



Thoughts from the Bible and Books Devotions from The Heidelberg Catechism

University Reformed Church

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Twelve Ways to Pray for President-Elect Obama

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

It's been a few weeks since I've written on the Heidelberg Catechism. I was out of town the better part of the last two weeks and thus unable to write my weekly devotions on Lord's Day 43 and 44. I hope you'll permit me one more excused absence. Instead of Lord's Day 45, I thought it would be good to reflect on how we can pray for our new president.

1. We can thank God for the progress made in race relations over the past 40 years. Certainly, there are still tensions between blacks and whites and racism still lingers in some hearts, but no one can deny the very real and monumental progress that has been made over the past decades. Tens of millions of white Americans voted for a black man to be president. And I think it's safe to say that the overwhelming majority of those who did not vote for Senator Obama felt compelled to vote against him for issues having nothing to do with race. We are getting closer to achieving Dr. King's dream that Americans would be judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin. Whether we voted for Obama or not, we ought to be thankful that our country is at a place where two little black girls will be playing in the White House instead of being escorted into desegregated schools by armed guards.
2. We can thank God for Senator McCain's gracious concession speech and President Bush's promise to make a smooth transition for President-Elect Obama. John McCain did not call for armed resistance or rally his supporters to fight Obama's victory every step of the way. And George W. Bush is not trying to hold onto his power by force. Both men are willing to hand the mantle of the presidency to Barack Obama. These concessions are the Lord's grace to our country, even more so because they are not surprising.
3. We can thank God for democracy. As Winston Churchill once quipped, it may be the worst form of government, but it still beat the alternatives. For all the faults of our country, we can be grateful that over a hundred million people freely cast their vote for president on Tuesday and those votes, not armies or media pundits, determined the outcome of the election.
4. We should pray that God keeps Senator Obama humble, that he has a teachable heart and a spirit that relies on the Lord's strength and not his own. He has shown a willingness to listen to Christian leaders. Ask God that he would be willing to genuinely listen to Christian leaders of all political persuasions, even now that the election is over.

5. Pray that Obama will make good choices for his administration. There are thousands of decisions facing Obama right now, many of them having to do with the people he will be surround himself with come January 20. Pray that Obama would have courage to pick men and women of integrity and good character, that his selections would be for the common good and not political expediency.
6. We should pray for the new president's family. Pray for a strong marriage between Barack and Michelle. Pray that their daughters, Malia Ann and Sasha, would adjust well to their new environment and be able to live normal lives as much as possible.
7. Pray that President Obama will change his mind about the rights of the unborn. Senator Obama has promised to make the Freedom of Choice Act his first legislative objective as president. In its current form, FOCA would enshrine a host of pro-abortion laws that would go far beyond *Roe v. Wade*. It would also sweep away parental consent laws, informed consent laws, restrictions on tax-funded abortions, physician conscience laws, and partial birth abortion bans. Abortion rates have gone down in states with similar legislative restrictions, while the rate has increased in states with FOCA style laws (even as the national average went down). Pray that President Obama will see the moral outrage in the death of 45 millions unborn babies since 1973 and weep over the fact that half of all African-American pregnancies end in abortion.
8. Pray that Christians in this country, especially those dismayed by his election, will not show contempt for our new president but will lead the way in showing respect. He is a servant of God (Rom. 13:1-4) to whom we are subject (1 Peter 2:13-14). We owe him our prayers, thanksgiving (1 Tim. 2:1-2), and honor (1 Peter 2:17).
9. Pray that Christians in this country, especially those thrilled with an Obama presidency, will be gracious toward those who do not share their sentiments. Rude comments about President Bush's two terms do not give him the honor he deserves, nor do they foster the kind of unity Senator Obama lauded throughout his campaign.
10. Pray for the Lord's blessing. Ask God to give us peace and safety. May he spare us another 9/11 in the first months of Obama's presidency, and keep us free from racial hatred (from any side) in the months ahead.
11. We should ask God for good information, sound advice, and noble advisors to come before the president, and that he will have the wisdom to make good decisions as a result. President Obama will face difficult choices about the economy, health care, taxes, the environment, the war in Iraq, our relationship with Iran, and a hundred other issues. Pray that the policies of his first hundred days would be based on reason, compassion, good theory, and realism.
12. Pray for Obama's heart. None of us can imagine the pressures and temptations that come with being President of the United States. We ought to pray that God would give Obama a pure heart, free from the love of money, the lures of power, and the lusts of pride. Ask the Lord to speak to Obama in daily times of prayer and Scripture reading. Pray that the Spirit of God would give him confidence in the gospel, a delight in the cross of Christ, and love for God and neighbor. May God give President Obama courage, integrity, Christlike virtue, and growth in personal holiness. O Lord, make him a man after your own heart.