to help us appreciate who God is and His ways, the Lord Jesus Christ had to come into this world to live like us, as a Man with a natural body, subject to all the influences of the world, the attacks of the evil one, the temptations that the evil one could bring to him with great intensity. He went through all this to help us.

Would our lives manifest the character of the being of God? Would our lives transmit the message of God? What God wants to tell the world, can our lives transmit that?

If our lives contradict the message that we are talking about in the gospel, then we are not properly representing God.

We are to let our light so shine in this world that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

When people look at us, if they understand us correctly, they should be able to appreciate the character, the being of God, the ways of God, the message of God – what God wants to say.



So while we see that the Lord Jesus Christ manifests grace and truth that we often appreciate in a very positive way, let us also remember the Lord Jesus Christ was very angry with those who were hypocrites and He pronounced woes on the scribes and Pharisees who were hypocrites.

**Matthew 23: 13**, He said: "...woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites..." He was angry with them and He repeated this a number of times to help us understand that it is not the outward appearance that seems good that God is looking for. He is looking at the heart: What is the reality within us? Is there true moral quality in our being?

So while the Lord Jesus is very gracious, He is also very fierce towards those who are hypocritical, who do not walk in the path of truth and goodness.

Then we come to God the Holy Spirit, which we read earlier:

**Galatians 5: 22-23**

- 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

We are called upon to bear the fruit of the moral character of God the Holy Spirit.

And it is in such context that we will know the preciousness, the meaningfulness, the richness, the wonder of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that will lead us, guide us and bring us into a depth of fellowship with God of a very deep kind, and fellowship with all those who truly love God: true oneness and fellowship with the perfect God and with those who love God. This kind of oneness and fellowship is based on moral quality of character: the fruit of the Spirit.

If we want deep fellowship with God, if we want to develop deep fellowship amongst the brethren in the body of Christ, then we must develop the fruit of the Spirit because that is the context in which true fellowship can be nurtured and they can grow.

The apostle Paul says, "...against such things there is no law": There is no hindrance, there is no judgment; it is life, it is freedom, it is fellowship of the highest degree when we develop that kind of quality.

Why were Ananias and Sapphira judged with death? We are told in **Acts 5: 3 and 9** they were judged because they lied to the Holy Spirit. Instead of being led by the Holy Spirit, walking by the Holy Spirit, they sought their own purposes and desires, and they lied to project a more positive image of themselves than what they truly were. So God pronounced judgment on Ananias and Sapphira. Such an attitude will destroy fellowship and at this early stage in the development of church life, God wanted to make it clear there is a need for purity of character if there is to be good quality of fellowship in the body of Christ.

If the church is to grow properly, effectively, then we must deal with all aspects of self-life.

So we must bear the fruit of the moral character of God the Holy Spirit, so that we can develop the highest quality and meaning of fellowship according to the will of God.

So the apostle Paul put it this way in **2 Corinthians 13: 14**:

**2 Corinthians 13: 14**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

The apostle Paul highlighted these three areas for us to appreciate as we relate with God.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” – do we sufficiently appreciate that? Or we just say, “He is my Saviour, He is my Lord” and we are not very conscious of what this means: the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The love of God” – are we taking this for granted? “God loves me so much.” How much did it cost Him? Are we like Him?

“The fellowship of the Holy Spirit” – is our fellowship really in the realm of the working of the Holy Spirit? Or is our fellowship basically man-made – our own ideas, our own ways, our own terms, our own pleasures?

So ultimately, it is up to us how we want to live our lives. But we must appreciate that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is meant to help us to enter into the development of the fruit of the Spirit so that there can be true quality and meaning in our lives, and we can then contribute in the kingdom of God in the most meaningful way.

So a primary condition that will determine whether the fruit of the Spirit will be developed in us is: What occupies our heart; what we treasure; what we pursue; how we want to spend our time and resources; what matters most to us. This is what will determine whether the fruit of the Spirit will be developed.

What occupies our heart?

Whatever we treasure, whatever we seek for; in the end our character will be developed in that direction.

Why did Satan become so evil? Because he desired the wrong things: What was in his heart? He wanted to be great like God. He wanted to be powerful. He wanted to be worshiped. He desired for things that he ought not to have. And so his character followed.

