

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 7

I am
the
vine;
you
are
the
branches.
John 15:5

MAN'S INSUFFICIENCY

*Scripture Texts: Isaiah 40:6-8; Luke 19:41-44; Luke 24:25;
John 15:4-5; 2 Corinthians 3:5*

Why does God in His Word warn us of our weaknesses? Why do we put a gauge on a gasoline tank? Of what benefit is it to us to know our lack of ability, our weakness before temptation, and our slowness to believe? It is a step toward something better, toward success in our Christian life. It is the difference between victory and defeat.

God's wisdom is much higher than man's wisdom. Our earthly life is short and uncertain. We are weak and blind and slow to believe. All our goodness and strength must be drawn from God. Without vital connection with Christ, we can do nothing.

Last week we looked at God's holy plan to lift man to be conformed to the image of His Son and to possess the Kingdom of God eternally. Today we see an opposite picture, one of weakness and lack.

MEMORY VERSE: *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.*

—2 Corinthians 3:5

All Flesh Is As Grass

Isaiah 40:6-8 Into a chapter extolling the power of God and the glory of the Gospel are inserted this contrasting view of the fleeting life and feeble powers of man. Grass withers. Flowers fade. Just so, man is born, feels the health and hopes of youth, but soon age and illness blight them, and the grave claims him. Even while we live, we cannot **make one hair white or black** (**Matthew 5:36**). We **dwelt in houses of clay** (**Job 4:19**). Man cannot **direct his steps** (**Jeremiah 10:23**). His **heart is deceitful above all things** (**Jeremiah 17:9**). Perhaps our greatest weakness is failure to know our weakness. To know it truly should lead to dependence upon God. We see here the strength for our dependence—**but the word of our God shall stand for ever**. (See **Mark 13:31**.) There is our strength. On Him we can depend. From Him we can draw life and strength.

Blinded by Unbelief

Luke 19:41-44 The people of Jerusalem had heard Jesus teach and had seen His miracles. Yet they heard not the truth in His Words. They saw not God in Him. Jesus did not withhold from them. He longed to give (**Matthew 23:37-38**).

If thou hadst known . . . Why didn't they know? Unbelief closed their minds and hearts. **The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God** (**1 Corinthians 2:14**). Unbelief robs mankind of many blessings from God.

Luke 24:25 **O fools, and slow of heart to believe.** Jesus spoke to some of His disciples. They knew Him. They had His Words and **all that the prophets have spoken**. Here were all the answers they needed. Yet they grieved and wondered and stumbled in their progress for the Lord. Why? Unbelief—how often it is our stumbling block too. It blinds our spiritual eyes to light even as we read. Or worse, it leaves the Book unread and us in ignorance.

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Nothing Without Christ

John 15:4-5 Here in a metaphor, Jesus shows the close union of Him and the church—united as vine and branches. Separated from the vine, no branch can bear fruit. It is the same with us and Christ. Only when connected with Him does our soul live. Only then can we bear spiritual fruit. Only then can we live holy and do deeds pleasing to Him.

No man has life in himself, either physical or spiritual. We must receive it from God. **In him we live, and move, and have our being . . . (Acts 17:28). The Father hath life in himself and has given to the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26). God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (1 John 5:11).** We need to realize and act upon Christ's warning, **without me ye can do nothing.** Think of the greatest saint you know. What would he be separated from the vine, Jesus Christ?

Nothing of Ourselves

2 Corinthians 3:5 Paul did not claim to think anything as of himself. His discussion was of the Gospel he had taught these people and which had transformed their lives. This was a source of joy and satisfaction to Paul, but he knew it was accomplished by God. There was nothing of his own in him that could do it. He knew his weakness and dared not think of any accomplishment as his doing. Any good thing done by a human is done by God through him. Jesus said, **There is none good but . . . God (Matthew 19:17). Our sufficiency is of God.** He is the Superior. He is the Supplier. He is the power. His is the glory.

No doubt most of us have known of a promising young person, gifted with ability and intentions to use it for God. He began, God used him, and praise was received. It "went to his head." Pride took over, and his usefulness to God was gone. Why this disaster? How can it be avoided? God's grace is needed to balance ability and dependence on God. **For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (1 Corinthians 4:7).**

Things We Can Do

We know we are weak and forgetful and foolish and rash and easily tempted. How shall we profit by this knowledge? **Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12). If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God (James 1:5). Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might (Ephesians 6:10).** How can we do this? This is done by Bible study, prayer, church attendance, trust, and obedience to the Holy Spirit. These things bring strength from the Lord.

JUST A THOUGHT

Prayer should be the key to the day and the lock of the night.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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