

# Independence

Independence is defined, freedom from control, influence, support, aid, or the like. Also, it is defined as not influenced or controlled by others in matters of opinion, conduct, thinking or acting for oneself. Closely associated with freedom and self rule. Yesterday we observed the signing of the Declaration of Independence and what is considered the birth of our nation.

As we think of our independence, we need to think of what Jesus came to do for mankind. Jesus said the truth shall set us free, John 8:32. He came to give us independence but from what and for what purpose? What are we supposed to do with this “independence” or freedom?

Independence means there is something to become independent from. As our Founding Fathers signed the Declaration of Independence, they were accusing England of unfairly subjecting the colonies to harsh treatment and tyranny. The Bible defines sin for us, i.e. transgressing the law of God but it also points out the tyranny of sin. Not only is sin something we commit it also identifies us as sinners. **“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).** Thus, the man and woman living together out of wedlock are adulterers. The person not telling the truth is a liar. Those bowing down to some image in worship are idolaters.

People living in our country in 1776 realized the need for independence from England. For many years the colonies were content to be under British rule but there came a time they felt the cost of such rule was too high. Jesus had to convict His audience of the need for freedom from sin. **“Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’” (John 8:34).** Many today are willing to live in sin, enjoying its pleasures. However there comes a time when many realize the high cost of those passing pleasures.

But to receive independence people in 1776 had to do more. They had to act

upon that desire; they had to fight and make sacrifices. Many of those who signed the Declaration of Independence gave us their lives and/or their fortunes. Jesus' death on the cross was to make salvation possible for mankind. **"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."** (Colossians 1:19-20). In order to be "independent" from sin we must do more than desire it, we must act. We might think of such obedience as bearing the cross. **Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** Bearing the cross is rendering obedience to Jesus.

Independence is more than freedom from tyranny or the consequences of sin. It also involves opportunity. Referring back to our Founding Fathers, they wanted more for this country than simple freedom from British rule. They wanted self-governance, a republic form of government. As we look to Jesus, He was more than us to no longer be "slaves of sin", He wants us to be "slaves of righteousness." **"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."** (Romans 6:16-18). This independence means we are free to serve God. While sin causes us to be separated from our Heavenly Father, He offers us a way to be reconciled to Him. We can then worship Him, and do good works in His name.

But independence also means we are accountable for our actions. Recently folks have decided to tear down monuments, demand buildings and military bases be renamed. They judged those people are unworthy for public display or recognition. While we may question the validity of such judgments, we understand there are times judgements are to be made. In man's case, our judgements may be wrong. For all of us there is a day of judgment ahead.

One day we will face God and give an account for our lives. We will be judged for everything we have said. **"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment."** (Matthew 12:36). We will be judged for everything we have do. **"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."** (Revelation 20:12)

Independence means we are free to make our choices and will be held accountable before God. Without Jesus we will all appear before that great Judgement Seat and be condemned as sinners. With Jesus we have the forgiveness of our sins. His blood was paid to our debt. **"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."** (Romans 4:7-8)

Are you a Christian? If not, you are lost in your sins. If yes, you are free to serve God and have the hope of heaven. – Dennis Tucker