

Lesson 13
YOU CAN DO NOTHING

Apart From Me Ye Can Do Nothing - John 15:5

What is the opposite of dependence=independence When one seeks to be independent what is he asserting? I can do it on my own; I do not need you; I do not want your authority or control over me; I am not accountable to you

I. The Independence of Satan

- a. A core spiritual principle revealed in the Bible is the fact that God as Creator asserts His sovereign authority over all His creation. Nothing in the created universe, not one **molecule**, is beyond His authority. Ps 96:12-13 *Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice* ¹³ *Before the LORD : for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. KJV*
- b. This implies that all created beings are subject to Him. All created beings are subject to His providential benevolence, His moral laws, pronouncements and the fulfillment of His will. This makes them **dependent** upon Him.
- c. If created beings are dependent upon Him then they may also be said to be **accountable** to Him. Nothing brings these truths into sharper focus than the life, work, and ultimate destiny of Satan. Isa 14:12 *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! KJV*
- d. The revelation of the personality and motives of Satan demonstrate the presence of his desire for **independence** from God. This, we see clearly in the temptation of Adam and Eve. Gen 3:5 *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* NIV
- e. Here, by adopting Satan's ideal Adam and Eve became self-centered, self-sufficient, and thought themselves independent of God. This attitude became their very **nature** and has been transmitted to all their posterity.
- f. The **anti-type** of Satan and his desire for independence from God is found in the person and work of Christ who identifies Himself as being utterly dependent upon the Father. Heb 10:7 *Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. KJV*

II. The Dependence of Christ

- a. Most often we think of Christ in His deity so we miss this element of **dependency** in the teaching of Jesus. But, on many occasions Christ taught His dependency explicitly for our learning.
 1. His very **life** was dependent upon the Father John 6:57 *Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, NIV*
 2. His every **activity** was dependent upon the Father John 5:19 *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. NIV*
 3. The specific people whom He would **save** were given to Him by the Father John 6:37 *All that the Father gives me will come to me, NIV*
 4. The very **words** He spoke were given Him by the Father John 12:50 *So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." NIV*
 5. It is also helpful to us to notice that as Son Jesus did not receive His instructions for life from the Father once for all, but moment by moment. His life was a continual **waiting** on the Father. John 5:20 *For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. NIV*
- b. If the Lord had that kind of entire dependency, how much more are we His **branches** dependent upon the Vine?
- c. The message of Jesus is one of total and **utter** dependence. As Christ was dependent upon the Father, so the branch is dependent upon the Vine

III. The Dependence of the Branch

- a. As we have seen previously, abiding in Christ is indispensable, and had already been established as a **prerequisite** for the spiritual life of the believer. Abiding in Christ is a dependent position.
- b. This dependent **relationship** is reinforced by the simplest and strongest of arguments in the words: *Apart From Me Ye Can Do Nothing - John 15:5*
- c. What Jesus was saying is that it is beyond the **capability** of mortal man to maintain a spiritual life or to manifest it. Any such production or manifestation must therefore be the operation of the Spirit. We are dependent.
- d. As believers we need to once again be reminded that in everything, the life of the branch is to be the exact **counterpart** of that of the Vine. Jesus said of Himself: "The Son can do nothing of himself."

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- e. We the branches must **wait** moment by moment for the instructions from the Vine. And so when Christ says of His disciples: "*Ye can do nothing apart from me.*" He means it literally. We are to be exact counterparts of the Vine.
- f. Therefore, to everyone who wants to live the true disciple branch-life, to bring forth fruit and to glorify God, the message comes: You can do **nothing**. As Jesus was dependent; we are dependent. Matt 10:24 *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. KJV*
- g. As branch-life believers we must have a deep conviction of the **reality** of our dependency. Our real comprehension of this is foundational for building a strong spiritual life. 2 Cor 12:10 *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. KJV*
- h. The Creator of divine life alone has the power to **give life** and to manifest it. Since I don't have it then I am dependent upon Him.
- i. Further, if I can not create divine life, then, neither can I maintain it nor can I **increase** it: every aspect of the divine life is the work of God through Christ and His Spirit. I am dependent.
- j. It is as a man by faith experiences his dependency through circumstance he endures that he will take up that position of entire and **continual** dependence; trusting in God. This is the very essence of the life of faith. 1 Peter 1:7 *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: KJV*
- k. With the spiritual eye he sees Christ every moment supplying grace for the very act of **breathing** and for the deepening of the spiritual life. Job 12:10 *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. KJV*
- l. With his whole heart, such a believer says Amen to the word: I can do nothing. I need the continual **filling** of the life of the Holy Spirit.
- m. This recognition of being entirely dependent also places one in the position of realizing that since he is dependent all that may be **required** in any moment of time is also available to him. Phil 4:13 *"I can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth me."*
- n. The sense of **helplessness**, and the abiding to which it compels, leads to true fruitfulness and diligence in good works.

IV. What This Means to Believers

- a. ***Apart from me ye can do nothing.***-What a plea and what a call every moment to abide in Christ!
- b. We have only to go back to the vine to see how true it is. Look again at that little branch, utterly helpless and fruitless **except** as it receives sap from the vine.
- c. From this position we learn that the full conviction of **not being able** to do anything apart from Christ is just what we need to teach us to abide in our heavenly Vine.
- d. It is this that is the great meaning of the pruning Christ spoke of-all that is self must be cut off, that our confidence may be in Christ alone. Dependence means **letting go**.
- e. Let your heart go out to what **Christ is**, and can do, to His divine power and His tender love to each of His branches, and you will say evermore confidently: "Lord! I am abiding; I will bear much fruit.
- f. My impotence is my **strength**. So be it. Apart from Thee, nothing.

V. Application

- a. Everything we have learned in our natural lives has propelled us toward independence. Spiritually, this makes it very difficult to truly see ourselves as being dependent upon God in any moment by moment sense.
- b. However, our desire for independence from God is really a deception and an illusion because all created beings are utterly dependent upon God for their existence. What are the ways you believe that you are independent from God?
 - 1. Finances?
 - 2. Health?
 - 3. Time?
 - 4. Future plans?
 - 5. Other?