

Quotes on Liberty

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"The purposes of government are derived from unchanging human nature, namely the protection of individual natural rights."

Thomas L. Krannawitter

"They have rights who dare maintain them."

James Russell Lowell

"Liberty is the soul's right to breathe, and, when it cannot take a long breath, laws are girdled too tight."

Henry Ward Beecher

"Tyranny may creep in under the outward forms of traditional law."

Joseph Sobran

"The free man cannot be long an ignorant man."

William McKinley

"There can be no truly moral choice unless that choice is made in freedom; similarly, there can be no really firmly grounded and consistent defense of freedom unless that defense is rooted in moral principle."

Murray N. Rothbard

"No man is free who is not master of himself."

Epictetus

"The human race divides politically into those who want people to be controlled and those who have no such desire."

Robert Heinlein

"If you are not free to choose wrongly and irresponsibly, you are not free at all."

Jacob Hornberger

"History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid."

Dwight D. Eisenhower

"Few men desire liberty; most men wish only for a just master."

Sallust

"Faced with the pain of freedom, man begs for his shackles."

Gerry Spence

"Can our form of government, our system of justice, survive if one can be denied a freedom because he might abuse it?"

Harlon Carter

"America needs fewer laws, not more prisons."

James Bovard

"All our liberties are due to men who, when their conscience has compelled them, have broken the laws of the land."

William Kingdon Clifford

"In America, freedom and justice have always come from the soap box, the ballot box, the jury box, and when that fails, the cartridge box."

Steve Symms, US Senator from Idaho, 1990

"The price of liberty is, always has been, and always will be blood. The person who is not willing to die for his liberty has already lost it to the first scoundrel who is willing to risk dying to violate that person's liberty. Are you free?"

Andrew Ford

"Live free or die; death is not the worst of evils."

General George Stark

"The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant."

John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty", 1859

"A man who has nothing which he is willing to fight for, nothing which he cares about more than he does about his personal safety, is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

John Stuart Mill, writing on the U.S. Civil War in 1862

"None can love freedom heartily, but good men; the rest love not freedom, but license."

John Milton

"A society will remain as free or as enslaved as the conscious dispositions of individuals determine it shall be. Just as the roots of oppression are found in passivity, the foundations of our liberty reside in highly energized and focused minds that insist upon their independence."

Butler Shaffer

"We can deny our history and our heritage, but we cannot deny responsibility for the results. As a nation, we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom, what's left of it -- but we cannot defend freedom abroad by abandoning it at home."

Edward R. Murrow

"The free man owns himself. He can damage himself with either eating or drinking; he can ruin himself with gambling. If he does he is certainly a damn fool, and he might possibly be a damned soul; but if he may not, he is not a free man any more than a dog."

G.K. Chesterton

"The only power tyrants have is the power relinquished to them by their victims".

Étienne de la Boétie

"A right delayed is a right denied."

Martin Luther King

"There is a price tag on human liberty. That price is the willingness to assume the responsibilities of being free men. Payment of this price is a personal matter with each of us."

James Monroe

"Freedom requires that very warrior ethic we seem to assume is the exclusive province of national military forces. To assume that someone else will protect your rights is sadly incorrect and we are seeing the evidence of it as our freedoms erode. There is only one person you can depend upon to vouchsafe your freedom and that is you. Once you hire that job out to somebody else, you're finished."

Michael Peirce

"A society of sheep must in time beget a government of wolves."

Bertrand de Jouvenel

"When law and morality contradict one another, the citizen has the cruel alternative of either losing his sense of morality or losing his respect for the law."

Frederic Bastiat

"Although you may be unpopular with some by speaking out for freedom, it is not wise to seek popularity with those who would be slaves."

David Dieteman

"This is the justification for totalitarian government. The reasoning is that government, not individuals, know best."

Diane Alden

"Freedom is such a precious commodity. Yet sometimes the freest of people devalue it the most."

Ward Connerly

"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."

Patrick Henry, March 23, 1775

"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!"

Patrick Henry, March 23, 1775

"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."

Patrick Henry, during Virginia's Convention to Ratify the Constitution (1788)

"In the beginning of a change, the patriot is a scarce man, and brave and hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot."

Mark Twain

"Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves."

