

# Without Me, You Can Do Nothing

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Good afternoon, everyone. I'd also like to say "Hello" to everyone on the west coast. I hope you're having a good Sabbath. Ours started out with rain this morning and actually delayed a lot of people coming. Now the sun is out. I'm not going to tell anybody here but I did turn the air conditioner on since it was kind of warm. So, if anybody gets cold, Jason knows how to turn it down—after I give him permission. No, I'm just kidding.

Brethren, in just two weeks from tomorrow night God's people are going to be gathering together to observe the most solemn and most important event in God's plan. Everything, moving forward in God's plan, hinges from what we're going to be observing on that Passover night. On His final night before His arrest, His trial and His execution, Jesus sat down with twelve of His disciples and instituted a very important and a very meaning ceremony. And this set a template moving forward for everyone that God has called, has repented, has been baptized, has received His holy spirit and entered into a relationship with Them. Everyone moving forward would be observing what Christ instituted that night.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 11. The four verses which you are very familiar with, we're just going to read them. They are literally packed with instructions on how to approach and how to observe the Passover. And I want to spend just a little bit of time on that. First Corinthians 11 and we'll pick it up in verse 23. The author, and again, Paul was writing and he said:

**1 Corinthians 11:23.** *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24. And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me."* (NKJV)

Jesus Himself instructed those disciples, and all of us, to be in a frame of mind of focusing on Him and on that sacrifice while they were observing that. This examination process, that we should be in the midst of, is not something that we just do prior to Passover. It's also something that we do during Passover. He said, "Do it in remembrance." We are to be thinking about it. We are to be examining what we're doing and thinking about it in relation to Him.

Verse 25:

**1 Corinthians 11:25.** *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant..."* (NKJV)

And the King James says, “the new testament.”

**1 Corinthians 11:25b.** *... the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.* (NKJV)

Again, our focus during that should be thinking about what He did for us, what that sacrifice, what that bread and what that blood mean. He said to do it in remembrance of Him.

He says, “as often as you do it.” There are actually two Greek words that are translated “often” in this case. And again, there are two Greek words and they’re Strong’s 3740 and 1437. I’m just going to read this out Zodhiates, what he says about those two words. He says, “The two words together (*hosákis, án*) [He pronounces them, which I’m not going to try to do.], mean *however often, as often as.*” In 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26 it says [and he’s saying the meaning], ‘*each time that you do so*’ (a.t.). There is no implication of urgency or frequency.”

So in other words, this is not talking about how often you do it in frequency. He said, “Rather it means that each and every time you do so.” So when He says “as often as you do it,” it means every time you do it, every single time you do it. It doesn’t mean it’s a free-for-all and you decide when you want to do it. If you want to do it every week, that’s okay. He’s saying when you do this, every time you do it, this should be your frame of mind when you are taking it. And that is, thinking about Him. Zodhiates said, “the Lord’s table must be a reminder of Christ’s death until He comes back.”

So, again it’s... I know there are some that have thought that that just meant that we were able to set it and that’s not what that means at all.

Verse 26:

**1 Corinthians 11:26.** *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till he comes.* (NKJV)

And again, these verses are just packed with information.

That word “proclaim” is, again, Strong’s 2605. I’m not going to try to pronounce it, but it means *declare, preach, show, speak of, or to teach.*

It’s interesting in this day of media and mass audiences, we think of “proclaiming” as something as words that are being spoken. Proclaiming the gospel is just a media activity or spoken verbal words. And here is a proclamation, a proclaiming by one’s actions. By one’s doing what he was told, He said that is a proclamation. And it’s not by words; it’s by what we do. This is something that is not well understood in this age and I would even go as far as to say in our church culture to understand that a proclamation can be actions.

It's very clear, brethren, that this was instituted for the firstfruits at this time and was to be observed as a re-affirmation of the acceptance of the sacrifice by both His broken body and His shed blood representing His new covenant until His return. Our calling at this time into the God family is so incredible in its scope. We, as limited humans, try to grasp the magnitude of our calling and, frankly, it just boggles our minds. Even the disciples and those said, "We don't even know what it's going to be like. All we can tell you is we're going to be like Him when He appears." But to try to go through and....

As people, we always want to try to flesh out concepts and ideas and concepts and to think about. But what lies ahead of us is beyond our ability, I think, even as humans to comprehend it if we understood. It's sort of like looking on Christ's face when He told Moses, "You can't look at My face and live." I don't think we could fully grasp and understand it and live. Our invitation as the firstfruits has been given to us to become literally the Bride of Jesus Christ. And again, it's beyond our comprehension. We can relate to it at a human level, but to really understand it ...

