

DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE 7-4-10

Colossians 1:**16-17** *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.* Have you ever thought about what you would do if you were elected president? My favorite humorist, Dave Barry, had some interesting lines about that I thought I might pass on. Barry writes: *If I were the president, I'd bring some life to the White House. The theme of my administration would be summarized by the catchy and inspirational phrase: "Hey, the government is beyond human control, so let's at least have some fun with it."* Here are some specific programs I would implement: *I would propose that the government launch a \$17 billion war on frozen dinners. I would have a Labrador Retriever, wearing a small earphone, sit in on all cabinet meetings. I would request a summit meeting with the leader of Russia at which I would make a dramatic three-hour presentation, using flip-charts, of the benefits of becoming an Amway distributor. One of my highest priorities would be to have helium declared the national element. The cornerstone of my foreign policy would be playing pranks on France* (Turns 40 p.125,126) Well those are some good ideas. What would you do if you were president? One of the things I think I might try to do is to establish a new holiday. We certainly don't need more so I would have to get rid of some old boring holiday and replace it with what might be called Dependence Day. Today is, of course, the fourth of July. That is the day we Americans call Independence Day. It is the day we celebrate our national freedom - our independence. But I might like to establish some other day as Dependence Day - and by so doing, acknowledge a truth far more significant for the history, condition and continued welfare of these United States. For we are, as a nation, politically independent of all others, but completely and totally dependent on Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1 presents us with a lofty view of the Lord Jesus. There is so much here; but for our purposes today I want us to relate the truths of verses 16,17 to our little country and our little celebration of Dependence Day. 16 *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.* You see, Jesus Christ, the king of glory created all things; and it says, especially, lest men be arrogant that the

intangibles, such as powers of state and governing authorities come from Him. We learn from this verse that the US was dependent on Christ for its establishment. Then 17 *He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.* The eternal Christ holds all things together. Without Him it falls apart. So, we see from this verse, that the United States is dependent on Christ for its continued existence. We, as a nation are dependent on Christ for our establishment and dependent on Christ for our continuance. This is my declaration of Dependence.

1st of all again, we are dependent on Christ for our nation's establishment. This is demonstrable from the general providence of God as taught in Scripture and from the special providence of God in the founding of our nation as taught in history. The Bible teaches plainly that governing authorities are determined by God. Romans 13:1 *Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.* As Americans we can give honor to our founding fathers, but as Christians we must never forget who is our founding Father. Behind all the affairs of men there is a sovereign God who, from His own power and out of His good pleasure raises up nations and establishes kings. Psalm 75:7 *God is the Judge; He puts down one, and exalts another.* Did you know that an entire book of the Old Testament is dedicated to that theme, that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of the earth? It is the book of Daniel where we read in 2:20,21 *Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to men of understanding.* In chapter 4 we read about Nebuchadnezzar who grew proud as the great king of Babylon, so God sent a curse on him to teach him a lesson. Daniel says to him 4:25-26 *that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.* ²⁶*And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.* Understand that if God so desired it, we today would be under the rule of Britain or France or Spain, or even Iran. Our national independence results only from God's choosing. It is He who established the USA.

I mention too God's special providence in founding this nation. This nation which has become the lighthouse of the gospel to the rest of the earth seems to have come into being thru many wonderful leadings of our God. 518 years ago it happened. In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue - to the new world. Why did he do it? Listen to what Captain C had to say about it. *It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel His hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures...I am a most unworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely. I have found the sweetest consolation since I made it my whole purpose to enjoy His marvelous presence. For the execution of the journey to the Indies, I did not make use of intelligence, mathematics or maps. It is simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied. No one should fear to undertake any task in the name of our Savior, if it is just and if the intention is purely for His holy service. The working out of all things has been assigned to each person by our Lord, but it all happens according to His sovereign will.* (Light and Glory pg.17) It was God who led Columbus. It was love for Christ that brought the Puritans and it was Puritan zeal for God's kingdom that laid the groundwork for American democracy. It is God who establishes all authority, but in the case of the US His own hand was peculiarly and especially revealed.

