

1. It's the seventh inning stretch at a baseball game. We're asked to doff our caps and join in a rousing chorus of *God Bless America*. This practice has been especially prevalent at public events since September 11, 2001 when our United States of America was attacked by Islamic terrorists. When I hear the song played in such a venue, a couple of questions pop up in my head. "To what 'god' are the people around me singing?" and "Why should 'god' bless us?"
2. I myself know which God is the "god" who can bless America. You yourselves know Him too. He is the only true God, the Lord, the God of the Scriptures. That's because there is no other god. I also know that there are those among the many thousands around me singing *God Bless America* who don't have a clue Who the true God is. And there may even be people singing to Allah with the mentality that the only way America can be blessed is through its demise.
3. So, the answer to my first question is simple. To what "god" are the people around me singing? They are either singing to the true God or to no one at all—"no one" in all its various manifestations. It's the second question that scares me. Why should God bless us?
4. I love our country. I am thankful to God for the blood shed, and shed by many Christians, so that we can worship the true God of the Scriptures in freedom. That is why it concerns me so much when I see so much FROGBA around us. When you read the sermon title in the bulletin, you may have asked yourself, "What *is* this FROGBA stuff all about?" It's an acronym. It stands for the Folk Religion of God Bless America. It's a mentality that says, "God *has* to bless us because, well ... we're *America*." And that mentality ties directly into our text for today.
5. People in the Northern Tribes of Israel and the Southern Tribes of Judah in Amos' day thought, "God *has* to bless us because, well ... we're the *chosen* nation." And they were the chosen nation. God used His Old Testament people to create the historical context for Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, to come into the world and do His saving work. But God confronted them with their mentality of entitlement. {Read verses 1-2.}
6. Speaking to the Southern Kingdom using the name Zion, and speaking to the Northern Kingdom using the name Samaria, God calls out all of the people—and especially the leadership—for its FROGBA-like mentality. Were they blessed? Yes! Calneh, Hamath, and Gath—they had *nothing* on Israel in those days. But the people of Israel were complacent and secure. They were at ease with their current situation. And that situation was sad because God wasn't in the picture even though they knew they were supposed to be "God's people." They thought they'd continue to get whatever they wanted simply because of who they were.
7. How they lived showed that mentality. {Read verses 4-6a.} It's good David's name is mentioned here. David enjoyed the blessings of God. He especially enjoyed the forgiveness of sins after God led him to repent of his sins. That's why he sang the songs he did as they're recorded for us in the Psalms. What made David different than the folks to whom God called Amos to preach, was that David understood that it's not because of our worth that God saves us and blesses us. It's because of His grace that He

saves us and blesses us!

8. Everything the people did in Amos' day was about indulgence with a perverse and sacrilegious twist—all while expecting God to bless them. Covered couches were always used for more than just lounging. The bowls full of wine were the same bowls that were supposed to be used for worship in the house of the Lord. It's no wonder God says in verse 3, {Read verse 3.} They acted like nothing bad was going to happen, but were just making it come more quickly. The word for terror there is *chamas*. It's the same word that terrorists use still today to describe their "holy wars." Arabic and Hebrew share many words because they're both Semitic languages. The sin of the nation of Israel is what brought the terror upon them.
9. So, what was their sin? {Read verse 6b.} Joseph is a nickname for the Northern Tribes of Israel. The half-tribes named after Joseph's sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) had territories making the border between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Their ruin was caused by idolatry. And the people were so far gone in that idolatry, that they didn't even care anymore. So, God gave His chosen nation this stern judgment. {Read verse 7.} The Savior from sin was going to have to come from a people who returned from exile because of their sin. And that chosen nation would never be the same again. Israel would be stripped of its glory and its autonomy.
10. Looking at that history is what makes FROGBA such a concern to me today. A perverse and sacrilegious spirit colors our culture today. It colors it to the point where we are losing sight of that spirit. And then we sing *God Bless America*. We don't even have ancient Israel's guarantee of being the only chosen nation. But we do have the guarantee that came out of that chosen nation in the Person of Christ our Savior.
11. We grieve over our country's—and our world's—ruination which comes from sin. We grieve that babies are murdered in the name of mercy, we grieve that marriage is a word that has lost its meaning, we grieve that our education system promotes false theories as truth—we grieve that we're becoming numb to it all, complacent, secure. But God doesn't let us become numb. God's Word still applies. It cuts and forgives. Sin is still sin. And Christ has paid for our numbness with His death on the cross. And we, who know the true God, have been chosen to share that message of sin and grace at this time and place.
12. Now, back to my second question as I'm pondering FROGBA at a baseball stadium. Why should God bless us? God doesn't *have* to bless us. But look at how God *has* blessed us! As long as we are free to talk about sin and grace, we have the message that all people of our United States need to hear. We Christians do pray that God would use us to stand beside her and guide her, not be complacent and secure. As you exercise the freedoms you now have, beware of FROGBA. Amen.