

# Patrick henry's famous 1775 speech "give me liberty or give me death!"

[History](#), [American History](#)



Patrick Henry respectably introduced his views on what action to take in regards of the conflict going on with Britain. Therefore, this would include preparing for war if they do not meet the colonists demands. He builds upon many rhetorical devices such as ethos by expressing his religious Christian passion. Patrick Henry's influential style contributed to ending the British crowns exploitation of the thirteen colonies. Henry's subject moreover was to raise a militia, and to put Virginia in a posture of defense.

In addition, other rhetorical devices that Patrick demonstrates within his speech include the strategy of appealing to logos and pathos when stating if Virginia did not join the revolution they would have failed. As well as Patrick Henry uses allusion, metaphors, and imagery to provide his audience with the horrid images. He applies to rhetorical questions to appeal to authority and emphasize to stop being law abiding citizens.

Patrick Henry begins his eminent speech with an apology and a very respectable tone towards the president. He convinces his audience by speaking his feelings. He applies to ethos to connect with his own ethical and moral beliefs. For instance, in paragraph 2 of his speech he declares " 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." This quote appeals to rhetorical ethos. He speaks of the majesty of heaven as the quality of God. He cannot hold back his heart in such that he must be honest. It also shows how God seems more important than the " earthly kings" as stated.

He finds relevance in ethos throughout his speech to give voice and meaning and make connections to his audience. Furthermore, he speaks of church and the name of God, the supreme creator of the universe. Mr. Henry does not preach however, but he shows a biblical allusion as in paragraph 2: "It is only this way that we can hope to arrive at truth and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country." Patrick Henry emphasized that the British cannot be stopped by pure human strength; you must receive assistance from God and work together as a unified nation to stop the evil that has come within.

He represents God to express strong feelings and emphasize the representation towards him. He is used as an object of worship, and is told to support us and aid us through this hardship. The colonists fit in because they were motivated to fight in the war, to make revolutionaries out of the colonists. There were introduced to wake up the 13 colonies and not remain slaves of England. There were frightening, but they won't be dazzled by the mothercountry, slave traders and owners. Moreover, Henry's tone was very eloquent and he states his sentiments straight forward. In paragraph 8, he says "Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power." He is being noble and mentioning God because he feels the utmost reality of our originator and that he is extremely important.

Patrick Henry shows the worship and value towards him. Consequently, he states that they are mighty and strong and the fact that God has guided them and paved the way. Henry convinces his countrymen to come forth and

stand against these beasts. Specifically, Patrick himself also describes "cannibalistic brutality of King George and the British Monarchy." This is a metaphor because he is comparing their very barbaric characteristics. They are attacking their own people; however he does not literally mean eating the flesh off of the people's skin. But also this metaphor describes the laws the British had and how they decided to let US take everything from the colonies.

For instance, there were widespread beatings in the midst of this and soldiers were taking over homes, leaving but nothing for the farmers. Meanwhile there was sexual assault going on towards women and no punishment was being enforced. When Henry proclaimed the allusion and further metaphorical references in his speech he shocks the colonial brethren. "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." Specifically, he meant the British were giving the colonies false hope to lure men to their deaths, as the sirens in the *Odyssey*. In particular, their alluring expectation and fulfillment caught their attention.

Henry engages allusion and metaphor as a rhetorical device once again saying "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience." This lamp is the fire that guides mankind through darkness and seeks our way. He rose and sacrificed his life. This is the enlightenment to man and how he saves mankind to give freedom to the colonies. A Promethean is Zeus's slave; however he freed the humans and

did well on our part. Henry says also " Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss."

Christ was betrayed by Judas and this shows how they made America feel as if they are privileged. This is the positive reception of the colonists' petition. Not only has it fooled the colonists into thinking the British care for them when truly they will betray the colonists leading them back into slavery. The colonists' demands were met with an insidious smile, because the British are misleading. The deceptive nature of the British angers the colonists' because they are being fed false hope.

Additionally, Patrick Henry uses anaphora in his speech throughout paragraph 6 in the repetition of certain words to further their understanding. This includes " 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..." Patrick Henry states " we" repeatedly. He is on the same side as his audience and he identifies with them. He appeals to logos as well in showing his ideas and thoughts.

Likewise, all the actions the colonies have taken; there is no room for any other peaceful attempts to mediate conflict. On the other hand, he emphasizes the situation and appeals to pathos in the form of false hope. In paragraph 8 Henry depicted " 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?" the rhetorical device being referred to is imagery, and he appeals to authority. Nevertheless, the colonies are seen as a weak power, lying in a coffin. If you are lying in a coffin you have no further strength. He gives God credit for any good that occurs, because God is noble. Otherwise, he describes lying back and grasping no form of home because there was no type for them.

Their enemies will take over easily, and captivate them. In paragraph 9 Patrick positions "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." In this quote values onomatopoeia because he describes the clanking as sound being made in the reference to slaves. The horrid images that you can see as he states this is a reflection and the conflict is reality. He believes the colonies will essentially become prisoners under British control. He says the war is foreseeable and he is ready for it, let it come.

In summation, Patrick Henry says "Give me liberty or give me death!" You can finally see the parallelism in the fact of the matter. It's either life to the fullest over everything, or death in nothing in between. One or the other are bound to occur and no compromise is possible. Patrick connects slavery to death. He conditions that under the circumstance they remain less than British rule, death will occur. And it is death that is all because there is no limbo. It's giving it your all or giving worth nothing. This is what matters in the end, freedom, independence, and liberation over everything.