And to think that God took us—the weak, the base, the nothings of this world—and extended an invitation to us. Not an open invitation to everybody, but He has handpicked the weak, the base, those that are nothing. And He extended that to us to marry His Son to serve those that come after and to share what's been given to us in understanding now and to assist Jesus Christ in bringing many sons to glory.

All of us should be actively preparing ourselves for the rapidly approaching Passover and spring holy days. All of us should also be actively preparing for the role which God has called us to fill in His family plan. And we understand—again, what a precious truth to understand that God is a family. And when we look among ourselves and to be able to see one another with all of our warts, with all of our shortcomings, with all of those things, something about each and every one of us was precious to God and we should be precious to one another.

These two preparations (both preparing for the upcoming holy days and to prepare for the role that we are), you can't separate them. What we are doing is almost inseparable, but that preparation for both of those has to include a review and an evaluation of ourselves and our focus in preparation for what's ahead not just in two weeks, but for the future, for our lives, for the world.

We all understand, brethren, very well the need to put ourselves under a microscope, to closely examine ourselves. I think about the physical when we are looking for leaven. And I've been following some of the experiences of some where you're looking for all of the little crumbs and things that were left in the couch or in this or that. And then all of a sudden you come upon something. You stumble on some big cracker or a loaf or a piece of bread. It's not just the microscopic small things. And just as us, that examination also includes us to take a large scale approach to our calling.

With what we've been given and what is expected of us, to properly prepare for the upcoming Passover as well as our future, we must examine both the individual sins, those elements in our lives that are incompatible with God, and we must examine the overall relationship with God and with Jesus Christ in our calling. Not only the micro, not only us, but we have to back out and we have to take a macro view because this is about relationships, first and foremost relationships with God and with Jesus Christ. We have to look at the big picture.

Today, what I'd like to do is let's zoom our focus out and look at the bigger relationship issues and come to appreciate what we've been given, but also to examine that relationship and to see if there are areas in that that we need to work on because, again, it's such an important part of our calling.

Go over in Hebrews 9. We're going to break into a thought here. But the context was the author talking about the Aaronic priesthood and the system of sacrifices that was instituted under the old covenant. Let's start in Hebrews 9 verse 9. It says in Hebrews 9:9:

**Hebrews 9:9.** *It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices were offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—*

*10. Concerned only with food and drink, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation, (NKJV)*

And again, you can look that word ["reformation"] up 1357. It means to *straighten out, to rectify, to put in line.*

It says they were "imposed until the time of reformation." Now remember this letter went to the Hebrews, who were not only very well versed, they were still looking at primarily the Old Testament, the covenant and what was involved in it. So, it wasn't like this was us today trying to understand the old and the new. This was written to people that very well understood the old. And Paul was saying, "That's been done away." This scripture says the times of reformation has come since these things have been done away and replaced by Christ who was the reality of the previous system.

Verse 11:

**Hebrews 9:11.** *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.*

*12. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

*13. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,*

*14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (NKJV)*

Just hold your finger there. Let's turn over to Isaiah 61. Isaiah 61, here is a Messianic prophecy that we're very familiar with and I'm going to read but then I'm going to tie it back to what we're talking about. Isaiah 61:1, it says:

***Isaiah 61:1.*** *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn..." (NKJV)*

The five seconds that we read that verse 2, that prophecy covers a period of over 2000 years from the beginning of that to the end. For the sake of time, we're not going to turn there, but over in Luke 4 when Christ stood up to read that prophecy, He very purposely stopped halfway through the verse. Then He told them, "Today, this has been fulfilled." In other words, He said, "I have proclaimed all of that."

The reformation began at His death when all of the shadows were made obsolete by His sacrifice, by His resurrection, and by the acceptance by the Father of His blood for all sins. The new covenant was entered in by those that the Father drew, but it's not a closed one-time offering. That is offered to us at this time, the firstfruits, but we know from God's plan and from the holy days (that give us a pattern of His plan), it's going to be offered to everyone that's ever lived to respond to it and to make a choice to either accept it or reject it.

Go back to Hebrews 9 and pick it up in verse 15. It says:

***Hebrews 9:15.*** *And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, (NKJV)*

He's the one that mediates it. He's the one that parcels it out. He is our High Priest.

***Hebrews 9:15b.*** *... by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under that first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

*16. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. (NKJV)*

The words that we read that are translated as "covenant" and "testament" are exactly the same word, Strong's number 1242. And they are used interchangeably here. But it means *a contract or a will or a disposition*.

