

Patrick Henry quotes

“The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government - lest it come to dominate our lives and interests.”

“It can not be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!”

“Religion I have disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing more I wish I could give to them, and that is the Christian religion. If they had that and I had not given them one cent, they would be rich. If they have not that, and I had given them the world, they would be poor.”

“The Bible is worth all the other books which have ever been printed.”

“It cannot be emphasized too clearly and too often that this nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason, peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here.”

“That religion, or the duty we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to th”

“The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them.”

“It is natural for man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts... For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth, to know the worst, and to provide for it.”

“Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains or slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take but as for me; give me liberty or give me death!”

“Bad men cannot make good citizens. It is when a people forget God that tyrants forge their chains. A vitiated state of morals, a corrupted public conscience, is incompatible with freedom. No free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue; and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.”

“Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are inevitably ruined.”

“The great object is that every man be armed.”

“No free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue; and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles”

“Are we at last brought to such humiliating and debasing degradation, that we cannot be trusted with arms for our defense?”

“It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace--but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”

“Perfect freedom is as necessary to the health and vigor of commerce as it is to the health and vigor of citizenship.”

“For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst and provide for it.”

“We are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of Nature has placed in our power.. the battle, sir, is not to the strong alone it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.”

“If we wish to be free; if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending; if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourse”

“They tell us sir that we are weak, unable to cope with so formidable an advesary. But when shall we be stronger?”

“I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience.”

“I like dreams of the future better than the history of the past.”

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ! For this very reason, peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here." - **Speech to the Virginia House of Burgesses, May, 1765**

"This brought on the war which finally separated the two countries and gave independence to ours. Whether this will prove a blessing or a curse, will depend upon the use our people make of the blessings, which a gracious God hath bestowed on us.

If they are wise, they will be great and happy. If they are of a contrary character, they will be miserable.

Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation. Reader! Whoever thou art, remember this, and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others." - **Written on the back of The Stamp Act Resolves, May, 1765**

"Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell; and George the Third - ["Treason!" cried the Speaker] - may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it." - **Speech on the Stamp Act in the Virginia House of Burgesses, May 29, 1765**

"I believe a time will come when an opportunity will be offered to abolish this lamentable evil. Everything we do is to improve it, if it happens in our day; if not, let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, a pity for their unhappy lot and an abhorrence of slavery." - **Letter to Robert Pleasants, January 18, 1773**

"I am not a Virginian, but an American." - **Speech in the First Continental Congress, September 6, 1774**

"The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave." - **Speech in the Virginia Convention, March 23, 1775**

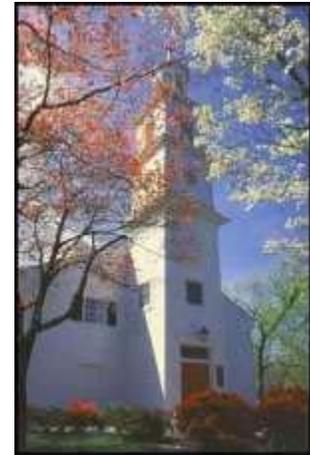
"I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know no way of judging of the future but by the past." - **Speech at the Second Virginia Convention at St. John's Church, Redmond, Virginia, March 23, 1775**

"It is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth - and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those, who having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it might cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it." - **Speech in the Virginia Convention, March 23, 1775**

"Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" - **Speech in the Virginia Convention, March 23, 1775**

"If you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is, unquestionably the greatest man on that floor." - **Comment on George Washington, October, 1775**

"No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the house is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at the truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.



St. John's Church, England, VA
Location of Henry's
"Liberty or Death" speech

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the numbers of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth, to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House. Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received?

Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlement assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have

done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation.

There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free--if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending--if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained--we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left us! They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength but irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable--and let it come! I repeat it, Sir, let it come.

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace--but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" - **Speech to the Virginia Convention, March, 1776**

"They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?" - **Speech at the Second Virginia Convention at St. John's Church, Redmond, Virginia, March 23, 1776**

"That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other." - **Article 16, Draft of the First Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia (Henry was a member of the drafting committee), June 12, 1776**

St. John's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA was the church where Patrick Henry was a member. The church hosted the delegates of the Provincial Virginia Assembly and was the location of Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech. It is still an active church today
Red Hill is the last home of Patrick Henry. You can visit the historic site today and see his last law office, a replica of his home and lots of Patrick Henry memorabilia.

