

**DAY 64**

READ

EPHESIANS 1:7-10

FOCUS

⁷IN HIM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE ⁸THAT HE LAVISHED ON US. WITH ALL WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING, ⁹HE MADE KNOWN TO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL ACCORDING TO HIS GOOD PLEASURE, WHICH HE PURPOSED IN CHRIST, ¹⁰TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT WHEN THE TIMES REACH THEIR FULFILLMENT—TO BRING UNITY TO ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH UNDER CHRIST.

REFLECTION from PASTOR CONNIE SURRATT

In today's world there are a few things that we hold dear and one of the most precious of these is our freedom. From small issues--what I eat, where I live--to the bigger more decisive political issues, we hold tightly to "our rights." Somehow we have come to believe that this means we can do whatever we want to do. As we first read through this passage we can look at it as the ultimate "get out of jail free" card, but as we delve a little deeper we find what being "truly free" really means.

Christ has redeemed us.

To redeem means "to purchase and set free by paying a price."

Slavery is a social ill that has troubled the human race throughout history; there has rarely (if ever) been a time where human beings were not bought and sold as mere possessions. But there are also instances where a slave could be purchased and set free. This is exactly what Jesus did for us! The price of our freedom was "His blood." But what were we set free from? God's forgiveness set us free from the burden of our trespasses, our sin. This may be something you are hearing for the first time or maybe you've heard it your whole life. But, have you really internalized it? Jesus paid our debt so that it could be taken away--cancelled. How many of us know that intellectually, but can't let go? We keep remembering, rehearsing all that we have done wrong; this is the exact opposite of freedom.

Jesus doesn't just want you to be "redeemed," He wants it to happen "according to the riches of his grace" which he "lavished" upon us. I love the word lavish here. It means: to bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities. Doesn't that sound like something we all would love? Well, you have just that. His grace has no limit; no sin is too great for His redemptive power. I think some of you reading this right now are still holding on to things from your past or present. You haven't let Christ "lavish" you with His forgiveness. Today is your day! Just sit and soak in His forgiveness and the peace that it brings to you. Free yourself from the chains that are holding you down.

But with Christ's redemption comes a personal responsibility: we are to imitate and become like Christ. We are to strive to become like our Heavenly Father. "With freedom comes great responsibility." How many times did you hear that when you were growing up? In my house it was an often used phrase: when you got to take the car out for the first time after you got your driver's license, when your curfew was extended--the list goes on and on. Your parents expected you to behave in a certain way that was consistent with that freedom. But we all test the limits don't we? When Chelsea got her driver's license, CA had made a law that you could not have anyone under the age of 18 in the car with you. Chelsea was given the "freedom" of driving the family car with all the rules in place. You can guess the end of the story: she abused this freedom and decided it was more fun with a car full of friends. She would have gotten away with it but she ran into a problem (one which my children consistently had); someone from church saw her and happened to mention it to me!

One question we often hear is, "Christ wants us to live in freedom so shouldn't that mean that we are free to keep sinning?" Paul deals specifically with that in Romans 6:1-2 "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"



DAILY DEVOTION

DAY 64**REFLECTION from PASTOR CONNIE SURRATT (CONT'D)**

Just as I wasn't too happy with Chelsea abusing her freedom, Christ wants us to live in our freedom--but not abuse it. So the challenge for us then, is to live in that freedom and not go back to the bondage of our own desires that tend to enslave us. Isn't it amazing that God would pay such a great price for our freedom? That tells us a lot about God's character, personality and care for us. What better way to honor God (living a life of worship) than to daily choose freedom in decisions great and small.

QUESTIONS

- WHAT HAVE YOU HELD ON TO THAT YOU NEED TO LET GO OF TODAY?
- WHAT IS KEEPING YOU FROM EXPERIENCING "FREEDOM"?