

Declaration of Dependence, June 30, 2013

Independence. It's a great thing, right?

I mean, we wouldn't have Thursday off if it weren't for Independence Day, right?

All joking aside, Thursday will mark the 237th anniversary of our independence from England back in 1776. That is a momentous event, and should be celebrated.

As Americans, we have been brought up to feel that independence is a great thing, not just for the country, but as individuals. The "rugged individualist" who goes off on his own and survives in the wilderness; the "self-made man" who "pulls himself up by his own boot straps"; the person who achieves the "American dream"; the independent business owner; they all are independent; they do it all on their own.

I think men are more independent than women are, but maybe that's just because I'm a man. How many women do you know won't stop and ask for directions to get somewhere, or will throw away the directions with the packaging because they know how to put something together?

All this is great for achieving what the world is looking for, but what about with respect to our relationship with God? I think that the American ideal, the individualist mentality, causes us as Americans to have a hard time with our relationship with God.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Independent as "not subject to control by others: self-governing or not affiliated with a larger controlling unit <as in an independent bookstore>". This is exactly what we'd expect in a country that places such value on independence – it's a good thing to be independent.

I remember when I was in the military, many of the "dependent spouses" would cringe at that term, because they weren't dependent on anyone – they could take care of themselves, and their families, and usually did when the military spouse was away. That may have been

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true, but the term still applied to them because their military spouse was the one who provided specific things for them, so they were technically dependent on the military person, whether they liked it or not.

Just like the military dependent, we're dependent on God for more than we usually like to admit. If we accept that God created everything, than God provides everything we have (well, even if we don't accept it, it's true). We tend to fool ourselves into thinking that we're actually the ones doing the providing, but even the work we do, and our ability to do that work is from God.

After Pentecost, I think the Apostles finally "got it" regarding God and being dependent on Him.

Acts 4:23-37

²³ When they [Peter and John] were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

*"Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?*

*²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed'—*

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand

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to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Here, we see the Apostles relying on God, being “dependent” on God and His will, asking Him for His favor, so they can continue to reach out to the people in the city of Jerusalem. But we also see them quoting a Psalm here, using a song that they would sing in worship to God as a part of their prayer. In verses 25 and 26 they quote from the 2nd Psalm.

Psalm 2

The Reign of the LORD’s Anointed

- 1 *Why do the nations rage
 and the peoples plot in vain?*
- 2 *The kings of the earth set themselves,
 and the rulers take counsel together,
 against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,*
- 3 *“Let us burst their bonds apart
 and cast away their cords from us.”*

- 4 *He who sits in the heavens laughs;
 the Lord holds them in derision.*
- 5 *Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
 and terrify them in his fury, saying,*
- 6 *“As for me, I have set my King
 on Zion, my holy hill.”*

- 7 *I will tell of the decree:
 The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
 today I have begotten you.*
- 8 *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,*

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- and the ends of the earth your possession.*
- ⁹ *You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."*
- ¹⁰ *Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.*
- ¹¹ *Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.*
- ¹² *Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

In the first verse of this psalm, the "Nations" refers to the gentiles, and the "peoples" refers to the people of Israel. Their kings and leaders conspire together against God and His anointed one or Messiah. What are they conspiring about? They want to cut all ties with God, "burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." Amazing this was written so long ago; it sounds like it could have been written this week.

In this Psalm, David is basically telling the listener that God is in charge, we are dependent on Him, and God even laughs at us when we struggle against His will. David closes the Psalm with a warning – Kiss the Son or He will be angry and you will perish on your journey.

One thing we (or at least I) tend to do is take things into my own hands. I see something that's wrong, or not the way that I think it should be, and I want to fix it; to make it right. That's not always the right thing to do.

I think that sometimes God uses us to correct bad situations. History shows us that not every change is caused by supernatural events. Like 237 years ago, men got together and decided that it was the right thing to do to declare independence from tyranny. I believe God was

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involved in that; Godly men made a good decision to make a radical change.

However, I do think that many times, God wants us to just sit out the storm, to wait for His resolution to the problem, because we're not a part of that resolution.

In Psalm 4:4, 5 David says this:

Psalm 4:4, 5

- ⁴ *Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.*
- ⁵ *Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.*

The way I understand what David is saying here is that it's OK to be angry about things, but don't react. Think about it, overnight, and give the issue to God, and He will resolve it. That resolution may include you, and it may not. That's up to God. But you need to honestly let it go and wait for God to give it back to you if He wants you to resolve it.

Paul says something similar in to the Christians at Ephesus in Ephesians 4:26 and 27.

Ephesians 4:26, 27

- ²⁶ *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,*
²⁷ *and give no opportunity to the devil.*

If we react to a situation, rather than pray about it and let God handle it, it can lead us into a situation where we are the ones in the wrong, where we are sinning.

We need to depend on God for resolution to bad situations, even though sometimes that resolution may involve us.

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Another way of saying you are dependent on someone or something is to say that you trust or believe in that person or thing. John 14 is a good example of this. The Greek word that's translated as trust or believe in John chapter 14 is pist-yoo-o. Strong's concordance describes it as "the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul." – In other words, faith.

Here in John 14, Jesus is talking to His disciples, kind of giving his "farewell speech" if you will.

John 14:1-4

¹ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going."

Jesus is saying "Trust me! I've never lied to you, and I never will! Heaven is a big place, and my Daddy has made sure there's space for you there, because I want you there with me. I'm dependable."

Peter didn't always get it. He was there for all of it, but didn't get it for a long time. He even cut off a man's ear "defending" Jesus from arrest, but then denied that he even knew Him. But Peter did figure it out, as we saw from his discussion with the chief priests and elders in Acts 4. Then, in the first letter we have from Peter, he clearly understands his dependence on God and Christ.

1 Peter 1:21 (GTP)

²¹ Through Christ, you believe in God. God raised Christ from death and gave Him glory. Now your faith and hope can be in God.

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237 years ago, give or take a few days, a group of men signed a Declaration of Independence from England; the beginning of this country. But how do we “sign” our declaration of DEPENDENCE on God? Peter has the answer for us.

In Acts 2:38, 39 he answers that question.

Acts 2:38, 39

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Declare your obedience to God and His Son, turn away from sin, and depend on Him for everything, and you will be His child.

Opening scripture: Isaiah 26:1-6

Closing scripture: Romans 15:13

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Questions:

1. What do you think is the answer to David's question in the first three verses in Psalm 2?
2. Think about Psalm 4:4, 5 and Ephesians 4:26, 27. How can we apply these verses to our lives?
3. What about trust? Is it hard to trust in God? What about John 14:1-4?