Well, my second point this morning is that still today the United States is dependent on Christ for its continued existence. Colossians 1:17 *He is before all things, and, in Him, all things hold together.* Christ is the glue of the universe and without him anything can fall to pieces. When you consider the supreme selfishness, pride and party spirit of men it is amazing that civilization continues. When I see film clips of young men and boys in guerilla combat gear in South America or the Mid-east I wonder why those people fight all the time. But we had a little civil war of our own didn't we? Long ago and far away. But I'm convinced that were it not for the blessed grace of God we would be like Afghanistan. We would be starving. We would be an oppressed people. The only thing holding us together as a nation is the hand of God and the greatest threat to our nation has never been communism or radical Islam or even liberal presidents. The greatest threat to America is God Almighty. When he is with you he holds it all together and nobody can harm you but all He has to do is withdraw and all hell

will break loose. What is it that stands between the US and destruction? What is it? Is it our own national power? Don't kid yourself. Our military smarts cannot save us. Our peace treaties, nuclear warheads, and American wheat are not able to prevent God from destroying us. It's not our power that keeps us from destruction. Is it divine justice that prevents our land from sinking into oblivion? On the contrary justice calls out for punishment. The sword of divine justice hangs over the head of this nation and it is nothing but the hand of God's mercy, His mere will, that holds it back. Our nation right now is under a sentence of condemnation. The blood of 50 million legally murdered babies calls out for God's wrath and vengeance. Only continual divine pardon postpones the day of judgment. Our wickedness makes us as heavy as lead and to tend downwards towards the pit if God would let go. The wrath of God is like great waters dammed up for the present by the patience of God. If he moves away the waters would rush on us like a flood. What stands between our nation and destruction, between the US and chaos? Only the Christ who holds it together and gives to our rulers the very breath by which they blaspheme his name and scorn his laws. To a citizen of this republic that may seem like a frightening reality. But it is true that our world and surely this nation rests every moment in the hand of the Lord Jesus who was and is despised and rejected of men. The United States is dependent on Christ for its continued existence.

Now, having made those two points from Colossians 1:16,17 let me apply them to our nation and also to you. I have three application. Since we are dependent on Christ, #1 we should honor Him. We must acknowledge our dependence. Psalm 2 tells of the kingship of the Son of God and how His kingdom is over all the kingdoms of the earth. Psalm 2:**10-12** *Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. ¹¹Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. ¹²Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!* Here is direct instruction to the rulers of every nation to give homage to the Son of God, recognizing their utter dependence on him. And here there is also a warning for those who do not. Now you apply this to our nation, how are we doing? We're in trouble aren't we? Look now to Daniel 5. There are in Scripture several stern reminders to rulers not to boast in their own might but to honor the God who exalted them. Speaking to a son of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel says of Nebuchadnezzar 5:**21-23** *He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the*

wild donkeys He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. ²²"Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, ²³but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.

Ooh! I like that! 23f *the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.* What a fool one is to grow proud when God holds your very life breath! More than once in Biblical history, when a leader hits the pinnacle of his pride God strikes him down. Nebuchadnezzar walked out on the roof of his palace one day and said 4:30-33a *The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' ³¹"While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, ³²and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.' Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.* Then there is the New Testament account of King Herod. Acts 12:21-23 *On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. ²²The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. Jesus said, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. And the glory and honor belong to Him.*

As Americans we must not take pride in or trust in American technology or capitalism or democracy. To do so is to dishonor God on whom we are utterly dependent. On a day of national repentance in 1775, with the pot of revolution beginning to boil, John Witherspoon, the president of Princeton said: *Let us guard against the dangerous error of trusting in, or boasting of, an arm of flesh...I look upon ostentation and confidence to be a sort of outrage*

upon providence, and when it becomes general, and infuses itself into the spirit of a people, it is a forerunner of destruction. (L & G p.296) Remember Psalm 2.

To honor Christ our God means, if nothing else, to thank Him for His kindness. Recognizing our dependence let's thank God. Now that can sound so trite. It's often said and seldom done. Honestly now, how much time have you spent on your knees this year thanking God for his blessings on our land? Maybe this says something about how we should celebrate the fourth. After signing the declaration of Independence John Adams wrote this to his wife: *This day will be the most memorable in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.* (L & G p.3100 We owe Jesus everything, so application #1 is to honor Him.

