

# PRISONERS OF LOVE

*Two Mysterious Passages: Ephesians 3:1, 7, 14-21; John 5:19-20*

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- I. **Love gets heaven's attention because God is love.**
  - A. The Gentile, Cornelius, prayed regularly and gave generously to those in need. His "prayers and gifts to the poor" rose to heaven "as a memorial offering to God," despite a massive cultural and religious divide (Acts 10:1-4).
  - B. Cornelius' understanding of God greatly increased when an angel told him to invite Peter to his home. This opened the entire Gentile world to the gospel (Acts 10:5-23).
  - C. "Consider carefully what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more..." (Mark 4:24-25). The love of Jesus exploded into the Gentile world, because Peter properly understood the freedom and love of the Holy Spirit.
  
- II. **"We love, because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). "If we are 'out of our mind,' as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us..." (II Corinthians 5:13-14).**
  - A. The love of God in us, and compelling us, is the most powerful force in the world.
  - B. God gives us supernatural eyes for others to love them as the Father does.
    1. We look past their sins.
    2. The grace of God enables us to forgive even when we have been wronged. When we forgive, the love of God comes on us all over again (Matthew 6:14-15).
    3. There is a patience and discernment that only the Father's love can bring. "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does" (John 5:20). He sends us to the most unlikely people.
  
- III. **The Scriptures have many examples of compelling, audacious love. The love of God will cause you to act and think in ways you never thought possible (II Corinthians 5:14-15). At the heart of everything is this: "We love, because He first loved us" (I John 4:19).**
  - A. Compassion helps us recognize and respond to cries for mercy that make us stop and do the impossible (Mark 5:21-43).
  - B. The worship of God will help you rise beyond your prison cell (Acts 16:22-34).
  - C. The love of God will cause you to give secretly (Mark 12:41-44), but heaven always notices (Matthew 6:1-4).
  - D. Those who believe in God's love have a hard time taking "no" for an answer. They approach God with shameless audacity. They are prisoners of love (Luke 11:1-13).
    1. The woman who wouldn't take "no" for an answer (Mark 7:24-30)
    2. The faith of the Centurion (Matthew 8:5-13)
    3. Hezekiah's healing (II Kings 20:1-6)

*Mike Hudgins  
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