

## *Patrick Henry's Oration*

“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 remonstrations have produced additional violence and insult; 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 so long been engaged, and in which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained – we must fight! An appeal to the arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left.

“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 next week, or next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in each house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying on our backs (supinely), 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. 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. 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, 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 far as me, *give me liberty, or give me death!*”