**Hebrews 9:17.** *For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. (NKJV)*

In other words, Christ, when He was born and until His sacrifice covered and He died and made the new covenant in effect, the old covenant was still being done. The priests were still offering sacrifices, but at His death the old had passed away.

Verse 18:

**Hebrews 9:18.** *Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.*

19. *For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,*

20. *saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.*

21. *Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.*

22. *And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.*

23. *Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

24. *For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*

25. *not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— (NKJV)*

Steve, in his last sermon, [With One Sacrifice](#), covered this in great detail. You might want to review that.

**Hebrews 9:26.** *He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world, but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

27. *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*

28. *So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (NKJV)*

In His brief tenure on this earth, Jesus brought more truth, which John called "light" to this earth than all of the men of God before and after Him. He was a perfect teacher. Not only were His words full of wisdom, but His actions were never in conflict with His words. Everything that Christ said He lived. Everything that He told and said about Himself He was. Whether He was talking to the hypocritical scribes and the Pharisees, His disciples, the gentiles and the Samaritans, His words and His actions set a perfect example for us today. And His teaching is just as timely to us two thousand years later as it was then.

Turn over to Matthew 7. Here's a case where the audience consisted not only of His disciples, but also some of the leaders, which were the scribes and the Pharisees. And we're going to pick it up in verse 12 of Matthew 7. It says:

**Matthew 7:12.** *Therefore [and He's teaching them], whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (NKJV)*

I remember when I was a child, we would start elementary school. And I don't know this... We don't even like to think about cigars now, but every child got a cigar box and in it they put some large pencils, some big pink erasers, a ruler. And the ruler that was, at least where I grew up, it was painted kind of a golden. And it had—they called it—the Golden Rule on it. The Golden Rule was "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That is an almost word for word quote from Matthew 7. It's the epitome of the second and the great commandment.

Just hold your finger in Matthew 7. Well, no, I'll tell you. Let me just read these to you. I don't want you running out of fingers trying to hold your place. I'll just read Matthew 22 verse 37.

**Matthew 22:37.** *Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind."*

*38. This is the first and great commandment.*

*39. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*

*40. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets". (NKJV)*

Matthew 25:40, and again I'll just refer to it. You can write it down and look at it later.

**Matthew 25:40.** *And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' (NKJV)*

How do we treat others? Do we treat them the way we would like to be treated? It doesn't say, "the way they treat us." It says, "We should treat them the way that we would want them to be treated." Even when this world is not nice, when everyone is trying to take advantage of you, you still treat them the way you would like to be treated. That is, the second and the great commandment.

Continuing in verse 13 of Matthew 7, He said...

Because I think when you really understand verse 12—what you want people to do, do also—you go, "That's hard! That's difficult!" And do you know what? You're right.

He said:

**Matthew 7:13.** *“Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.  
14. Because narrow is the gate; ... (NKJV)*

Notice this:

**Matthew 7:14b.** *... and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (NKJV)*

The scribes and the Pharisees relied on their genealogy for their salvation. They didn't feel they had to change themselves. They were Abraham's seed. They were in the—I've said it before—the diamond lane. They got to pass everybody else up because they were carpooling. Everybody was stuck back here and they were just whizzing along because Abraham was one of their forefathers. And it just wasn't true.

Today, there are many of us that feel... And first I'll start broad. The Christian World: “Well, I believe on Jesus Christ and it says I'm saved. So, I'm in the diamond lane and I'll go live my life the way I want to. I don't have to change. I don't have to do anything different.” I think we can even narrow that down to today in God's church. Somehow, there are feelings that if you are in a group, somehow that gives you sort of a leg up on everyone else. Brethren, I'm here to tell you it just isn't true! It depends on our one-on-one relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

Verse 14:

**Matthew 7:14.** *Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way [and few] ... find it. (NKJV)*

Verse 15:

**Matthew 7:15.** *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. (NKJV)*

Christ was saying, “You better be careful. They didn't come to serve you. They came to have you serve to them. They want to eat you. They want to grow fat off of you. They want to use you for their pleasure and their agenda.”

Before we move forward, I want us to think about something. Christ was indicting and warning about the Pharisees and the Sadducees. But when was the last time any of you ever ran into a Pharisee or a Sadducee. No, they've been gone a long time. So, was this just filler for the Bible? Does it have any relevance to us today? Was it written so that we can be thankful we're not like that Pharisee, that Sadducee? “Well, I'm sure glad I'm better than that guy! I'm sure glad we don't have any of this or that we don't have any of those issues!”

