

Without Me You Can Do Nothing

By R.T. Nusbaum

Every one of the names and titles given to Christ are suppose to typify different relationships we are to have with Him. Most Christians are aware of this when it comes to such titles as Savior and Lord. For most believers, these are more than title, as they have found Christ rich and real in these areas and relate to Him regularly in them as such. However, there are other titles that have remained just that B titles. For example, we call Jesus the Vine and say that we are the branches but I wonder how many of us have entered into the relationship of this reality?

For Jesus To be OUR Vine and ourselves be the branches, we must begin to relate to Jesus in this manner. But the real question is in how to make this reality practical. When we experience situations that bring out frustration and anger in us we have the option of reacting outwardly with our own natural tendencies or we have the option of functioning as a branch. Jesus said to we who are branches, "Without me you can do nothing". This is one of the first realizations come to by someone who begins to function as a branch. But this involves greater realizations than just the fact that we need God's help. To realize that "Without me you can do nothing" is a realization that we are unable to do the right thing apart from the Vine. It is more than the fact that we need help: we are helpless. We cannot successfully control ourselves much less bring forth good fruit.

Once you have recognized the lack of capacity by the branch, now you must turn to the full potential of the Vine. But instead of relating as separate from the Vine we must FUNCTION as though we were one (for truly we are one). For example, one who has no idea of how to have a relationship as a branch would to a vine might resort to relating to Jesus only based on Savior or Lord. So instead of proceeding as a branch, he proceeds as a servant under the Lord. This is fine in the right place but falls completely short of a Vine/branch relationship. In other words, we completely limit the power and fullness of God in our life because we are limited to only a few relationships.

The following example might help you understand what I mean: Picture the Bible as being like a big bag filled with names of God that stand for the different relationships we can have with the Lord. They are so myriad and plentiful that "asking in His name" brings forth an abundance of supply. However, picture now our bag that only has a few names and relationships. Every time there is a need or situation, we reach into our bag and can only pull out Savior, Lord, Healer, etc. Wouldn't it be better if we, the church, had entered into all the fullness of Christ?

Let's get back to our example of the Vine/branch relationship. If I am aware of such a relationship and how to function in it, I will not turn to "THE LORD" and ask for help, I will turn to the Vine. I will not cry out for strength or patience, as one who is separate and empty for, at the same moment that I am empty as an individual branch, I have all the potential of the Vine to fill me. As a branch, there is a clear recognition that I am incapable of PRODUCING good fruit but as joined to the Vine I am aware that it is

possible for me to BEAR a tremendous amount of good fruit. Jesus, as the Vine, does not enable me to bring forth fruit but flows through me to produce His fruit.

Moving From Doctrine To Relationship

As I have already stated earlier, much of the titles we are aware of pertaining to the Lord are not functioning relationships we have with Christ. We may learn different titles and even use them in prayer but do we relate to the Living Jesus based on the surety of them? But titles are not the only area of the Christian life that we have not obtained the full potential of Christ. Even as many have done this with titles, so they have done with doctrines. Christians know many doctrines and teachings but they have remained on the shelf of our heads and never been moved into the living chambers of our heart and motivation.

For example, we know that Christ was tempted in all areas like as we are, yet without sin. But for most of us this is just fact and has little to do with our on-going relationship with the Living Christ. What good does it do us to know that there is not a single temptation, situation, problem, or circumstance that He was not capable of mastering? But instead of that being a doctrine we need to depend upon it in our Vine/branch relationship. The practical reality this should convey to us is that Jesus, the Vine, will not succumb to sin or be tripped up by the enemy. Now, we are not just talking about the Vine that is seated in heavenly places but the life of that Vine that flows through every branch. We may trust that this is true of the Lord of heaven but we need to trust that this is true of Him who is our Life within. No one ever questions the sufficiency of Christ when we are considered separate from Him. We are assured by our doctrines that He can handle any trial, test or temptation. But does that have any relational value in our lives? The doctrine of this reality cannot help us.

The only way this doctrine can be transformed from just facts to living relationship is by entering into the Vine/branch relationship with Jesus. Doctrine must become relationship. But somehow we are able to trust these wonderful doctrines while, at the same time, doubting their sufficiency when applied to us.

When the concepts I hold are that the attributes of love, joy, peace, etc. are of my making and must be produced out from myself, then I set about to produce them. But these attributes are not my fruits; they are the fruit OF THE SPIRIT. I don't need someone to convince me of my inabilities; all I have to do is look at my life when I am in turmoil. I can ask the question "What would Jesus do?" till I am blue in the face and it will not help me. Knowing what Jesus would do and doing it are two different things. I don't just need to know what Jesus would do but I need to let Him do it through me. He is the Vine and I am only the branch. Without Him I can do nothing.

This is just an example of one name and also of one doctrine that must become relational. We have hundreds more in the Bible. As long as Scripture remains to be simply a source of information and doctrine to us, we will continue to languish in the pool of defeat. The Word must be made flesh so that others may behold HIS GLORY. It is possible for us to

appropriate these things by assimilating them not just by learning them. Jesus said, "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you". The Word of God has got to become more to us than dead letter and doctrine. We must go to the scripture and feast on Christ as the life of our being. Our motivation must not be one of trying to get better by applying the scriptures to our lives. Instead, we are to eat of His flesh and His blood as OUR LIFE and as we do, He is being assimilated into our beings as Life. As long as we are separated from Him, His Word will only be doctrines by which we try to order our lives. But as we relate as joined, like a branch to a Vine, then the Word will become spirit and life.

What I just described is the Vine/branch relationship. As we look away from ourselves as some sort of source, we will become aware of the Vine's sufficiency. Then we connect in to the root and fatness of the Vine through a faith relationship that trusts Him to come forth. The result will be fruit but it will be fruit that is not of our doing. We may be bearing it but there will be no question in our mind that this fruit is not of our doing for "Without Him we can do nothing." ***