

Arrested by Love

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Staying true to the vision to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of men in the uttermost parts of the world, Pastor Scibelli has ministered in more than 20 African countries and 50 other countries over the last 20 years.

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Can you imagine the things that King Solomon was a prisoner to? If you read Ecclesiastes chapters 1 and chapter 2, seven times Solomon says something about the great things he had. He had great possessions. He had great authority and power. He had so many great things.

In chapter 2, verse 9, he said, "I was great. I was great." And there were seven "greats." Great knowledge, great wisdom, great, great, great, great, great. But then, in chapter 2 verse 17, he says, "I hated life." Imagine that! This man who was so great said, "I hate life."

There is nothing more you can want than what Solomon had, and he wound up saying, "I hate life." You know why? He became a prisoner to the thing he desired. He realized that those very things could not fulfill him, and he came to the complete end of himself.

Of all the men on the face of the earth, no one had more than he had—possessions, power,

authority, kingship, wisdom, knowledge, and a heritage. He had everything any person could ever desire, yet he said, "I hate life," because those things were apart from Jesus Christ. Eventually, he realized that the simplest individual who is a prisoner of the Lord will be absolutely free. In Song of Solomon 8:6, Solomon said to God, "I want to be a seal on Your heart and on Your arm—Your nature and Your work. I want my relationship with You to be so unique that I'm set as a "seal," as a permanent setting, an eternal seal on the heart and on the arm of God.

Solomon knew that no matter what he had done in his life God loved him, and was still able to place him under arrest, placing him in the love of God. After he discovered that everything this world had to offer was altogether vanity, Solomon was ready to be captured. He was absolutely ready to be arrested by the love of God. Before he came to that place, Solomon was a prisoner to his possessions, to his lifestyle, and to his position. But, as you will see in this booklet, once he was arrested by real love, by the love of God, Solomon was finally, totally, and forever free.

Chapter One

WHAT'S YOUR PRISON?

“So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in the bitterness, in the heat of my spirit, but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

“Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished [(or, in the Hebrew, overwhelmed)] among them seven days” (Ezekiel 3:14-15).

Something extraordinary happened to Ezekiel the prophet here. He wasn't really so keen about the call of God. He wasn't really happy or encouraged. He was not in the place at all where he even wanted to see this happen. But, at a point in time, something changed him.

He was angry, and he was thinking, “I have to go speak to a people who, I happen to know, are stiffnecked, rebellious, stubborn, and don't even want to listen. I'm thinking about the re-

sults, and that maybe there's something else I could be doing at this particular point in my life."

But as he sat where they sat, he became overwhelmed. And I believe that is when he received from God, God's heart for these people. That is so vitally important.

I was reading a story today about a man in a Communist prison. He wasn't sure whether he would be getting life imprisonment or a death sentence. So he went to court and came back, and all the prisoners were there, and he came back beaming, smiling as if he saw a judge who said, "You're going to go free."

And they said, "What's the good news? What's the good news?"

He said, "Today, I go to see Jesus. I'm going to meet Jesus!" He was so enraptured with the thought of going to see Jesus Christ. He had been given the sentence of death, but that did not control his emotions or his thinking or his decisions. He was a prisoner arrested by God's love.

Prison Did Not Define Paul

So many epistles were written from prison. And you could think of Paul being in situations

in prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy). You can see time and time again that the man never stopped speaking about *agape* love. Literally, it was not the prison cell that controlled him. The prison cell was not his domain. The prison cell did not define his existence or his future. He had been arrested by the love of God and controlled by God's love.

I worked in a prison for ten years. (I didn't say I lived in one! although I've been in jail about seven or eight times.) I worked with murderers, and whenever we had to take them out of their cells to eat or to use the bathroom, they were chained ankle to ankle, and they do what they call the "duck walk." In that condition, there is really very little they can do, as far as freedom of walking. You could look at that and say, "Wow, what an existence!" Yes, they're getting what they deserve, as far as their sentence for their crime. But you know, we have such freedom in our walk with God! And we have been so arrested by the love of God.

