

# Without Me - Nothing

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [ 0 : 00 ] We can sing to God's praise from Psalm 62, Psalm 62 at verse 5, singing down to verse 10.
- Psalm 62 at verse 5. My soul, wait thou with patience upon thy God alone. On him dependeth all my hope and expectation.
- He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he. He only is my sure defence, I shall not move it be. In God my glory placed is, and my salvation sure.
- In God the rock is of my strength, my refuge must secure. Ye people, place your confidence in him continually. Before him pour ye out your heart.
- God is a refuge high. Surely mean men are vanity, and great men are a lie. In balance laid they hardly are, more light than vanity.
- [ 1 : 14 ] Trust ye not in oppression. In robbery be not vain. On wealth set not your hearts, and as increased is your gain.
- We're going to sing from verse 5. My soul, wait thou with patience upon thy God alone. My soul, wait thou with patience upon thy God alone.
- On him dependeth all my hope and expectation.
- He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he.
- He only is my sure defence. I shall not murder thee.
- [ 2 : 46 ] In God my glory, and my salvation sure.
- In God the rock is all my strength.
- My refuge most secure. He is my God alone. He is my God. He is my God. He is my God. He is my God. There is your heart.
- Surely men are my mercy, and yet men are alone.
- [ 4 : 17 ] In the turning point, we may lay the talk of God.
- No oppression, and robbery, no drain.
- On a well said in your pure heart when you increase in your gain.
- I'd like us to turn to the passage that we were reading together, the Gospel of John, chapter 15.
- And we can read again, verse 5. John, chapter 15, verse 5. I am the vine, ye are the branches.
- [ 5 : 39 ] He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing.
- I am the vine, ye are the branches. There is an English idiom, which I'm sure you're all familiar with, which suggests that it's not what you know that matters, but who you know.
- And we understand what that saying means. The friend of the king will have the ear of the king far more so than any other member of the kingdom.

But we could argue that it is of the utmost import for every one of us to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

To know him as he is represented to us in the scripture. But it is not just enough for us to know Christ with a head knowledge.

[ 7 : 06 ] It is important, as you probably understand and believe, to know him personally. To know him intimately. To know him so that what you are taught about him from the scripture becomes your all-abiding passion.

You know the need that there is for you to be in that relationship with him that his people enjoy.

The verse here takes us as close to a mystery as any verse of scripture does.

It is a mystery for the Lord's people to be told that Christ is in them and they are in Christ.

And that is what these verses teach us. He is using the illustration of a tree, the vine and branches that are part of the vine.

[ 8 : 28 ] Nothing could be more interlinked. The branch depends upon its substance that it is grafted into the trunk.

Separate from the trunk it becomes dead. It loses its source of sustenance.

And Christ wishes his disciples to understand this. And I am sure that when they were taught this, they were in awe of what he had to tell them.

Just as much as you and I would be in awe of the implications of what is taught by him. If you go back just two or three chapters, you find the account given to us of the intimate supper that the Lord enjoyed with his disciples and the disciples with the Lord.

You will read of the occasion where he washed his disciples' feet. Where he tenderly ministered to them and taught them what it was to be a servant.

[ 9 : 54 ] On the same occasion, he sat at a supper with them. And they subbed with him.

And Christ continued to teach them concerning his own death and the necessity of it.

And there is no question but that they would be disconsolate. Because his death, although they did not understand it, he spoke of it in terms of him going away from them.

That they did understand. And they could not bear the thought of being separated from him. But he insisted on teaching them that even though this parting must come, that it was for their good.

And even though he was to part from them, in a very real sense, he was going to remain with them. And it's no wonder that their head couldn't handle such a thought.

[ 11 : 10 ] On one hand, he was saying that he had to go. And the way that he was going, nobody could follow him at that time. But the time would come when they would follow him.

And there's a whole host of different teachings that he presented to them. And it is no wonder that they struggled with it.

But as they and we read his word and hear what he has to say.

We need to understand how caring the Lord is. In the sense that he understands the need that we have.

We have been reminded of that at the weekend. Because at the weekend, we participated in the Lord's Supper. And what is the Lord's Supper?

[ 12 : 10 ] If it is not something that the Lord has given to his church in order to remember him. But in order to remember him in a very specific and a special way.

He has given us in the supper a sign and a seal of his own interest in us as his people. Of the intimacy of his own union with us by faith.

We in him and he in us. And those who participated, those who participated by faith, understand the importance of that.