Verse 16:



**Matthew 7:16.** *You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? (NKJV)*

When all is said and done and when all the smoke clears, a person's fruit—that which is showing on the outside by their lives, the way they live, the way they treat others—it will reflect a person's motive; it will reflect a person's heart, a person's intent, a person's focus.

Now, do you know what? That makes it real easy for us to look at one another and go, "Oh, let me check that out." What about us? What about in our self-examination when we evaluate what is really down in here?

Verse 17:

**Matthew 7:17.** *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*

*18. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*

*19. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (NKJV)*

We are wielding a double-edged sword. And we know a double-edged sword, if you've seen them, is a very decisive tool for evaluating those that would claim to be apostles and prophets and teachers and friends. But we also know a double-edged sword cuts both ways. Is it not a very valuable tool that we can use for judging and evaluating and examining ourselves?

Put a marker in Matthew 7 and let's go over to Hebrews 4. I want to just drill down into that concept just a little bit. Hebrews 4 verse 12, it says:

**Hebrews 4:12.** *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (NKJV)*

Now if you think about what this is saying, this is talking about using it on yourself because you can't go and use it on someone else and get to this level of detail.

**Hebrews 4:13.** *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him [talking about God, notice:] to whom we must give account. (NKJV)*

Notice in writing the letter, the author of the epistle of Hebrews, he didn't say that "you are going to have to give an account" he said; "we." He didn't exclude himself from the body of Christ and from the world. He said, "We are going to give an account."

I don't think it's possible for us to personalize this too much—that we must give an account. And we need to be careful not to deceive ourselves into thinking that somehow we're under some special arrangement that excludes us from having to give an account for our sins. The Bible doesn't leave wiggle room. It says, "We are going to have to give an account."

Look over in 1 John 1 and I'm going to pick it up in verse 5, 1 John 1. It says:

**1 John 1:5.** *This is the message which we have heard from Him... (NKJV)*

John was relating that he heard this directly from Jesus Christ's own lips.

**1 John 1:5b.** *... and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*

*6. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*

*7, But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (NKJV)*

Now, does that walk in the light require something of us? Brethren, it absolutely unequivocally requires something. What? Let's continue.

**1 John 1:8.** *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (NKJV)*

Here's what it requires of us.

**1 John 1:9.** *If we confess our sins, ... (NKJV)*

I want to pause for a moment. If we confess our sins, is that not giving account to God? We have sinned and we're giving an account to God. Is that not absolutely necessary to continue our walk with Him? We must give an account to God of our behavior, our actions, even, as we read earlier, our thoughts and our intents. Brethren, if we give an accounting, the outcome is sure.

Verse 9:

**1 John 1:9.** *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NKJV)*

If we think we don't need to, continue reading.

**1 John 1:10.** *If we say that we have not sinned, ... (NKJV)*

In other words, if we don't give an account.

**1 John 1:10b.** ... we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (NKJV)

Have you ever wondered why it has to be that way? God knows our sins. He knows what we do. Have you ever thought anyone has ever come before God and confessed their sins and God would react with "I didn't know that! I didn't realize you had that problem."?

Go over in Psalm 139. There is a reason that we give an accounting to God now. Psalm 139. Now before I give my opinion, we know that God's ways are unsearchable. We're on a totally different plane, but to some degree I understand what I need in order to change. Psalm 139:23, it says:

**Psalm 139:23.** Search me, ... (NKJV)

And that means *to examine intimately*.

**Psalm 139:23.** Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, ... (NKJV)

And that means *to examine, to prove, to test*. And it means *to test*—you're not going to want to hear this—*by trial*.

**Psalm 139:23.** ... and know my anxieties; ... (NKJV)

Or the King James says:

**Psalm 139:23.** ... and know my thoughts: (KJV)

We're asking God to bring our faults and our sins to our attention so that we could work on them. If they remain hidden and buried in us, we (a) will never be aware of them because we decide ourselves what we want to work on; and (b) we'll not be able to expose them to our consciousness so we can ask God for the strength and mercy to work on them.

Our giving an account to God is not just the second grader that was talking during recess and 'fesses up. It is to bring it to a conversational level with God so that we know it in our consciousness. And we can start to work on it with God's help and we can ask God to help us.

We're asking, and this sure sounds counterintuitive to humans, we're asking God for trials and tests to expose our shortcomings so we can work on them. It hurts. That's not fun. It's not a pleasant thing. It hurts. Do you know what? There just is no easy way going forward. That's what Christ was talking about when He talked about that way and how narrow and difficult. There is no painless way to move forward. And why? Because we have to come face-to-face with ourselves, our sins and our faults. When we give an accounting to God and they're [ours sins and faults] open between us, only then can we move forward without the weight of them dragging us down.

