Session 3 Paul’s Prayer in Philippians 1:9-11

1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Paul prayed for the believers in Philippi to abound in love and not to yield to compromise nor cause offense, even in the face of the criticism and persecution that they were enduring (Phil. 1:9-11, 29).

9And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge [of God’s heart] and all discernment, 10that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be   
sincere and without offense [blameless; ESV, NAS, NIV] till the day of Christ, 11being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:9-11)

* 1. This is an important prayer with prophetic significance in light of Jesus’ zeal to lead His people to relate in deep unity as a mature family as the context for the great end-time harvest (Jn. 17:23) while concurrently Satan releases intense accusation against the saints, seeking to fuel a betrayal culture even in the Church (Mt. 24:10; Rev. 12:10).

23“…that they [the end-time Church] may be made perfect in one, and that the world [the nations] may know that You have sent Me and have loved them [the Church] as You have loved Me.   
(Jn. 17:23)

10I heard a loud voice saying…, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom…have come,   
for the accuser of our brethren [Satan], who accused them…day and night, has been cast down. (Rev. 12:10)

10And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (Mt. 24:10)

* 1. ***That love may abound***: We pray earnestly that we would “abound in love” in three specific ways. First, we ask the Spirit to cause us to abound in our *understanding of God’s love for us*. Second, that He would cause us to abound in our *love for Jesus*, and finally to abound in *our love for people*.

5…the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit… (Rom. 5:5)

* + 1. ***Revelation of God’s love for us***: We pray for greater understanding of God’s love for us.   
       Even in eternity we will never exhaust or fully grasp the fullness of the ocean of God’s love.

17…that you…18may be able to comprehend…what is the width and length and depth and height—19to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge… (Eph. 3:17-19)

* + 1. ***Impartation of love for Jesus in us***: Jesus prayed that the Father would impart His own love for Jesus to His people so that they would love Jesus in the way the Father loves Jesus.

26I declared Your name…that the love with which You loved Me may be in them…  
(Jn. 17:26)

* + 1. ***Overflow of God’s love for others through us***: We pray that love flow through us to others.

12…If we love one another…His love has been perfected [overflows] in us… (1 Jn. 4:12)

* 1. ***Still more and more***: This speaks of love progressively growing in the hearts of God’s people.
  2. ***In knowledge***: Walking in greater love begins with understanding the truth about God’s personality, the finished work of the cross, Jesus’ leadership, how He views His people, and more.
  3. ***All discernment***: We must love on God’s terms. Jesus is the only Man qualified to define love. There are many definitions of love in the culture that are not in agreement with God’s Word.
  4. We are equipped to abound in love for others by growing *in knowledge* of God’s heart and growing *in discernment* that sees others through the lens of His love—including His delight in mercy and His gentleness towards them (Ps. 18:35; Mic. 7:15). Jesus’ leadership is so gracious and kind. Being treated by God with gentleness and viewing others through His gentleness makes people “great.”

19…He delivered me because He delighted in me…35Your gentleness has made me great.   
(Ps. 18:19, 35)

18Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity…? Because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)

* 1. ***That you may approve the things that are excellent***: Spiritual discernment enables us to “see” and rejoice in what God calls excellent—His Son, His Word, His godly ways, and His people (Ps. 16:3). One quality that made David’s life “great” was to intentionally cultivate God’s view of His people.

3As for the saints who are on the earth, “They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.” (Ps. 16:3)

* + 1. ***God’s people are excellent***: Seeing others through the lens of God’s grace enables us to see “excellent things” about them, including their sincere desire to obey—seen in their budding virtues that have not yet matured—instead of defining them by their failures and deficiencies.

5Judge nothing [do not make final evaluations on people] before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels [motives] of the hearts. Then each one’s praise [affirmation] will come from God.   
(1 Cor. 4:5)

* + 1. ***God’s commands are excellent***: God’s commands are debated in the culture and the church. Studies tell us that many today define love, truth, and justice by *what they feel is right,* without reference to God’s Word. We must define love and truth according to His Word.

12Therefore…the commandment holy and just and good. (Rom. 7:12)

* 1. ***That you may be sincere***: We pray for grace to walk out our sincere intentions to love and obey Jesus and sincerely seek to see, feel, and speak about others in a way that is in agreement with God.
  2. ***That you may be without offense***: We pray for grace not to act or speak outside of God’s will so as to give “offense” to God or to others by not walking in godly virtues and kindness towards people. Also, not to trick, trap, nor injure others—their finances, property, feelings, reputation, position, etc.

