

Dear Friends in Christ:

As we move into July we join the rest of the nation in celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. If one were to take the first few sentences of this document seriously, It could not have been written by people who merely wanted more power over their lives and money in their pockets. It sees the hierarchical system of British governance by fiat and taxation without representation as an affront not to human sensibilities or human bottom lines, but against God himself and his expectations of how human affairs are to be conducted.

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— Any number of leftists and secularists will project themselves and their agenda back in time 250 years and try to tell people that the Declaration of Independence is the triumph of atheism over Christianity in an outcome that cannot be reversed.

They are wrong.

Any struggle behind the scenes leading up to the Declaration of Independence was between those advocating the God of the Natural Order and those advocating the God of Sectarian Christianity. Christians were on both sides of this struggle. If we are endowed by our creator with the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, then all of our rights are based upon the will of God. Our existence as a society of persons created equal is based upon the will of our creator.

There were some enemies of Christianity around like Thomas Paine. There were some wacky theological ideas like those of Ben Franklin. There was the idea of a wall of separation between church and state that Thomas Jefferson held privately, but none of these ideas made it into the Declaration of Independence.

While most of the founders who signed the document were church members and practicing Christians, for the purposes of the new nation, they were not sectarians. They did not want the nation to have Anglican Christianity or Roman Catholic Christianity or Quaker beliefs as the state religion. They did not want the government to be in the business of suppressing outlawed religions. But they were fully and explicitly able to agree that the grounding of our rights, our status before the law, and our nation itself was based on the will of God. They even recognized that their own lives and well-being would be protected by "providence" or not at all: "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."

So we celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our country by people with faith in God. We celebrate the signing of this historical document. We celebrate the people of history who signed it in recognition that God has expectations that cannot be ignored. It is the will of God that justice must be done. It is the will of God that the truth must be told. While our nation has often been too slow in recognizing the implications of all this, those implications are right there in our founding: the rights that God gives to human beings must be recognized and protected.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor John.