

THE PULPIT.

THE CONVERSION OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAOER.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."—Acts xvi. 25-31.

This is one of the most affecting and instructive narratives in the inspired history. For their fidelity in preaching Christ and the resurrection, Paul and Silas are imprisoned by the magistrates of Philippi. The jaoler is commanded to keep them safely; who, having received such a charge, thrusts them into the inner prison, and their feet are made fast in the stocks. At midnight there is an earthquake; the foundations of the prison are shaken: immediately all the doors are opened, and every man's bands are loosed. The keeper of the prison, finding the doors open, draws his sword to kill himself, supposing the prisoners had fled. Paul cries with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he calls for a light, and comes in, and tremblingly asks that most momentous question: What must I do to be saved? Paul and Silas immediately reply: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." From this narrative, the following lessons may be learned:—

1 *God can make the very opposition of men to the truth contribute to its advancement.*

By the imprisonment of Paul and Silas, the magistrates of Philippi flattered themselves that they would arrest the progress of the Gospel in that city. Their very opposition, however, was the means of effecting one of the most glorious triumphs which the Gospel ever achieved. So that it is altogether a vain thing for Satan and his emissaries to think, that they can stop the progress of truth by their malignant opposition. God can make even "the wrath of man" to "praise" Him. Haman's efforts to crush Mordecai were the means of his promotion. Satan thought to secure his interest in the world by the crucifixion of Christ, but yet that was the way to destroy his power and kingdom. He thought to stop the progress of Christianity in the early age, by stirring up a persecution against the Christians in Jerusalem, but that was just the way to scatter them abroad, to sow the seed of Divine truth in all lands. He thought to burn up the Protestant Reformation in Britain, three hundred years ago, by kindling the fires of persecution, but that was just the way to propagate it. "My advice to you," said an old Friar to Cardinal Beaton, "is that, for the future, you burn these heretics in low cellars, because the reek of Patrick Hamilton's burning has infected