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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Philippians

by Matthew Henry

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE

PHILIPPIANS

Philippi was a chief city of the western part of Macedonia, *prote tes meridos tes Makedonias polis*, ^{<4162>}Acts 16:12. It took its name from Philip, the famous king of Macedon, who repaired and beautified it, and it was afterwards made a Roman colony. Near this place were the *Campi Philippici*, remarkable for the famous battles between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, and that between Augustus and Antony on one side and Cassius and Brutus on the other. But it is most remarkable among Christians for this epistle, which was written when Paul was a prisoner at Rome, A.D. 62. Paul seems to have had a very particular kindness for the church at Philippi, which he himself had been instrumental in planting; and, though he had *the care of all the churches*, he had, upon that account, a particular fatherly tender care of this. To those to whom God has employed us to do any good we should look upon ourselves both as encouraged and engaged to study to do more good. He looked upon them as his children, and, having *begotten them by the gospel*, he was desirous by the same gospel to nourish and nurse them up.

I. He was called in an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel at Philippi, ^{<4161>}Acts 16:9. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: *There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.* He saw God going before him, and was encouraged to use all means for carrying on the good work which was begun among them, and building upon the foundation which was laid.

II. At Philippi he suffered hard things; he was scourged, and put into the stocks (^{<4163>}Acts 16:23, 24); yet he had not the less kindness for the place for the hard usage he met with there. We must never love our friends the less for the ill treatment which our enemies give us.

III. The beginnings of that church were very small; Lydia was converted there, and the jailer, and a few more: yet that did not discourage him. If

good be not done at first, it may be done afterwards, and the last works may be more abundant. We must not be discouraged by small beginnings.

IV. It seems, by many passages in this epistle, that this church at Philippi grew into a flourishing church, and particularly that the brethren were very kind to Paul. He had reaped of their temporal things, and he made a return in spiritual things. He acknowledges the receipt of a present they had sent him (4:18), and this when no other church communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving (v. 15); and he gives them a prophet's, an apostle's reward, in this epistle, which is of more value than thousands of gold and silver.