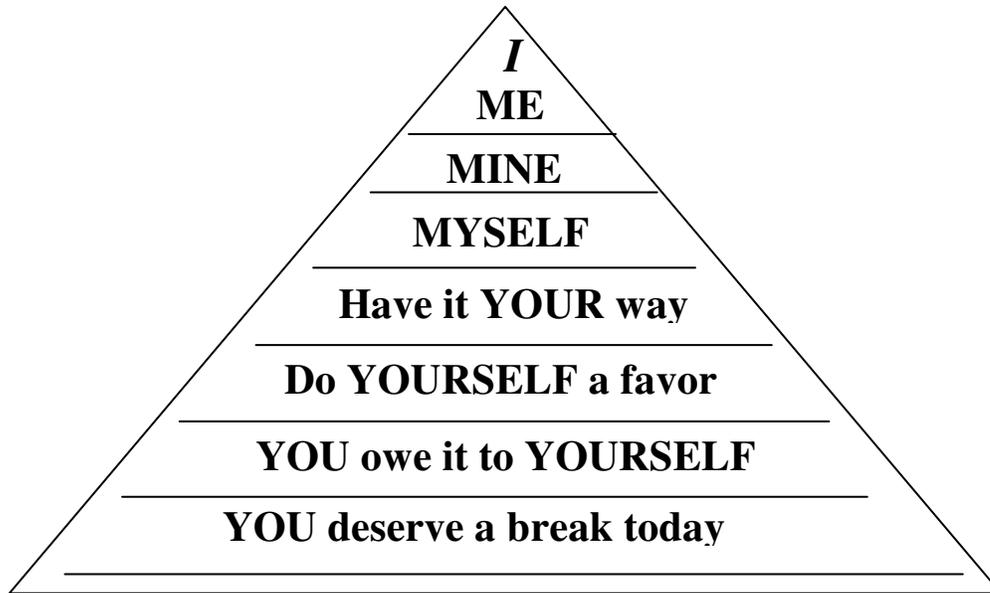


GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life for week ending 05/06/01.

An editorial cartoon appeared in a publication some time ago. It was an unusual cartoon and in the center of it was an enormous monument. On the monument



Arranged in pyramid form were written some of the expressions that are so popular today. Beneath the people that were shown worshipping at this "shrine for selfishness" the caption read, "*Speaking of American Cults.*"

Not all cults are that bold. In fact, selfishness is often contained in acceptable terms like good philosophies.

Greece said, "*Be wise, know yourself.*"

Rome said, "*Be strong, discipline yourself.*"

Religion says "*Be holy, conform yourself.*"

Epicureanism says, "*Be sensuous, enjoy yourself.*"

Education says, "*Be resourceful, expand yourself.*"

Materialism says, "*Be satisfied, please yourself.*"

Psychology says, "*Be confident, fulfill yourself.*"

Pride says, "*Be superior, promote yourself.*"

Humanism says, "*Be capable, believe in yourself.*"

Philanthropy says, "*Be generous, give yourself.*"

It is interesting that all of the philosophies end with the same word...yourself. Even more interesting is how each one differs from the philosophy of The Lord Jesus Christ... "*Be a servant, think of others.*"

Phi 2:3-5 from the New American Standard translation reads ***“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,”***

In Mat 20:28, our Lord said, ***“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”***

Shortly after the fall in the Garden in Gen 3:7 we read ***“they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”*** Here, for the first time self is mentioned in the Bible. They now began to look out for number one, themselves, and it hasn't stopped since. That's the heart and center of the problem. But not only did they lose something with themselves, they lost something with God. They heard God as He moved toward them. They heard His voice as He called out to them. For the first time, they didn't meet Him, they didn't keep their appointment with Him, instead, they hid themselves.

In Heb 4:13 we read ***“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”***

We too try to hide in a variety of ways. We project our problems on those we live with, we ridicule and dominate. We pronounce the final word when we have no right or reason to. We cut a person down neatly with a word of criticism, to his face or behind his back, because we are self-centered. Justifying that it isn't our problem, it's theirs.

We are by nature, terribly, terribly infected and obsessed with self.

Time passed until God brought His Son who was born like no other man was ever born, talked like no other man ever talked, taught like no other rabbi would ever teach and operated as no other human being ever operated. Our Lord in His earthly ministry dealt with it, two of the men He had called to follow Him were named James and John. As fisherman they had given up a pretty good trade in fishing. They had followed The Lord Jesus Christ for a while, and they began to think about their lives and their future, (as most achievement-oriented men do). One day they came to Him in all their selfishness and they made a request, Mark 10:35-37 ***“And James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Him, saying to Him, Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You. And He said to them, What do you want Me to do for you? And they said to Him, Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on {Your} left.”***

The other ten men whom our Lord had called were indignant. Notice what our Lord said in Mar 10:42 ***“You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.”***

In verse 43 our Lord said simply ***“But it is not so among you,”***

God's family doesn't operate like the world's family. But so great is the temptation because we are infected with the Adam and Eve disease, caring for self, occupation with self, promotion of self, protecting self.

Mar 10:44-45 ***“and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”***

Even He, the Son of God didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give, right down to His own life. Our Lord was occupied with others.

The point is selfishness is a real problem and something we have to deal with it. This is what Paul is dealing with as we continue in our study with Phi chapter 4. So far our corrected translation of chapter 4 looks like this: Phi 4:1-2 *“Therefore, my beloved brethren [members of the Royal family of God] whom I desire to see or be with, my source of happiness and wreath of glory, so stand firm [be advancing not retreating] in the Lord, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be having the same viewpoint or to think objectively by means of the Lord.”*

Phi 4:3 *“Indeed, I request also you, true Syzygus [genuine one who is a real man], to help or to assist these women who are of such quality have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”*

We have been noting the reason why the apostle Paul has been so forthright and up front in dealing with a division that has been trying to divide the church at Philippi. We have begun to study this verse and we have seen the danger of personality conflicts, and why Paul is concerned enough to mention these women by name. In those first verses of chapter 4 we have seen how to deal with the problem of selfishness. The answer to “think objectively by means of the Lord.” We then introduced the individual called “true comrade” mentioned in verse 3, his name is Syzygus.

