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The Dependence of the Words

Paul and Silas (on their journey) make a stop in Philippi, a chief city in Macedonia (verse 12). They had a special call for it (verse 9). Being there the next Sabbath, they apply themselves to praying and preaching (verse 13), and each of these was crowned with a blessed effect.

By the former Lydia is converted (verses 14–15). By the latter the devil is dispossessed out of a damsel (verses 16–18). The Word and prayer are the great power of God to change the heart and conquer Satan.

But if we trouble the devil, the devil will not cease to trouble us. It has been the lot of the best ministers to do the most good and find the most affliction. Look in the 19th verse and there you shall see Paul and Silas caught and drawn before the rulers.

Good God! That Paul should be questioned because he cast out a devil! But this is not the matter objected, nor the immediate ground of the trouble (her master saw that the hope of their gains was gone). How far will the love of the world thrust a man against God's servants? Even

Paul himself is brought to the bar when he cuts off the gains that the devil brought. Covetous hearts and good ministers can never agree; they will rather sell the truth than lose their gain.

But being now before the magistrate, what is their accusation? What! That Paul and Silas cast out the devil? No, that they who were the masters of the damsel were impaired and disadvantaged by their preaching? No, though this was the ground yet something else was the pretense. This would seem somewhat too base, and therefore they urge against them another allegation that they knew would easily take (verse 20): "These being Jews do exceedingly trouble our city." And, verse 21, "teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans."

It is as if they said, "They are a couple of factious and schismatic fellows, men of a singular spirit, given to innovation. They speak strange things of one Christ, and of believing and of repenting, and we know not what."

They need say no more, as presently there is an uproar; and without any more ado, right or wrong, they have justice. The magistrates rent their clothes and commanded them to be beaten (verse 22).

And this is not enough. Besides the whip, they must go to the prison and be kept safe and close (verse 23). Hatred of goodness many times precipitates evil men to acts of injustice; and he