Agape Love Opens a Heart

How is the life of an individual changed? I was thinking about the woman in Luke 7. In that scene, Jesus said to the Pharisee, "I came into

your house, Simon. You didn't give Me any water to wash my feet. You didn't anoint Me. You didn't kiss Me with any kisses at all. But this woman—this woman has used her tears to wash My feet and she wiped them with the hair upon her head. She has anointed My feet with oil. And do you know why she's done this? Because the one who has been forgiven much loveth much."

In other words, she was so overwhelmed by *agape* love—the pure, unconditional, love of God—that it controlled the decisions she would make, even with regards to whoever was in the room. Who knows what kind of murmuring was going on there. "Well, does He know what kind of a woman this is? We know her reputation." Nobody was giving her a chance at all, but this woman was completely controlled by *agape* love. That is what makes the difference.

How many times are we controlled by situations? I can literally let situations dominate me, and—whether they be my past or present circumstances, my desire and thoughts about the future, my anxieties and fears, a trial or a test, a family situation, a marriage, a financial situation, a medical problem—those situations become a controlling factor and dominating

influence of my life and my will. I become a prisoner to situation rather than being a prisoner to *agape* love.

When we are prisoners to *agape* love, we are absolutely free.

Chapter Two

THE BOLDNESS OF LOVE

In Ghana, I once preached at the funeral of man who was a Jehovah's Witness, and I talked about "the issues of death belong to God" (Psalm 68:20). I got a report later that the mother of that man came to church and said she will never go back to the Jehovah's Witness's again.

She said, "Fifty years—and it's over." You know what happened? She heard a message on *agape* love. Pastor John and Pastor Ben in Ghana ministered to her, and the love of God penetrated her soul and set her free from fifty years of deception. She is on the right watchtower right now, watching God love her.

The love of Christ constrains us, holds us in on every side, and prohibits us from considering any other purpose in life. So many things pop into my brain about what I'd "like" to do. I think about them for a second and then cast them out, because I am totally controlled by *agape* love. I

have been arrested by the love of God.

How could Amy Carmichael spend twenty years in bed because of a debilitating disease, and yet she could write books on God, God's nature, God's character, and God's love? Rather than being a prisoner to that bed, she was a prisoner to *agape* love. She was arrested by the love of God.

One time we were taken into custody and brought up to the Jordanian secret intelligence headquarters in the mountains. It was fun, actually! This guy was interrogating me, and I said, "Does Allah really love you?" At that point you get up and take a shot, right? You could be trembling in fear, sweating under your armpits, wondering whether you were going to see your precious wife and kids and the church ever again. Instead, I just thought, "I'm going for this one."

"Does Allah really love you, sir?"

He said, "I'm asking you what your mother's name is and what your father's name is. I'm doing this whole long documentation on you. Be quiet."

I said, "Can I just say one thing?"

He said, "What is it?"

I said, "Does Allah really love you?"

He said, "You asked that again, and I'm not interested in explaining anything about that!"

I said, "I would just like to know, number one, Who is Allah? And number two, Does he love you? You! Does Allah love you right now?"

He said, "You're a very interesting person."

I said, "At my point in life it doesn't really matter what's going on. I know that Jesus loves me. And, by the way, I'm going to tell you that Jesus is Allah anyway. Jesus is God, in the Arabic, and He really cares about you."

He says, "I've heard that message once before from somebody else like you."

I said, "You think that you have me as a prisoner, but you are mine. You are my prisoner. And this initiation of God's love can make a difference in your life."

This man had to let me go because he thought I was insane. I was not insane. I was constrained by God's love. How many people are in prison to their emotions, to their physical inabilities? "I wish I could do that. I wish I could go here. I'm thinking about all the obstacles." We can begin to be dictated to by our natural abilities instead of being arrested by God's love.

Unlimited Potential

Do you know what you and I can do? Do you know what this church can do in all the world? Have you any idea? It is amazing, the potential impact of our lives. We have people who have brought the message of grace and the Finished Work and unconditional love into all the world. This one's preaching on it in India. That one's preaching on it in Brazil. Others are preaching on it in the United States in different cities and different churches. That happens because people have literally been confined, controlled, and held in by *agape* love.

That is what a church is all about. That's what a Bible college is all about. Can you imagine a Bible school where people learn only knowledge and academics but never hear the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of God's love? They may have the Greek inside out, the Hebrew inside out. Well, they need to be turned inside out by *agape* love. They may have all the academics. There's nothing wrong with that. We need to learn. But I think the Bible says in Ephesians 3:19, "Love passes knowledge." We could all know a lot more.

