

God Bless America, America Bless God

Psalm 33.12

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • October 5, In the year of our Lord, 2014
Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Christian Lake – No suggestions

Prelude:

I. Irving Berlin introduced a prayer by saying,

While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.

II. Then he gave this prayer,

God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above
From the mountains To the prairies,
To the ocean white with foam
God bless America, My home sweet home.

III. The original version was written during the summer of 1918

- A. at Camp Upton, in Yaphank, Long Island,
 - 1. for a show called Yip, Yip, Yaphank that Berlin was writing.
- B. He never used the song and it remained tucked away until 1938.
- C. In the fall of 1938, Berlin decided to write a song about peace.
 - 1. He recalled his "God Bless America" from twenty years earlier,
 - 2. altered parts to update popular sentiment, and
 - 3. introduced it to the world on November 11, 1938, with Kate Smith.

Persuasion:

I. God Bless America

- A. How good it is to see "God bless America" everywhere in America.

1. The song has always been special, but
 2. since September 11, 2001 it has increased in its endearment.
- B. If God did not bless America,
1. during the night of troubles,
 2. our nation would cease to exist.
- C. Another popular song reminds America,
- “America! America! God shed His grace on thee,”*
1. which is true because grace is unmerited favor.
 2. If you know
 - a) the demands of a righteous God,
 - b) the spiritual state of America, as well as
 - c) the favorable conditions in America,
 - (1) you have to conclude that God sheds His grace on America daily,
 - (2) even as He does the rest of the world.
 - (a) Perhaps we receive more, because
 - (b) we have songs like these.
- D. Think of how God blesses America and how we want Him to bless America.
1. According to Acts 14, God is responsible for the food of America.
 - a) This is why many Americans give thanks before meals and
 - b) why we have a special day on the fourth Thursday of November.
 2. Paul explained to a group of people who were about to worship him
 - a) that they should not do it,

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from

these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, 16 who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14.14–17).

3. Daniel 4 teaches

- a) that government comes from God, even down to who is president.
- b) God showed a ruler that he was king because God made him king.
 - (1) King Nebuchadnezzar thought that his government and his glory
 - (2) were all of his own doing.
 - (a) So God made the king suffer, until he learned otherwise,

17 “This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men” (Dan 4.17).

- (b) Do you think the words of Daniel apply to Babylon alone?
 - i) Yet, Babylon was far more anti-God
 - ii) than any of us imagine America being.

4. Jeremiah 18 reveals

- a) that God is responsible for the prosperity or adversity of America.
- b) However, listen to these words carefully, because
 - (1) they will lead us into the second half of my message today,
 - (2) which is the second half of the sermon title.

7 “The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, 8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. 9 And the in-

stant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, 10 if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it (Jer 18.7–10).

5. All these things are why we sing,

*God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above
From the mountains To the prairies,
To the ocean white with foam
God bless America, My home sweet home.*

6. This is why we say in the Pledge of Allegiance, "One nation under God."

"What does this mean? It means that we have this land, this flag, this government as a gift from the Great God Almighty. It means that this did not become 'the land of the free and the home of the brave' by blind fate or a happy set of coincidences, but that a wise and benevolent God was hovering over us from the very hour of conception...and long before"
(*"Which Way, America?" The Rebirth of America*, p. 228).

- E. Therefore, we say, "God bless America,"

1. asking God to bless us, and
2. we have blessings because of you, God, and
3. please continue to bless America.

- F. However, we cannot forget another truth.

II. America Bless God

- A. People often say

1. that God loves unconditionally,
2. that He gives grace unconditionally,
3. that He blesses unconditionally.
 - a) There is a measure of truth to these, but

- b) also a measure of misinformation.
 - (1) If *all* God's blessings were unconditional,
 - (2) no one would be lost, no nation would ever be destroyed.
 - 4. Yes, God gives love, grace, and blessings before we bless Him,
 - a) those are unconditional, but
 - b) He expects something in return.
 - (1) If He does not see it,
 - (2) He ceases to bless.
 - 5. This is why it is not only critical to the health of any nation,
 - a) including America, to acknowledge that God blesses America, but
 - b) that then America blesses God.
- B. Deuteronomy 8 was spoken to Israel, but
- 1. you will see that what was true for Israel
 - 2. is also true for America,

7 “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. 11 Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; 15 who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and

that He might test you, to do you good in the end— 17 then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' 18 And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. 20 As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God" (Deu 8).

- a) Does this only apply to ancient Israel?
 - b) Is it merely Old Testament and so does not apply to us?
 - (1) Look at verse 20 again.
 - (2) That verse shows God demanded something of
 - (a) the Canaanite nations,
 - (b) although they were never under the Law of Moses.
- C. Two verses in the Psalms should make an impression upon you.
- a) If Deuteronomy 8 is too much to remember,
 - b) carry away these two passages with you today.

**12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.
(Psa 33.12)**

**15 Happy are the people who are in such a state;
Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!
(Psa 144.15)**

- c) Let me add a passage from Isaiah,

**1bc "We have a strong city;
God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks.
2 Open the gates,
That the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in.
3 You will keep him in perfect peace,**

**Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.
4 Trust in the Lord forever,
For in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting strength.
5 For He brings down those who dwell on high,
The lofty city;
He lays it low,
He lays it low to the ground,
He brings it down to the dust.
6 The foot shall tread it down—
The feet of the poor
And the steps of the needy.”
(Isa 26.1–6)**

D. Whenever Americans say, “God bless America,”

1. America is blessing God.
2. Let us back it up with godliness.

E. Powerful forces seek to keep America from blessing God.

1. Did you know that our public schools once used the Bible as a text book?
 - a) Prayer is no longer allowed in schools.
 - b) There are attempts to keep the Pledge of Allegiance from the schools.
 - c) There is an attempt to remove our national motto, “In God We Trust.”
2. Major forces seek to keep God out of American public government life.

Exhortation:

I. What are you doing to bless God as an American?

- A. You need to attend our seminar this coming weekend.
- B. Are you even a Christian?
 1. Being a Christian surpasses being an American.
 2. America shall perish, but
 - a) the Kingdom composed of Christians,

44 “...shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom [of God] shall not

be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan 2.44).

II. Becoming a Christian is the best thing for America.

- A. You then become the salt of America and
- B. the light of the land we love.