

## Winston Churchill - Blood, toil, tears, and sweat speech - 1940



“And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year, unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigor, arise and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.”

“I am prepared to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter.”

“You can measure a man’s character by the choices he makes under pressure.”

“History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.”

“Today is Trinity Sunday. Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of Truth and Justice: Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar. As the will of God is in Heaven, even so let it be.”

**Editors Note:** Winston Churchill was a man trained by the unseen hand of God, for his post as Prime Minister. In the early throws of World War II, he was the statesman Britain so desperately needed after resignation of Neville Chamberlain. From his overbearing father, who toughened him to his later military experiences, all prepared him for his later position. He was protected as a soldier on the Afghan border in 1897. In full view of the enemy, he said “Nothing is so exhilarating in life as to be shot at with no result.” “Foolish perhaps,” he told his mother, “but I play for high stakes and given an audience there is no act too daring and too noble.” From his daring escape after being captured in an ambush in the Boer War of 1899, to his fortuitous escape by train, he had a hand of protection on his shoulder. Even on a lecture tour of the United States in 1931, he was nearly killed after being hit by a car in New York City. How different world history would have been, if Churchill had not lived to serve his post. In hindsight of the events of his life after the war, he wrote, “I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and this trial.”

Time Line: 1939 - Czechoslovakia and Poland fall to German forces with Britain and France declaring war on Germany. 1940 - Scotland bombed, Germany attacking Denmark and Norway and invade France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

# Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat

First Speech as Prime Minister

May 13, 1940

to House of Commons

I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the formation of a Government representing the united and inflexible resolve of the nation to prosecute the war with Germany to a victorious conclusion.

On Friday evening last I received His Majesty's commission to form a new Administration. It as the evident wish and will of Parliament and the nation that this should be conceived on the broadest possible basis and that it should include all parties, both those who supported the late Government and also the parties of the Opposition. I have completed the most important part of this task. A War Cabinet has been formed of five Members, representing, with the Opposition Liberals, the unity of the nation. The three party Leaders have agreed to serve, either in the War Cabinet or in high executive office. The three Fighting Services have been filled. It was necessary that this should be done in one single day, on account of the extreme urgency and rigour of events. A number of other positions, key positions, were filled yesterday, and I am submitting a further list to His Majesty to-night. I hope to complete the appointment of the principal Ministers during to-morrow. the appointment of the other Ministers usually takes a little longer, but I trust that, when Parliament meets again, this part of my task will be completed, and that the administration will be complete in all respects.

I considered it in the public interest to suggest that the House should be summoned to meet today. Mr. Speaker agreed, and took the necessary steps, in accordance with the powers conferred upon him by the Resolution of the House. At the end of the proceedings today, the Adjournment of the House will be proposed until Tuesday, 21st May, with, of course, provision for earlier meeting, if need be. The business to be considered during that week will be notified to Members at the earliest opportunity. I now invite the House, by the Motion which stands in my name, to record its approval of the steps taken and to declare its confidence in the new Government.

To form an Administration of this scale and complexity is a serious undertaking in itself, but it must be remembered that we are in the preliminary stage of one of the greatest battles in history, that we are in action at many other points in Norway and in Holland, that we have to be prepared in the Mediterranean, that the air battle is continuous and that many preparations, such as have been indicated by my hon. Friend below the Gangway, have to be made here at home. In this crisis I hope I may be pardoned if I do not address the House at any length today. I hope that any of my friends and colleagues, or former colleagues, who are affected by the political reconstruction, will make allowance, all allowance, for any lack of ceremony with which it has been necessary to act. I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all

terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realised; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal. But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, “come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.”<sup>1</sup>

Endnotes:

1. Winston Churchill, First Speech as Prime Minister May 13, 1940 to House of Commons, <http://www.winstonchurchill.org>

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When a people lose their history they lose a part of who they are.  
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