This principle is true for all of us. Be careful what you pursue; be careful what you nurture in your heart; be careful what you are seeking for because all that will change your heart. You will become what you long for. Your character will be developed according to what occupies your heart and what you pursue: *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

The moral quality of your heart will be developed on the basis of the treasure that you pursue.

How then can we make sure that what occupies our heart is truly good and right?

**John 15: 4-5**

- 4 *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*
- 5 *"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

The Lord Jesus gave this analogy, this illustration of the vine and the branches to help us understand that kind of relationship we ought to have with Him.

The branch receives its life from the vine. The vine has its roots in the ground to absorb water, nutrients, and this is passed on to the branches, and the branches can then do their part to produce fruit. But if the branch were broken off from the vine, it will not be able to receive the water and the nutrients and it will dry up, it will die. So in the physical realm, it is like that.

But the branch of the vine cannot make a decision. In the physical realm, it is just part of the vine. It may be broken off when someone cuts it off or when there is a storm and it breaks off, but that is not its decision.

In the spiritual realm, it is our decision. We are the ones who decide whether we will abide in the vine or not. And that is very important for us to remember. We are not in the vine just because it happened to be so. And we are not broken off just because it happened to be so: because of environment, because of storms, it just breaks off. No. However big the storm, the branch can still remain in the vine spiritually, if we choose to do so.

No one can pluck us out of the Lord's hand if we choose to remain in Him. The word "abide" also can be translated as "remain". We remain in Him, we stay with Him, we are united with Him; we refuse to go away. If your heart truly longs for what is good and you know that the Lord Jesus is perfect, you want to remain with Him, you want to stay with Him, you want to abide in Him.

That is the only way by which we can really develop the fruit of the Spirit because the fruit comes about as a result of the life that comes from the vine. When we abide in the vine, when we abide in the Lord Jesus, His life will flow through to us. And because we love Him, we absorb that life, it becomes part of us. And in that context, we bear fruit.

"...he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." Notice that the phrase "I in him" comes after "he who abides in Me".

The Lord Jesus cannot abide in us if we do not wish to abide in Him. Abiding in Him is our choice. He abiding in us is His choice. So if we choose not to abide in Him, He will not abide in us. He stands at the door and He knocks. He will not force open that door. If you refuse to open the door, He will go away. If you open the door, He comes in and He will dine with you and you with Him.

So in the spiritual realm, if we truly love Him and we want Him to be our life, we must abide in Him, we welcome Him, we think of Him, we ask Him to be our Lord. We ask Him to be with us in every situation to teach us His ways, so that we will walk with Him. And when we do that, He abides in us. He will grant to us His life and His life will come through to us in the power of the Holy Spirit who will then help us to appreciate more of who the Lord Jesus is, and He brings the life of God to us that Christ may be formed in us.

“...he bears much fruit” – We can say the meaning of “fruit” in this verse can have two aspects to that: “fruit” in terms of moral character and “fruit” in terms of labour, the fruit of our labours arising from that. And both aspects arise from the life of Christ in us.

If we properly abide in Him, then the fruit of the Spirit will grow in us and as a result, as we walk with God, He will lead us in the things that we do and we will bear fruit in our labours. The effect on people’s lives, the outcome in the kingdom of God, the things that we can do that will be precious to God, helpful for other people – all this comes from the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we must be united with the Lord Jesus in order to receive His life. He gives us the Holy Spirit to enable us to partake of the divine nature and to bear fruit: the fruit in the character of our being and the fruit of our labours by His life and enabling.

So the critical issue that will determine the quality of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives is the depth and the intensity of our love for God in His being and in His will, such that all that we want is to be like Him, and to do His will because that is good and right and it is the most meaningful path possible for us.

If we live in this way, the fruit of the Spirit will develop in us, by the life that God will grant to us through His Spirit.

This is something that we need to ponder over throughout our lives. If we want to develop quality of the fruit of the Spirit, ask yourself: How intense, how deep is your love for God, His being, His ways? Do you really love Him and His ways? When I refer to “love” in this context, I am referring to what we value. How much do we value, do we treasure, do we appreciate, and we want to be what we ought to be and live by what we know is truly good? We appreciate God, we worship Him, we want to honour Him; we want to live for Him.

