

Katamares: Acts: 18:1-11.

18:3 *Of the Same Trade*

The Value of a Life of Work.

Chrysostom: Let no one who is a craftsman be ashamed, but rather those who are reared for no purpose and do nothing, the ones who employ many servants and enjoy an immense court. For being raised as an unceasing worker is the nature of philosophy. The minds of such people are purer, more vigorous. The one who does nothing is really one who does much in vain and, full of indolence, in an entire day accomplishes nothing. The one engaged in work will take on nothing superfluous in haste, neither in deeds nor words nor thoughts. For such a person's entire soul, throughout the day, has been set on a painful means of existence. We, therefore, ought not to scorn those who support themselves by the work of their hands, but we should really count them blessed because of this.... Paul, after countless journeys, despite such great wonders, stayed with a tentmaker and sewed skins. Angels honored him and demons trembled at him, and still he was not ashamed to say, "These same hands served my needs and those who were with me." ⁵ Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 18.3–5. ⁶

Paul Does Not Live in Idleness.

Chrysostom: It was with them that [Paul] stayed, and he was not ashamed to do so; on the contrary, he stayed precisely because he had found a suitable lodging place. For it was much more suitable for him than royal palaces. And do not laugh as you listen.... For just as to an athlete the gym is more useful than soft cushions, likewise to a warrior an iron sword is useful and not a golden one. And he worked while preaching. ⁷ Let us be ashamed, we who live idle lives even though we are not occupied with preaching. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 39. ⁸

Earning an Honest Living.

Augustine: [Paul] has repeatedly said of himself that he was working with his own hands so as not to burden anyone, ⁹ and it is written of him that he joined with Aquila because of the similarity of their handicraft, so that they might work together to maintain a livelihood. From these and other such passages of the Scripture it is clear enough that our Lord does not reprove a person for procuring these things in the usual manner, but that he reproveth a person who would serve in the army of God for the sake of these things, one who in his works has his eye fixed not on the kingdom of God but on the acquisition of these things. This entire precept is reduced, therefore, to the following rule: namely, that even in the procuring

of these things we should keep our mind on the kingdom of God and that in the service of the kingdom of God we should give no thought to these things. In this way, even if these things be lacking at times (and God permits this usually for the purpose of exercising us), not only do they not weaken our resolve, but they even strengthen it for trial and approval. Sermon on the Mount 2.17.57–58.¹⁰

Making Heavenly Tents—The Spiritual Sense of Paul’s Labor.

Origen: Tents can refer to perfect souls, which also is true of the name Israel derived from “seeing God.”
¹¹ Now these “tents,” says Scripture, are “just like shady groves, like paradises beside streams and like tents that the Lord has pitched.” ¹² It thus shows that there are other tents that the Lord has pitched, which the tents of Israel resemble. I have to go forth beyond this world in order to see those that are “the tents the Lord has pitched.” They, no wonder, are those he showed to Moses when he was building the tent in the desert. The Lord said to him, “Behold, you shall make all according to the model that has been shown to you on the mountain.” ¹³ In imitation of these tents, therefore, Israel must make its tents, and each of us must prepare and build our own tent. In light of this, I do not believe it happened by chance that Peter and Andrew and the sons of Zebedee were fishermen and that Paul was a tentmaker. And as they, summoned from their trade of catching fish, are changed and become fishers of people when the Lord says, “Come, follow me, and I shall make you fishers of men,” ¹⁴ so too Paul—for he too was called “apostle” through my Lord Jesus Christ—was changed by a similar transformation of his trade so that, just as they were turned from fishermen into fishers of men, so he was moved from making earthly tents to building heavenly tents. He made heavenly tents by teaching each path of salvation and showing the way of the blessed dwellings in the heavens. Paul made tents also by establishing churches when “he proclaimed, in its fullness, the gospel of God from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.” ¹⁵ In this way he too made tents in the likeness of the heavenly tents, “which God showed to Moses on the mountain.” ¹⁶ Homilies on Numbers 17.4.6–7.¹⁷

18:6 *Your Blood Is on Your Heads*

Accountable for Those Entrusted to Us.

Chrysostom: “He argued in the synagogue every sabbath and persuaded Jews and Greeks.” But “when they opposed and reviled him,” he withdrew. By this [Paul] expected to draw them all the more. For why did he leave that house and go to one near the synagogue? Was it not for this? For it was not danger that he saw there. “Testifying to them,” it says. He did not yet teach, but he testified. “When they opposed,”

it says, “and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said, ‘Your blood be upon your heads!’ ” He does this to frighten them not only with words but also with action. And he argues rather vehemently inasmuch as he has already persuaded many of them. “I am innocent,” he says, “from now on I will go to the Gentiles.” So we too are accountable for the blood of those entrusted to us, if we neglect them. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 39.1

Rejection of the Gospel As Suicide.

Ammonius: “Your blood be on your own heads.” These words are obscure, but I think they mean this: Whoever does not believe in Christ, who is life, seems to kill himself by passing from life to death and shedding, as it were, his own blood through his self-inflicted death. Therefore he means that when you kill yourselves through disbelief, you receive the punishment of murder, so I am innocent. Following this train of thought it may be also said that he who kills himself is punished by God as a murderer. Similarly if a person is the reason why someone kills himself, he will be guilty in the same way. Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 18.6.2

18:9 *Do Not Be Afraid*

Strengthening for Witness.

Didymus the Blind: In Corinth, God appeared in a vision to the apostle and urged him not to be afraid to teach, and he made clear to him the reason why he should speak and not be silent, namely that, in that town, there were many that God knew would receive the proclamation of the gospel. For since it was natural that Paul, being human, was afraid of some attack against himself, seeing that then nearly everyone there was still pagan, God encourages and rouses the teacher to be brave by saying, “I am with you and will prevent anybody from attempting to harm you, so that nobody lays a hand on you.” ³ Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 18.9–11.4

18:10 *I Am with You*

Allaying Apprehension.

Chrysostom: “Do not be afraid,” he says. This was enough to rouse him, either because he was reproved as being afraid or because he was not reproved but encouraged that he would not suffer this. (For he did

not always allow them to suffer terribly, so that they might not become too weak.) For nothing pained Paul so much as those who disbelieved and gave opposition. This was more difficult for him to bear than dangers. "And do not be silent," he says, "for I have many people in this city." It was probably for this reason that Christ appeared to him. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 39.5