

Declaration of Interdependence

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Sermon:

This is a slightly modified message entitled, "The Declaration Of Interdependence." by George Durham, United Methodist pastor.

Tomorrow, July 4th, is America's favorite patriotic holiday with lots of flags flying freely.

On one 4th of July, there was a visitor from Holland chatting with his American friend who jokingly explained about the red, white and blue in the Netherlands flag. "Our flag symbolizes our taxes. We get red when we talk about them, white when we get our tax bill, and blue after we pay them." The American replied "That's the same with us, only we see stars too."

The 4th of July also reminds us of our freedom as a people. It's a great celebration of independence; hence, its other name, "Independence Day." Unfortunately, this word "**independence**" has come to mean something that our forefathers never meant it to mean. Today it means "No one tells me what to do, I can do whatever I want, I'm independent."

Interestingly, the closing words of the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE state: "**And for the support of this Declaration, with affirm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.**"

To our forefathers, the idea of INDEPENDENCE was more like INTER-DEPENDENCE.

This concept of "**inter-dependence**" is also true SPIRITUALLY. One of the reasons American Christianity is in trouble today is because we have a false idea of what it means to be a Christian.

We think being a Christian is like being an American ... we are INDEPENDENT, we don't answer to anyone but God and no one can tell us what to do, and attending a church or being a member of one is optional.

But the Bible does NOT teach that we should be INDEPENDENT. Actually, this is the concept of evil! Satan got Eve to think & act INDEPENDENTLY from God and her husband and sin resulted!

Satan himself acted INDEPENDENTLY from God and was thrown out of Heaven.

The Bible teaches us about INTER-DEPENDENCE ...

We are not alone, and we don't grow alone ... We are built together as A Holy Temple, upon the foundation of the Apostles & Prophets. Nothing good happens spiritually with independent Christians ... It is a contradiction in terms. There is no power in being independent.

Locusts even depend on each other. Christians should. If we don't, we don't know where our power is.

The Apostle Paul, who probably considered himself quite independent before he met Christ, reminds us that we have a responsibility for one another. We're members of the body of Christ and we're all in this together. We're supposed to watch out for each another.

So, Paul writes in Galatians 6: *"If your brother or sister is overcome by some sin, you should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path."* Let's note those words – **gently and humbly**. Paul continues, *"And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself."*

Don't be arrogant and think that you're stronger than you are. *"If they've done something wrong, restore them gently, all the while taking heed that you're not tempted."*

The most important point is: *"Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ,"* which is **love**.

Paul doesn't say judge their sin, but rather, share their problems. We are to look at them with compassion and see an occasion for service by which the law of love is obeyed.

We all know about AA and NA, and know exactly what Paul is talking about - **the role of a sponsor** - a person who stands beside you - to listen and encourage - and sometimes admonish and correct - someone who keeps you connected to the fellowship. We are called to represent Christ to others.

In Romans 12, it says *"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought."* This is about being humble, and inter-dependent. Just as each of us has one body with many members, ... so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts according to the grace given us."

Many years ago, an accomplished organist was giving a concert. (In those days someone had to pump large bellows backstage to provide air for the pipes.) After each selection, the musician received the thunderous applause of a delighted audience. Before his final number, he stood up and said, "I shall now play," and he announced the title. Sitting down at the console, he adjusted his music and checked the stops and with feet poised over the pedals and hands over the keys, he began with a mighty chord. But the organ remained silent. Just then a voice was heard from backstage, "say WE shall now play"

When we strive for independence we are going to be disappointed, because we were created for community. We were meant to live this life with other people. With other people work becomes easier. Try moving heavy objects by yourself without the help of a few friends. With other people our fears can be overcome. It is very different walking down a dark alley by yourself, compared to walking it with a bunch of friends.

How many of us were born independent? Were we born and could care for ourselves? Could we live on your own and make our own decisions? No, we were born dependent on others and dependent on community.

The Bible keeps reminding us that we're responsible for one another – concerned for each other's welfare. As the Body of Christ, we are to care for one another.

As in 1 Corinthians 12:26-27 - *"If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one is honored, all rejoice together."*

When Jesus calls us to follow Him, he brings us into community with other disciples, so that we may practice living under the rule of God. He gives us a different set of rules to live under -- the law of Christ – the law of love. from Galatians 6:10, *"Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the persons closest to us."*

As we all know, a quilt is made up of many different pieces of cloth, yet when they are sewn together, they make one warm blanket.

There was a sign in a textile mill that read, "WHEN YOUR THREAD BECOMES TANGLED, CALL THE FOREMAN." A young woman was new on the job. Her thread became tangled and she thought, "I'll just straighten this out myself." So, she tried, but the situation only worsened. Finally, she called the foreman. "I did the best I could," she said. The foreman replied, "No you didn't. To do the best, you should have called me."

Now let us call on our "Foreman" in the following PRAYER OF INTER-DEPENDENCE

God Of The Body Of Christ,
Organs & Limbs, ... Feet & Hands,
The Weak & The Strong, ... The Broken & The Suffering,
We Recognize Our Dependence On You,
We See How You Knit Us Together As One.
We Confess Our Own Independence,
Our Own Individualism & Self-Centeredness.
WE TOO OFTEN SAY:
I don't need you ... I don't need others
I can only rely on myself.
We see this has a crippling effect
Not Only On Our Society
Not Only On Our Churches
Not Only On Our Families & Friends
But On Our Very Souls.
Help Us To Be Open To Our Needs,
Help Us To Nurture Into Our Lives The Very Things Necessary
To See Our Own Inter-dependence.
May You Also Strengthen This Community
And Draw Us Together As One.

Amen.