If this is very intense within us and is genuine in terms of practical application to daily life, then in that context, God will find it meaningful to impart His character to you: because God’s character cannot be just transferred to us unless we value it, we want to be like that.

God cannot just give us His life, character to be part of us when our hearts are elsewhere, when our values are not the same as His.

So we must first make sure that our values are the same as His. Then we must make sure we are prepared for the cost of it: Whatever it costs us, we want it. It is in that context that the fruit of the Spirit can then be developed in us in quality.

Let us look at some examples in the Scriptures very briefly to see this feature.

Those who developed significance in the fruit of the Spirit were all people where there is this intensity: their love for God, identification with God, the desire to be like Him, the concern for the kingdom of God, to want to do the things that are good and meaningful in the eyes of God.

Enoch:

**Genesis 5: 24**

Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

A very simple verse but so rich in meaning: The **book of Hebrews** tells us that Enoch was pleasing to God and it is in that context that God took him. So what is the characteristic feature of Enoch? Very simple: Enoch walked with God.

Many Christians think they are walking with God but in reality, they are not. They are walking in their own ways.

They are walking according to what they please, what they like, what they prefer and in that context, they ask God, "God, please walk with me." They want God to walk with them in the path they have chosen.

But Enoch walked with God in the path that God decided would be best. This is the difference between Enoch and most people.

Most people think in terms of what they want and then they ask God, "God, please help me! Answer my prayers. Be with me. See me through this problem, that difficulty. Help me to achieve this." Is this how we treat God?

If we truly love God, we will ask God, "Lord, what is it that You want of my life? How do You want me to live my life so that it will be truly meaningful to You, it will be precious to You? And I will walk with You. Lead me, guide me, strengthen me; I will walk with You."

So Enoch was raptured because he was pleasing to God. He walked with God.



Moses: we have seen his life from time to time and again, we see this characteristic in him.

**Exodus 32: 9-14**

- 9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.
- 10 "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."
- 11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?
- 12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about *doing* harm to Your people.
- 13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.'"
- 14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

It is such a beautiful passage that shows to us the kind of quality in the heart of Moses: the fruit of the Spirit – how deeply he loved God, how intensely he loved God, how much he wanted God's purposes to be fulfilled, God's name to be honoured. This was so deep and so intense in the life of Moses.

God said: "I will make of you a great nation." God said He would destroy the people in the wilderness and make of Moses a great nation. Moses would still be from the nation of Israel.

But things would have changed. Moses did not want that. Moses wanted this whole thing to be completed. God brought the people of Israel out from Egypt with great power and this would be a witness in the world. And he wanted this to continue, that God's name would be honoured in the world. He said: "...why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? These are Your people. It is in accordance with Your will, what You wanted to do. Do not do this now."

Moses did not think of himself and his glory – a great nation arising from Moses. He was not concerned about that. That was not what he was interested in. He was interested in the glory of God, the purposes of God being most wonderfully fulfilled. And this is something that we should learn from.

So that is why we are told that “By faith, Moses when he was born, he was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw he was a beautiful child and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. And then we are told: by faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.” That is **Hebrews 11: 23-26**.

Moses, he was hidden for three months by his parents because they trusted God – “By faith, Moses... was hidden...”

And that faith was also nurtured in the life of Moses and somehow, his parents had transmitted to him the right direction of life. And when Moses grew up, he chose this path. He did not want the passing pleasures of sin. He was prepared to go through ill treatment; he was prepared to go through suffering, reproaches, to be identified with what God wanted to accomplish.

And so, Moses became a good servant in the house of God, appreciated by God.

Elijah: We can see in Elijah the kind of intensity in his love for God.

**1 Kings 19: 9-10**

- 9 Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"
- 10 He said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

God spoke to Elijah to encourage him in a time when he found life very difficult. Jezebel wanted to destroy him, to kill him. In that situation, God spoke to Elijah. And He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts". Very zealous: his heart was occupied with what was important to God.

He was very zealous and he said: "...for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword." This was something that pained him very much. He was very concerned with God's kingdom, what God was seeking to do and he was very angry with those who were persecuting the people of God and so, he took his stand against the prophets of Baal. But now, he felt very alone and he felt very difficult: "I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." And God encouraged him; God helped him in that situation.