How many of you sense that the devil

knows a lot? He does. He probably can tell you a lot about the Bible. He quoted the Bible to Jesus. He couldn't quote love, because it is not in his nature and character.

We want a Bible college where students come up with knowledge of the character and nature of God. They know categorical doctrine. They think with God. Yet, there is so much love and *agape* love in their hearts. By the way, it is never a love disconnected from truth. It is not one of these wishy-washy, "I love you! I love you! I love you!" deals. First Peter 1:22 tells us that we ought to have "unfeigned and fervent love." The Greek word is *anupkritos*, and it means "genuine, sure, and sincere love"—love connected to truth. Love that is disconnected from truth is just an emotional response to another kingdom or the flesh. You know what "fervent" means? It means "hot." Unfeigned love is not lukewarm, laid-back and passive. It is hot, active, ready to go.

The Passion of Agape

Agape love is aggressive. It goes after souls. It goes after relationships, to mend them and restore them. It is initiating all the time. Peter said, "This is the kind of love Jesus had towards me.

I'm going to cut a man's ear off. I'm going to have six full denials of the Lord. But you know what? Jesus Christ loved me with unfeigned and fervent love. He initiated that towards me, and it changed my life. It took me from being a denier, a person who would run away—a prisoner to 'Simon' (my old identity)—to being Peter. I was a prisoner to my past, a prisoner to my Galilean inability, a prisoner to my lack of education, a prisoner to my insecurity, a prisoner to my prejudice. But *agape* love took me way beyond that, because it controlled me. I was arrested by the love of God."

What about heroin addiction? People just need to become arrested by God's love. Alcoholism? Is that your problem? Just get arrested by God's love.

There is no lust pattern that can control any person's life—I don't care who you are—because the opposite of lust is *agape* love. Are you with me? Lust is *epithumia*—that which is on my mind. What is on my mind? Anxious? Anxiety-lust. Afraid? Fear-lust. Insecure? Insecurity-lust. Lust is that which is upon the mind, controlling the mind. But when *agape* love and truth is on the mind, it delivers a person like me or you from any lust that would try to control our lives.

Chapter Three

A MESSAGE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

I've been arrested by God's love. This is awesome. That's the message that has made a big difference around the world. That's the message we preach in Africa. That's the message we penetrate villages with. We go into villages where people worship trees, rocks, snakes, dogs, cats. It's like an animal farm. We go into those places and bring them this message, and, all of a sudden, love comes in and begins to control people. We have a church in a place where they worship the trees, and now there's a Greater Grace Church, a Bible college, and a Christian school in that village where the Gospel had never before been preached. Hallelujah! It was because of you—because of Jesus Christ in you.

We want to have Christian schools where young people are controlled by *agape* love and not controlled by desires to be like the world.

Like the world? Why would anyone want to be like the devil?

I can just hear someone saying, "You shouldn't say that."

Well, I just did.

I want to have Jesus Christ in my life. We have Christian schools around the world where young people are taught the character and nature of God. Someone can give them all the academic brains. I went to five universities and have three or four university degrees, and I became the cause of the devil. Sorry. It's just me. I'm not saying you shouldn't go to school. Don't take me out of context.

I'm talking about Bible schools, Christian schools, Christian education programs that bring kids off the buses and from the neighborhood, and they are baptized into God's love. People get to drink of the cup of God's love. Love goes into them by the Holy Spirit, and then they are placed in the love of God and the Body of Christ. Before you know it, they have been arrested by God's love.

Love Changes Men

How did Joseph make it for ninety-five years in Egypt? You want to know how? He was loved

specially by his father (Genesis 37:1-3). He received the love of God and was able to forgive his brothers, even when they sold him. "God sent me to save many people alive."

What about Moses? What do you think God does with a man who murders somebody and then digs the hole and hides the body in the sand? How do you change his life? He's been under the control of thinking he's a deliverer, but without God, and all of a sudden God comes in and loves him unconditionally and arrests Moses.

"You're under arrest, Moses. I'm placing you under arrest. You have a right to remain silent, and anything you say will be used against you."

