

# The Gift We Hold

A precious gift has been thrust into our hands. Its idea comes from the Designer of the vast universe, the Creator of man Himself. It was planted in mortal minds thousands of years ago.

Its ideals have been trumpeted by the thinkers of Greece and the statesmen of ancient Rome. Homage was paid to it by a hardy band of settlers in a new land once explored by Vikings and put on the map by a Genoese sailor. A description of it flowed from the pen of Thomas Jefferson, and a collection of upstart colonial lawmakers swore their allegiance to it, thereby challenging the British crown and the world's most awesome military machine



The brilliance of it flickered in the winter snows of Valley Forge, but flared afresh when the 13 Colonies and France signed a treaty of alliance, when frontiersmen caught a glimpse of it and carried the fight to the British on Kings Mountain, when patriots won a victory at Cowpens, South Carolina, when John Paul Jones and his sailors gave an infant navy some stature in hand-to-hand combat with the crew of the British ship Serapis on the high seas, and, finally, when Gen. Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown.

The luster of the gift was embellished in the surge westward by families on foot, on horseback or in covered wagons seeking to tame the land and extend the boundaries for a government that carried civilization's strongest hope for equality and peace and individual fulfillment. The gift was in danger of being split asunder when brother rose against brother in the all-time bloodiest battles of the Civil War.

But it was saved and polished by a bewhiskered man called Lincoln, whose heart was broken by the strife and whose life was snuffed out because of his devotion to the gift.

The gift was enhanced by deeds of bravery, such as at the Alamo when 187 men under Col. William Travis fought to the death for it, and when Gen. Sam Houston at San Jacinto routed the entire Mexican army. It was bathed in the blood of men, real men, on San Juan Hill, in the trenches of France and Belgium, in the greatest naval engagement of all time in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, on Pork Chop Hill and in the steaming jungles of Vietnam. And when a band of hijackers and murderers attacked America on Sept. 11, 2001, it became the heart of a struggle with those who sought to vanquish it – in Afghanistan, in Iraq and around the world.

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The gift has passed through many hands – hands such as those of Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower and Martin Luther King Jr. Countless numbers of hands, in fact, have held the gift briefly, and passed it on. For every American, you see, has fallen heir to the gift. It is the heritage of these United States. Americans for the past 235 years have held it stubbornly, guarded it zealously and – paradoxically – died to keep its possession.

The gift is liberty.

It's such a small word – only seven letters. And yet, the dream of civilization is wrapped within it. It is the essence of America.

Tomorrow is July 4, 2018. The treasure of 242 years rests in our hands now. What will we do with it? Will we give it our unyielding allegiance, as did those who have gone before us? Or will we lose this most precious of human gifts?

Only time will tell.

– Beecher Hunter

