

Change We Can All Believe In

It was an average January 20th morning when change came to Washington D.C., and with that change came hope for millions of Americans. It brought hope for a renewed sense of pride in the office of the President and hope that our nation's standing in the world would once again be bolstered by a healthy respect for a strong military and a robust economy.

The brand new President spoke of our storied past—a past full of mistakes and moments of glory. He closed by reminding us that we are all doing the work of a sovereign God.

I'm sure by now it should be clear that this description is a flashback to the 2001 inauguration of George W. Bush. Or you might be a little confused.

That's because much of the same feelings and attitudes from Bush's supporters back then have been reborn through the lives of Obama's supporters in 2009. Strangely, the two Presidents' speeches had many similarities as well.

You might recall that back in 2001, President Bill Clinton was wrapping up his eight-year term in the Oval Office. It was a contentious presidency with moral failures and questionable foreign policy decisions that overshadowed the positives of his administration which included a balanced budget and a strong economy. Still, there was a significant part of the population that was ready for change.

And so entered a governor from Texas with a political pedigree of near-Kennedy stature. He offered a powerful message of fiscal responsibility, lower taxes, faith-based initiatives and military might for which so many conservatives, Republicans and (most importantly) Evangelical Christians had hoped.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that the fervor

during Bush's first campaign was anything remotely close to the hysteria witnessed through Obama's historic run for the presidency, but there was palatable excitement and a sincere belief that this man—who like Obama was unashamed to quote scripture and tout his Christian faith—would be the best thing since Ronald Reagan.

I'm not going to get into the pros and cons of Bush's presidency in this column. That's for another time, although I do believe he will ultimately be seen in a more favorable light than poll numbers currently suggest.

But what's most interesting to me is how it appears that the most ardent Obama backers are really no different than those who have defended Bush at every turn. Don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to glaze over the historical significance of Obama's presidency nor am I trying to diminish the inspirational value of his rise to power.

This world's history has always depended on great men and women who were able to send strong messages of hope to the otherwise hopeless. We were reminded of some of these people just one day before Obama's inauguration—transformational figures such as Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Jackie Robinson, Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, Rosa Parks and of course Martin Luther King, Jr.

Even the Bible is full of so-called "Heroes of the Faith" that showed incredible leadership in the most difficult times: Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Esther, David and the great prophets of Israel; all used by God as instruments of hope.

I guess the question for me is this: What happens when euphoric idealism is blindsided by a freight train full of reality? In other words, when President Obama is unable to keep all of his campaign promises, will his faithful followers give him a pass or will they start to get restless—especially if those broken (or delayed) promises directly affect their

lives?

What happens if President Obama turns out to be just another politician? What if his governing style differs only slightly from his recent predecessors Bill Clinton and George W. Bush?

Will his most ardent supporters become disillusioned with him just as many conservatives became disillusioned with President Bush during his second term in office? Will they start to lose hope in democracy?

What about those who didn't vote for Obama? Will we all start to look for the one who will save us from him like many felt Obama would save us from Bush? Maybe it will be Mike Huckabee. How about Mitt Romney? Perhaps Sarah Palin will be the one to finally bring the kind of hope we need.

Or maybe one day, we will finally realize that our hope has never been in a government system, a social program or a political figure. Our only hope is in the one true God and through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. David writes in Psalm 62:5, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him" (NIV).

We as Christians know this, but sometimes we don't act that way. Trust me, you're reading the words of someone who has lost a lot of time over an unhealthy obsession with the past five presidential campaigns (especially the three most recent). I've lost sleep over this kind of stuff and I know plenty other Christians who have done the same—worrying that the election of this candidate or that candidate was going to make or break this great nation.

Am I suggesting that we disengage from the process? Absolutely not! In fact, I think we should all become more engaged in what's happening instead of burying our collective heads in the sand. This is not the time to sit idly by and watch as both political parties continue down a dangerous path towards amoral social stances and fiscal irresponsibility.

I also believe that we should pray for all elected officials—not for their success and not for their failure, but rather for God’s will to be done in all of their decisions and that their hearts would be softened towards the Spirit’s leading.

But while we’re praying, how about asking for some of that peace “which transcends all understanding” (Phil. 4:7, NIV). and for a more trusting relationship with the One who actually holds our future in His hands. That’s the kind of change (and hope) we can all believe in.

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