

Sermon

Freedom and In Dependence

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When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.



We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world...

And on it goes to delineate the various grievances the Founding Fathers of our Country levied against King George III. And then it ended with pronouncement that these 13 colonies were severing all ties to Great Britain becoming 13 independent and united states. The revolution that was already underway now had a clear and specific document that served as a rallying point for the patriots and the final straw of defiance for the most powerful army in the world.

This Declaration of Independence, dated July 4, 1776, is what we celebrate today with our parades and barbecues and fireworks. Happy Independence Day.

These Founding Fathers embarked on what has been called the great *American experiment*. While certainly not perfect, 230+ years later we enjoy the successes of the American experiment. This is, by most reasonable measures, the greatest country in the world.

Some have described the success of the American experiment as nothing short of a miracle. In defiance of the most powerful nation in the world, back in those 18th century days, even the writings of those founders betrayed that this just might not work. But it was worth the risk.

The patriots who stood up for liberty in 1776 were more than mere rebels who were tired of the rule of King George III. They aspired to a new level of greatness.

It is worth noting that the Declaration acknowledges that rebellion often results in little positive change.

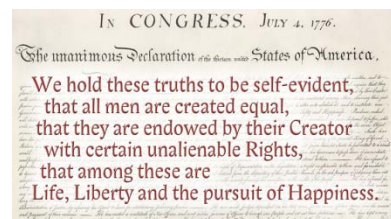
Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

Mere overthrow and *regime change* often results in simply going from tyranny to tyranny. I suppose it is something like what the psalmists of our time mean when they write, "Meet the new boss... same as the old boss."

No... this was more than a mere rebellion... more than chasing off the old boss from across the Atlantic to install some new boss. This was not a fight for a new ruler, but a fight for new rules. It was not a cause to usher in a new champion, but an effort to champion a new cause. They were not appealing to a new king, but rather to a higher ideal. They appealed to what they felt every person knew deep in their soul, what they felt every person knew was right (the Laws of Nature)... and they appealed to *Nature's God*.

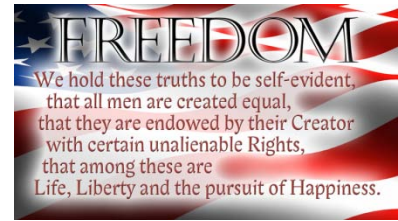
That second sentence of the Declaration capsulated that core belief. These words have uniquely identified the soul of the American experiment, and continue to be the driving force of the spread and strengthening of liberty around the world.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.



We are created... not a mere chance of nature, something far more than survival of the fittest in which the strong rise to power, subjugating the weak. Created... and created equal... and endowed by our Creator with Rights.

From a nationalistic perspective, this is what we mean by **freedom**. These words define liberty and a free society; they have not only defined our republic, but have significantly influenced the free nations of the world over these past few centuries.



Our founding fathers determined that these lofty pursuits were no longer possible under the reign of King George III, and they were forced to establish a new government.

Thus, this Declaration we celebrate today... this Declaration of Independence.



Independence is an interesting word. In simple terms, it comes from the word **independent** (independence is the condition of being independent)... which breaks into two parts **in-** and **dependent**. The way our English works, it simply means **not dependent**.

The founders declared their independence from Great Britain and her King... but even the Declaration betrays that that there could not be pure independence for humans, certainly not individual humans. This Declaration claims **independence** from their current tyranny, but asserts **dependence** on

- inalienable rights,
- new ideals,
- each other, and
- God.

Is there any doubt that this Declaration of Independence found its strength not in the assertion of **independence** from the crown, but **in dependence** of these core beliefs?



The genius of the Declaration was that it established dependence on these

- inalienable rights,
- new ideals,
- new bonds with each other, and
- God.

Independence was a remarkable statement, especially in the face of the most powerful nation and army in the world at that time. But what was far more remarkable was the statement that this United States of America would find our freedom by choosing to be dependent on these newly stated foundations.

Our Founders knew that the freedom they sought would be costly. The Declaration ends with these words:

And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.

Freedom is not free and is worth sacrificing everything. But more profound than that is the clear assertion that freedom is not merely about saying **no** to a tyrant, it is about saying **yes** to something higher and better. This is the case when it comes to freedom of any sort (nationalistic, spiritual, freedom from some addiction or life controlling habit, etc.). **Freedom is always more about saying yes than saying no.**

This Declaration of Independence is a nationalistic document, and a theological document. There is plenty of debate over the beliefs of our Founding Fathers. Were these men Christians or merely deists? It seems that there was some of each. Regardless of the arguments, they were on solid theological ground from a Christian, theological perspective.

Freedom is a core Christian concept.

¹³You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.¹

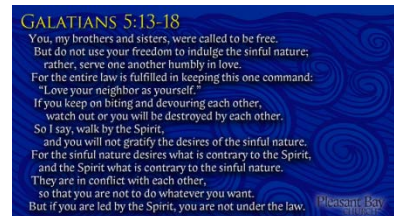
This is the Gospel. All for the Glory of God, Christ sets us free! Free from

- Evil (Powers of Hell)
- Law (Powers of Religion)
- Sin (Powers of Our Fallen and Flawed Nature)

You (we) are called to be free.

The Gospel is our *Declaration of Independence*. And just like our Nation's Declaration, the Gospel is certainly our Declaration of **In Dependence**. The freedom we have in Christ is not merely a freedom for freedom's sake... but freedom to fully claim our dependence on God. We are in dependence of

- Christ, and His righteous work, having nothing righteous in ourselves that could possibly purchase our right standing before a Holy God.
- Each other, serving "one another humbly in love." Christ saves each person so that we can serve as a people of God.
- The Spirit. Not merely saved from Hell, but saved for this life too. Not merely free from the punishment of Hell, but free to walk by the Spirit, in the Spirit, through the Spirit.



Freedom.

¹³You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.²



This Independence Day, July 4, is a good day to also proclaim our *in dependence*. This July 4, this first Sunday of July, coincides with our practice of coming to the Lord's Table.

Communion is a declaration of *in dependence*. We celebrate the freedom that we have in Christ, and we remember that we depend on what is symbolized by this cup and this bread.



In a few minutes, we will have opportunity to come forward and take these symbols in our hands.

- This cup that tangibly reminds us of the Blood of Jesus that was shed to set us free.
- This bread that tangibly reminds us of the Body of Jesus that was broken to set us free.

Freedom, any kind of freedom, comes at a price. This freedom that we celebrate before God on this day was purchased by the precious Son of God.

We celebrate that freedom, and again declare our dependence on Christ, and His work for us.