Continuing in verse 24:

**Psalm 139:24.** *And see if there is any wicked way in me, ... (NKJV)*

Notice: "I want you to bring that up and show me."

**Psalm 139:24b.** *... and lead me in the way everlasting, ... (NKJV)*

Jeremiah 10.

Again, God knows our faults even before we know them. He knows our sins. He knows our weaknesses much better even than we do. But we need to know them in order to start to deal with them.

Jeremiah 10:23, it says:

**Jeremiah 10:23.** *O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it's not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*

*24. O LORD, correct me but with justice, not in Your anger lest You bring me to nothing. (NKJV)*

I want to read that out of the Tanakh. It says:

**Jeremiah 10:23.** *I know, O LORD, that man's road is not his to choose. That man as he walks cannot direct his own steps.*

*24. Chastise me, O LORD, but in measure; not in Your wrath lest You reduce me to naught. (TAN)*

Now, let me tell you, none of us want to go before God and say, "I've had a pretty good year. Just hit me with Your best shot so You can show me what I need to work on." When we go to God, we need to ask for patience and for mercy. And remember when I said Christ was what He spoke and what He was, [were] exactly the same. Did you know when we go to God and ask for mercy and patience, we'd better be doing that with one another. We'd better make sure that what we're asking God to give us we're willing to give to someone else. That's hard too! But we should also expect, as a result of that, that situations are going to arise that will allow you to work on it. That's the nicest way I can think of of saying, "You had better expect some trials."

We're not on this earth to try to find the easy way through life. That's what Jacob did. And finally one day he said, "Do you know what? This is getting me nowhere. Every time I try I just dig deeper." And finally he prevailed with God. He said, "I've got to work on this and I can't let up."

So, we need to go to God and we need to ask him for patience and mercy, but we also need to expect that God is going to give us trials that will allow us to work on that.

Back to Matthew 7. I think I told you to put a marker there. I hope I did. If not, dig it out again. Matthew 7 and verse 20, it says:

**Matthew 7:20.** *Therefore by their fruits you will know them.  
21. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of  
heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (NKJV)*

God requires that we bear fruit. This concept of bearing fruit is such an integral part of God's word, such an integral part of our spiritual journey, it's part of our spiritual DNA. You can't separate those.

But the fruit that we bear, brethren, is godly fruit, fruit from Him, fruit from His spirit working in us, fruit that is born by our trials and our struggles to overcome and to ask Him for help. Godly fruit is not what we bear by our works. Now be careful there. It's fruit that God produces in us as a result of our sincere desire to walk in His ways, to follow the lead of Jesus Christ and to submit ourselves to Him.

Keep your marker in Matthew 7. Turn over to John 15 and I'll pick it up in verse 4. Let's just look at couple of concepts with this bearing fruit. John 15:4.

**John 15:4.** *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, ...  
(NKJV)*

It's not the branch.

**John 15:4b.** *... unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (NKJV)*

You cannot bear godly fruit disconnected from God and from Jesus Christ.

**John 15. 5.** *"I am the vine and you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (NKJV)*

If you want a title for today's sermon, it is:

### Without Me You Can Do Nothing

**John 15:6.** *If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.  
7. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ... (NKJV)*

In other words, we take nourishment back just as a fruit on a vine. It stays connected to the vine, but it receives the life-giving nourishment from that.

**John 15:7b.** ... and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it will be done for you. (NKJV)

I think the better we understand that “My words abide in you and ask what you desire,”—the more we’re plugged in and connected to God—those requests are going to be spiritual in nature. They’re going to be to spiritual growth. They’re going to be things that we need to be like God. He said, “If you ask for that, it’s going to be done.”

**John 15:8.** By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples. (NKJV)

As human beings apart from God’s spirit no matter how hard we try, we cannot bear godly fruits because we can’t change what’s in our hearts. Our hearts—Jeremiah 17:9—I don’t even need to quote it. The only thing, the best things that we can produce if we really get down and try and try and try, the best things we can produce are outward counterfeit fruits that will not stand the test of time.

Think back twenty, thirty, forty years. There were some that we looked to as very powerful, very spiritual, very godly on the exterior. Only God can change our hearts. And the very best that we can come up on our own apart from God is the same fruits that the scribes and the Pharisees bore—selfish, showing, empty, hollow fruits built on our works.

