

June 25, Ordinary 12A (Romans 6:1b-11)

False security is a lovely, loathsome thing.

by [Kirk Byron Jones](#) in the [June 2023](#) issue

In Philadelphia, I came across a striking sculpture by Zenos Frudakis. In front is a person in open stride, arms outstretched, face toward the sky. Behind the person are four vertical tombs. One is empty—the freed soul has just emerged. In the others, three more beings are coming out.

Immediately I marveled, *What a picture of freedom!* Then I saw the writing on the empty tomb where a head once rested: “Stand here.” The artist didn’t stop at expressing freedom; he wanted viewers to experience being newly free. I walked into the empty space and stood still. Then I took a delightful step into fresh liberation.

Romans 6 dares us to be free in Christ and not take bondage back. Even to stand up to death in the truth that life in Christ fears no one and nothing. It is a hell of an invite along with being a heaven of one. Being free in Christ for good requires that we tenaciously hold on to freedom in the face of intimidating circumstances.

An old comic strip shows just an egg in the first panel. The next panel shows the egg beginning to crack. Next, the appearance of a little chicken emerging from the shell. Upon being freed from the shell, interestingly enough, the little chicken spots a telescope. The next panel shows the little chicken, telescope in hand, looking around. Finally, the chicken throws the telescope in the air and, in shock and horror, tries to get back into the shell it has just come from.

What did the little chicken see that upset it so much that it preferred old bondage to new freedom? Perhaps it was the sight and feeling of agency, a strange new sense of empowerment that meant making choices, determining directions, and being held accountable for doing so. The reality of freedom can prove daunting if we are not ready for the responsibility that comes with it. Seeing something new can bind us, just like seeing something we have seen before can.

My dear older brother once had a career that fulfilled him at first but in time became a heavy burden and began to wear him down. He finally left it. It took him almost two years to restore his health, recharge, and begin to embark on a new job search. But as he sought new employment, he found himself searching for the exact kind of job and position he had left. One morning he caught himself and asked a game-changing question: *Why would I want to go back to something that broke me?*

False security is a lovely, loathsome thing. Attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that seem to bring us meaning and status but in the end prove deathly are fully disclosed in Christlike freedom. We come to understand that holding a belief about this or that, no matter how comfortable, does not make it holy. The sacredness of a belief lies in its enduring power to bless. Any belief or desire that thwarts your openness to divine transformation is deadening and deserves to be buried. In the end, being free for good is a choice and a practice.

There is a new saxophonist in glory. Wayne Shorter, a 12-time Grammy winner, died in March at age 89. Herbie Hancock said, “My best friend left us with courage in his heart, love and compassion for all, and a seeking spirit for the eternal future. He was ready for his rebirth.”

What would inspire the legendary Hancock, a musical genius still at it at age 82, to declare someone “a seeking spirit for the eternal future . . . ready for his rebirth”? Wayne Shorter, saying and living the following, would:

I think that music opens portals and doorways into unknown sectors that it takes courage to leap into. I always think that there’s a potential that we all have, and we can emerge, rise up to this potential, when necessary. We have to be fearless, courageous, and draw upon wisdom that we think we don’t have.

How does being free for good feel? Like opening portals and doorways to unknown sectors. Like fearless leaping and reaching potential. Like daring to draw upon wisdom that we think we don’t have. Over and over and over again.