But the issue I want to raise here is: Elijah had an intense love for God and he was very zealous for the Lord in the right kind of way – not like many of the Jews who were zealous for God, but in a wrong way. Elijah loved God and he was raptured. Enoch was raptured; so too was Elijah.

Then we consider David.

**1 Samuel 13: 13-14**

- 13 Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.
- 14 "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

Saul, the first king of Israel, was rejected by God because he disobeyed God; he walked in the flesh. He lived by what he thought rather than what God commanded.

"You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you..." Saul went his own way, walked in the flesh. So Samuel told him: "...your kingdom shall not endure."

So in contrast, "the LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people".

God sees the heart and He selected David to succeed Saul. He knew what was in the heart of David: a man after His own heart.

This describes David in terms of the general direction of his life. He had a genuine and deep love for God.

Yes, he had his weaknesses: he did fail; he dishonoured God, but he was honest, he was humble, he was contrite; he repented and God forgave Him, and God continued to help him. And the Lord Jesus is still called the Son of David.

"A man after God's own heart" tells us the kind of direction that we ought to nurture in our lives. Is our heart really after God's own heart or are we preoccupied with what our own heart may desire? This is what makes the difference.

The fruit of the Spirit cannot develop in us if we are preoccupied with our own desires. The fruit of the Spirit can develop only if we truly want what is meaningful to God: we are consumed by that.

Daniel: the man of preciousness whom God appreciated so much – a man of high esteem. How did he develop that kind of quality?

**Daniel 1: 8**

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

“Daniel made up his mind...” or you can translate it as “Daniel set upon his heart...” that he would not defile himself and the meaning here basically is: Daniel was loyal to God. He would not depart from it.

He would not defile himself in any way that he understood would affect his loyalty to God. Whatever happened, he would be faithful to God. Faithfulness is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit: faithfulness to God and faith in Him, entrusting our lives to Him. And Daniel entrusted his life to God. He was prepared to be killed as a result of taking this stand.

Daniel developed to become a man of high esteem, a man of preciousness because there was quality in his heart.

Then we can look at the apostle Paul, prominent in the New Testament.

**Acts 20: 24**

"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God..."

This was the attitude of the apostle Paul. He had given up his life to God. He sought to live for God and what God had entrusted to him.

He said: "...I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself. It does not matter what happens to me. It really does not matter. What matters is that I must finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus. What the Lord Jesus has entrusted to me, I must complete it, I must fulfil it."

This is what occupied his heart: he was concerned for what was in the heart of God, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

If we want to develop the fruit of the Spirit, then we must nurture this kind of love for God and His will and His ways, and we identify with Him without concern ultimately for what happens to us.

Our lives must be subjected to God and His will. What we are concerned about is to live for Him, to live by His ways, His will.

And in that context, we can enjoy deep fellowship with God; we can appreciate whatever God may give to us. We can pray, we can seek Him, we can trust Him, we can receive His life, His power, but all for the purpose of fulfilling what is most meaningful in His sight.

So if we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must ensure that we give up our self-centred way of life and make sure our heart completely belongs to God, to be and to do what is most meaningful to Him in His moral goodness and perfect wisdom.

Is this what we want in life? If we truly want to develop the fruit of the Spirit, then we must set our hearts in that direction.

Christians are already born again. They are already baptized into the body of Christ. They may have experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit. But this is not the end.

That is only the beginning of something very rich and wonderful, and that is to develop the fruit of the Spirit, the character of God in us so that we can participate in all that God wants to do. We can enter into deep oneness with God, have fellowship with Him, and in all eternity, find life to be truly wonderful and meaningful.

Is that what we long for? Would we give ourselves to live in that way? That is something that each one of us will have to consider and decide for ourselves.

Let us then, as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us understand what this means and if there is something He has spoken to you in your heart and you recognize that it is not what it ought to be, it is good at this time that you come before Him and pray to Him, confess if it is not what it ought to be, and make a commitment to Him: Give yourself fully to Him just to live for Him and to be true to Him; and ask Him to transform you by His Spirit, so that the character of God may be formed in you.

So as we spend this time before the Lord, it is good if we can deepen in our response to the Lord, so that He will have the freedom to work in us, transform us and work through us.