And we don't always appreciate the significance of it. You know, we can sit at the Lord's table without exercising the graces necessary for us to appreciate what Christ is doing for us.

What Christ not just has done for us in his death on the cross. Inevitably that is part of our thinking. But what he is doing in the sacrament through the spirit.

[ 13 : 26 ] He is ministering to us through our senses. And reminding us of, in our remembrance of him, of the fact that he will never be parted from his own people.

And we have these words recorded for us in Matthew's gospel and Mark's gospel. When he spoke to his disciples, I say unto you, I will not drink any more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God.

I always remember that. I've quoted it. I've quoted it to you before. I always think of that text and it always comes to mind when I read it in the scripture.

But the importance of it for the disciples, it probably filled their heart with longing and with yearnings of spirit that only he could meet.

But what I was remembering was, I remember an old Christian lady speaking to us about her own husband, her late husband. And he was on his deathbed.

[ 14 : 54 ] And a Christian friend came in to see him, a lady friend that he had known for all his Christian life. And I remember her telling me how completely lacking in a jealous spirit she was.

Towards the relationship that she understood her husband had with this woman. A completely innocent spiritual relationship of many, many decades.

And she let them sit together in what she knew was probably his last hours. Sharing spiritual fellowship with him.

But what reminds me of that. I remember her telling me this. And I remember how she saw what her husband, according to the flesh, enjoyed with this woman.

There was nothing in it that could be construed as anything other than what it was. An intimate spiritual relationship based on the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 16 : 16 ] And this woman, when she parted from her friend, that was the text that spoke to her. She said, as she came out of the room, this was the text that spoke to her.

And at that moment, she told that to this woman.

She said, I'm not going to meet him again, this side of glory. And that's the way it was for her. But Christ spoke to her.

Even though he parts physically from them, he will remain with them throughout what remains of their time on earth and beyond that. But looking at the text, what we find in the text is a reminder to us that that is not always the way it was for the disciples or for you, a Christian.

He says in verse 5, I am the vine, he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing.

[ 17 : 58 ] And the Lord's people are in the privileged position of having discovered that without Christ, they are incapable of producing spiritual fruit.

That is something that they now know and now understand in a way that they could not possibly appreciate it in the days of their ignorance.

They probably thought that they could produce fruit that would satisfy God.

Even though in truth it was partly and insignificant and poison if you like. But they mentioned with their human understanding that God would in some way be satisfied with their spiritual meager fare.

Temporary obedience, occasional obedience, good works and whatever it was.  
Temporary obedience, good works and whatever it was.

[ 19 : 32 ] Temporary obedience, good works and whatever it was.

And because they were without Christ, they were not part of the commonwealth of Israel. They were strangers to the covenant of promise.

They were without hope and without God in the world. Paul's explanation, Paul's description is powerful.

They were far off, they were enemies, they were separated from God. And the child of God understands this. And as they are by nature, they cannot bring forth fruit for the Lord.

And the scripture explains to us why that must be so. Why it cannot but be so. Paul, if you remember, speaks of it in the first epistle.

[ 20 : 59 ] That he writes to the Corinthians. And he's describing to us there how the resurrection is going to be enjoyed and embraced by the Lord's people.

When, because of who they are and what they are, how they will experience it. But notice, he takes you right back to the way things were in the fall.

And because it was the way it was, the fall could not but affect them in this way. 1 Corinthians 15, we read.

So it is written, the first man, Adam, was made a living soul. The last, Adam, was made a quickening spirit.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy.

[ 22 : 05 ] The second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy. As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we are born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Paul teaches us through that passage many things.

But he also reminds us of our connection with our first parents. That in Adam we fell.

In Adam we sinned. In Adam we experience the death that God has pronounced upon all who are descendants of Adam.

By nature we are all of the stock of Adam. By the spirit we become the stock of the last Adam.

[ 23 : 08 ] By faith that is what becomes true of the child of God. Without that there is no possibility of fruit. Paul insists on it.

John, quoting the words of our Lord and Saviour, teaches us the same thing. Eric Alexander, in one of his sermons, talks about the experience of the child of God.

And when he comes to faith, or when she comes to faith, by the word of God, they come into, they are drawn through the straight gate.

And they are brought into the broad, out of the broad way, into the narrow way that leads to life. And they are kept in that way through Christ.

And Jesus here, in this passage, insists that this is the only way that the Lord's people can possibly be able to bear fruit.