Go back to Matthew 7. And as you’re going back, just keep in mind as we’re reading this in Matthew, it was in relation to their fruits being judged. Matthew 7, we’ll start it in verse 22. It says:

**Matthew 7:22.** Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ (NKJV)

There was this self-satisfied pride of what they had accomplished. They didn’t see that God was working through them, that they were the recipients of God’s grace, His mercy or His gifts.

**Matthew 7:23.** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (NKJV)

You know practice it as a way of life. Not a temporary lapse.

They were quite satisfied with where they were and with their progress. If, when we examine ourselves and we’re satisfied with our spiritual growth and our progress, if I could borrow one from, I don’t know, “You might be a redneck if”... If you’re satisfied, you’re probably in trouble because what you’re looking at is yourself.

I think it is beneficial that we look in our rear view mirrors and see that we have moved forward with God's help. I think that's part of our examination, but to be satisfied with our current state is not a good place to be. Our growth is not a passive activity on our parts. We have to be an active participant asking Him to do those things in us.

You can turn loose of your marker in Matthew 7. Turn over to Luke 8. You're very familiar with the parable of the sower and the seed. Keeping in mind that we are the "seed" it's talking about, I just want to focus on the seed that fell on the good ground because that's what we all ... that's the category that we desire to be in and that's the pattern of what we're wanting to do. Luke 8:15, it says:

***Luke 8:15. But the ones that fell on good ground are those who having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. (NKJV)***

This is one of those scriptures that we all want to be in this category. It's kind of like the churches in Revelation. We all want to be in the Philadelphian category. Well, we all want to be in the fruit that fell on good ground. I don't want to insult anybody, but it's almost a no-brainer for us to say, "That's the one I want to be."

Let's de-construct this verse because it describes about five responses that the seed on the ground had that caused them to be productive and to bear fruit. It describes how we respond to the nourishment, the instruction, and the correction that we receive from God. Again, we are the "seed." And I'm just going to tell you what they are and then we're going to put them under a microscope.

- Hear the word,
- Noble,
- Good heart,
- Keep it, and
- Patience.

These are the action words that I want to look at. I think if we examine them we'll see that they are inextricably woven together. Let me just re-read Luke 8:15.

***Luke 8:15. But the ones that fell on good ground are those who having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. (NKJV)***

I want to look at other translations of this because I think the fullness of this will come out as we look at some of the other translations.

The King James says:

***Luke 8:15. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience. (KJV)***

To put it in the context of this sermon, examination has to lead to change. In fact, one of the fruits of examination is change. If it doesn't, brethren, we're just spinning our wheels; we're just going in circles.

Look over in James 1.

And you can turn loose of that [Luke 8:15]. I'm going to read it in other translations, but we're not going to go back there.

So, James 1 and verse 22, it says:

**James 1:22.** *Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24. for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (NKJV)*

I'm trying to decide if I have enough time. Turn over to Revelation 3. I want to make a point as you're turning over to Revelation 3.

Every one of the letters to the churches ends in "Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." And in every letter there is admonition for action. And I think some are more obvious than others.

I think we think, "Well, the Philadelphia, God was just pleased as punch with them." But I think through the lens of this day and age, I want you to consider something. Look over in Revelation 3. We're going to pick it up in verse 7 (Revelation 3:7).

**Revelation 3:7.** *"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, 'He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens': (NKJV)*

And let's go to verse 10 because it ties right back to what we're reading about the seed.

**Revelation 3:10.** *Because you have kept My command to persevere, ... (NKJV)*

And remember that persevering was to receive the nourishment but to make changes, to act on it, to go through all of those trials and all of those things that are not for our destruction but for our shaping and molding into what God wants.

He says:



**Revelation 3:10b.** ... I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (NKJV)

And here is the admonition:

**Revelation 3:11.** Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (NKJV)

Verse 13:

**Revelation 3:13.** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' (NKJV)

Again, every Christian, as far as I know, wants to be in this category. I want to be a Philadelphian, but I think we all have to admit, today there has never been so much wholesale departure from what was delivered to us and what we're to hold fast to. It is astounding to have come through all of those things the last twenty, thirty, forty years and then there's something that will titillate someone and they're gone. Hold fast that no one take your crown.

Even the letter to the Church of the Philadelphians was admonished to hold fast that no one take their crown. And again, brethren, we had better pay very close attention in this age with the issues that keep springing up and keep chipping away at the foundation of the faith that was delivered.

I've said it. I know I'm going to say it again. Go back to when the Israelites were ready. They had gone through the forty years of wandering. Those had died off. There they were on Acacia Grove looking over into the promised land and twenty some thousand of them died because they didn't hold on. They didn't wait. They gave up in sight of the goal. They gave up and they quit and they went back into the world.

