



The Smiling Maven

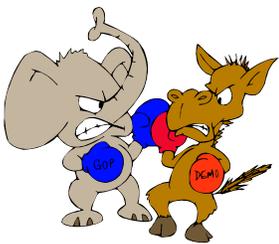
Grace for Grace (John 1:16)

חסד על חסד (יוחנן א'טו)



The Number One Battle

It seems like many of us are fascinated by the 2008 presidential campaign. It is an interesting campaign for many reasons. There is no incumbent president or vice president running in either party. This has not occurred since the 1952 presidential campaign (Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson). The Democratic Party is looking to nominate either the first woman candidate or the first African American candidate. We also have a Republican candidate who has the conservatives either scratching their heads or banging their heads on a wall - quite interesting. Yet no matter how interesting, no matter how unique, no matter which candidate wins, this is not the number one battle. The battle in Iraq or in Afghanistan or against radical Islamic terrorists is not the number one battle either. Issues regarding morality, abortion, etc.



are also not the number one battle (though they may be important and significant battles). The number one battle waging in heaven or in earth is against the pride of man. And the front-line battle ground is not amidst politicians, conservatives or liberals, atheists, humanists, or even terrorists; it is amidst those who are truly God's people. The following quote from C.S. Lewis depicts this battle quite well:

"There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves... The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility...

According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea-bites in

comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind...

Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man... It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, Pride has gone. That is why I say Pride is essentially competitive in a way the other vices are not... Greed may drive men into competition if there is not enough to go round; but the proud man, even when he has got more than he can possibly want, will try to get still more just to assert his power."¹

The number one issue that God is after in his people is pride. The extent of the pride in our heart is visible only to God. The problem, deep-seated pride, is something that is ultimately between God and the individual. It is an evil (or sin) before God that makes all the others seem small. The depth of pride is a deception from the evil one that we are better than our Creator or that the Creator is not as good as He really is. There is something in our hearts that exalts itself against the very knowledge of God (which includes the goodness of God as well as the mercy of God). That is why dealing with the pride in our own hearts is more important than the issue of abortion in America. It is more important than whether or not we have tax cuts or tax increases. Y'shua said that the Kingdom of God is within the heart. Pride does not belong in the Kingdom of God. It is not part of the Kingdom of God. It must be brought down. It is brought down by the light of the gospel, the un-pride of Y'shua's heart, His mission and His humility in giving Himself for us at the cross. When we genuinely recognize that Y'shua died for all and that all of us are in need of His forgiveness and His atonement, there is a lot less room for human pride. It might be said that the light of the cross is the great equalizer.

None of us stand in a better light outside of the cross. When we see the cross clearly, our self-exalted attitude toward God is brought down by the very humility of the Creator Himself.

C.S. Lewis made the point that the comparison or the competition with others is also where pride comes in. If we stopped comparing ourselves with others, or stopped trying to make our lives look better to other people, pride would have less room to rise up. How often do I think about what others have – that I do not have? If I am honest with myself (which might happen sometimes), I often compare myself with others because there is something in my heart that is not quite convinced about the fairness of God. In that sense, my heart is exalting itself against the knowledge of God. God is fair. He is loving. He is Good. He loves us equally and is not a respecter of persons. How often do I consider myself better than others because of, (fill in the blank with almost anything). That comparison - that competition with what is going on in other people – is a pride thing. How often do I try to appear different so others would see me in a better light? How often do I make a comparison with my own expectations rather than simply live in the freedom and understanding of God's acceptance in the light of the cross? All that we really have now, and will ever have, is what God has given us through Y'shua's death on the cross. I can never surpass that. I will never really have less. Neither will others. That is all there is to it. If I did not care about the comparison, or if I were not constantly making a comparison with others or with my own self-image, I would be a lot more content with my circumstances, and pride would have less room in my life. Less pride in my heart affects my relationship with God: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."² Though the problem is ultimately between the individual and his Creator, the humbling of our heart and the reception of God's grace can make us a lot

Number One Battle (continued from page 1)

more of a blessing to those around us.

In the political realm, those of us who believe in Messiah are faced with this battleground. Do we make wrongful comparisons with the candidates? In our heart, do we compare them with what we think they should be? Do we want them to be something that they are not? Do we make prideful judgments about candidates based on our own comparison of what we think they should be or what we think they should stand for? Though there can be important value in reviewing a candidate's position regarding the issues, there is also great potential to make a heart judgment regarding the candidate that may be based more in pride than anything else. Y'shua said not to do it: "Judge not, that you be not judged."³ I plan to vote this coming November, yet there is something about making a choice regarding candidates that often bothers me. In a way, I can easily make a prideful judgment in my heart for or against one of these candidates. In that sense, my actual choice of candidates may

not be that significant, but the condition of my heart toward the candidates (and toward those that support the candidates) may be of great value both before God and before man. It may be that the humbling of our hearts and the coming down of our pride may be of greater and more lasting value than the political choice that we make regarding who to elect as president.

