

# Nothing or All Things

#0138

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—November 28, 1975

Jesus is a wonderful friend. Isn't He? Let's turn and listen to the Savior, John 15:1. We are going to look especially at the fifth verse, but we will understand it better if we get the setting. Christ was on His way from the upper room to Gethsemane. As He passed out of that house where the Passover had been celebrated, led the eleven apostles down the narrow streets of Jerusalem, across the brook Kidron, as He drew near the garden of Gethsemane, He passed a large grapevine.

There in the moonlight, it stood, the fresh green of spring. And as He often did, Christ seized the opportunity of the moment to point a spiritual lesson.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.  
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. Now ye are clean through the  
word which I have spoken unto you. 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.  
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" John 15:1–5.

Now let's look at that last line and I want to ask you something. In the light of the verses which we have read, was Jesus trying to tell the disciples that there was nothing for them to do and that they never could accomplish anything anyway, they might as well quit trying? Is that the message that you get from that? No.

The purpose then of saying "without Me ye can do nothing" is not to satisfy us with doing nothing. For the very same verse says, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth" what? Much fruit! Oh yes.

Wouldn't it be too bad to go around in the apple orchard telling the trees, "There is no use to you trying. You can't produce apples anyway. Just as well stop trying because you can never do it." Or to go to the vineyard and say to all the vines, "No use of trying to produce grapes because you can't anyway." This is not the goal of Christ's teaching at all! Nothing remotely like it!

And yet, strange to say, this is the message that some people seem to get when it comes to the spiritual life. No use to make any effort in the Christian life because you can't do it anyway. Nobody can do it. Nobody ever did except Jesus, and He did it for you because He knew you couldn't do it. And so all you can do is

just to trust in what He did and accept that, and someday Christ will come and we will all go to Heaven, and when we get there everything will be lovely.

Now the interesting thing about everything I just said is that it is partly true. But you know, the most dangerous lie is not something that is all falsehood, friends. The more truth there is in a lie, the more dangerous it is. Nobody that is trying to poison animals gives them all poison. He puts the poison in something that is good. Doesn't he? Yes.

Now let's look at what Jesus is saying.

"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" John 15:5.

I submit, and emphasize it by repetition that Christ's objective in what He is saying is to encourage us to bear fruit! Do you agree with me? That is what He is talking about. That is His subject. His subject is not, "You can't do anything." His subject is, "You can do everything that My Father has planned if you will just stay in Me. Abide in Me." That is His subject. Read the whole chapter, and you will see how He emphasized it again and again. "Abide in Me." Remain. Stay. Dwell.

Why friends, no vine branch could bear fruit if it were just being cut off, and then we tried to graft it back, and then cut it off again and then graft it back in. No fruit branch in an orchard could bear fruit that way. The secret is in doing what? Abiding. Staying put.

How do we abide in Jesus? By giving ourselves to Him, through faith, and accepting Him as our Savior. Moment by moment saying, "Lord, I will give myself to You. Lord, I will believe that You are mine, and I will act accordingly."

Notice the seventh verse:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye..." John 15:7-8.

What?

"...bear much fruit"

The purpose is to do what? Bear fruit. Why yes, what would a man have a vineyard for if it weren't to bear fruit? Why cultivate an orchard?

Here is something that I want to share with you from the little book *That I may know Him*.

"Christ is hungering to see and receive fruit. Leaves of profession without fruit are to Christ just as worthless as

those of the fig tree which He cursed" *That I may Know Him*, page 147.

Now the leaves are profession, but the fruit is action. The fruit is performance. The fruit is changed lives.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"  
Galatians 5:22–23.

Yes, fruit on the tree is what God is looking for, and He guarantees that it will happen if we do what? Abide. Abide. How to abide? That is the question.

Let's turn over to Philippians, the second chapter.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" Philippians 2:12–13.