That leads right to the next translation of Luke 8:15. The English Standard Version says:

**Luke 8:15.** As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. (ESV)

"Heard the word and hold it fast." It is precious. It is a jewel. There is no price that can be put on the word. We must, brethren, we must have a love of the truth because it was those that didn't have a love of the truth that it was so easy to discard.

The Revised Standard:

**Luke 8:15.** And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience. (RSV)

Darby:

**Luke 8:15.** *But that in the good ground, these are they who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*  
(DARBY)

The next thing I want to look at is patience. Patience is one of those words that, again, can be misunderstood today because the word “patience” has this connotation of I’m going to say “a passive waiting for something to happen.” We just put our feet up and we just grit our teeth, and we just tough it out. I remember asking my mom for something and she would say, “Just be patient!” No, actually her favorite saying was, “Hold your horses!” I’m sure you’ve heard that. But it means that. It does mean we have to wait. But it means much more than that—just waiting for something to happen, a passive waiting.

Let’s look at these two approaches. Look over in Luke 12 and we’ll pick it up in verse 42. Luke 12:42 and we’re going to compare and contrast these two.

**Luke 12:42.** *And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?”*

**43.** *Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.*  
(NKJV)

Doing! Not waiting, doing. Remember the parable of the talents. There was one who goes, “I knew you were hard. I’ve just been waiting for it and here it is. I took care of it. Here it is.” What happened? Was Christ pleased with that?

This action of “so doing when he comes” means to be occupied with a task.

There’s a principle regarding this. I know you’ve heard this, but that is, if you want something accomplished ask a busy man. If you ask a person that has time to do something, it probably isn’t going to get done. There’s a reason he’s got time on his hands. If you want something done, ask somebody that doesn’t have time to do it—somebody that you actually have to put upon to do it.

Keep in mind, though, the reward of accomplishing something is to get more work. When you’re busy and you’re doing not only, brethren, in life or in your job is the reward of doing a good job to get more work, guess what? In God’s family, do you know what the reward is? You see this is a very godly principle.

Continue reading, verse 44. It says:

**Luke 12:44.** *Truly I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.*  
(NKJV)

So blessed is him that so doing, guess what? You're going to get more. You're going to become a ruler over all of that. Now, at first blush, the reward of doing a good job is you get to be a ruler. You get to sit on the throne. You get to eat chocolates and you get to bark orders at the minions down there. Ha-ha—in your dreams! Until you realize that the ruler is a servant that serves his master and how does he serve his master? By serving those that he rules over.

This is the pattern that Jesus Christ set for us when He came. It's a pattern that we're going to have impressed in our minds when we take the Passover and participate in the foot washing.

Just hold your finger there in Luke 12. Go back to Matthew 20. Matthew 20 verse 25:

**Matthew 20:25.** *But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.*

*26. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.*

*27. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—*

*28. just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* (NKJV)

In God's family, in God's kingdom, the greater position one has the greater service he offers, the more he gives. Do you know what, brethren? That includes the Father and the Son. This concept is so counterintuitive to what man, blinded by Satan, thinks and does.

How does God the Father serve us? What did He give? John 3:16. Write that scripture down and study it and meditate on it. He gave us the ultimate gift, the ultimate sacrifice! God continues to serve us by giving us mercy and forgiveness and help when we need help. It's not a one shot deal. It is on a daily basis that God serves us; the Father serves us.

If you don't think that takes effort, think about how difficult it is when you have to forgive someone who has terribly wronged you or hurt you. How much work does it take to forgive and to show mercy to someone knowing there is a good chance it's going to happen again? It's hard. Consider God—the effort, especially, that demanded the death of your closest friend and family member.

The work that God produces in us is the same. "Well done, good and faithful servant. You did a good job. Now, get back to work." And we're going to gladly do that because there is going to be, by that time, there's going to be a lot of work to do. Christ says, "My Father works and I work until now." God is not passively waiting.

On the one hand, we all rightly scoff at this idea that we're going to... This is the world: "Well, you're going to get a harp and you're just going to strum it and play forever and

waft around on the clouds.” And we go, “Ha-ha. No. No. We’re going to be on a throne and we’re going to be eating chocolate and telling other people what to do.” Ha-ha.

In your own life’s experiences because Christ didn’t return when we thought He was and some lost heart and fell aside, and the longer we are, the more it hurts and the harder it gets and the more it takes to just hang on. But I want to give you a key here, one that you can relate to. Have you ever noticed how fast time passes when you’re busy? In your own life’s experiences, “Where did this day go? The time just flew by!” An active person, one that’s busy, will never feel as if he has enough time to get something accomplished.