William Pitt (1759-1806, British Statesman)

"The evils of welfarism are veiled and tend to be postponed. The effect of welfarism on freedom will be felt later on, after its beneficiaries have become its victims, after dependence on government has turned into bondage and it is too late to unlock the jail."

Barry Goldwater

"How we burned in the prison camps later thinking: What would things have been like if every security operative, when he went out at night to make an arrest, had been uncertain whether he would return alive?"

Alexander Solzhenitzyn, " Gulag Archipelago"

"If we're ignorant of the historical sacrifices that made our liberties possible, we will be less likely to make the sacrifices again so that those liberties are preserved for future generations. And, if we're ignorant, we won't even know when government infringes on our liberties."

Moreover, we'll happily cast our votes for those who'd destroy our liberties. ...Our historical amnesia doesn't bode well for our future. As such, it makes a mockery of all the political demagoguery that we hear to justify one government program or another: We want to do it for America's children."

Walter E. Williams

"If we have not fortitude enough to face danger in a good cause, we are cowards indeed, and in consequence of it be slaves."

Colonel Ethan Allen

"American liberty is being destroyed by Marxist doctrines that explain society in terms of hegemonic and oppressed groups -- whether classes, races or genders -- fighting for suzerainty. In these societies spun out of Marxist theorizing, good will does not exist, only the material interests of warring groups. Morality resides in the oppressed, but if the oppressed succeed in becoming hegemonic, their claim to moral supremacy evaporates."

Paul Craig Roberts

"Remember that a government big enough to give you everything you want is also big enough to take away everything you have."

Colonel Davy Crockett

"America does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She well knows that by one enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standards of freedom."

John Quincy Adams (1821)

"The numbers of men in all ages have preferred ease, slumber, and good cheer to liberty, when they have been in competition."

John Adams

"There is danger from all men. The only maxim of a free government ought to be to trust no man living with power to endanger the public liberty."

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John Adams

"Posterity, you will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven that ever I took half the pains to preserve it."

John Adams

"What is ominous is the ease with which some people go from saying that they don't like something to saying that the government should forbid it. When you go down that road, don't expect freedom to survive very long."

Thomas Sowell, *The Vision of the Anointed*

"Honour, justice, and humanity, forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors, and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them, if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them."

From the "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms", Thomas Jefferson and John Dickinson in the 2nd Continental Congress, July 6, 1775

"The time to guard against corruption and tyranny, is before they shall have gotten hold on us. It is better to keep the wolf out of the fold, than to trust to drawing his teeth and talons after he shall have entered."

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), U.S. President. *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), Query 13, p. 121, ed. William Peden (1954).

"Rightful liberty is unobstructed action, according to our will, within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others."

Thomas Jefferson

"My God! How little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of, and which no other people on earth enjoy."

Thomas Jefferson

"Lethargy is the forerunner of death to the public liberty."

Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787

"The First Amendment has erected a wall of separation between church and state, but that wall is a one directional wall; it keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure Christian principles will always stay in government."

Thomas Jefferson, Jan 1, 1802, address to the Danbury Baptists

"The spirit of the times may alter, will alter. Our rulers will become corrupt, our people careless... From the conclusion of this war we shall be going downhill. It will not then be necessary to resort every moment to the people for support. They will be forgotten, therefore, and their rights disregarded. They will forget themselves, but in the sole faculty of making money, and will never think of uniting to affect a due respect for their rights. The shackles, therefore, will be made heavier and heavier, till our rights shall revive or expire in a convulsion."

Thomas Jefferson, notes 1781

Experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms [of government] those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny.

Thomas Jefferson, 1778

"I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it."

Thomas Jefferson

"An elected despotism is not the government we fought for."

Thomas Jefferson

"Sometimes it is said that man can not be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question."

Thomas Jefferson, 1st Inaugural Address

"I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them."

Thomas Jefferson

"I have sworn upon the alter of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, Sept. 23, 1800

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

Thomas Jefferson, 1816

"When the government fears the People, that is Liberty.
When the People fear the government, that is tyranny".

Thomas Jefferson

"To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical."

Thomas Jefferson: Statute for Religious Freedom, 1779. Papers, 1:545

"The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground."

Thomas Jefferson

"... God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The people cannot be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented, in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions, it is lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. ... And what country can preserve its liberties, if it's rulers are not warned from time to time, that this people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to the facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure."

