

May 4, 1941

[Woodrow Wilson's Birthplace Dedication]

FDR Speech File

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SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
DEDICATION OF WOODROW WILSON'S BIRTHPLACE
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA,
MAY 4, 1941

We are meeting here today to dedicate a new shrine of freedom. By this action we are bearing true witness to the faith that is in us -- a simple faith in the freedom of democracy in the world.

It is the kind of faith for which we have fought before -- for the existence of which we are ever ready to fight again.

I can think of no more fitting place in all the land for Americans to pledge anew their faith in the democratic way of life than at the birthplace of Woodrow Wilson. In this quiet Presbyterian manse first saw the light of day one whose whole active life was dedicated to the cause of freedom, to the conquest of fear and to the liberation of the eternal spirit of man from every thralldom imposed by force.

Woodrow Wilson was fortunate in his birthplace and favored in his parentage and environment. This was a home of plain living and high thinking and wherever the family moved in the migrations incident to the religious calling of the father they carried with them ideals which put faith in spiritual values above every material consideration.

In the tragic conflict which the world witnesses today and which threatens everything we have most loved as a free people, we see more clearly than ever before the unyielding strength of things of the spirit. All of recorded history bears witness that the human race has made true advancement only as it has appreciated spiritual values. Those unhappy peoples who have placed their sole reliance on the sword have inevitably perished by the sword in the end.

Physical strength can never permanently withstand the impact of spiritual force.

Woodrow Wilson's whole career was a triumph of the spiritual over the sordid forces of brute strength. Under his leadership this country made great spiritual progress.

Of Woodrow Wilson this can be said, that in a time when world councils were dominated by material considerations of greed and gain and revenge he beheld the vision splendid. That selfish men could not share his vision of a world emancipated from the shackles of force and the arbitrament of the sword in no wise detracts from its splendor. Rather does the indifference of hostile contemporaries enhance the beauty of the vision which he saw and enlarge the glory of the world he sought to rebuild.

He will be held in everlasting remembrance as a statesman who, when other men sought revenge and material gain, strove to bring nearer the day which should see the emancipation of conscience from power and the substitution of freedom for force in the government of the world.

It is good for America that this house in which Woodrow Wilson was born will be preserved for us and for many future generations. In this Valley of Virginia it will remind America that his ideals of freedom were wide enough to support democracy in all the world. He taught that democracy could not survive in isolation. We applaud his judgment and his faith.

SUGGESTIONS
FOR
WOODROW WILSON FOUNDATION SPEECH
MAY 4, 1941

I want a perfect little gem of the value of the type of civilization that recognizes and has in its daily life a recognition of the spiritual qualities of mankind. All of recorded history shows that over long periods of years this recognition advanced the race. All of recorded history also shows that those nations, or combination of nations, which abandoned spiritual values, which tried to substitute force, ~~which~~ might have temporary success, but even though the sword triumphed for the moment, this triumph degraded the civilization to which it was applied.

Something about the very great spiritual progress that was made by the people of this country under the leadership of Wilson, and that even if it seemed to fail, after the theory of the sword had been defeated, the effect of that up-lifting of men's souls made a permanent contribution to the civilization of the Twentieth Century and has laid the ground-work of a renewal of the effort to maintain it.

Remarks of the President at the Dedication of
Woodrow Wilson's Birthplace, Staunton, Virginia,
Sunday, May 4, 1941.

We are meeting here today to dedicate a new shrine to freedom.

By this action we are bearing true witness to the faith that is in us, a *Temple*
faith in ourselves, ~~faith in free institutions~~, *the freedom of democracy*, ~~faith in the~~ *in the world*
~~of the American people to uphold the democratic way of life against~~
~~every assault from every quarter.~~

I can think of no more fitting place in all the land for
Americans to pledge anew their faith in the democratic way of life than
at the birthplace of Woodrow Wilson. In this quiet Presbyterian manse
first saw the light of day one whose whole active life was dedicated
to the cause of freedom, to the conquest of fear and to the liberation
of the eternal spirit of man from every thralldom imposed by force.

Woodrow Wilson was fortunate in his birthplace and favored
in his parentage and environment. This was a home of plain living and
high thinking and wherever the ~~Wilson~~ family moved in the migrations
incident to the religious calling of the father they carried with
them ideals which put faith in spiritual values above every material
consideration.

In the tragic conflict which the world witnesses today and
which threatens everything we have most loved as a free people, we see
more clearly than ever before the unyielding strength of things of
the spirit. ~~If we take a backward glance we find~~ ~~all~~ of recorded
history bears witness that the human race has made true advancement
only as it has appreciated spiritual values. Those unhappy peoples
who have placed their sole reliance on the sword have inevitably
perished by the sword, ^{is the sword} In the long struggle of mankind to achieve
freedom under self-government an Unseen Power ever has chosen the
weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

Physical strength can never ~~withstand~~ permanently ~~impact~~ ^{withstand the impact of} with spiritual force.

Woodrow Wilson's whole career was a triumph of the spiritual over the sordid forces of brute strength. Under his leadership this country made great spiritual progress. What seemed like defeat of his purpose has proved to be a victory in the light of the world's experience during the past twenty-years.

