



*13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Gal 5:13-14)*

### **God Bless America**

Spoken Introduction:

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.

Song:

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 oceans, wide with hope,  
God bless America,  
My home sweet home.

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This hymn song was written by Irving Berlin when he was serving in the Army in World War I in 1918. It did not seem to fit the production for which he wrote the song, so he shelved it for twenty years. When asked by Katy Smith if he had written any patriotic songs, he pulled this song out of his desk drawer and handed it to her. He had revised it slightly in 1938, and Kate Smith sang it for the first time in 1938. It became Miss Smith's signature song. Not a single Independence Day goes by without the singing of this great tune. I have heard it every 4<sup>th</sup> since my early understanding and memory. Berlin, born Israel Baline, composed this wonderful song, along with hundreds of others, in spite of his inability to read music.

When royalties began flooding in for this song, Berlin did not wish to profit from a patriotic song. He said the lyrics belonged to God. He founded the God Bless America Fund to control the copyright with all proceeds being donated to the Boy and Girls Scouts of America.

What could be more representative of wholesome American culture than these other popular songs - *White Christmas*, *I'll be Loving you Always*, and *Easter Parade*? It is hard to believe that these three songs were composed by a man who could not read music and was a naturalized US citizen from Siberia in Russia. He immigrated to America at the age of five. He died of a good old age of 101 (1989).

In a sense, we in America are all immigré's, or descendants of immigrants. It is that mixture of western and oriental cultures that have produced a hybrid society of common values and patriotic virtue across the fertile plains and alabaster landscape of America. But it was not the wealth of America, or the professional opportunities that drew our forefathers to America. In fact, it was a bleak life, materially speaking, for those who founded a nation on these well-blessed shores. Food was not easily grown at first, the weather was new and uncertain, hostile Indians occupied the woods and wetlands, and the European powers were unfriendly to the idea of granting freedom to our colonial states. Coming to these fair shores to escape religious persecution, the colonist found themselves shackled with a new kind of tyranny in excessive taxation and suppression of personal freedoms. Those freedoms had to be won at the great cost of deprivation, blood, and unbelievable personal exertion. It is because of the faith and blood of our forefathers that we enjoy such abundance of freedom in America. If we continue to take those freedoms for granted, we shall lose them. Freedom requires a constant vigilance and determination to defend it at all cost while trusting in the superintending Providence of God.

Irving Berlin loved America. He loved the new-found freedoms he and his family enjoyed in contrast to the oppressive rule of Tsarist Russia. It became his "Home Sweet Home." He prayed that God would guide America with the "Light from Above." If we ignore that Light, we shall soon become blind to it. Though it continues to beam in effulgent rays, Light that is unseen is of no benefit. It is my prayer that our youth will again be led to seek that Light of Christ that has granted us our freedoms and purchased our liberties.

The storm clouds again are gathering, "far across the sea." But the more threatening storm clouds hang over the horizon and the landscape of America. The

most feared enemy is no longer in Europe, Asia, or Tripoli – it is in the heart of America herself. Lest we repent, and soon, it, may be too late for our children and grandchildren to enjoy the legacy bequeathed by our Founding Father to us as our inheritance which we have lately viewed with a social contempt. We have become drunk with pride and material riches. We have turned from the God of our primitive founding and resorted to social experiments that are unholy – but not all have fallen away in faithless complacency. God has preserved Himself a remnant in the land to serve as the seed of a revival of Godly reverence and holy living. The enemy among us can only be vanquished by repentance and commitment to God. Will you join other patriotic Americans across our land and help restore the biblical foundations of our beloved America? May we come to appreciate our America as did an immigrant from old Russia who wrote the lyrics for our Song we sing this day.