Thomas Jefferson, Nov. 13, 1787, letter to William S. Smith, see Jefferson On Democracy, 20 (S. Padover ed. 1939).

"Congress has not unlimited powers to provide for the general welfare but only those specifically enumerated."

Thomas Jefferson

"The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not."

Thomas Jefferson

"Temporary deviations from fundamental principles are always more or less dangerous. When the first pretext fails, those who become interested in prolonging the evil will rarely be at a loss for other pretexts."

James Madison

"I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."

James Madison, Virginia Convention speech, June 16, 1788

"It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens, and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The freeman of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise, and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle."

James Madison, "A Memorial and Remonstrance", 1785: Works 1:163

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will. Find out just what the people will submit to and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue until they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."

Frederick Douglass, Aug. 4, 1857

"Tyranny is always more organized than freedom."

Charles Peguy

"A democracy cannot survive as a permanent form of government. It can last only until its citizens discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority who vote will vote for the candidates promising the greatest benefits from the public purse, with the result that a democracy will always collapse from loose fiscal policies, always followed by a dictatorship."

Sir Alex Fraser Tyler

"I have long been convinced that institutions purely democratic must, sooner or later, destroy liberty, or civilization, or both."

Thomas MacCaulay

"The average age of the world's greatest democratic nations has been 200 years. Each has been through the following sequence:

From bondage to spiritual faith,
From faith to great courage,
From courage to liberty,
From liberty to abundance,
From abundance to complacency,
From complacency to selfishness,
From selfishness to apathy,
From apathy to fear,
From fear to dependency,
And from dependency back again into bondage."

Lord Macaulay

"Common sense will tell us, that the power which hath endeavoured to subdue us, is of all others, the most improper to defend us."

Thomas Paine

"Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly."

Thomas Paine

"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it."

Thomas Paine

"Corruptissima re publica plurimae leges."
(The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws.)

Tacitus, *Annales*, 1st century A.D.

"Our principles were revolutionary. We began as a small, weak republic. But we survived. Our example inspired others, imperfectly at times, but it inspired them nevertheless. This constitutional republic, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are

created equal, prospered and grew strong. To this day, America is still the abiding alternative to tyranny. That is our purpose in the world -- nothing more and nothing less."

Ronald Reagan

"When those who are governed do too little, those who govern can, and often will, do too much."

Ronald Reagan, 2nd Calif. Inaugural, Jan 4, 1971

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it on to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children what it was once like in the United States when men were free."

Ronald Reagan

"To be born free is an accident, to live free is your duty, to die free is your obligation."

William Allen Coulter

"The only good bureaucrat is one with a pistol at his head. Put it in his hand and it's good-bye to the Bill of Rights."

H. L. Mencken, 1923

"The fact is that the average man's love of liberty is nine-tenths imaginary, exactly like his love of sense, justice, and truth. He is not actually happy when free; he is uncomfortable, a bit alarmed, and intolerably lonely. Liberty is not a thing for the great masses of men. It is the exclusive possession of a small and disreputable minority, like knowledge, courage and honor. It takes a special sort of man to understand and enjoy liberty -- and he is usually an outlaw in democratic societies."

H. L. Mencken, 1923

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke

"The true danger is when liberty is nibbled away, for expedience, and by parts."

Edmund Burke

"But what is liberty without wisdom, and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint."

Edmund Burke

"A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude. To make them love it is the task assigned, in present-day totalitarian states, to ministries of propaganda, newspaper editors and school teachers."

Aldous Huxley

"It is impossible to introduce into society a greater change and a greater evil than this: the conversion of the law into an instrument of plunder."

Frederic Bastiat

"Freedom is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."

George Orwell

"Experience teaches us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are beneficent."

U. S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis (1856-1941)

"Those who won our independence by revolution were not cowards. They did not fear political change. They did not exalt order at the cost of liberty."

U. S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis (1856-1941)

"Our government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher. For good or for ill it teaches the whole people by example. Crime is contagious. If the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself; it invites anarchy. To declare that in the administration of the criminal law the end justifies the means -- to declare that the Government may commit crimes in order to secure the conviction of a private criminal -- would bring terrible retributions."

