

Preachers in Prison

Dub McClish

God's preachers are in prison yet,
But unlike Paul of old;
The bars and chains God's preachers get
Today, are manifold.
Paul's habitat was likely cold
In Rome, his dungeon crude.
But brethren now, God's preachers hold
In chains of attitude.

"Just preach the Bible," is the wail,
"Leave everyone alone!"
But if this theme becomes their jail,
The seed will scarce be sown.
"Do not condemn," the cry is heard,
"We like commending better!"
But such confines the Spirit's Word.
And binds it with a fetter.

Their charge demands they preach the Truth,
With plain and mighty power.
And yet this work behind their booth
Becomes the critic's hour.
"Be positive," they say with force,
"Don't name specific sin."
You might in someone stir remorse,
He might not come again!"

The preachers of our day are cursed
With two extremes of thought:
"Do all the work," or what is worse,
"Who cares if you do nought?"
Thus held in bondage by their lords,
Or by their nonchalance hobbled,
They rarely opt for any course
But what by some they're gobbled.

God's preachers oft must realize
(A widely known admittance),
That they will struggle money-wise,
For many receive but a pittance.
Yet they're expected to entertain,
And dress to the highest status,
While it brethren make it plain
That their income is but "free gratis."

Sometimes they're a prisoner of the view,
"Your work is just to visit."
Such thinking, by many or few,
Should be met by asking, "What is it?"
They're work is to preach and declare God's plan
To those who know not salvation.
They could spend all their time with cup in hand,
But 'twould be to their own condemnation.

Though the bars are not iron and the walls not stone,
Nonetheless are these cell blocks real.
Because they exist, preachers oft feel alone,
And thus unto God they will steal.
They pray for bigger and more mature men,
Who can in His church fill their place,
So that their hands, unfettered again,
May preach to a perishing race.

Dear brethren, God's preachers deserve to be free
From any bonds we may have set.
Release them, don't jail them, and thus guilty be
Of a sin with eternal regret.
If preachers were freed, yet free they'd not be;
From experience, I know this is true.
But bound by obsession that knows no degree,
They must preach till their work here is through.

[Note: I wrote these verses in 1963, at the age of 25, while living and preaching in Tuscaloosa, Al.]

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