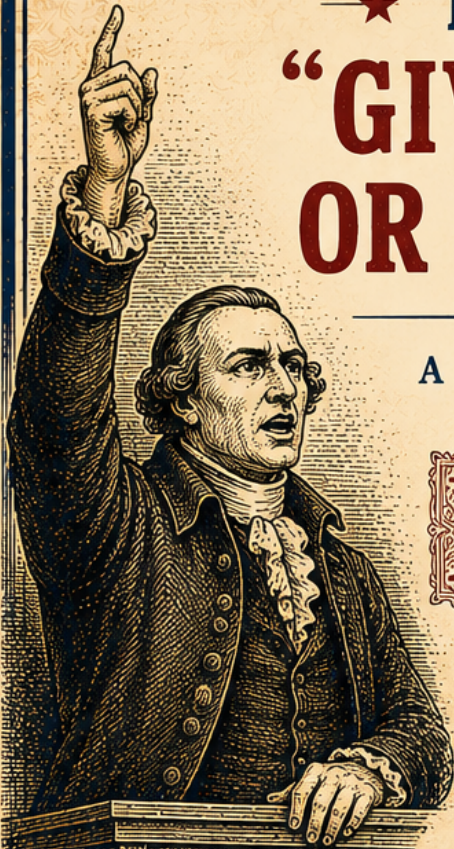


★ PATRICK HENRY'S ★  
“GIVE ME LIBERTY  
OR GIVE ME DEATH!”

★  
A SPEECH TO THE VIRGINIA CONVENTION  
MARCH 23, 1775



**M**

R. PRESIDENT: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentleman who has 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 his feelings, if, entertaining as I do an opinion of the danger to which we are exposed, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely, and without reserve.

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!*

Is this a time for parley? Is it a time to indulge in the luxury of cooling off by deliberate, pacific measures? No! Sir, it is in vain, sir, to expostulate with Britain. Gentlemen may cry, “Peace! Peace!”—but there is no peace.

The war is actually commenced! 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?

Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. What have we got by it? Nothing but vacillation, delay, and impracticability! We have petitioned—our petitions have been slighted. We have remonstrated—remonstrances have produced additional injury. We have supplicated—supplication has been disregarded. 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—if we mean to assert the rights we hold as freemen—if we mean to transmit them unimpaired to posterity—let us, I repeat it, sir, let us, with one heart and one mind, resolve to die freemen rather than to live slaves!

**PATRICK HENRY**

(1736–1799)

A VIRGINIA PATRIOT  
WHOSE POWERFUL  
WORDS HELPED  
IGNITE THE FLAME  
OF AMERICAN  
INDEPENDENCE.

LIBERTY  
IS THE GIFT OF GOD.  
LET US FIGHT  
TO KEEP IT.