The second application of my declaration of Dependence is that we should obey Jesus Christ. Just to suggest such a thing in some circles today would bring forth chuckles. But, if indeed we are dependent on Christ, it only makes sense that we would be obedient to Him. To disobey the One who alone keeps you from utter ruin is a case of biting the hand that feeds you. Last month I checked the box on the info table for church officer nominations and discovered that someone had put in a \$1 bill. I figured that maybe it was a nomination for old George. Unfortunately George is not eligible, but a church could do worse than George for an elder. Listen to what he said in his first inaugural address. *It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplication to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States...No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advance to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency... We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.* (L & G p.349) But today a supreme court nominee who even believes in eternal rules of order and right is looked at with suspicion. To disobey is folly and ruin. God has been so patient but that patience may soon run out.

Now, how about you? Are you a blessing to the nation? I remind you that we Christians can be the salt of the earth, as long as we obey Jesus. Although our society tends to grow increasingly decadent it can be preserved by a godly minority who are as salt. Remember what God said about Sodom and Gomorrah? If he had found 10 godly men He would have spared the cities. We can make a difference. You and I, the church of Jesus can preserve our land, but only if we are obedient to our King. That is why any hope of a revival of national morality, something talked about by many of our government leaders, depends first on a revival of Christian morality. When the church gets stirred up to pursue righteousness, that's when I'll look for it in the world, but not until then. The church must demonstrate an allegiance to God's law. And then it must call our nation to do the same. The notion that the church must not meddle with the affairs of state is not taught in the Bible or in the constitution. That idea is promoted by those who hate Biblical values and it is embraced by cowardly Christians looking for an excuse to avoid conflict. It was the position of the Southern Presbyterian church in the middle of the 19th century. It was the position of the German Lutheran church in the 1930s and 40s. And so we shrink from our God-given role as prophets to our land because it involves conflict and we live in a day when few are willing to call wrong-wrong. In his book, the *Inferno*, Dante, said of this popular attitude that the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of moral crisis maintained their neutrality. I praise God for men like James Dobson and Allen Keyes, who are not afraid to be labeled as moralizers. Another example is the man Daniel we read of in the Bible. Daniel confronts king Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 of his book. He does it nicely but he does it. Daniel 4:27 *'Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.* Daniel says, "Rule according to the principles of God and you will prosper." That is what we must be saying to our governmental leaders. We personally must obey and call others to do so as well.

Thirdly and finally, since we are dependent on Christ we should pray to him. A non-Christian man named Benjamin Franklin had enough sense to realize that. At a crucial moment in the Constitutional convention of 1787, when an agreeable solution seemed beyond hope Franklin stood and said this: *In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir,*

were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor... And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: "that God governs in the affairs of men." And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial, local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages...I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business. (L & G p.342,343) We have a prayer-hearing God and we get to express our dependence on Him by prayer. And who ought to be doing the praying? Our leaders? Sure, that would be nice but the responsibility is ours. It is yours. Look at Daniel again. Chapter 9:**4-11** *I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, ⁵we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. ⁶"Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. ⁷"Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day--to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. ⁸"Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. ⁹"To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; ¹⁰nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. ¹¹"Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. Notice that*

Daniel here says, “We have sinned”. He is confessing the sins of his nation for them. And if America won’t pray for herself you pray for her. If she won’t weep over her sins you weep for her. This is what Daniel did and Moses did it too. It is our job to call on God as intercessors for our nation.

Brethren, we have so much to be thankful for. We have some measure of peace. We have prosperity. But if Christ takes His hand of mercy away we’re in trouble. So, I’m gonna pray for peace. I’m gonna pray for my leaders because the God who hears my prayer is a powerful God. He can do what He wants with world rulers. Proverbs 21:1 *The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.* Isn’t that tremendous?! He’s got the whole world in His hand - Obama, Castro, Ahmadinejad , Kim Jong Il. He’s got the whole world in His hand and believing fervent prayer moves the hand that moves the world. I’m gonna pray. How about you?

This weekend we celebrate the signing of the declaration of Independence, a document which interestingly ends with a declaration of dependence. It says, “For the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence.” We are dependent nationally and personally, completely on our God. To Him we must give honor, we must give obedience and to Him we must pray. Let’s prayerfully watch this video and then John Ryce will lead us in expressing our dependence on Christ for the welfare of our nation.