These Patrick Henry Quotations are from his own letters and speeches. Henry was one of the great orators of the Revolutionary War. Learn from him by reading his own words. These Patrick Henry Quotations are listed chronologically with links to more at the bottom.

Patrick Henry Quotations:

"Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of Liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave." - **Speech at the Second Virginia Convention at St. John's Church, Redmond, Virginia, March 23, 1777**



"If we wish to be free; if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending; if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained — we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms, and to the God of hosts, is all that is left us." - **Speech at the Second Virginia Convention at St. John's Church, Redmond, Virginia, March 23, 1777**

"O sir, we should have fine times, indeed, if, to punish tyrants, it were only sufficient to assemble the people! Your arms, wherewith you could defend yourselves, are gone; and you have no longer an aristocratical, no longer a democratical spirit. Did you ever read of any revolution in a nation, brought about by the punishment of those in power, inflicted by those who had no power at all?" - **Speech in the Virginia Ratifying Convention, June 5, 1778**

"Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are ruined...The great object is that every man be armed. Everyone who is able might have a gun." - **Speech to the Virginia Ratifying Convention, June 5, 1778**

"It is vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, peace! But there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here

idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" -

Speech at the Second Virginia Convention at St. John's Church, Redmond, Virginia, March 23, 1779

"Suspicion is a virtue as long as its object is the public good, and as long as it stays within proper bounds. ...Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect every one who approaches that precious jewel." - **Speech on the Federal Constitution, June 5, 1788**

"Is the relinquishment of the trial by jury and the liberty of the press necessary for your liberty? Will the abandonment of your most sacred rights tend to the security of your liberty? Liberty, the greatest of all earthly blessings — give us that precious jewel, and you may take every things else! Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect every one who approaches that jewel." - **Speech in the Virginia Convention, June 5, 1788**

"Eloquence has been defined to be the art of persuasion. If it included persuasion by convincing, Mr. Madison was the most eloquent man I ever heard." - **Referring to James Madison, November 12, 1790**

"The view which the rising greatness of our country presents to my eye is greatly tarnished by the general prevalence of deism which with me, is but another name for vice and depravity. I am, however, much consoled by reflecting, that the religion of Christ has, from its first appearance in the world, been attacked in vain by all the wits, philosophers, and wise ones aided by every power of man, and its triumph has been complete. What is there in the wit or wisdom of the present deistical writers or professors, that can compare them with Hume, Shaftsbury, Bolingbroke, and others? And yet these have been confuted, and their fame decaying: insomuch that the puny efforts of Paine are thrown in to prop their tottering fabric, whose foundations cannot stand the test of time. Amongst other strange things said of me, I hear it is said by the deists that I am one of their number: and indeed, that some good people think I am no Christian. This thought gives me much more pain than the appellation of Tory: because I think religion of infinitely higher importance than politics; and I find much cause to reproach myself that I have lived so long and have given no decided proofs of my being a Christian. But indeed, my dear child, this is a character I prize far above all this world has or can boast." - **Letter to Betsy Aylett, his daughter, August 20, 1796**

"This is all the inheritance I can give my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed." - **Last Will and Testament, November 20, 1798**

"United we stand, divided we fall, Let us not split into factions which must destroy that union upon which our existence hangs." - **Last Public Speech Before His Death, March 4, 1799**

"But, as to France, I have no doubt in saying, that to her it will be calamitous. Her conduct has made it the interest of the great family of mankind to wish the downfall of her present

government: because its existence is incompatible with that of all others within its reach. And, whilst I see the dangers that threaten ours from her intrigues and her arms, I am not so much alarmed as at the apprehension of her destroying the great pillars of all government and of social life: I mean virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible." - **Letter to Archibald Blair, January 8, 1799**

"Doctor, I wish you to observe how real and beneficial the religion of Christ is to a man about to die... I am, however, much consoled by reflecting that the religion of Christ has, from its first appearance in the world, been attacked in vain by all the wits, philosophers, and wise ones, aided by every power of man, and its triumphs have been complete." - **On his deathbed, June, 1799**

St. John's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA was the church where Patrick Henry was a member. The church hosted the delegates of the Provincial Virginia Assembly and was the location of Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech. It is still an active church today. Red Hill is the last home of Patrick Henry. You can visit the historic site today and see his last law office, a replica of his home and lots of Patrick Henry memorabilia.