

From *The Battle of Maldon*

- 25 þa stod on stæðe, stiðlice clypode  
wicinga ar, wordum mælde,  
se on beot abead brimliþendra  
ærænde to þam eorle, þær he on ofre stod:  
“Me sendon to þe sæmen snelle,  
30 heton ðe secgan þæt þu most sendan raðe  
beagas wið gebeorge; and eow betere is  
þæt ge þisne garræs mid gafole forgyldon,  
þon we swa hearde hilde dælon.  
Ne þurfe we us spillan, gif ge spedað to þam;  
35 We willað wið þam golde grið fæstnian.  
Gyf þu þæt gerædest, þe her ricost eart,  
þæt þu þine leoda lysan wille,  
syllan sæmannum on hyra sylfra dom  
feoh wið freode, and niman frið æt us,  
40 we willað mid þam sceattum us to scype gangan,  
on flot feran, and eow friþes healdan.”  
Byrhtnoð mapelode, bord hafenode,  
wand wacne æsc, wordum mælde,  
yrre and anræd ageaf him andsware:  
45 “Gehyrst þu, sælida, hwæt þis folc segeð?  
Hi willað eow to gafole gasyllan,  
ættrynne ord and ealde swurd,  
þa heregeatu þe eow æt hilde ne deah.  
Brimmanna boda, abeod eft ongean,  
50 sege þinum leodum miccle laþre spell,  
þæt her stynt unforcuð eorl mid his werode,  
þe wile gealgean eþel þysne,  
Æþelredes eard, ealdres mines,  
folc and foldan. Feallan sceolon  
55 hæþene æt hilde. To heanlic me þinceð  
þæt ge mid urum sceattum to scype gangon  
unbefohtene, nu ge þus feor hider  
on urne eard in becomon.  
Ne sceole ge swa softe sinc gegangan;  
60 us sceal ord and ecg ær geseman,  
grim guðplega, ær we gofol syllon.”

## Translation

Then stood on the shore a messenger of the Vikings. He called out sternly, spoke with words, threateningly he delivered his message to the nobleman where he stood on the bank:

“Strong seamen have sent me to you; they have commanded me to tell you that you must quickly send treasures for protection, and it is better for you that you pay off this rush of spears with tribute than that we should so brutally engage in battle. We have no need to destroy each other, if you are rich to that degree. We want to confirm peace in exchange for that gold. If you who are the most powerful here take that course of action, that you should redeem your people, give the seamen money for protection according to their own judgement and make peace with us, then we want to go to the ship[s] with that treasure, travel the water, and keep your peace.”

Byrhtnoth spoke, raised his shield, brandished his firm ashen spear, spoke with words, angry and resolute gave him answer:

“Do you hear, sailors, what this people says? They want to give you spears for tribute, the poisoned speartip and the old sword, such war-equipment as will not benefit you in battle. Report back, messenger of the seamen: tell your people a more unpleasant tale, that here stands unafraid a nobleman with his troop, who wants to protect this homeland, the land of my ruler Æthelred, his people and soil. Heathens must fall at battle. It seems too shameful to me that you should go to your ship[s] with our treasure unfought, now that you have come this far here onto our land. You will not obtain treasure so easily; spear-point and sword-edge will reconcile us first, grim battle-play, before we should pay tribute.”