

“Without Me You Can Do Nothing!”

Have you ever wondered about this statement by our Lord and Savior as recorded in the Gospel according to John chapter 15 verse 5? I certainly did when I first accepted Jesus as my Savior, but had not yet accepted Him as Lord, and all that such acceptance requires. My first thoughts were something like this. “Dear Jesus I understand what you are saying, that because You are the vine and I am a branch off of that vine, all that I am, all that I can do, must flow through you to me. But with those words, you were speaking to the Apostles, true believers, and special people of your choosing. I’m but a very recent believer, and, therefore, a newly grafted branch. I have spent a lifetime not being one of your branches, yet achieving things long before I even knew whom You were. Are you telling me I did nothing, that all my achievements amount to nothing? What about the many great men in history who never became branches, who were either atheist or worshipers of false gods. Many of them actually shaped history. Are you saying that their accomplishments were meaningless and only an illusion because they were not through you? Please explain, because it makes no sense to me.”

If you are a believer, most likely you were not as dense as I was when you first believed. Therefore, you may not have needed an explanation, or if you did need one, by now you may have already been blessed with all you need for an answer. On the other hand, if you are a believer and it is not yet clear to you just what Jesus means by this, then the following is written for you as an expression of what I pray is a Spiritually led explanation. If you are not a believer then the question may have no relevance to you beyond a mere curiosity which may have been provoked by the title. I pray that for the believer, who is seeking clarification, this will be beneficial, and for the unbeliever I pray that he or she will read this to the end, so that it may stimulate an interest to know more about this “crazy, arrogant” assertion our Lord makes and about Himself.

First of all, the Author, Jesus is in fact God Himself as every redeemed soul, and only the redeemed, know with certainty. In that same Book, the writer John, at the very beginning identifies Jesus by these words: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with*

*God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made, In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehends it not.”*

Being the Creator God Himself who is speaking, we need to conclude that He speaks with absolute authority and that, therefore, there is a compelling reason to believe His words. Clarification and full understanding of the exact meaning of the title statement can be satisfied by approaching it from two directions, depending on where one is in his or her theology or lack thereof. One direction is the purely solid Christian spiritual perspective and the other, for want of a better term might be called quasi-biblical / scientific physical perspective. That is from the perspective that one generally believes in a creator “force” or God, but not necessarily that Jesus is He.

The Christian sense of the message is very clear, and I am probably insulting the intelligence of the seasoned believer to even mention an explanation. In Christ’s analogy of the vine and the branches, He is the vine who provides all spiritual sustenance to the redeemed Christian who is the branch. In that context, the believer, the branch, can do nothing spiritually valid or eternal, without the nourishment and the water of life provided by Jesus to the believer. All of a lifetime of generosity, honesty, service, and impeccable moral behavior, that isn’t derived from a redeemed soul grafted to Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior, count for nothing. For it is only the fruit of the spirit that is in concert with the Holy Spirit, which has everlasting substance. Only the good deeds of the redeemed, which are derived out of love and gratitude for Jesus and for His sacrifice on our behalf, deeds done without desire for earthly gain, only these have eternal value.

All else is “hay and stubble” to be burned and to become nothing. Jesus expands on this analogy both before and after the title statement in order to broaden His delivery of this fundamental truth.

*John 15 1-6*

*Jesus the True Vine*

- 1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*
- 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*
- 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*
- 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*
- 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.*
- 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

As with a great proportion of Jesus' teachings through the various media such as analogies, allegories, similitudes, and parables, the theme here is fruitfulness or lack thereof. A reasonable case may be made here that the fruitless vine being burned is simply a saved believer whose life is cut short for lack of fruitfulness and thus enters heaven absent any crowns. Or perhaps it is a category 2 person in the Parable of the Sower who may have gained a short lived pseudo attachment to the vine but had no real grafting or sustenance, and soon fell away, being effectually a non-believer. Disturbing thoughts, in either case.

Now to the quasi-Biblical/scientific perspective of the title statement. This is a poor label for the idea that I am about to put forth, but at the moment I can't think of a more appropriate one. One could fall back on John 1:1-5 previously noted, and from this make the observation that if Jesus had not created all things there would be nothing nor anyone here to do anything. There wouldn't even be a here. Therefore, it is obvious that without Him no one could do anything, because there would be nothing and no one. But that is the wrong context, because the world long ago was set in motion and you and I are here. Now our free will enables us to do things with or without believing in Jesus, and seemingly without His involvement. However, consider this, and bear with me as I muddle through trying to make simple, a very complex idea.

In science class it is likely most of us learned about magnetic forces that opposite poles attract each other and like poles repulse each other. We also learned that all atoms contain a positively charged nucleus of any number of protons and a varying number of negatively charged electrons orbiting around the nucleus, like planets around the sun. If opposite polarities attract, why aren't all of the electrons pulled into the positively charged nucleus? One might say because the centrifugal force of their revolving motion keeps them apart. But the laws of entropy demand that this force must wind down, but it doesn't. Now an even more perplexing problem. The nucleus in the heavier elements contains many dozens of protons, all with positive charges yet tightly bound together. Why don't they repel each other and drift apart instead, as do all other polarized substances. This bond is so strong, with so much energy holding it together that when the nucleus is split through an externally applied force, there occurs what we call an atomic explosion. What causes that incredibly powerful bonding of the protons, when by all scientific principals they should be voluntarily pushing themselves apart and should never even have been joined in the first place? Scientists have pondered this for generations and have had many ever-changing theories. No one really knows, from an earthly perspective.

But consider this, In Colossians 1:17, we learn of Jesus that, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." **IN HIM ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER.** So Who is adding the energy, which causes those electrons to continue spinning and never run down? And Who is exerting that tremendous force that holds the protons bound together in every multi proton atom in the entire universe? **JESUS!!!!!!** The Bible says so. **HE HOLDS ALL THINGS TOGETHER!!!!**

Every scientist in this secular society would scoff at this explanation because scientists, regardless of any flaws or absurdities in their theories cannot, because they will not, allow a supernatural explanation for anything. So they will go on seeking anything but Scriptural answers, spending billions of dollars and wasting their lives chasing windmills, when the answers are right in Scripture!!

Thus we have another explanation of how, even now without Jesus we can do nothing. Without Him continuing day-by-day, moment-by-moment, holding all things together, in fact, every atom in our bodies, none of us could even be, let alone do anything, literally.

Jesus is the Creator of all that exists, and what exists He continues to maintain. If He didn't, all matter would immediately revert back to energy. It would cease to exist, as one day it will when He "lets go," and thereby destroys the heavens and the earth. But if you are one of the redeemed, one of those who has truly accepted Him as your Lord and Savior, have no fear! Because He has promised that He will create for you a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21).