

Without Me, ye can do nothing.

John 15:5

THE EXERTIONS OF THE WORKER can do nothing without God's aid. For neither can the husbandman, when he has spent the utmost pains in cultivating the ground, forthwith ascribe the produce of the crops and the rich fruits to his own exertions, as he finds that these are often in vain unless opportune rains and a quiet and calm winter aids them, so that we have often seen fruits already ripe and set and thoroughly matured snatched as it were from the hands of those who were grasping them; and their continuous and earnest efforts were of no use to the workers because they were not under the guidance of the Lord's assistance. As then the Divine goodness does not grant these rich crops to idle husbandmen who do not till their fields by frequent ploughing, so also toil all night long is of no use to the workers unless the mercy of the Lord prospers it.

St John Cassian, *Third Conference with Abbot Chaeremon*, ch. iii, NPNF, Second Series, Vol. XI, p. 423

IN THE OUTER WORLD, the husbandman tills the ground; but in spite of his tilling, he needs rain and showers from above. If no moisture comes from above, the husbandman has no profit from his tilling of the ground. So is it with the spiritual world. There are two factors to be taken into consideration. The man must cultivate with a will the ground of his heart, and labour upon it – for God requires the man's labour and toil and travail. But unless clouds of heaven make their appearance from above, and showers of grace, the husbandman does not profit by his toil.

St Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, tr. Mason, Homily xxvi, §10, pp. 189–90

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

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