

**James 2:12** In light of these things, keep on speaking [ Imperative mood #16 ] or communicating and keep on applying [ Imperative mood #17 ] just as those who are about to receive judgment by the law of freedom.  
(EXT)

28. The English Bibles that use the word *liberty* to translate *eleuthería* are the KJV and NASB. The NIV and NET Bibles correctly translate it, *freedom*, which is best. Here's why:

### The Differences between Liberty and Freedom

1. When searching for the English word that contains the full essence of the Hebrew or Greek word under consideration, synonyms must be evaluated to discover which has the most precise definition.
2. Although liberty and freedom seem to be synonymous, they are not exactly. The Greek word under scrutiny is the noun, *eleuthería*. To understand why the better translation of this word is "freedom" rather than "liberty," we must define each.
3. We will begin with the word "liberty" from whose definitions will emerge the reason it is not the best translation. In our research we will consult *The Oxford English Dictionary*:

**Liberty.** Permission. Exemption or release from captivity, bondage, or slavery. **Natural liberty:** the state in which everyone is free to act as he thinks fit, subject only to the laws of nature. The condition of being able to act in any desired way without hindrance or restraint; faculty or power to do as one likes. Unrestrained action, conduct, or expression; freedom of behavior or speech, beyond what is granted or recognized as proper.



Freedom. Exemption or release from slavery or imprisonment. Liberation from the bondage of sin. Exemption from arbitrary, despotic, or autocratic control. The state of being able to act without hindrance or restraint, liberty of action. The quality of being free from the control of fate or necessity. The power of self-determination of the will. Exemption from a specific burden, charge, or service; an immunity, privilege. The right of participating in the privileges attached to: a. membership of [the royal family of God]; b. citizenship of a town or city [the heavenly πολίτευμα (*políteuma*)]; often conferred upon eminent persons [always conferred by faith alone in Christ alone].<sup>10</sup>

4. The latter definition of freedom speaks of all believers' citizenship, or πολίτευμα, being in heaven. Paul's point is that believers live in the hostile environment of the devil's world although their real citizenship is in heaven. They must orient and adjust during their human lives but, at physical death, they are immediately rescued from it.
5. The following excerpt expounds upon this idea regarding the noun πολίτευμα:

The commonwealth to which Christians belong, their "homeland," is in heaven. They are not citizens rooted here in nature, thought and interests. What we have here is a figurative use of the term in the sense of state or commonwealth and with a view to describing the fact that Christians are inwardly foreigners, not specifically in relation to the earthly state, which is not mentioned at all in the context, but very generally in relation to the earthly sphere. More positively, the word is used to describe their membership of the heavenly kingdom of Christ, to which they belong as it were by constitutional right.<sup>11</sup>

6. Definitions of the word *liberty* indicate an environment in which a citizen may live and act as he thinks fit, subject only to the laws of nature. This is a right conferred by a society with attendant laws restricting some behaviors.
7. The word *liberty* is best understood as the general public environment in a nation of laws that allow its citizens freedom of thought, movement, and choice as long as laws are obeyed.

---

<sup>9</sup> "For our citizenship [πολίτευμα (*políteuma*)] is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

<sup>10</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), s.vv. "liberty, freedom."

<sup>11</sup> Hermann Strathmann, "πολίτευμα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:535.



8. The word *freedom* may be used theologically to define the circumstances that occur when a person places his personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life.
9. Freedom of choice results in a person being removed from the slave market of sin and invested into the divine policy of grace.
10. Where he was once in bondage to sin, he is now emancipated by being made free from the Law. The Law only illustrated an Israelite's release from bondage by the performance of rituals.
11. The rituals portrayed the means by which the Law would be replaced by divine grace in the form of a human, substitutionary sacrifice.
12. The Law was to be kept, not as a means of salvation, but as a means of learning about the freedom which would be provided by a coming Messiah.
13. It is by the power of self-determination and free will that one may extract himself from the works of the Law and be set free to follow the Savior.
14. The concept of freedom is the right of self-determination to make the choice to either stay under the yoke of the Law or to choose the freedom of grace.
15. Liberty nicely defines the system of imposed restraints necessary in an open society. Citizens of the United States still enjoy independence of thought, movement, and choice, but for the good of the society certain restraints must be imposed.
16. Freedom nicely defines the release from bondage to a dead system of commandments associated with obsolete rituals that cannot be consistently obeyed.
17. Faith in Christ produces freedom from the slave market of sin while anointing us into the freedom of His grace. Free of both ritual and unforgiven sin, the believer is free to grow in grace and acquire the guidance that leads to potential escrow blessings at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ.
18. From Oxford's definition of *freedom*, we may now develop some application from the phrase "law of freedom":
  1. Those who place their personal faith in Jesus Christ move out of a life of works into a life of freedom in which they may serve God.

2. This freedom makes you free to make good decisions based on principles found in the Word of God.
3. Except for the worldly laws that define criminality, you are not accountable to other people on how you live your life as unto the Lord.
4. While continuing to function under the authorities of this world, you personally orient to a set of rules that are exercised under the divine policy of grace.
5. The object of grace is faith toward the divine guarantee of God's logistical grace support.
6. The Law of Freedom rejects all human ability, talent, or good works. Man's work has no place in a system of grace.
7. The cosmic system functions on human good and evil. However, the law of freedom places the obligation on the believer to use that freedom to apply the Word of God and its power, under the enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit, to produce divine good.
8. Associated with the Law of Freedom is the Law of Love which is the function of the Royal Law.
9. The Law of Love is directed toward other believers. This application emerges in the sophisticated spiritual life. Basic levels of spiritual growth have provided the foundation for advanced application of doctrine.
10. The ability to love other believers, let alone other people, is the initial ability to love God. Many people contend that they love God and to a certain degree they do.
11. However, one must understand the essence of God in order to comprehend how His essence works in association with believers.
12. Divine essence is broken down into ten characteristics. We will not take up a detailed doctrine but briefly define these characteristics.

**(End JAS2-69. See JAS2-70 for continuation of study at p. 691.)**



1. **Sovereignty:** God's eternal, infinite, unchangeable will expressed in the doctrine of the divine decree in eternity past. His sovereignty has absolute prerogative and volition.
2. **Righteousness:** God possesses eternal, unchangeable, and absolute righteousness. His righteousness, in combination with perfect justice, forms the integrity of God.
3. **Justice:** Divine justice administers the system of divine laws that are compatible with divine righteousness and sovereignty. Justice is the function of the integrity of God. Since all mankind is born spiritually dead, the justice of God is our point of contact, before and after salvation.
4. **Love.** God's love is different from human love, which God does not possess. His love, for example, contains no emotion. In God's love there is no deception—only the inviolable demand of perfect truth and integrity. Because He is righteous and just, His love is never biased. God's love depends on His integrity and is governed by His integrity.
5. **Eternal Life:** Has no beginning and no end; it has always existed and will always exist; there was never a time when He did not exist. Time, although without substance, is an object of God's creation. His eternal life is imputed to all who believe in Christ. This eternal life is technically called everlasting life; that is, it has no end but began at the moment of salvation.
6. **Omnipresence.** God is eternally, wholly, and simultaneously present everywhere. Omnipresence means He is personally there, an eyewitness to every activity of our lives and of all human and angelic history. God is the cause of space which extends for immeasurable lightyears. Space is one of two boundaries God has given to creatures, the other being time.