

A Question of Choice



By Paul Engel

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- The fundamental basis of our freedoms is the power to choose.
- Independence, liberty, and freedom are all based in people choosing.
- Yet the American people have handed over their power to choose over to others.

The word “choice” has all but been taken over by the pro-abortion crowd, but that is not what I want to discuss here today. Recent history, both public and private, has displayed the fundamental function choice plays in a person’s independence, liberty, and freedom. Yet said history has shown that many of the American people have given up the ability to choose, placing that responsibility on others. By doing so, people have voluntarily abandoned their position as free citizens in order to become enslaved subjects to those who do the choosing for them.

If there is a fundamental core concept behind the idea of America, it is the belief in independence, liberty, and freedom. Think about it: Our nation was formed when we declared independence from Great Britain. Within the Declaration of Independence we find the recognition of the unalienable right to liberty. And the Bill of Rights starts out with protecting our freedoms of religion, speech, and press. These ideas, and the laws that protect them, are the fundamental basis for our nation. Yet there is one key aspect to this triad that we seem to seldom think of, because all

three are dependent on the ability to choose.

The Power of Choice

a: to select freely and after consideration

b: to decide on especially by vote

[Choose – Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online](#)

When our nation was founded, our ability to select freely how we live our lives and to decide who will represent us, was not only a fundamental part of the character of this nation, it was unique in the world. Throughout our almost 250 year history, this power of choice was not only the envy of many of the world's population, but drew them to our shores with the hope that their children would be able to choose for themselves. While not always smooth, our ability to choose not only shaped our lives, but the lives of billions across this planet. As often as I hear people complain about their choices being taken away from them, more often than not, it has been We the People who have given up our right to choose rather than others taking it away.

Every choice has consequences. Even choosing not to decide has consequences. In the long run, our choices come down to what consequences we are willing to endure. Take for example, our own war of independence.

Independence

1. A state of being not dependent; complete exemption from control, or the power of others;
2. A state in which a person does not rely on others for subsistence; ability to support one's self.
3. A state of mind in which a person acts without bias or influence from others; exemption from undue influence; self-direction.

[Independence – Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#)

For a decade, the king and parliament of Great Britain chose to enact laws and taxes upon the colonies, many of which violated the rights of those colonists. During that time, the colonies chose to push back, either by request or by disobeying those laws and edicts. This, of course, led to conflicts between the colonies and Great Britain. On April 19, 1775, the consequences of those decisions blew up.

Picture April 19, 1775, Lexington, Massachusetts. Imagine you are a member of the Massachusetts militia. Having heard the warnings about the British marching for your neighbors in Concord, to confiscate their ammunition, you responded with your fellow militiamen and gathered on Lexington Green. Shortly after dawn, you see a column of British soldiers marching your way. As their commander orders them to halt, you stand there, nervous but steadfast. This is your land, your home, and you will defend it. The British commander orders you and your fellow militiamen to lay down your arms and go home. You have a choice.

Yes, you had joined the militia, giving your word to follow the orders of your commander, Captain John Parker. The British Army had law enforcement powers, so their commands to disarm and go home had legal authority. You probably didn't realize it, but what you and your fellow militiamen did in the next few moments would change the world forever. As you stand there, you have a choice. Do you stand with the militia or obey the legal authority? The choice is yours, and you will suffer the consequences.

Your commanding officer makes a choice and issues orders.

Stand your ground.

He chooses to disobey the legal authority, recognizing the violation of the colonist's rights. He orders his troops to do so as well. They will not lay down their arms. They will not go home.

Don't fire unless fired upon,

He chose not to escalate the situation. He will not order his men to fire, neither will he expect them to stand defenseless if attacked.

but if they mean to have war, let it begin here.

There's your choice. Do you stand against the legal authority or obey it? Do you hold your fire, waiting for your opponents to fire first? Should they attack, do you stand and fight or do you flee. Captain Parker made his choice; independence was more important than life and limb. If the British wanted a war, he was willing to give it to them. However, you still have a choice. Obey your commanding officer or the legal authority. What do you do?

History tells us that someone fired. Who was it? We are not sure. The battle that followed effectively started the War for Independence, or as we call it today, the Revolutionary War. In those times it was called the War for Independence, but in many ways it was the war to remain independent. The Massachusetts Militia at Lexington Green had looked at what the legal government was doing, and knew it was wrong. They considered, to whatever extent possible, the consequences of their decision, and chose independence over servitude. To this day, we live with the consequences of those actions for, both good and ill.

Liberty

Freedom from restraint, in a general sense, and applicable to the body, or to the will or mind. The body is at liberty when not confined; the will or mind is at liberty when not checked or controlled. A man enjoys liberty when no physical force operates to restrain his actions or volitions.

[Liberty – Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#)

Liberty, in its most general sense, is the ability to choose without outside influence. This is a state which cannot fully exist in the real world. There will always be people who wish to control you, how you live, what you can and cannot do, and what you will allow to confine you if you do not comply. Either they will be stronger than you, and thereby enforce their will on you, or you will be stronger than them, thereby enforcing your will on them. Which is why, when most people talk about liberty, they are talking about civil liberty.

Natural liberty consists in the power of acting as one thinks fit, without any restraint or control, except from the laws of nature.

Civil liberty is the liberty of men in a state of society, or natural liberty so far only abridged and restrained, as is necessary and expedient for the safety and interest of the society, state or nation.

[Liberty – Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#)

Civil liberty is the ability to live your life as you choose, restrained only by the laws of nature, or of civil laws necessary for the safety and interest of society. I like to summarize the laws of nature into one simple statement: We don't hurt people, and we don't take their stuff. Civil laws that protect the public as a whole, such as speed limit and traffic light laws, do not infringe on your civil liberty because they are necessary for the safety of society. On the other hand, helmet and seatbelt laws do infringe on your civil liberty, since they are designed to protect the individual not the society as a whole.

Even here, we still have the ability to choose. Many people choose, if not to ignore, at least to "bend" speed limit and traffic light laws. In many cases when they are caught, people recognize their breach of civil law and accept the consequences. Others act as if they have the right to violate

these laws, frequently because many have done so without getting caught. I feel little sympathy for these people, since they chose to break the law and are merely suffering the consequences.

Freedom

A state of exemption from the power or control of another; liberty; exemption from slavery, servitude or confinement.

[Freedom – Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#)

As you can see, freedom and liberty are closely related. For our discussion here, I want to focus on the exemption from slavery, servitude, and confinement.

Many think that slaves have no choices. In reality they have very few choices, and the consequences of are extreme. After all, the consequences of failing to escape slavery cannot only be severe, but lethal. Servants, on the other hand, may have a few more choices, but the consequences are generally far less severe. In rare circumstances losing one's job is likely to lead to the end of their life. Even those in confinement have choices. They can obey the guards or not, or they can try to escape or not. In those circumstances the consequences of their choices have varying punishments.

Giving Up the Right to Choose

In all of these situations, people have choices. The most fundamental of these choices is whether or not to obey. This nation was founded on our ability to choose and the independence to govern ourselves, rather than be governed by others, the liberty to live our lives as we see fit, and without undue external influence. The ability to live as free citizens rather than subjects of government. During my lifetime I have observed a disturbing trend, one that seems to have accelerated exponentially over that past decade or so, that of the American people giving up their right to choose

for themselves. Instead, they choose to follow others without consideration.

When did the image of a strong and independent American become something to be vilified? When did we decided that conformity was preferable to uniqueness? When did we decide that the ability to choose for ourselves must be subjugated to the will of others? When did the American people decide to give up being citizens and decide to be subjects?

The native of a city, or an inhabitant who enjoys the freedom and privileges of the city in which he resides;

[Citizen – Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#)

American citizens are those who enjoy the freedoms and privileges of this nation. Over the decades Americans have given up many of those freedoms in an attempt to “get along” with others. We gave up our freedom of speech, first to the politically correct, who then took over our governments and Human Resource departments. Then we gave up our privacy to tech giants, who vacuum up our data in exchange for the latest gadget and the claim of making our lives easier. We gave up our freedom of the press to social media, who in turn encouraged us to give up our freedom of thought. Let us not forget that we also gave up our civil liberties to government agencies that do not legally exist. Lastly, it appears we have given up even our right to decide by vote, first by handing over our right to choose to political parties, then by allowing those who corrupt the process to continue without punishment. Just as Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, the American people have sold their birthright as citizens to become subjects of others.

Being under the power and dominion of another;

[Subject – Webster's 1828 Dictionary](#)

Just look at the reaction to the mask and vaccine mandates.

Few Americans recognized that these acts were violations of the Constitution and therefore void. Even fewer were prepared to defend their rights in the face of government and corporate actors. Millions of Americans still live under the dominion of illegal government actors, not because of the law, but because of their own subjugation, and their unwillingness to accept the consequences of defending their rights.

Conclusion

I have met hundreds of people who truly believe they have no choice. They complied with the mandates because they didn't think they had a choice. They follow government edicts about their health, their homes, and even their speech, because they do not think they have a choice. The truth is, they have a choice, but are afraid of the consequences of it. As a society, we have become so risk adverse that we will give up just about anything to be kept safe, and in doing so we become subjects of government. Many will not prepare to defend themselves because we are told that is what law enforcement is for. We won't prepare for natural disasters because that is what the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is for. We won't investigate the drugs, supplements, and foods we eat, because that is why the Food and Drug Administration was created. Many see these problems, but won't stand up because they are afraid of being put on some list, or of receiving a knock on the door. We have done what Benjamin Franklin warned us not to do, and we are suffering the consequence:

They who would give up an essential liberty for temporary security, deserve neither liberty or security."

Benjamin Franklin

Look around you today. Do you have liberty, or do government and societal actors claim the authority to tell you how to live? Do you have security, or does law enforcement simply come to mop up the mess afterward?

Contrary to popular belief, you do have a choice, and it's a legal one. The Constitution is the proof of the illegality of so much of what the federal and state governments are doing, the infringement on our rights, and the usurpation of our powers. The question is, do you have the fortitude to do what is right in the face of evil, knowing there will be consequences?

Most of us only know the first stanza of our national anthem, the last two lines of which ask an important question:

Oh, say! does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

[The Star Spangled Banner](#)

Does that banner still wave over the land of the free? Not unless the American people are brave enough to choose rights over false promises of security, to look at the cost of standing up for freedom, and to consider that cost worth the gain. As long as we value our comfort more than our rights, we will continue to be servants of those in government.

When the 56 men in Philadelphia saw independence in their grasp, they were well aware of the costs. They would be labeled traitors and subject to death. Even though we won the war, some of those men died, others suffered horribly in British custody, and others had financial ruin. They knew the likely costs of declaring independence, yet were still willing to pledge...

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

[Declaration of Independence](#)

Only if the American people recognize that those who work in government serve us, not the other way around, and are willing

to pay the price so that the following generations can live free, do I believe we will be brave enough to ensure that the land our children live in will be free.

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