

THE REALLY GOOD LIFE

Life of Christ Series

Gospel of Luke

'God Bless America?'

'I've got my rights!' screams a combatant protester as the police are forced to carry him away. 'It's a free country!' hollers the feisty rebel burning an American flag. 'Freedom of speech!' declares the foul-mouthed irritant using God's Name in vain. Independence Day is all about celebrating our 'rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' in this 'one nation under God', not about abusive and reckless freedom to impetuously do or say anything we want regardless of God and others. **The Declaration of Independence** was about casting off the ruthless tyranny of a despotic king in England, not about casting off all restraints, common decency and morality. When the rights of the worst and most godless in society take precedence over the common good of respectable, godly citizens, the stage is set for liberty to turn into anarchy. God, in **Proverbs 17:15** puts it this way: ***"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them are an abomination to the LORD."*** When our nation began, the concept was not equal rights for both the good and the bad in society; it was all about protection of the good citizens from bad people who trampled on the basic rights of others, just like the king of England had done to cause Independence Day. It seems the older we get as a nation, the more historically senile our leaders become about our origins and the intentions of our forefathers. Rather than try to understand what essentially good, decent, humble, God-fearing men sought to convey, modern day political leaders try to see the Constitution through sympathetic eyes of the most outrageous and debauched among us and then rule accordingly.

Today, we are teetering on the brink economic, environmental, international, moral and spiritual breakdown – not as a judgment of God, but simply reaping what has been sown for the past half-century. In the 1960's those voted into office rejected the Bible and prayer as improper in public places. After those foundations were removed, structures built upon them began to crumble and fall – immorality (called 'free love'), drug experimentation, abortion on demand, divorce for any reason fulfilled God's warning: ***"...they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools..."*** (**Romans 1:21-32**). Other nations such as those in Asia have begun to see America as a nation in decline much like the Roman Empire in the years of its demise.

Nearly two and a half centuries of greatness in the history of the world stand in jeopardy because of the foolishness of these last fifty years. It will not do to simply say 'God bless America' regardless of how America acts. 'God blessed America' in the past and is still blessing America today with great toleration of our great sinfulness in His sight. The correct phrasing of the patriotic cliché should be changed from a command we give God to a question we ask ourselves, 'Will God bless America?' And the answer from God is not ambiguous: ***"It's up to you, America! Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people"*** (**Proverbs 14:34**). Although **2 Chronicles 7:14** was specifically to the nation of Israel, the general principle is true of any nation claiming to 'be under God': ***"...if My people who are called by My Name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."***

Don't stop there, however; read on for the complete agreement – ***"Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place..."*** (**v 15**). God wants to hear some real praying followed by action in order for His blessings to flow rather than His judgments fall. A few chapters later God promises to bless those who remain 'BLESSABLE' – ***"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."*** (**2 Chronicles 16:9**). Our faltering, failing nation must return to God with repentance or face the consequences. 'God bless America' is simply using His Name in vain unless we meet the criteria for that to happen. Maybe its time for a new slogan to be heard at the end of speeches and conversations; let's try 'America! Bless God!' and then just watch God bless America.

Prayer-ables of Jesus (Part 1)

(Prayer Keys to Keeping the Faith in the Last Days)

Luke 18:1-14

Synopsis: Luke's pattern in this part of his gospel is teaching, a parable and a miracle. In the final weeks leading to the cross, Jesus follows this pattern consistently to inculcate principles of spiritual leadership to the twelve. **Luke 17: 20-37** taught about Jesus' teaching on establishment of the kingdom of God. He intimated that it would be preceded by a difficult interim period of history with society and spiritual values in decline. This prophetic teaching is now followed by two important parables on the importance of prayer and faith during what we now know to be the Church Age era between Christ's first and second comings. The parables are related to Jesus' prophetic teaching by His question: ***"...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"*** (**18:8**). Clearly, persistent prayer by humble disciples of Jesus will be the way God continues to prepare His people on earth while the Master is away.

‘Pray, Don’t Faint’

(The Importance of Persistence in Prayer)

A Prayer-able of the Last Days’

“Then He (Jesus) spoke a parable to them, that **men always ought to pray and not lose heart**, saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while, but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’”

18:1-5

Interpreting this parable:

The context: To be properly understood this parable must be seen as connected to the previous teaching of Jesus about the postponement of the kingdom of God on earth (17:20-37).

The characters: **The unjust judge** - the perception of God felt by Israel awaiting Messiah
The victimized widow - the nation of Israel calling out for deliverance from oppressors
The adversary - the Roman Empire at the time (and all anti-Semites anytime)

The conclusion: *The LORD will eventually provide justice for His people after a long delay. He will do so, not because the Jewish people deserve deliverance or their superfluous requests for justice over their enemies, but because the nation Israel belongs to His jurisdiction and He is obliged for His own Name’s sake and the Old Testament Law to keep His promises to her. This will be proven out when Christ, the Judge (John 5:22-23) returns to deliver Israel, who even at the end of the Tribulation will be in unbelief about Jesus until they see Him coming in glory (Zechariah 12:8-10, Romans 11:25-27). To most Jewish people today their prayers seem to ascend to a God that hasn’t defended them or delivered them like the unjust judge.*

Discussion:

- When your prayers seemingly aren’t answered, how does it affect your concept of God?
- Why may God delay answering prayer?
- What about God assures you He will answer eventually?
- Are you praying more here at the end of the age? What new prayer habits did you start during the lockdown? Do you plan to continue more prayer so you faint less?

Lessons About God & Prayer

“Then the Lord said, “**Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?**” I tell you that **He will avenge them speedily.** Nevertheless, **when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?**”

18:6-8

Jesus’ focus: The Word of God

(The judge’s word, not his demeanor)

The personality of the *unjust judge* is to be overlooked as the mischaracterization intended by the religious leaders of Jesus if He doesn’t immediately establish the kingdom of God on earth. All of the harsh things about the *unjust judge* are the exact opposite of Judge Jesus Christ.

Discussion:

- Do you believe that persistent Bible-based prayer prevents or heals spiritual faint-heartedness? (Explain)
- Why is skillful, constant prayer especially vital in these last days?
- What about God assures you He will answer eventually?
- How does a good prayer life improve your overall spiritual growth?
- Discuss the “Prayer Principles” (below)-- Which are most helpful to you being a better pray-er?

7 Prayer Principles to Ponder:

1. **God is only obliged to the prayers of His ‘elect’.**
Are you one of the elect? (Matthew 24:31; John 6:37, 44; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:11, 11:7, 11:28; Ephesians 1:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:10-11). If in doubt, see 2 Corinthians 13:5.
2. **Believers must be persistent in prayer to avoid ‘faint-heartedness’** (Ephesians 6:18)
3. **Persistent praying must be from the heart not vain repetitions** (Matthew 6:7-8).
4. **Effective fervent prayer (James 5:16) must be to God only** (John 16:23-24).
5. **Crucial prayers are not usually answered immediately** (Lamentations 3:25-26).
6. **Prayers for justice – God moves slowly; then He acts suddenly** (2 Peter 3:9).
7. **Faith is the ‘offspring’ of persistent prayer and precious to God** (Hebrews 11:1,6)