



The Chain Gang

A parody is a comic caricature, a ludicrous likeness, an absurd analogy, a ridiculous representation which exposes a particular reality by comparing it to another of a different order. Parodies can be a very useful verbal or literary tool to expose the “red herrings” of diversions which distract attention from real issues; to expose “hobby horses” whereby men keep reverting back to repetitive over-emphasis without critical thought; to expose inane traditions which become familiar ruts wherein we fail to recognize the absence d’esprit. By the use of parody one can be direct yet subtle at the same time.

For some there was the slight semblance of the synchophonic sound of church bells. But it was, instead, the clanging of chains as the prisoners performed their duties. Their day began with roll-call, responding to their assigned identification number. Then, dressed in the dreary uniformity that dissipates individuality, and manacled together in bondage, they marched out to perform their monotonous tasks. The obligatory service having been performed under the watchful eye of the taskmaster, the prisoners filed back into the vaulted dungeon to be fed a bland diet and to engage in the socialization of their chants. They were psyching themselves up for another day of the same regimen on the chain-gang.

Each day as they labored, a crusader on a nearby hill repetitively proclaimed, “Let my people go! Let my people go! What you are doing to my people is contrary to justice; it is cruel and unusual punishment. I have come to set you free! Exercise your right to walk out in freedom with me.”

This sounded like good news to the prisoners, yet there was little hope that such freedom could be effected until their sentence had been served. Whatever hope these men had was long-term and futuristic, for these men were “lifers.” Meanwhile, the law-enforcement officers who guarded them made every effort to keep the prisoners from hearing the daily proclamations of the rabblouser on the hill. They knew that what he was saying was true.

Few exercised the right to walk away unto freedom. They were held not by the manacles of chains—but by the captivity of their own minds.

There was an initial enactment of this scenario when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. Moses was the designated leader to set the people free. A great exodus ensued, though few ever found their way to the land of freedom.



ILLUSTRATION BY AARON ESKRIDGE

Today God’s people are enslaved in the bondage of religion. Individuality is dissipated; conformity is dictated. Attendance is mandated; performance is regulated. The roll is taken as we file back into our vaulted cathedrals to be “fed” a bland diet, and to engage in what we have been conditioned to call “worship.”

Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, still stands on Calvary hill, calling, *Let my people go!* “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32, NKJV). “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6, NKJV). “I have come that they may have life, and...have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV). Few there are who leave the bondage of religion for the freedom of Christ’s life. □

—Jim Fowler

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