[ 24 : 13 ] Until we come to Christ, it was the broad path. And our fruit was the fruit of the wilderness, which was corrupt and perishing.

But when we come to Christ by faith, when we come to embrace him through the drawing of the Holy Spirit, then we are grafted into the vine and we are enabled to bear fruit.

Jesus Christ says to us, I am the vine and you are the branches. And the believer is united by faith to Jesus.

And it is first and foremost a spiritual union. He uses this image, he uses this picture. We can readily understand what he is saying to us.

We have a tree, we have a vine, and we have the branch. And the branch will be the branch that bears the fruit. But without being tied, without being linked to the actual physical tree, fruit is not possible.

[ 25 : 25 ] Obviously, it is using symbolic language to describe what is a very, very real relationship. The reality of it is brought home to us forcibly.

And we cannot imagine. You can't think many of the people who speak about this verse.

Remind us of the impossibility that there is for the fruit-bearing branch to be at one moment in the vine.

And then separate from the vine. And then in some way to be grafted again into the vine. Because you can only be one or the other.

You can't be in and out of it. You can't be alive one moment and dead the next. Undecked one moment and alive the next. That's not what Christ is teaching.

[ 26 : 28 ] In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. He says this. And it's, I suppose, the simplicity of it may be overestimated.

Ephesians 5, verse 30. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. We are members of his flesh, of his body, and of his bones.

Now, if you want to study a verse that will give you time to chew, you go to that verse. Think about what it teaches. Because I don't think there are many verses in the New Testament that have had as many different varieties of interpretation.

The divine Charles Hodge says it is the most, well, I don't think he's prone to exaggeration. He says it is the most difficult version of the Bible to understand.

And probably when you try and read what others have written, you'll find out why it is so difficult. Because the different interpretations that are placed upon it.

[ 27 : 55 ] But what we need to understand, and it's not, it's dangerous to oversimplify it. But you remember what comes along with these words. Paul is stating, Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

In that context, you'll remember, he uses the love of Christ for the church. And compares it to the relationship that exists between a husband and a wife.

And he uses the greater illustration, the greater image to emphasise the lesser. But not to negate the import of it.

But it is still, he says, he says himself, this is a great mystery. It is no minor thing to state that the believer is in Christ.

Or that Christ is in the believer. It's not something trivial. It is something that is marvellous. It's something that is beyond comprehension. Again, if you go back to the Apostle Paul, and probably his mind, when he was writing to this epistle to the Ephesians, it was so full of this relationship with Christ that he couldn't get away from it.

[ 29 : 19 ] Because throughout, he comes back to it again and again. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

What that tells you is that this relationship that Christ is speaking about, that his church will enjoy with himself in time, was something that God had foreordained in eternity.

The election of his church was something that he had undertaken before the world was. So that when he elected you, the believer, he did that work in Christ.

And again, if you're wanting simplicity, if you're wanting something that is easy for you to understand, then I'm afraid it's not. The election of God is something that is deeply mysterious.

But the fact that Jesus is speaking about this relationship, that the church of Christ, the believer in Christ, enjoys in the here and now that he has bequeathed to his church, that when he was taken, take the step to go to the cross, and through the cross into the experience of death and from death to glory, he was not going to leave his church behind.

[ 31 : 09 ] The church was in him. The believer was in him. John Murray, in his book, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, he speaks of the union with Christ.

And it's interesting why, Murray himself explains why he does it. I think there's 11 chapters in this short book and union with Christ appears at chapter 10 or something, I think.

And he explains why union with Christ occurs by stating that everything else is undergirded by this truth, that the believer and Christ are united.

But this is what he says, there is no election of the Father in eternity apart from Christ. And that means that those who will be saved were not even contemplated by the Father in the ultimate counsel of his predestinating love apart from union with Christ.

They were chosen in Christ. And what does that say to you? If you are overwhelmed with the thought of the union that you enjoy with Christ, and Christ insists that the believer has with himself, that will not be changed by anything.

[ 32 : 53 ] And he takes you back into eternity to see the fountainhead, if you like, of that experience. There is nothing that makes your experience of salvation through Christ more certain.

And you always find that the believer feels that their salvation is jeopardized by what they are themselves. Now that isn't a license for misbehavior, but it is a reminder that even misbehavior, while it is never something that God commends, that it will not frustrate his redemptive purposes.

He is in them and they are in him. They have put on Christ. There is a union to Christ that involves him in union with the Father.

Do you remember him saying that? Just a few chapters after this, the high priestly prayer of Christ. He is praying to his heavenly Father, and he is saying to his heavenly Father in chapter 17, that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one.

I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. The focus there, I suppose, for many is on the unity that should be part of the experience of the body of Christ.

[ 34 : 46 ] But there is something equally extraordinary there, and that is the fact that if you are in Christ, and Christ is in God, and you are in God. However, that is explained or understood.

When we look at the scriptures, they teach us about this, the nature of this relationship that the believer enjoys with Christ.

United to Christ. Remember when we think about death, what do we think of? The souls of believers are after death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.

But the body, we are told, rests in the grave. But not just rests in the grave. The body, being still united to Christ, rests in the grave.

And how offensive it is to God to hear of people speak of someone being at rest or being at peace when they never enjoyed that rest or that peace through union with Christ by faith in life.

[ 36 : 11 ] How could they possibly imagine that it is going to be true of them in death? It can only be true of the believer. And the believer can take that as a promise that God will fulfill in their experience.

One final thought. They who are in Christ, we are told, and I suppose this was the crucial part of this passage, they are to produce fruit.

fruit. They are to bring forth fruit. Not just fruit, but much fruit. They are to bring forth much fruit.

Well, where do we start? What fruit are you looking for? What is the fruit that marks out the Christian? Oh, you say the Christian is marked out by his church attendance.

The Christian is marked out by his prayer. prayer. The Christian is marked out by their church membership.

[ 37 : 17 ] The Christian is marked out by the company they keep. The problem with all of these is that you don't have to be a Christian to have any of these marks.

They are not necessarily the fruit of a union with Christ. They can't be like them without being what is there.

That's not to say that we dismiss them or we discard them because they should be there for the believer. They should be there for the believer to identify.

But there are other evidences which are fruit. which depend upon the relationship of faith with Christ.

And I'm sure there are many. What about for example if you are a Christian surely one of the things that is a burden to you that you still carry around with you the vestiges of self-righteousness.

[ 38 : 46 ] As a believer you trust that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to you. You trust in that. That is what that is what you depend on because you know that from head to toe the finished work of Christ would satisfy God and that you are covered.

And yet having been clothed with that righteousness what do you find yourself doing? you'll take a hold of some rug and cover yourself with it or place it on your body somewhere.

Humanly speaking how ridiculous is that if you were going to some grand event and you put on your finery and then put on your tangerines on top of that.

It's ridiculous but no less ridiculous than it is when a person who has believed in the finished work of Christ has been what atones for their sin and the righteousness that is now there through him that they would lay claim to something else on top of it.

And that is a burden to you and that is something that challenges you and that is something that grieves you and you understand that. You are troubled by it and you would wish to be rid of it.

[ 40 : 24 ] There is a vital union with Christ where your sins offend God and your sins offend you and you desire to be genuine penitent sinners before God.

Your sins are sins that you want rid of. You want to be cleansed of them. You are not smugly satisfied that they exist there because you know how odious they are in the eyes of God.

We are in the world but we are not of the world. Our conversation is in heaven and we think more of what God has prepared for us in Christ rather more than we think of what we have here in this world.

Are these not fruits that you could recognize and there's more and more and more and Christ has ensured that we are able to bring forth such fruit and more fruit in abundance.

the true vine, a vine that is destined to bear fruit and the branches that are grafted by faith into him, our fruit bearing is assured however much we bemoan that fact.

[ 42 : 12 ] may God encourage us to think about the privilege that we have to be united to such a saviour who has promised that we will be indeed those who will bear fruit for him and in his name.

Let us pray. O Lord our God as we come before you we give thanks for the fruit of your people are enabled to bring forth.

However much they bemoan their lack of fruit, however much they fear that when the day of the harvest comes that they will have empty baskets to present before God.

God. But we give thanks that it is from you that our fruit is to come.

Help us to look to you that this may be so. Remember your people with all their needs grant mercy for our sins in Jesus' name. Amen.

[ 43 : 24 ] I'm going to sing in conclusion verses from Psalm 92. Psalm 92 verse 12.

I'm singing in garlic. I'm singing in abys out Ruby and son Cheumyth cadyingom Meth trong George H cues weull, which proclaims as possible as the temple and the priests who establish for the kingdom and you will and describe the

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 46 : 34 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 49 : 04 ] Amen.