Justice Louis Brandeis, dissenting, *Olmstead et al. v. United States*, 277 U.S. 485 (1928)

"When a legislature undertakes to proscribe the exercise of a citizen's constitutional rights it acts lawlessly and the citizen can take matters into his own hands and proceed on the basis that such a law is no law at all."

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas

"The right to be let alone is indeed the beginning of all freedoms."

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas

"A function of free speech under our system of government is to invite dispute. It may indeed best serve its high purposes when it induces a condition of unrest, creates dissatisfaction with conditions as they are, or even stirs people to anger."

Supreme Court Justice William Douglas

"We have in the U.S. produced several generations of cultural orphans who have little knowledge and even less appreciation of their heritage of freedom, or the struggles and sacrifices that produced it."

John A. Howard, On Freedom, 1984

"The essence of constitutionalism in a democracy is not merely to shape and condition the nature of majorities, but also to stipulate that certain things are impermissible, no matter how large and fervent a majority might want them."

George Will

"The test for whether one is living in a police state is that those who are charged with enforcing the law are allowed to break the laws with impunity."

Jon Roland

"I believe that every individual is naturally entitled to do as he pleases with himself and the fruits of his labor, so far as it in no way interferes with any other men's rights."

Abraham Lincoln

"All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth in their military chest; with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years. At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide."

Abraham Lincoln

"Today, we need a nation of Minutemen, citizens who are not only prepared to take arms, but citizens who regard the preservation of freedom as the basic purpose of their daily life and who are willing to consciously work and sacrifice for that freedom."

John F. Kennedy

"It is a common observation here that our cause is the cause of all mankind, and that we are fighting for their liberty in defending our own."

Benjamin Franklin

"Democracy is two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner. Liberty is two wolves attempting to have a sheep for dinner and finding a well-informed, well-armed sheep."

Benjamin Franklin (?)

"Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Benjamin Franklin, Nov 11 1755, from the Pennsylvania Assembly

"None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe that they are free."

Johann Goethe (1749-1832)

"No one escapes when freedom fails.
The best men rot in filthy jails.
And those who cried, 'Appease, appease!'
Are hanged by those they tried to please."

"Liberty exists in proportion to wholesome restraint."

Daniel Webster

"Human beings will generally exercise power when they can get it, and they will exercise it most undoubtedly in popular governments under pretense of public safety."

Daniel Webster

"I apprehend no danger to our country from a foreign foe. Our destruction, should it come at all, will be from another quarter. From the inattention of the people to the concerns of their government, from their carelessness and negligence, I must confess that I do apprehend some danger. "

Daniel Webster, June 1, 1837

"The evils of tyranny are rarely seen but by him who resists it."

John Hay, 1872

"If you will not fight for the right when you can easily win without bloodshed, if you will not fight when your victory can be sure and not too costly, you may come to a moment when you have to fight with all the odds against you, and only a precarious chance to survive. There may even be a worse case - You may have to fight when there is no hope of victory, and it will be better to perish than to live in slavery."

Winston Churchill, 1937

"I'd rather be a free man in my grave, than living as a puppet or a slave."

Winston Churchill

"How strangely will the Tools of a Tyrant pervert the plain Meaning of Words!"

Samuel Adams, Letter to John Pitts, January 21, 1776

"If ever time should come, when vain and aspiring men shall possess the highest seats in Government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin."

Samuel Adams, 1780

"In a state of tranquility, wealth, and luxury, our descendants would forget the arts of war and the noble activity and zeal which made their ancestors invincible. Every art of corruption would be employed to loosen the bond of union which renders our resistance formidable. When the spirit of liberty which now animates our hearts and gives success to our arms is extinct, our numbers will accelerate our ruin and render us easier victims to tyranny."

Samuel Adams

"Our contest is not only whether we ourselves shall be free, but whether there shall be left to mankind an asylum on earth for civil and religious liberty."

Samuel Adams

"A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security."

Samuel Adams

"When people are universally ignorant, and debauched in their manners, they will sink under their own weight without the aid of foreign invaders."

Samuel Adams

"If ye love wealth greater than liberty, the tranquility of servitude greater than the animating contest for freedom, go home from us in peace. We seek not your counsel, nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen."

Samuel Adams, Speech at the Philadelphia State House, August 1, 1776