

## **Redemption** – by Lorelei Pepe

When I was a kid we lived in a big, old type farmhouse in Brooklyn. It had a huge backyard with 2 areas for a pool and a patio. During the winter, my father would freeze over the back patio with the hose, so I could go ice skating which I truly loved. It was a bit bumpy and uneven and maybe a little lopsided, but I did not care, I was in my glory. Even my pesty brothers had fun on it, kidding around and knocking each other over. But at eight years old, I treasured my white ice skates and felt like a princess every time I put them on to skate.

My biggest thrill was when my parents took us on a trip to New York City and I got to skate at Rockefeller Center, a dream of mine. This was a real treat for me. As I got older I realized I was not going to be a “world famous ice-skater” it was just a hobby, but I became a big fan of watching all the ice skating shows on television.

I recently enjoyed the Winter Olympics and would sit glued to the set watching all the single skaters and pairs perform. I would hold my breath if they took a spill or a misstep. It seems they are doing all kinds of incredible lifts and spins nowadays.

I particularly enjoyed watching Nathan Chen, a skater who won the first Gold Olympic Medal for the U.S. team in a long while. He is only 22, and not only is he a talented skater, he is an excellent student at Yale, plays the guitar and piano and is quite a determined young man.

However fame did not come without a price. Skating since he was a child, he worked hard at his craft and had high expectations for himself. However in 2018, he was invited to go to his first Olympic games. He faltered there terribly and could not get a grip on himself and performed badly. Not long after that he became discouraged and had to take a step back and evaluate what was wrong. So he took time off and worked hard for another 4 years and he was redeemed at the 2022 Olympics. He had said during this dark period of his life that he had thoughts of defeat and failure. However, in time, he fought back, and with strength, encouragement and determination he rose to the top.

I think many of us can relate to that sense of failure – in other instances, losing a job, a career, a competition, etc... and sometimes we cannot get over it. Left alone, often to fight our own internal demons, we become defeated and do not try again and can become depressed. This is where I think we need to look for God in our lives, as it is so easy to stray from the faith during the dark times. We lose hope easily and forget to remember that Jesus saved us from all these struggles. His suffering and death redeems us all if we trust and follow Him. We live in a spiritually hostile world now and we are constantly being bombarded with negative forces so it is hard to be a “cheerleader” for God. But I believe no matter how long it takes, Jesus is there and waiting. It is never too late to be redeemed. As we have read in the Bible of so many that have gone before us and of their incredible struggles, we can all be “overcomers” if we believe and take it to the Lord in prayer. Just talking to Him daily can help keep the dark forces that constantly enter our minds away.

**In Colossians 1:13-14**, we are reminded that **“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed in us into the kingdom of the Son of His Love, in whom we have Redemption, through His blood , the forgiveness of sins.”** In other words, our sins are already forgiven through Jesus’ death and resurrection. In Him we have redemption through His shed blood.

Jesus is just asking us to be **“upright”** citizens of this world, and to be humble and loving servants and walk with Him and He will remain in our hearts and minds forever. Our reward is not here on earth, but in heaven. The darkness can turn into light. I believe it is in every one of us, sometimes it is dim, flickering and about to go out, but when we give it to God, He can restore us and will make it shine brightly again for all the world to see. Others will see it in us too. **He gives us the gift of “grace” that no earthly human can give us.**