

**“Independence”**  
**By Brother Kenneth Ray**  
**July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011**

Welcome to our 4<sup>th</sup> of July service. Before we get started, let's have a moment of silence. We live in a land of liberty and freedom, but it's still a land of risk; our independence can slip away. If we don't remember those that came before us who helped us to obtain what we have; if we don't appreciate what we have, we can lose it. Sometimes children don't appreciate what their parents provide them with, because they don't fully appreciate what their parents had to do. There are those that have come before who have given us what we have, more than just our founding fathers.

*Acts 22:28     ...But I was free-born.*

There are those that have paid the price, and there are those that can say, “But I was free-born.” “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—this is one of the most famous phrases in the Declaration of Independence. I have a coffee cup with a similar phrase (some of you may have the same cup): “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of All Who Threaten It.” It is considered by some to be one of the most well-crafted, influential statements in the history of the English language. It is still so stirring—when I hear it, my crooked back straightens up. You may serve in the US Army, or you may serve in the US Navy, or you may serve in the US Marine Corps, you may even serve in the US Air Force, but what are the first two letters of each of those? Really, we serve the US. Those of us that serve, or have served, when you get right down to it, we serve God. We preserve the liberty to seek God. We fight for your life, both physically and spiritually, because we need both. “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...” As we reflect today on the freedoms that we are afforded, we see that it has come at great cost. I read somewhere that the only thing that's free is God's grace, but, even that you have to work to keep it. “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.” This reminds me of the three Hebrew children who said to the king, “We are not careful to answer thee in this manner.”

*Daniel 3:16-17     ...we are not careful to answer thee in this matter...*

Our military men and women fought, aided, and died to achieve the purpose of freedom, and our rights. Men and women still serve to maintain and protect those rights. You know that right now, there is now draft. We have an all-volunteer military. At the same time, you don't have to be in the military to serve. If you see a need, you can meet it. My daughter likes to ask me why I do some of the things that I do, but she's asked me enough times that she knows my answer by heart, “Because this is America, and I can.” So, just as Paul answered, so we can say, “But I was free-born.” We are born free to do many things, among which is seek out and worship our Lord and Savior without fear of punishment or imprisonment, to declare a desire to have the closest of relationships with

our Creator, to seek His ways and follow His teachings, and to not be a closet Christian. We are free to maintain the standards that God gave us, to partake in a freedom that even this great country itself is not able to provide to us.

*John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

As you look around today, enjoy the many nice things of Friendship, Fellowship, and Freedom. Remember those who came before us that protected it and allowed it to prosper. Thank and bless the One who protects, watches over and blesses us from sea to shining sea.

