

*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Psalm 127:1*

In affirming that God governs the world and the life of man, the Psalmist does so for two reasons. First, whatever prosperous event may fall out to men, their ingratitude is instantly manifested by their ascribing it wholly to themselves; and thus God is defrauded of the honor, which is his due. Solomon, to correct such a perverse error, declares that nothing happens prosperously to us except in so far as God blesses our proceedings. Secondly, his purpose was to beat down the foolish presumption of men, who, setting God aside, are not afraid to undertake to do anything, whatever it may be, in exclusive reliance upon their own wisdom and strength. Stripping the, therefore, of that which they groundlessly arrogate to themselves, he exhorts them to modesty and the invocation of God.

He does not, however, reject either the labor, the enterprises, or the counsels of men; for it is a praiseworthy virtue diligently to discharge the duties of our office. It is not the will of the Lord that we should be like blocks of wood, or that we should keep our arms folded without doing anything; but that we should apply to use all the talents and advantages, which he has conferred upon us. It is indeed true that the greatest part of our labors proceeds from the curse of God; and yet although men had still retained the integrity of their primitive state, God would have had us to be employed, even as we see how Adam was placed in the garden of Eden to dress it. Solomon, therefore, does not condemn watchfulness, a thing which God approves; nor yet men's labor, by which when they undertake it willingly, according to the commandment of God, they offer him an acceptable

sacrifice; but lest, blinded by presumption, they should forcibly appropriate to themselves that which belongs to God, he admonishes them that their being busily occupied will profit them nothing, except in so far as God blesses their exertions.

*Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?*

**John 1:38**

“Where dwellest thou?” By this example we are taught that from the first rudiments of the Church we ought to draw such a relish for Christ as will excite our desire to profit. And next, that we ought not to be satisfied with a mere passing look, but that we ought to seek his dwelling, that he may receive us as guests. For there are very many who smell the gospel at a distance only, and thus allow Christ suddenly to disappear, and all that they have learned concerning him to pass way.

The circumstance of Andrew immediately bringing his brother expresses the nature of faith, which does not conceal or quench the light, but rather spreads it in every direction. Andrew has scarcely a spark, and yet, by means of it, he enlightens his brother. Woe to our indolence, therefore, if we do not, after having been fully enlightened, endeavor to make others partakers of the same grace.

We may observe in Andrew two things which Isaiah requires from the children of God; namely, that each should take his neighbor by the hand; and next, that he should say, “Come let us go up into the mountain of the Lord, and he will teach us” (Is. 2:3). For Andrew stretches out the hand to his brother, but at the same time he has the object in view that he may become a fellow disciple in the school of Christ. We ought also to observe the purpose of God, which determined that Peter, who was to be far more eminent, was brought to the knowledge of Christ by the agency of Andrew; that none of us, however excellent, may refuse to be taught by an inferior; for that man will be severely punished for his peevishness,

or rather for his pride, who, through his contempt of a man, will not deign to come to Christ.

*Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.*                   **John 18:17**

“Then the maid that kept the door said to Peter...” Peter is introduced into the high priest’s hall; but it cost him very dear, for as soon as he sets his foot within it, he is constrained to deny Christ. When he stumbles so shamefully at the first step, the foolishness of his boasting is exposed. He had boasted that he would prove to be a valiant champion, and able to meet death with firmness; and now at the voice of a single maid, and that voice without threatening he is confounded and throws down his arms, Such is a demonstration of the power man.

Certainly all the strength that appears to be in men is smoke, which a breath immediately drives away. When we are out of the battle, we are too courageous; but experience shows that our lofty talk is foolish and groundless; and even when Satan makes no attacks, we contrive for ourselves idle alarms which disturb us before the time. The voice of a feeble woman terrified Peter; and what is the case with us? Do we not continually tremble at the rustling of a falling leaf? A false appearance of danger, which was till distant, made Peter Tremble; and are we not every day led away from Christ by childish absurdities? In short, our courage is of such a nature that of its own accord it gives way where there is no enemy; and thus does God revenge the arrogance of men by reducing fierce minds to a state of weakness. A man filled not with fortitude but with wind, promises that he will obtain an easy victory over the whole world’ and yet no sooner does he see the shadow of a thistle than he immediately trembles. Let us therefore learn not to be brave in any other than the Lord.