On the other hand, someone that’s just waiting for the five-o-clock whistle to blow, time goes so slow. You look back at the clock and only three seconds have past. “And when is it ever going to be time to get out of here? I have been waiting all day to go home.” And it will just never get there. A person who is passively waiting—you can take this to the bank—will get discouraged and distracted and over time will just give up and quit.

Let’s go back to Luke 12. Pick it back up in verse 45. These are not my words; these are our Master’s words. Luke 12:45.

**Luke 12:45.** *But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master delays his coming,’ ... (NKJV)*

“I have waited and I’ve waited and I’ve waited and he just isn’t going to come.” But notice what the result of that is.

**Luke 12:45b.** *... and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, (NKJV)*

Here a person for a time changed his actions as a result of wanting to appear acceptable, but he didn’t allow what was inside; he didn’t allow his heart to be changed. He changed on the outside, but not on the inside.

Verse 46:

**Luke 12:46** *the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. (NKJV)*

Now that doesn’t mean he’s going to literally take a knife and chop him. “Cut him in two” is when you “cut horses” or you “cut cattle.” In other words, you’re going to put the goats on one side. That’s what this is. It’s a cutting; it’s a separating that He’s talking about.

Brethren, patience is not just passively waiting. To be passively waiting will almost guarantee that we will become discouraged and quit. To put it in modern parlance, the biblical meaning of this is: We need to keep on keeping on!

The Greek word is... I'm going to try this one. It's Strong's number 5281, *hupomoné*. And it means *a cheerful or hopeful endurance, patience, patient continuance*.

We'll see this word in a greater meaning in Romans 2. Look over in Romans 2 verse 6. This same word is used. Romans 2:6, it says:

**Romans 2:6.** *who "will render to each one according to his deeds":  
7. eternal life to those who by patient continuance [hupomoné] in doing good...  
(NKJV)*

In other words, not just waiting, not just continuing to wait, but in an action of doing good, of doing what's right, of living God's way.

**Romans 2:7.** *eternal life to those who by patient continuance [hupomoné] in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; (NKJV)*

Brethren, we have to keep moving forward. We have to continue to allow God to work in us, knowing that He's shaping us into what He wants in His family. We have to continue our walk with God.

The Bible in Basic English of Luke 8:15:

**Luke 8:15:** *And those in the good earth are those, who having given ear to the word, keep it with a good and true heart, and in quiet strength give fruit. (BBE)*

The Cassirer of Luke 8:15:

**Luke 8:15.** *The seed that falls in good soil, on the other hand, signifies those who bring a noble and generous heart to the hearing of the word, who hold fast to it, who, by virtue of their power of endurance, yield a rich harvest. (CAS)*

The New American Bible:

**Luke 8:15.** *But as for the seed that fell on rich soil, they are the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a generous and good heart, (NKJV)*

In other words, not only do you hear it, but you embraced it. You made it a part of you. It became your heart.

**Luke 8:15b.** *... and bear fruit through perseverance. (NKJV)*

Again, much better than just patience—perseverance.

The New International Bible:

**Luke 8:15.** *but the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (NIV)*

The New Revised Standard:

**Luke 8:15.** *But as for that in the good soil are those who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patient endurance. (NRS)*

And Young's Living (This will be the last one), Young's Living Translation:

**Luke 8:15.** *And that in the good ground are they who in an upright and good heart having heard the word do retain it and bear fruit in continuance. (YLT)*

Again, patience can sound like just waiting. And it's obvious that this means to continue on, to continue doing what you're doing.

Brethren, we need to consider what we're doing right now in preparing ourselves for the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread by examining ourselves and asking God to help us change and to continue to give us His holy spirit. In fact, that's a large part of this element of perseverance.

As we approach the Passover and Holy Days ahead, let's be very circumspect in our preparations for them. We have to look at the small hidden secret sins, just as we look for all of the physical hidden leaven. But we also have to look at the big picture and to evaluate our relationships with God and with Jesus Christ.

Final scripture Matthew 5. This quality that I'm about to read has to become part of our DNA. Matthew 5 verse 6:

**Matthew 5:6.** *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. (NKJV)*

Are we looking to our Father and to our brother, Jesus Christ? Are we drinking in and feeding on Them and the words and the truth that were delivered? Are our hunger and our thirst for Their righteousness? For what They are?

Brethren, as we move forward, let's consider our relationships with God and Jesus Christ as our High Priest. We're being fashioned into a member of the very family of God. As we approach the Passover, let's be ever mindful of His words "without Me you can do nothing."