Syzygus was a man with true objectivity. Paul wanted to deal with this problem before the Pastor of the Philippian Church Epaphroditus returned to Philippi which is why he sent Timothy with the orders, Phi 2:19. When Timothy goes to Philippi while their pastor Epaphroditus is with Paul, Paul will call on Syzygus to solve the problems in the local assembly until their pastor returns. Finding individuals who are willing to stand in the GAP is a very difficult thing to find. Remember one of the things our Lord said to Ezekiel in Eze 22:30 *“And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”*

Real men are hard to find just like real doctrinal women are hard to find. God is looking for men and women who become a part of the solution and not a part of the problem. A real man is someone with mental strength and fortitude. One who has endurance, forbearance, perseverance, and stability. The Lord said to Job, who had lost everything and had been entered into the historical trial of the angelic conflict to glorify God, in Job 38:3 *“Now gird up your loins [brace yourself] like a man.”* God is also looking for women to do the same. There have been many women throughout history who became a part of the solution and not a part of the problem. They have been God's women for the crisis. There was Deborah the patriotic woman in Jud 4:4. There was Ruth, Esther, Abigail and many others. One thing that all believers who stand in the GAP or become a part of the solution and not a part of the problem have in common is that they have prepared for the **abnormal** times during the **normal** times. This makes them prepared for abnormal times or prepared for disaster when it comes. This same privilege is offered to us. We have the ability to take the courses God offers us and prepare for life before the crisis or the problems or the difficulties arise. Or we can drop out of the course and reject Bible doctrine. Some take the course and drop out when it gets too tough or time consuming. When disaster occurs, whether personal or national, they end up failing. However, there are always a few who stand out, they don't

quit, they keep on going. They fulfill their obligations to their loved ones, their family members, their business associates, and their local assembly. Most of all, they fulfill their relationship to God in their believer priesthood. These are the ones who took the course under normal circumstances and have learned how to handle the adversities of life.

Believers who become a part of the solution and not a part of the problem because of doctrine realize that there is nowhere else to go. They are occupied with The Lord Jesus Christ and can cope with any disaster of life whether personal or historical. They will not let distractions take them away. They don't let the pettiness of personality conflicts cause to withdraw. Syzygus was a real man; something that was very difficult to find in the ancient world as it is today.

Phi 4:3 ***“Indeed, I request true comrade, to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.***

Paul had commanded the women ***“to be having the same viewpoint*** or to think objectively ***by means of the Lord”*** but here he is requesting Syzygus to straighten out the conflict. Because Syzygus is a real man, he doesn't have to be ordered, he can be requested because he is the kind of man who stands in the GAP in times of pressure. Paul uses the verb *sullambanou* which means to seize, aid, help, assist, take hold of something together. Here it is a futuristic present tense, which means it denotes an event which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that it may be contemplated as already occurring.

Phi 4:3 ***“Indeed, I request also you, true Syzygus [genuine one who is a real man], to help or to assist these women who.***

The phrase ***“these women”*** emphasizes the identity of Euodia and Syntyche as two "prominent women" involved in a personality conflict that is dividing the church. "Who" is the nominative feminine plural from the qualitative relative pronoun *hostis*, which is *haitines*, a relative pronoun emphasizing a *quality* of former greatness in these women. These women are supergrace believers. Notice that Paul notes that these women have been great in the past.

The corrected translation of Phi 4:3 so far reads ***“Indeed, I request also you, true Syzygus [genuine one who is a real man], to help or to assist these women who are of such quality.”***

The next phrase is ***“have shared my struggle,”*** The word ***“my”*** is the personal pronoun *“moi”* and with this the verb *sunethlesan* which means to wrestle in company with, labor with, strive together. Even though these women had a conflict, Paul doesn't lose sight of their good qualities. It is so easy to overlook the good of those having problems. Isn't it amazing that when someone wrongs us or does something that we don't like how quickly we can forget all the positive things they have done for us throughout the years? Take a lesson here from Paul, the next time you are upset with someone for whatever reason, stop and focus on the good and positive things that they have done for you and the Lord.

Next the phrase ***“fought by my side”*** is a good translation. In other words, these two women have fought with Paul and supported Paul and worked with Paul during his ministry and have even followed him all the way through to supergrace. They have been right with him all the way.

Phi 4:3 ***“Indeed, I request also you, true Syzygus [genuine one who is a real man], to help or to assist these women who are of such quality have fought by my side”***

Next we have ***“in the cause of the gospel,”*** this means more than just the gospel, it means the entire realm of doctrine. God's good news to mankind, to unbelievers, is called the Gospel. God's good news to mankind, to believers, is called Bible doctrine or the Word of God. The gospel doesn't always refer to salvation.

Next in the verse we have ***“together with Clement also”*** we don't know too much about him except Paul calls on him to help also. Then Paul adds ***“and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”*** The other fellow workers happen to be others who have become involved. Notice that he adds that all the people involved are in the book of life. Syzygus is going to help all of these people by this arbitration. They are all involved. This demonstrates that once you crack the maturity barrier and get to supergrace and move out into no man's land to ultra- supergrace, one of your greatest dangers is personality conflict. The entire verse reads Phi 4:3 ***“Indeed, I request also you, true Syzygus [genuine one who is a real man], to help or to assist these women who are of such quality have fought by my side in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”***