Of Woodrow Wilson this can be said, that in a time when world councils were dominated by material considerations of greed and gain and revenge he beheld the vision splendid. That selfish men could not share his vision of a world emancipated from the shackles of force and the arbitrament of the sword in nowise detracts from its splendor. Rather does the indifference of hostile contemporaries enhance the beauty of the vision which he saw and enlarge the glory of the world he sought to rebuild.

He will be held in everlasting remembrance as a statesman who, when other men sought revenge and material gain, strove to bring nearer the day which should see the emancipation of conscience from power and the substitution of freedom for force in the government of the world. Better to have failed in bringing the world to the realization of that vision than to have succeeded as his associates did for a brief space in enforcing a peace based on revenge, greed and fear of brute strength.

Where then could we more fittingly renew our pledge of fealty and faith to the ideals of freedom which Woodrow Wilson exemplified by word and deed than here at the hallowed place of his birth? And in rededicating ourselves to Wilson's ideals of freedom we pledge ourselves

anew to support the democracies of the world wherever they are threatened by the forces of dictatorship and tyranny. The stream of freedom shall not be turned back. Our dearly bought liberties shall not disappear.

"In our halls is hung
Armory of the invincible Knights of old:
We must be free or die who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held."

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
This is a transcript made by the staff
from a recording of the President's
speech at the birthplace of Woodrow
Wilson on May 4, 1941. The original
recording is in the possession of the
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.
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INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
MADE UPON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION
OF THE
BIRTHPLACE OF FORMER PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA, MAY 4, 1941

MRS. WILSON, MAYOR COTTRELL, GOVERNOR PRICE, FRIENDS OF WOODROW
WILSON:

We are meeting here today to dedicate another (a) new
shrine, a new shrine of freedom. By this action we are bearing
true witness to the faith that is in us -- a simple faith in the
freedom of democracy in the world.

It is the kind of faith for which we have fought before
-- for the existence of which we are ever ready to fight again.
(applause)

I can think of no more fitting place in all the land for
Americans to pledge anew their faith in the democratic way of life
than at the birthplace of Woodrow Wilson. (applause) In this
quiet Presbyterian manse first saw the light of day one whose whole
active life was dedicated to the cause of freedom, to the conquest
of fear and to the liberation of the eternal spirit of man from
every thralldom imposed by fear (force).

Woodrow Wilson was fortunate in his birthplace (and).
He was favored in his parentage and his environment. I like the

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

WASHINGTON, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 1941

WOODROW WILSON WAS FORTUNATE IN HIS DISPOSITION AND HIS ENVIRONMENT. I LIKE THE

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old phrase that this was a home of plain living and high thinking and wherever the family moved in the migrations incident to the religious calling of the father, they carried with them ideals (which), ideals that put faith in spiritual values, put them in spiritual values above every material consideration.

In the tragic conflict which the world witnesses today and which threatens everything that we have most loved as a free people, we see more clearly than ever before the unyielding strength of things of the spirit. All of recorded history bears witness that the human race has made true advancement only as it has appreciated spiritual values. Those unhappy peoples who have placed their sole reliance on the sword have inevitably perished by the sword in the end. (applause)

No, physical strength can never permanently withstand the impact of spiritual force. (applause)

And Woodrow Wilson's whole career was a triumph of the spiritual over the sordid forces of brute strength. Under his leadership this country made as we know very great spiritual progress.

Of Woodrow Wilson this can be said, that in a time when world councils were dominated by material considerations of greed and of gain and of revenge he beheld the vision splendid. That selfish men could not share his vision of a world emancipated from the shackles of force and the arbitrament of the sword in no wise detracts from its splendor. Rather does the indifference of hostile contemporaries enhance the beauty of the vision which he

sought to rebuild.

He will be held in everlasting remembrance, everlasting remembrance by those who knew him and those who came after him, as a statesman who, when other men sought revenge and material gain, strove to bring nearer the day which should see the emancipation of conscience from power and the substitution of freedom for force in the government of the world.

It is good for America that this house in which Woodrow Wilson was born will be preserved for us and for many future generations. In this Valley of Virginia it will remind America that his ideals of freedom were wide enough to support democracy in all the world. (applause) He taught--and let's never forget it--he taught that democracy could not survive in isolation. We applaud his judgment (and) we applaud his faith. (applause)

5/A/41

Remarks
~~OF~~ OF THE PRESIDENT

DEDICATION OF WOODROW WILSON'S BIRTHPLACE
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA,
MAY 4, 1941

Woodrow Wilson

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of freedom. By this action we are bearing true witness to
the faith that is in us -- a simple faith in the freedom of
democracy in the world.

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for Americans to pledge anew their faith in the democratic
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H O L D F O R R E L E A S E

C O N F I D E N T I A L U N T I L R E L E A S E D

N O T E :-

THE FOLLOWING REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT, TO BE DELIVERED
AT THE DEDICATION OF FORMER PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON'S
BIRTHPLACE IN STAUNTON, VIRGINIA, SUNDAY, MAY 4TH, 1941,
MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE UNTIL RELEASED.

RELEASE IS AUTOMATIC ----- TWELVE O'CLOCK, NOON, E.S.T.,
MAY 4TH. THIS RELEASE APPLIES TO THE RADIO AS WELL AS TO
THE PRESS.

STEPHEN T. EARLY,
SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT.