

Romans 6:12-23; Genesis 22:1-14; Matthew 10:40-42 and Psalm 13 (Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18)

Opener: The Life God Frees, Fills, and Sends

Friends... What if we have treated freedom like an ending, when Jesus means it to become a beginning?

That is the question Romans 6 presses into us. Paul is writing to believers in Rome, teaching them the Gospel deeply enough that they can live it faithfully. He wants them to understand that grace does not simply forgive the past; grace opens a new life with God.

So, Paul does not say, “You have been set free from sin, so now go live however you want.”

Paul says, “*Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life*” (Romans 6:13, NIV).

That is not freedom as an ending. That is freedom as a beginning.

The question is not only, “What have I been saved from?”

The question is, “Who have I been saved for?”

We are not only saved from sin. We are saved for God. And a life given to God becomes mercy the world can actually feel... That is holiness.

To be a holy one of God is not religious tightness; it is not walking around tense, afraid that one wrong move will make God stop loving us. Holiness is the life Christ frees, fills, and sends...

Illustration of Locked Room

Think of it this way: There was once a man who had lived for years in a locked room. The room was small, dark, and familiar. He hated it, but he knew it. He knew where the walls were. He knew where the cracks were. He knew where to sit when the light came through for a few minutes each day.

Then one morning, the door opened. A voice called his name and said, “You are free.” At first, the man rejoiced, stepping outside, he felt the sun on his face. He took a deep breath of air that did not smell like the locked room.

But then he stopped.

Because freedom was not only the absence of the lock. Freedom meant learning how to live in the open air; it meant walking a new road and trusting a new voice. Freedom meant becoming someone who no longer belonged to the room.

The life God frees is the life God fills, and the life God fills becomes mercy in motion.

Roman 6 & Genesis 22

That is Romans 6. Jesus does not open the door of sin's prison so we can stand in the doorway forever. He frees us so we can walk in newness of life.

Paul says, "*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become **slaves of God** [δουλόω, douloō], the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*" (Romans 6:22, NIV).¹

We are "set free from sin." Given to God. Led into holiness. Moving toward real life, a whole good life... That is the Gospel of God.

But Genesis 22 asks the harder question. A question we probably will not say out loud, but is one we may feel at times... "Can I trust God with the life he has freed?"

Look at what Abraham asked when he was taking his son to the alter of sacrifice... You see, Isaac is not just Abraham's son. Isaac is the promise. He is the laughter after years of waiting... the future Abraham can hold in his arms. Can Abraham trust God with Isaac?

This is not a small test. This is not God asking for a habit or a preference or a little spare time. This story presses on the deepest place of surrender. Can Abraham trust God with what is most precious? And Friends, that is where surrender becomes real for us too.

- **It is one thing to say**, "*Lord, you can have my Sunday morning.*" It is another thing to say, "Lord, you can have my fear."
- **It is one thing to say**, "*Lord, you can have my religious language.*" It is another thing to say, "Lord, you can have my need to control."
- **It is one thing to say**, "*Lord, you can have my leftovers.*" It is another thing to say, "Lord, you can have the thing I keep clutching because I am afraid life will fall apart without it."

But the final word in Genesis 22 is not loss. The final word is provision. And in Genesis 22:14, "*So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide.*" That matters.

¹ To give myself wholly to one's needs and service, make myself a bondman (Enslaved of God). "G1402 - douloō - Strong's Greek Lexicon (NIV)." Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Jun, 2026. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1402/niv/mgnt/0-1/>

The surrendered life is not rooted in the belief that God is eager to take from us. It is rooted in the faith that God can be trusted with us.

- God can be trusted with what we love.
- God can be trusted with what we fear losing.
- God can be trusted with the promise itself.

A Parable of Light:

There was once a woman who carried a lamp through a village every night. The road was uneven, and there were many elderly people who could not see the stones in the dark. So each evening, she lit her lamp and walked with people slowly through the streets. One night, someone asked her, “Why do you keep doing this? That oil is expensive.” She smiled and said, “Yes, the lamp and oil is mine. But the light was never meant to stop with me.”

That is surrender.

Everything we have received from God—life, grace, mercy, freedom—was never meant to end with us.

God’s gifts are meant to become witness.

- Freedom becomes surrender.
- Surrender becomes holiness.
- Holiness becomes mercy the world can feel.

And this is where Jesus brings the whole message down to the ground in Matthew 10:

Remember the message from last Lord’s Day, after speaking about mission, rejection, courage, allegiance, and costly discipleship, Jesus says, “*Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me*” (Matthew 10:40, NIV). That is divine representation.

To welcome the sent people of Jesus is to welcome Jesus. Therefore, to welcome Jesus is to welcome the Father. And in the next verse, Jesus says something so simple we might miss how powerful it is: “*And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward*” (Matthew 10:42, NIV).

A cup of cold water.

Not a title. Not a dramatic sacrifice everyone can see. Not a grand religious performance.

A cup of cold water.

That means **mercy** does not have to be impressive to be holy. It does not have to be loud to be faithful. And it does not have to be noticed by everybody to be seen by God.

Parable of the Waterboy

There was once a great choir preparing to sing before the king. The soloists practiced. The musicians tuned. The director gave instructions. Everyone wanted the music to be beautiful.

But behind the building, there was a boy carrying water to the singers. He was not on the platform. His name was not in the program. No one applauded him.

But every time a singer's throat grew dry, he handed them a cup. When the choir finally sang, the music filled the hall. Afterward, someone said, "What a beautiful song."

And the king said, "Yes. And do not forget the boy who helped them keep singing."

That is Matthew 10: The kingdom of God sees what the world overlooks.

A cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus is not small to God. It is mercy in motion.

Concluding:

So, Friends, here is where the Scriptures meet:

- **Romans 6 asks**, "What if freedom is not the finish line, but the beginning of a life offered to God?"
- **Genesis 22 asks**, "Can God be trusted with what is most precious?"
- **Matthew 10 asks**, "Will the life God frees become mercy for the person in front of you?"

And the Gospel answers: Yes.

In Christ, we have been set free from sin's mastery, we are given to God and we are formed into a holy people. Through Christ, even our ordinary acts of mercy can become signs of the kingdom. So, the question today is not only, "Have I been set free?" The question is, "What is my freedom becoming?"

Is my freedom becoming love? mercy? patience? courage? hospitality?
Is my freedom becoming a cup of cold water in Jesus' name?

Because we are not only saved from sin. We are saved for God.

And a life given to God becomes mercy the world can actually feel.

Open Worship

So, as we enter Open Worship, I invite us to sit with this query:

Lord Jesus, what is my freedom becoming?

Where am I still standing in the doorway of the old room?

What am I still afraid to trust you with?

And what cup of mercy are you placing in my hand today?

The life God frees is the life God fills.

And the life God fills becomes mercy in motion.