

July 4: Be Thankful and Prayerful

Joe Slater

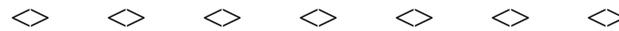
At this time of year we Americans celebrate the anniversary of our nation's independence. Amidst the feasting, flag-waving, and fireworks, let us remember to thank God for the bountiful blessings He has graciously poured out upon this country. Most of us, myself included, have nowhere near a complete grasp of how fortunate we are to live in this land at this time in history. Even with all of the problems about which we might legitimately complain, people in a hundred other places would trade places with us in a heartbeat. Desperate souls sacrifice their meager wealth and risk their very lives just for a chance to come here. How many people do you see leaving our shores on rafts for Cuba, or stowing away on ships bound for North Korea? This ought not to make us arrogant or condescending, but rather thankful that God has put us in such a marvelous place as this.

In the Old Testament, God dealt directly with nations, sometimes communicating with heads of state through dreams, prophets, etc. While God speaks today through His word, He still controls nations (Acts 17:26). Civil authorities are His servants (Romans 13:1-6), even as they were in Old Testament times (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6). Like all servants with free will, civil authorities may obey God or rebel against His ways. The book of Revelation shows how God would bring down the empire of Rome due to its abuse of authority, especially its persecution of Christians. Solomon's ancient proverb is timeless: "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

Paul teaches us to pray for our civil authorities, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:2). We have much about which to pray in this regard. As a nation, we

are killing over a million of our own children every year in the abortuaries, with the hearty approval of the very authorities God has charged with punishing evil-doers. Homosexual conduct is not only tolerated, but flaunted and encouraged by the President, Vice President, and half or more of the Congress and Judiciary. Our children are being force-fed a steady diet of situation ethics, relativism, and political correctness.

Let us petition our God to continue being patient and merciful with our nation! Let us plead that, through His providence, He would return us to a solid moral foundation. And let us remember that faith, without works, is dead; in addition to praying, we must use the freedom God has given us to bring about change for the better.



Killing Time

A. W. Tozer wrote, "When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection. The Bible urges us to redeem time (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5).

No one understood the use of time better than our Lord. He declared, "I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day; the night comes, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

via House-to-House/Heart-to-Heart

Daily Allowance

When our son, Chris, was eight years old, his weekly allowance was never enough. One day, he read aloud the nutrition information from a bag of potato chips. "Look, Mom," he said. "Even the USDA recommends daily allowances."

--Barbara H. Davis (in Ladies' Home Journal); via House-to-House/Heart-to-Heart

Losing or Winning Ground?

For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away (Matt 25:29).

Jesus made the above perplexing statement that warns of the danger of losing ground by doing nothing. One of the first surprises after you reach your twenties is how quickly you can get out of shape. You are lulled into a false notion that you are as fit as your were in high school. Only when you try to do something very physical do you learn just how much you have lost.

As we get older things get even worse. Being out of shape doesn't happen overnight, but slowly it creeps up on you until one day you discover that you are unable to climb a flight of stairs. When I hit 50, I quit working out regularly because of those frustrating, nagging injuries. Because I couldn't do the workouts I wanted to do, I did very little for quite a while. Was I in for a shock! Weight gain was slow but steady until I was shocked to learn I was 30 pounds overweight. I didn't weigh myself back then. I couldn't stay on a stationary bike longer than ten minutes. We usually don't see the changes until something jars us to reality like an angiogram and a stent to open a clogged coronary artery.

I've lost the weight, and I'm getting fitter by the day. I am able to stay on the stationary bike until I get too bored to ride any longer, but I can't rest on yesterday's accomplishments. If I'm not gaining, I'm losing. This especially applies to our spiritual state, which is my point. Remember what John said? "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2). If our physical health was just like our spiritual health, how healthy would we be?

When a blind man wanted to be healed, Jesus said, "It shall be done to you according to your faith" (Matthew 9:29). Isn't it time we ask the Lord that same question asked by the apostles? Lord, "increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5). Are we losing or gaining ground?

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)