Lord, please break us of our pride, of wrongful comparisons, wrongful heart competitions, and our incredible tendency to judge others as though we are the rightful judge. So Lord, regardless of who wins the campaign, bless the candidates, and bring down the pride in our hearts. Amen.



- Notes:
1. *C.S. Lewis on Faith*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998. P. 38-39 (Originally from *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis)
 2. 1 Peter 5:5 (New King James Bible)
 3. Matthew 7:1 (NKJ)

The Home Front—Moved

The Home Front has moved. No - it is still published in every other issue of The Smiling Maven. No - it is still produced at our office at 2816 Eshcol Avenue. Our family, the home front itself, has moved. On February 1st we moved from the Faith Home Meeting House, 2820 Eshcol Ave, to a second-floor apartment at 2814 Eshcol Avenue.

All four of us are happy with the move. Comedor is not alone at night at the office. Ruthe has the largest bedroom in the apartment and the largest bedroom that she has ever had. Caleb has his computer, his PlayStation, and TV - all in the same area. Dad thoroughly enjoys having the family together in our own "home" and having more opportunity to spend time as a family. All of us are somewhat relieved to be living without the pressure of living in a "church" building, and needing to "tip-toe" around numerous church meetings.

Though the move was essentially next door, it has been a growing experience. We needed to re-set up our own kitchen, do all our own food shopping and food preparation, and take a number of items out of storage. Our move occurred during an extremely cold and snowy February,

and we were snow shoveling between moving boxes and furniture.



In our new home.

It is also the first time since 1991 that I have not been living in a church-funded parsonage. It will be a bit more of a stretch for us financially, but we are trusting that this has been the right move at the right time, and that our needs will be met.

We are also planning a trip to Israel this summer. I hope to travel by myself to Israel late in May, study Hebrew for a month, and then have Ruthe and Caleb fly out to join me for three weeks of "seeing the land." Though excited about a trip to Israel, it will be another unique family adventure, and a challenge to plan and prepare properly. Recently some close friends were visiting our new home. When we talked about the plans for Israel, and planning this trip after making our recent move, the remark was made: "Either you have great faith or you are crazy." Maybe the truth is somewhere in between.



Upcoming Events

March 16, 2008 10:00 AM
Passover/Communion Explanation
 RiverValley Church
 1331 High Street, Oshkosh WI

March 16, 2008 4:30 PM
Messianic Passover Seder
 River Valley Church
 1331 High Street, Oshkosh WI
 920-231-9690

March 19, 2008 7:00 PM
Israel Photo Presentation and Testimony
 Glad Tidings Tabernacle
 122 W. Bent Avenue, Oshkosh WI
 920-233-4769

March 20, 2008 6:00 PM
Messianic Passover Seder
 Plymouth Congregational Church
 1325 Georgia Street, Oshkosh WI
 920-231-8231

Both Passover Seders have limited seating. Please call for additional information.

The Smiling Maven is a bi-monthly Jewish - flavored newsletter sharing God's incredible grace. There is coming a spiritual atomic bomb of that incredible grace. It is an imminent spiritual explosion soon to happen in Israel that will have a wonderfully awesome effect in Israel and all the world.

Life is often hard. Suffering is a real part of life. Sometimes suffering enables us to see more clearly the reality that God loves us. He loves us unconditionally; it is not based on how we are doing. We may begin to understand the wonder of God's salvation through Messiah Y'shua. Grace might actually be breaking through into our lives. It is the experience of grace that can generate the most genuine smiles. "Maven" is a Yiddish word that means "a person with special knowledge or experience." Evidence of God's grace should be characterized by an ability to smile. *The Smiling Maven* newsletter is an encouragement for all of us to be smiling mavens, smiling people with special knowledge of God's amazing grace.

EditorArthur Weiner
 Someone needing to Smile More

Copy Editor.....Peter Toeg
 Making sure that our English keeps people smiling.

Production Assistant.....Ruthe Weiner
 Often producing more smiles than her dad.

Quality Control.....Caleb Weiner
 Smiling, especially while playing on the computer.

You can also visit our website at smilingmaven.com. Contact us at smilingmaven@yahoo.com, The Smiling Maven 2816 Eshcol Avenue, Zion IL 60099, or call us at 847-731-6838. The Smiling Maven Newsletter is a division of Smiling Maven Ministries NFP, a not for profit corporation of the State of Illinois.