16…I always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. (Acts 24:16)

31…whether you eat or drink…do all to the glory of God. 32Give no offense, either to the Jews   
or to the Greeks or to the church of God… (1 Cor. 10:31-32)

* 1. ***Filled with the fruits of righteousness***: This starts by receiving Jesus’ *free gift* of righteousness and results walking in a *lifestyle* of righteousness. Simply put, *filled with righteousness* speaks of being filled with “the right views of God and His Word” in every area of our life—our view of ourselves and of others, together with our view of our money, words, sexuality, time, etc.
     1. Paul connected “abounding love” with walking in a lifestyle of righteousness that flows from “love-based obedience” (Jn. 14:21). All of God’s commands are motivated by love. They produce love in us as we embrace them. Our decisions to obey Him express our love for Him. Jesus loves us with all His heart. Out of gratitude we seek to love Him with all our heart.

21He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. (Jn. 14:21)

* + 1. One of primary lies being promoted today is that God’s commands are burdensome—they are out of reach and cause us to lose out on “real life” as they hold us in religious bondage and contradict true love. This false teaching claims that, because we have freely received grace, “hungering for righteousness” is harmful because it makes us proud and legalistic.

3…And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 Jn. 5:3)

* 1. ***By Jesus***: By receiving His gift of righteousness and in our on-going interaction with Him (Jn. 15:5)
  2. ***To the glory of God***: God is glorified as we walk out love-based “right views and choices.”

1. Embracing God’s narrative of others
   1. The Lord’s narrative of Joshua was challenged by Satan’s narrative based on accusation.

1He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him…2The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan!…  
3Joshua was clothed with filthy garments…4He answered…“Take away the filthy garments from him…See, I have removed your sin…I will clothe you with rich robes.” (Zech. 3:1-4)

…[Satan] the accuser of our brethren, who accused them…day and night… (Rev. 12:10)

* 1. The divine narrative is based on the profound reality that the Lord does not see as man sees.

7For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at [focuses on] the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7)

* 1. ***Secular narrative***: The outward appearance of one’s life as seen by others includes “the facts” about 5-10 of their *main accomplishments*, 5-10 of their *failures* and 5-10 of their *deficiencies*   
     (in their personality or leadership skills). These facts do matter but are not the *primary determining factors* in God’s narrative for people. Satan uses “these facts” to accuse people in his dark narrative.
  2. ***Divine narrative***: God looks at His *sovereign call* on one’s life, their *sincere motives* (seen in their countless 10-second thoughts or conversation with God that reveal their intention to obey) and   
     His interpretation of their *main accomplishments*, *failures,* and *deficiencies*.

16…from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh…17If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:16-17)

* 1. We ask the Spirit to empower us ***to see*** what He sees, ***to feel*** what He feels, and ***to say*** what He says when He looks at the lives of others. We want God’s narrative for both believers and unbelievers.
  2. John Wimber emphasized to me that “a ministry runs by the ***headlines stories*** that are emphasized.” He urged me to tell those stories over and over and not to allow the enemy to create the headlines.
  3. God’s narrative is not a detailed bio of a person’s life, but it is the ***main headlines*** by which He wants the story of their life to be understood. Satan wants the life story of our life to be centered on the facts related to our failures, deficiencies, errors, or the rumors whispered about us.
     1. The challenge is that Satan’s accusations may have a seed of factual information behind them.
     2. One lady accusing a leader to me insisted that she was just committed to “tell the truth.”
     3. The truth of the story or narrative of a sincere believer’s life includes 95% of their life that seeks to obey God and bless people while 5% includes their errors, failures, and deficiencies.
  4. God’s narrative or ***“headline stories”*** of a believer’s life is related to the 95% of their life that includes *His call* on their life (and His knowledge of their future), their *sincere motives* to love and obey Him, and *His interpretation* of their main accomplishments, failures and deficiencies.

8Above all things have fervent love…for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Pet. 4:8)

* 1. God’s story was that Abraham did not waver and that David did “all” the will of God in his day.

20He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief… (Rom. 4:20)

22“He raised up David…concerning whom He testified and said, ‘I have found David…  
a man after My heart, who will do all My will’…36For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep [died]…” (Acts 13:22, 36, NAS)

* 1. In our desire to abound in love we engage in “the right conversation”—the one that promotes God’s narrative in people’s lives and thus advances mature love with family unity and joy.
  2. Those who abound in love seek to give not even one sentence outside of the divine narrative of another’s life, knowing that Satan is zealous to obscure God’s headline stories in a believer’s life.
  3. We abound in love by acting in the opposite spirit as we embrace God’s narrative of believers, even those who mistreat us. In doing this we become “like our Father” displaying His goodness to others.

44“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you 45that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Mt. 5:44-45)