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America Has Chosen a President

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The election of Sen. Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States came as a bang, not a whimper. The tremors had been perceptible for days, maybe even weeks. On Tuesday, America experienced nothing less than a political and cultural earthquake.

The margin of victory for the Democratic ticket was clear. Americans voted in record numbers and with tangible enthusiasm. By the end of the day, it was clear that Barack Obama would be elected with a majority of the popular vote and a near landslide in the Electoral College. When President-Elect Obama greeted the throngs of his supporters in Chicago's Grant Park, he basked in the glory of electoral energy.

For many of us, the end of the night brought disappointment. In this case, the disappointment is compounded by the sense that the issues that did not allow us to support Sen. Obama are matters of life and death — not just political issues of heated debate. Furthermore, the margin of victory and sense of a shift in the political landscape point to greater disappointments ahead. We all knew that so much was at stake.

For others, the night was magical and momentous. Young and old cried tears of amazement and victory as America elected its first African-American President — and elected him overwhelmingly. Just forty years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, an African-American stood to claim victory as President-Elect of the nation. As Sen. Obama assured the crowd in Chicago and the watching nation, "We will get there. We will get there." No one hearing those words could fail to hear the refrain of plaintive words spoken in Memphis four decades ago. President-Elect Obama would stand upon the mountaintop that Dr. King had foreseen.

That victory is a hallmark moment in history for *all* Americans — not just for those who voted for Sen. Obama. As a nation, we will never think of ourselves the same way again. Americans rich and poor, black and white, old and young, will look to an African-American man and know him as President of the United States. The President. The only President. The elected President. *Our* President.

Every American should be moved by the sight of young African-Americans who — for the first time — now believe that they have a purchase in American democracy. Old men and old women, grandsons and granddaughters of slaves and slaveholders, will look to an African-American as President.

Regardless of politics, could anyone remain unmoved by the sight of Jesse Jackson crying alone amidst the crowd in Chicago? This dimension of Election Day transcends politics and touches the heart of the American people.

Yet, the issues and the politics remain. Given the scale of the Democratic victory, the political landscape will be completely reshaped. The fight for the dignity and sanctity of unborn human beings has been set back by a great loss, and by the election of a President who has announced his intention to sign the Freedom of Choice Act into law. The struggle to protect marriage against its destruction by redefinition is now complicated by the election of a President who has declared his aim to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. On issue after issue, we face a longer, harder, and more protracted struggle than ever before.



Still, we must press on as advocates for the unborn, for the elderly, for the infirm, and for the vulnerable. We must redouble our efforts to defend marriage and the integrity of the family. We must be vigilant to protect religious liberty and the freedom of the pulpit. We face awesome battles ahead.

At the same time, we must be honest and recognize that the political maps are being redrawn before our eyes. Will the Republican Party decide that conservative Christians are just too troublesome for the party and see the pro-life movement as a liability? There is the real danger that the Republicans, stung by this defeat, will adopt a libertarian approach to divisive moral issues and show conservative Christians the door.

Others will declare these struggles over, arguing that the election of Sen. Obama means that Americans in general — and many younger Evangelicals in particular — are ready to “move on” to other issues. This is no time for surrender or the abandonment of our core principles. We face a much harder struggle ahead, but we have no right to abandon the struggle.

We should look for opportunities to work with the new President and his administration where we can. We must hope that he will lead and govern as the bridge-builder he claimed to be in his campaign. We must confront and oppose the Obama administration where conscience demands, but work together where conscience allows.

Evangelical Christians face another challenge with the election of Sen. Obama, and a failure to rise to this challenge will bring disrepute upon the Gospel, as well as upon ourselves. There must be absolutely no denial of the legitimacy of President-Elect Obama’s election and no failure to accord this new President the respect and honor due to anyone elected to that high office. Failure in this responsibility is disobedience to a clear biblical command.

Beyond this, we must commit ourselves to pray for this new President, for his wife and family, for his administration, and for the nation. We are commanded to pray for rulers, and this new President faces challenges that are not only daunting but potentially disastrous. May God grant him wisdom. He and his family will face new challenges and the pressures of this office. May God protect them, give them joy in their family life, and hold them close together.

We must pray that God will protect this nation even as the new President settles into his role as Commander in Chief, and that God will grant peace as he leads the nation through times of trial and international conflict and tension.

We must pray that God would change President-Elect Obama’s mind and heart on issues of our crucial concern. May God change his heart and open his eyes to see abortion as the murder of the innocent unborn, to see marriage as an institution to be defended, and to see a host of issues in a new light. We must pray this from this day until the day he leaves office. God *is* sovereign, after all.

Without doubt, we face hard days ahead. Realistically, we must expect to be frustrated and disappointed. We may find ourselves to be defeated and discouraged. We must keep ever in mind that it is God who raises up nations and pulls them down, and who judges both nations and rulers. We must not act or think as unbelievers, or as those who do not trust God.

America has chosen a President. President-Elect Barack Obama is that choice, and he faces a breathtaking array of challenges and choices in days ahead. This is the time for Christians to begin praying in earnest for our new President. There is no time to lose.

