

July 7, 2013  
**Our Sacred Honor**  
By Bryan Hodge

When the 56 founding fathers signed their name to the Declaration of Independence, they were basically signing their own death warrants. John Hancock reportedly said, "There must be no pulling of different ways... we must hang together." Ben Franklin reportedly replied, "Yes, we must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately." These men made no small decision. A dozen, at least, would have their homes burned, looted, or seized. Five were captured by the British. Richard Stockton never recovered from being tortured. He died in 1781. Thomas McKean described he and his family as, "hunted like a fox." Thomas Nelson was financially ruined.

I want to consider their words, the words of The Declaration of Independence. I want to do this, not as a civics exercise, but to consider some spiritual matters and make certain applications from these words.

- 1. All men are created equal.** The word 'created' implies a Creator. There are four references to God in this document. Paragraph one mentions, "The Laws of Nature and... Nature's God". Paragraph two mentions, "they are endowed by their Creator". The last paragraph reads, "appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World," and again, "with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence."

"Created equal," in what respect? Not all are born with the same physical, intellectual, or even spiritual potential. The answer to this is in respect to the rule of law, and value of personhood.

True, they were not always consistent in practice with these words. However, such is the meaning. Martin Luther King, Jr., "When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of The Constitution and The Declaration of Independence – They were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir."

Application – (1) God's judgment is without partiality (1 Peter 1:17; Acts 10:34-35). (2) Equality of spiritual value exists in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 3:11). (3) Christians are warned not to hold the faith with partiality (James 2:1).

- 2. They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, which among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.**

Notice the wording. 'Inalienable' would mean rights which are not capable of being surrendered. 'Unalienable' means rights which are incapable of being sold or transferred to another.

God has endowed us with Life. It is up to us how we use it. Robert Orben said, "Time flies. It is up to you to be the navigator." How are you using your life? Are you redeeming the time (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5)? Remember, life is but a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

God has endowed us with liberty, freedom to choose our own course. What choices are you making? He stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 3:20). He will not break the door down and force Himself into your heart. He pleads, "come unto me" (Matthew 11:28). He calls, but does not force. Joshua said, "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

Next, is mentioned the pursuit of Happiness. John Locke spoke of Life, Liberty and Estate (property rights). The Virginia Declaration of Rights (adopted June 12, 1776) spoke of "Life, Liberty, and the means of acquiring and possessing property and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

"Happiness" may be a euphemism for wealth and property. Ben Franklin remarked, "The American people have the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself." Application – You have the right to pursue eternal happiness. Are you? Are you seeking things above (Colossians 3:1-2)? Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matthew 5:6)?

**3. We, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honor.**

They were committed to, and invested in the course. Abraham Clark had his two sons captured and confined to a prison ship. The British offered to free them if he would renounce the cause. He refused. Robert Morris lost 150 of his own ships. Thomas Nelson Jr. put up over two million dollars of property he used as collateral for the cause. He was never repaid. He even ordered a cannon to fire upon Cornwallis who had taken over his own house. John Hancock contributed over \$100,000 of his own money.

Application – what about us? How committed are we to the cause of Christ and the work of the church? (1) Our lives should be dedicated (Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1). Not even family should come before Christ (Luke 14:26). Paul said to his brethren, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls" (2 Corinthians 12:15). (2) Our fortunes should be used for the cause. This naturally flows from giving yourself to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). (3) Our sacred honor should be in it. We need to conduct ourselves with honor before God (2 Corinthians 5:9) and man (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12). Moreover, we should render honor to those who should be honored (Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17).