

John 15:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jesus reiterates 'I am the vine, ye are the branches' (ego eimi he ampelos, hymeis ta klemata). This identifies believers' relationship to Christ - they are not independent entities but extensions of Him, deriving life from Him. The promise follows: 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit' (ho menon en emoi kago en auto, houtos pherei karpon polyn). The reciprocal abiding (believer in Christ, Christ in believer) produces abundant fruitfulness (karpon polyn). The stark conclusion: 'for without me ye can do nothing' (hoti choris emou ou dynasthe poiein ouden). The phrase choris emou (without me, apart from me) indicates separation. The absolute ouden (nothing) excludes any spiritual accomplishment independent of Christ. This is not self-deprecation but theological realism - all spiritual life, growth, and fruitfulness derive from union with Christ.

Historical Context

This verse became foundational to Christian asceticism and mysticism. Desert Fathers and monastic movements structured life to maintain conscious Christ-dependence. Augustine's theology of grace relied heavily on this verse - apart from divine grace working through Christ-union, humans can do nothing spiritually profitable. Pelagian controversy centered on whether humans could do spiritual good independently - Augustine cited this verse proving absolute dependence on divine grace. Reformation soteriology built on this: sola gratia, sola fide, solus

Christus - salvation and sanctification are entirely from and through Christ. Modern Keswick movement emphasized 'victorious Christian living' through abiding. Prosperity gospel's emphasis on human potential contradicts this verse's absolute negation of independent achievement. The verse establishes that Christian fruitfulness is not about willpower, technique, or effort but about maintaining vital connection to Christ.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What is the nature of the 'much fruit' promised to those who abide - is it evangelistic results, moral transformation, or something else?
2. How does the absolute statement 'without me ye can do nothing' shape our understanding of human agency and responsibility?

Interlinear Text

ἐγώ	εἰμι	ἡ	ἄμπελος	ὕμεῖς	τὰ	κλήματα	ὁ
I	am		the vine	ye		are the branches	
G1473	G1510	G3588	G288	G5210	G3588	G2814	G3588
μένων	ἐν	ἐμοὶ	κάγὼ	ἐν	αὐτῷ	οὗτος	φέρει
He that abideth	in	me	and I	in	him	the same	bringeth forth
G3306	G1722	G1698	G2504	G1722	G846	G3778	G5342
καρπὸν	πολύν	ὅτι	χωρὶς	ἐμοῦ	οὐ	δύνασθε	ποιεῖν
fruit	much	for	without	me	nothing	ye can	do
G2590	G4183	G3754	G5565	G1700	G3756	G1410	G4160
οὐδέν							
G3762							

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Colossians 1:10 (Parallel theme): That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

John 15:16 (Parallel theme): Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Galatians 5:22 (Parallel theme): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Proverbs 11:30 (Parallel theme): The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

2 Corinthians 13:8 (Parallel theme): For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

John 5:19 (Parallel theme): Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

James 1:17 (Parallel theme): Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

2 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Romans 7:4 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

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