I've heard that too many times. I've got that thing memorized. That's sad, isn't it? "You have a right to remain silent and whatever you say can and may be used against you in a court of law." I was arrested in my pajamas one time. I was about ten years old. My mother was in shock. I started early.

Arrested!

Moses, you have been controlled by the thought that you are the deliverer, but you are trying to do it in the energy of your flesh. Let God's love take control of you, and then go back

to Egypt and say to Pharoah, "Let my people go."

Think about people throughout the Bible. Look at Jacob (Genesis 32). Think about Samson in Judges 16. Go to Judges 6 and 7 and read of these men who had no real desire to follow God or to do the things of God, who became totally arrested by God's love.

You think about James and John, the sons of thunder, with ambition and a desire to bring fire down from heaven on people. They needed to become the sons of Jesus' love and become people who were arrested by the love of God.

You think of Onesimus who stole from Philemon and was on his way out when he went to Rome, and he found Paul in prison. Seven times in the epistle of Philemon, it talks about doing things for love's sake. Love for love's sake. Paul was writing to his friend, saying, "For love's sake, love him. I love him and I want to put the two of you, Philemon and Onesimus, back together. Now that Onesimus has been arrested by God, he's going to make a great brother in the Lord, a great servant in your house, and a great church member. He's been arrested by the love of God."

Keep Yourself in the Love of God

“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 12-13).

In the book of Jude, it talks about three trends in the Last Days. It talks about Cain and his commitment to works, Korah and the rebellion against authority, and Balaam and his desire for money.

You know what it says in verse 12? “These things are spots on your love feasts.”

Jude offered a solution for those things, however. Do you know what it was? Get arrested by love.

“I’ve got something to tell you,” Jude wrote. “You are loved of God. Build yourself up on your most holy faith. Keep yourself in the love of God.”

The only thing that can make the difference, the only thing that's going to make a difference is love that will do the work, love that has a provision from God that will satisfy anybody, and love that will really bring out the true authority of God.

Be arrested by God's love.

Picture John on the island of Patmos. He was under arrest, surrounded by lunatic and maniacs. Still, in Revelation 1:5, he writes, "God loves me. I've been arrested by the love of God. I am controlled by the love of God."

First Corinthians 13:8, love does what? Love never fails.

Do you want to know something else? Romans 8:34 says that love never condemns you.

Here's something else. In Romans 8:39, you can never be separated from the love of God.

Romans 8:37 says that love is never defeated.

Want to know something else? Jeremiah 31:1-4 says love never changes.

You want to know something else? Love is never discouraged. Love never thinks about what it needs when it is self-sacrificing.

God, may I be under arrest to Your love. (I'm talking to myself.) May I declare as Paul did in

Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1, “I, Paul....” Put your name in there and say, “I, the prisoner of the Lord, I desire to be in the prison of God’s love. For when I’m in the prison of God’s love, I am absolutely free.”

CONCLUSION

Because I am arrested by God's love, I am free from the opinions of other people about me. I'm free from having to project an image to make you happy. I'm free from having to please man, the world, or anything from the past. I'm free of that!

In Hosea 14:4, it says that God wants to love us freely, that it doesn't matter what happens or what I do. Zephaniah 3:17 says that He will rest in His love. Why not let God rest in His love?

Oh God, I want to go into that cell for the rest of my life. I want to be arrested by God's love in me and made a prisoner to *agape* love.

Thank Him for *agape* love—unconditional, unending, unlimited, unfathomable love that could change our hearts and make us people who go with this message into a lost and dying world, where people are prisoners to themselves, to the past, to religion.

Father, we thank You that when we are arrested by God, there are no charges, no accusations. We need no lawyer, no judge, no jury, no evidence, no record. For some of us, we are not in any human prison only because we have been arrested by God's love.

Arrested by God's love! Thank You, Jesus! Thank You for what You said in such a loving way: "You are under arrest. You've been arrested by agape love." This love takes me out of the prison that I may be in, a prison of who I think I am. A prison of insecurity. A prison of fear. A prison of judgmental analysis of what I think is going on. A prisoner of a trial, a test, my health, my finances. I am no more a prisoner because I've been arrested by God's love, and I'm a prisoner of the Lord who loves me. In Jesus' name, Amen.