

Instant Access Listener Guide #3

Our Freedom in Christ

In light of the current world situation, a new catch phrase has become popular:

- **Every human being has a natural desire for freedom.**

Those who use this phrase believe that every human being on the planet has an innate, natural desire to be free. They are speaking in terms of:

- **Political Freedom = freedom from an evil, vicious dictator; freedom to form some type of democracy in which every citizen of the country has a role to play in shaping the direction and values of the country**
- **Economic Freedom = the right of each person to pursue his or her dream of financial success by whatever means they lawfully can**

The USA is the beacon of light for these freedoms:

- **Millions of people want to get here**
- **Millions have already come, some legally, some illegally**
- **We are truly the “Land of Opportunity”**
- **Our society offers unlimited opportunities – sometimes too many**
 - **What teenager doesn’t struggle with the question, “What do I want to be when I grow up?”**
 - **Because of the unlimited possible answers, it can be overwhelming**

What does God say about “freedom”?

- **Free from what?**
- **Free to do what?**

God has much to say about freedom but His view is not what we might expect.

God says:

- **Before a person is born again, he or she is not free**

As Americans we have more freedom of choice than anyone else in the world but in one way we are the same as every other person on earth.

- **No American is free NOT to sin**
- **All people are equally guilty of falling short of God's standard**
 - **No matter how hard we try, no matter standard a person sets – their own or God's – all fall short of the standard we are trying to live by**
 - **How long does a New Year's resolution last?**
 - **How long does a decision not to yell at the kids last?**
 - **How long before we are envious of another's promotion?**
 - **How long before bitterness sets in because our spouse's insensitivity to our feelings and needs?**

People around the world are the ultimately the same.

- **Cultures are different**
- **Languages are different**
- **Food is different**
- **Dress style is different**
- **Inside we are all the same – we are governed by what the Bible calls “the flesh” = greed, anger, jealousy, sexual immorality, etc**
- **We all sin and fall short of what God expects us to be**

Practically speaking, we can never be free in the sense of being totally independent of anyone else or anything else. We all know there are limits to our freedom.

- **One man says it this way, “Freedom is the length of chain we are attached to because of our limitations.”**
- **In America we have long chains, a lot of choices – more than anyone else in the world – but we all have an end to our chain that is attached to a limitation.**
 - **Most of us we cannot NOT work. We need a paycheck to survive.**
 - **We can live in any city we want and in any neighborhood we want but the size of our house or the neighborhood we choose will be restricted by the size of our income.**
 - **We can choose to go to college or not but our education level does have an impact on our employment opportunities.**

- All these realities are an expression of the length of the chain our freedom is limited by.

The length of our chain as Christians is very short.

- Our freedom is limited to choosing who are master will be
- Submit to God, and be a slave of righteousness
- Submit to sin, and be a slave to unrighteousness
- These are the only two choices

We like to think that we are masters of our own destinies, that we are captains of our own ships. God says this is not true.

The concept of being a slave is difficult for us to relate to. Americans abhor slavery. Americans cherish their freedoms.

However, in the spiritual whelm, we must face truth as God reveals it to us.

The cultural factor in Paul's words:

- Selling yourself into slavery to survive was culturally acceptable in Paul's day.
- Economic need might force a person to slavery.

Our first parents sold us into slavery to sin.

- God created them with freedom but limitation.
- God was a benevolent Master but He was their Master.
- They rebelled against this limitation.
- Their rebellion sold them to another master, satan.
- All their decedents have been born as slaves to satan and sin.

As born again believers we once again have choice. It is limited freedom but is freedom.

- God desires a love relationship with us.
- Love requires choice.

- The God of the universe, with unlimited power, intelligence, and wisdom, limits Himself to our choice.

This freedom of choice is the truth of Romans 6:12–23.

11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Vs. 12 “Therefore...”

- “Therefore” = as a result of; as a consequence of
- Verses 12 – 23 is a result of/consequence of vs. 1-11
- Vs. 1-11 affirms our co-crucifixion and our co-resurrection with Jesus

Vs. 12 “reign” = to control; to have the greatest influence over

As a result of our co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Jesus, we have the right to say “no” to letting sin control or have great influence over us.

The key word in this passage is “present”.

- “present” = to offer to another something or someone for their use; to be used as they desire

Vs. 13 The first use of the verb “present” is in the present tense = continuous action meaning “do not keep on presenting”

- **The Roman Christians had been continuously presenting their bodies to sin for its use.**
- **Under sin they expressed the flesh – anger, jealousy, lust, and other unrighteousness.**

The second use of the verb is in the aorist tense = make a permanent, once and for all commitment to being slaves of God.

- **Under God they would express love, kindness, forgiveness compassion, humility, and other righteousness.**

Vs. 13 “Instruments”= a tool or utensil; evolved to mean a military weapon or instrument of war

- **This word indicates the intensity of the issue being addressed.**
- **We are at war.**

Vs. 16 The consequence of living unrighteousness= death

- **“death” = Our relationship with God is broken. Our sins are a barrier between God and ourselves. We lose our sense of “rightness” about our life. We lose our sense of meaning, purpose, and significance to our life.**

Vs. 16 The result of presenting our members to God = righteousness

- **“righteousness”= living right. We live as God wants us to, as we were created to. We will be expressing His essential nature and character to the world. We are alive.**

Vs. 19 Paul says he is using the human relationship of slave and master because he wants the Romans to clearly understand what he is saying. The flesh wants to believe that it can be free from any restraints. It fights to be free from God. It doesn’t know that it is under another master, sin, if it is not submissive to God. God is making it clear that there is no ultimate freedom. Something or someone will be master over them.

- **“present” = present tense of the verb = continuously keep on presenting your members to God**
- **As a result of presenting their members to God, they are sanctified. They are set apart for God’s use. They are fulfilling the role they were created to fill. They will know meaning and purpose and significance.**

God is applying layers of truth to His basic point of choosing who our master will be.

- **In vs. 13 the basic call is to present our members to righteousness rather than to sin**

- In vs. 16 we are told that our choice has consequences:
 - Sin = death = manifesting the deeds of the flesh
 - God = righteousness = expressing the essential nature and character of God
- In vs. 19 we are told if we continue as slaves of sin, sin will lead us to more and more evil deeds. If to God, the result is sanctification - a habitual pattern of living for God's use.

There is one layer left to add.

- In vs. 21 Paul says there was no benefit to letting sin be master over them. The things they did were unable to satisfy their deepest longings for meaning, purpose, and significance. They were spiritually dead, doing things that only gave them a sense of shame.
- In vs. 22 Paul says as "slaves" of God, they do gain a benefit – sanctification which has the outcome of eternal life.
 - "eternal life" = a description of a quality of life, not just a measure of time. It is a quality of life that has no end.
 - The life that is eternal is the way of life that God lives. His nature and character will never end.
- In vs. 23:
 - "wages" = refers to a soldier's salary. Serving in sin's army earns death. It promises pleasure, power, and "stuff" that will make us happy and fulfilled, but it can only give us death – the loss of any sense of meaning and purpose and significance.
 - "gift" = something given, not earned. The gift is the life that is eternal. The life that gives meaning and purpose and significance.

This then is God's definition of "Freedom". It is a limited freedom but it is the most important freedom of all.

- What good is political or economic freedom if all we can do is live in sin and "die"?
- What good is the world's freedom if it can do nothing to give us a true sense of meaning and purpose and significance?

As Paul says in Vss. 17-18 "...thanks be to God that we have been freed from sin and have become slaves to living right!"