Well, who does it? Do I do it, or does God do it? It is according to which verse you want to hang on. Why not take them both friends. As one of old put it, "Without Him, we cannot, without us, He will not." That is it. Who does it say is doing it in the 13<sup>th</sup> verse? God. Who does He tell to do it in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse? We are to do it. You Philippians that Paul is writing to. "I hope you will be good Philippians. 'Work out your own salvation with fear trembling.'"

Oh, but somebody says, "I can't do it."

Well, without Him, you can't do it. He just got through telling you that over in John 15.

"Without Me ye can do..." John 15:5.

Not very much? How much? Nothing. Well, that isn't very much, is it? "Without Me, ye can do nothing." How would you put that on the blackboard? A zero. Now, if you try again without Him, you make another zero. Now if you get enough zeros together, you really have got something, haven't you? What? Nothing. You can string them all along across the board and back again, and it is still what? Nothing. That is how much you and I can do apart from Christ. By ourselves, of ourselves, in ourselves, we can do what? Nothing.

But remember, when Jesus told us that His object was not to quiet us in non-performance of duty. It was to show us how to get our duty done. "Connect up with Me," He says, "abide with Me. Abide in Me." And then He says, "You will bring forth" what? Much fruit.

Thank God friends for the simplicity of the Gospel! What do you say? Let nobody's mysterious theory rob you of this simple truth, friend. Jesus says it will

work. "If you will abide in Me," He says, "and I in you, My Father will be glorified in your bringing forth much fruit. The fruit of the Spirit in the Christian life. The fruit of souls won."

So don't forget this verse in Philippians. I ask again, who is working in these verses? Is God working? Yes. Is man working? Yes. That is right. As the prophet to the remnant used to say again and again, "Salvation is by faith. God works it in, and we work it out." God works it in, and we work it out. We can't do it without Him, and He won't do it without us.

"There is much said concerning the inefficiency of human effort, and yet the Lord does nothing for the salvation of the soul without the cooperation of man" *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 217.

How much can we do without Him? Nothing. How much will He do without us? Nothing. One nothing is just as big as the other one, folks. If you can think of nothing being very big, it is just a zero.

"Well," somebody says, "I don't think I can do very much."

No. You can't. You can't do very much, but dear friends, thank God, you can do whatever is necessary.

"Man can accomplish nothing without God..." *God's Amazing Grace*, page 319.

How many of you believe that?

"...and God has arranged His plans so as to accomplish nothing in the restoration of the human race without the cooperation of the human with the divine" *Ibid*.

So there are two ways to get nothing done. One way is to try to do it without God. The other way is to let go and let God, and then you get how much done? Nothing.

"Man can accomplish nothing without God, and God has arranged His plans so as to accomplish nothing in the restoration of the human race without the cooperation of the human with the divine" *Ibid*.

Now comes this interesting sentence.

"The part man is required to sustain is immeasurably small..." *Ibid*.

Oh, I am glad to get hold of that because I am a small fellow. I can't do very much, but I don't have to.

“The part man is required to sustain is immeasurably small, yet in the plan of God it is just that part that is needed to make the work a success” *Ibid.*

Do you know what man’s part is? Man’s part is to choose. God put a will up here in the forebrain of every one of us, and He waits for the consent of our wills. And that will—don’t miss it—acts not merely in saying, “I believe,” but in saying, “I will do what God says.” “I will believe what He says, I will do what God says.”

Ah, but the Devil says, “You can’t do it.”

And I say, “Yes. That is true. I can’t do it without Him.” But look at Philippians 4:13. Isn’t this a rich one. You don’t hear Paul saying, “I can’t do anything.”

“I can do...” Philippians 4:13.

What?

“...all things...”

“Oh, I wish I were Paul.”

No. Paul couldn’t do it without Christ, and you can do it with Christ.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” Philippians 4:13.

Do you believe it? How much can you do without Him? Nothing. How much can you do with Him? All things. Quite a difference isn’t there, friends? Tremendous difference. All the difference in the world. What we need is some fine-spun theories, friends, we just need to believe what Jesus said, that we can’t do anything without Him, and we can do everything with Him.

Somebody says, “Brother Frazee, I have tried and I fall.”

Well, did you ever try to walk and fall? What do you do then? That is what I do. I fell several years ago when I was learning, and I have fallen a few times since, but I am keeping on walking. And I know you all did that. Do you why I know? You are here tonight. There isn’t a one of you but what have fallen down somewhere. I am talking about physically, literally, bodily, you have fallen down again and again, haven’t you? Will the one who hasn’t please stand up just now, I want to take a look at him?

Oh folks, I am so glad that when I have fallen down spiritually again and again, the dear Lord was there to pick me up, and He didn’t kick me and say, “Well, you had better learn now. You can’t do it. You better just sit over here and watch me do it.” No. No. He never said anything like that.

He said, "Son be of good cheer. Thy sins be forgiven thee. Rise, take up thy bed and walk." And we walk by faith and not by sight. Thank God we are going to keep going. Aren't we, friends? Praise the name of the Lord.

Back to this little book *That I may know Him*.

"Many teach that all that is necessary to salvation is to believe in Jesus..." *That I May Know Him*, page 115.

Do you know what the next word is? But.

"...but what saith the word of truth?" *Ibid*.

And then this text is quoted, James 2:26. Suppose you turn to it. Let's see what the "but" brings us to.

"Faith without works is..." James 2:26.

What?

"...dead..."

How could dead faith help anybody? Well, it couldn't that is what James is talking about. The seventeenth verse:

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"  
James 2:17.

The twentieth verse:

"Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" James 2:20.

Three times in a few verses, the Bible tells us that faith without works is what? Dead. Dead. And yet there are millions of people repeating and chanting that they believe, and they have the idea that if they make any effort, if they make any endeavor to do what God said, that that spoils it all. Who but the Devil invented such a thing, my friends?

"Many teach that all that is necessary to salvation is to believe in Jesus, but what saith the word of truth? Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26)... It is a fatal mistake to think that there is nothing for you to do in obtaining salvation. You are to cooperate with the agencies of heaven" *That I may know Him*, page 115.

The biggest part of cooperate is operate. The "co" means what? With. Operate with who? With Jesus. Sure. I put my hand in His, and He and I walk the pilgrim pathway together. I fix my gaze on His blessed face, and He says:

“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” John 12:32.

I look, I behold, and I put my will on the side of faith and action. Thank God friends, there is room for all the effort we can make.

“Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection” *Acts of the Apostles*, page 482.

Man is to do what? Make earnest efforts.

“But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God” *Ibid*.

Turn across the page here in James to the fourth chapter and the seventh verse.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” James 4:7.

What is the first word? Submit. What is the next verb? Resist. Which do you do first? Submit. If you don't submit to God, the Devil will laugh at you when you try to resist him. He will play with you like a cat does a mouse that it has captured. But oh, if you will submit to God, if you will tie into the great powerhouse of Heaven, then you can resist the Devil, and remember the same God that tells you to submit to Him, tells you to resist the Devil.

Oh, but I may say, “But Lord, I am afraid of that devil. He has just gotten me down again and again. Lord, you take care of it. You take care of it.”

Listen. Do you remember a man, a young teenager, by the name of David that went down to the valley of Elah? 1 Samuel 17:4. There he saw all the hosts of Israel cowed and beaten by one man. Who was it? Goliath.

Now, did David say, “Well now if we will all pray and have faith, God will strike Goliath with lightning or something to get him out of the way.” Is that what he said? He said, “Let no man's heart fail because of him; [I] will go and fight with this Philistine.” God will give me the victory.” Was that faith or presumption? Faith. Yes.

Now, if he had tried to do it without God, what would have happened to David? Just what Goliath said would have happened to him, he would have taken his head off. That young fellow, if he just boldly in a brash, presumptuous way ventured out there, he would really have gotten what was coming to him for being so foolish as to try to take on that great giant. But when at the command of God, and with the promise of God, and with faith in God, he ventured forth, he came off more

than conqueror, killed Goliath, and oh what a shout of triumph was heard all through those hills from the hosts of Israel.

My dear friends, thank God you and I can be more than conquerors over Satan if we will believe the Word of God and then put forth all the effort of our being believing that God will strengthen us.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you” James 4:7.

He had better flee. If a man has faith in God, trust in God, and goes forward. Let's see, here is another one.

“In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself” *Desire of Ages*, page 466.

Who expels sin? You do.

Oh, you say, “I can't.”

You can't do it without Jesus.

“The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God” *Ibid*.

Well, you take something like smoking. Here is a man, he has smoked for 40 years. Suppose he gets down and prays, “Lord, if You will just take this away from me, I would be so happy.”

Now it is true, God in mercy and pity sometimes takes away the craving. But I tell you, if it happens that way, he will have to learn the lesson that I am studying with you tonight on some other subject. And in most cases, the man that comes face to face with giving up tobacco has to put his will into the thing and fight the good fight of faith. In many cases, unless he gets help from above, he won't be able to do it.

But in every case, if he will give his will to God and then put forth the effort, he can be a conqueror. He doesn't have to yield to the craving of tobacco. It may take at times all the will power he possesses, but that will power will be strengthened by the Spirit of God as he cries to Jesus for help. This is fighting the good fight of faith. This is with the battle against evil temper, a battle against appetite in any form, a battle against any sin. Thank God, Paul put it, “I can do...” what? “All things through Christ which strengtheneth me”( Philippians 4:13).



“Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation” *Selected Messages*, Book 1, page 381.

How much does God do without our cooperation? Nothing.

“Man’s efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory” *Ibid*.

Thank God. The difference, you see, is connection with Jesus. Well, here it is put in a very interesting, graphic way in the book *Welfare Ministry*.

“Let us not be deceived by the oft-repeated assertion, ‘All you have to do is to believe.’ Faith and works are two oars which we must use equally if we would press our way up the stream against the current of unbelief” *Welfare Ministry*, page 315.

And then James 2 is quoted that we read a moment ago.

“Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”  
James 2:17.

What are the two oars? Faith and works. Many of you have been in a boat, here is an oar on the right and an oar on the left. Suppose I just take the oar on the right? I just work away with that oar on the right, will the boat go? Yes, it will go. Where will it go? Around in a circle. Yes.

Well, suppose I say, “I guess that won’t work.” So I quit using that oar, and I start using this oar. Then will I go? Yes, I will go. How will I go? Around in a circle. The other direction you understand. But if I am on a river, and there is any current, do you know which way I am going all that time? I am going downstream, whichever one I am using. This is the picture. Oh friends, why not believe God and take the simple fact that without Him, we can nothing, but with Him, we can do everything that He tells us to do.

Certainly, we don’t want to do more than He told us to do, do we? We are not going to attempt any more than the mark He has set. That is high enough.

Now let’s go back to John the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.  
Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away”  
John 15:1–2.

“Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit” He what? Taketh away. But oh, He is taking me away because I don’t bear any fruit, and I say, “But Lord, You told me that I couldn’t do anything.” I missed the point, didn’t I if I say that?

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 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. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 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. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me...” John 15:1–5.

“He that stays put, He that anchors his soul in me.”

“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me...”

The margin says “severed from me”

“...ye can do nothing”

What is our goal tonight, nothing or everything? What is our goal, nothing or much fruit? Much fruit. Can we do it without Him? Will He do it without us? Shall we give Him everything? Thank God. And Christ’s accepts, oh so gladly, every human agency that is surrendered to Him. Kneeling at the cross, I see Jesus dying for me, the just for the unjust. He died to take away my sins, and as I give Him my life, He accepts me, pardoning the past and giving me power for the future. Thank God.

He takes care of the past, the present, and the future through His abundant promises. Let’s make Him happy by cooperating with Him. What do you say?

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