

TIME OF REFLECTION

“I was given eyes to see societal ‘beauty’ in a new way; ‘beauty’ was exposed for what it really was. Totally empty and not beautiful at all.

“I saw how societal ‘beauty’ ran on insecurity and shame. And that it was all on purpose. Making women feel like their face, or body, or skin is ‘wrong’ so they’ll adhere to a diet or buy a product to ‘fix’ themselves. In short, I was awakened to the black hole that is American ‘beauty,’ its gravity impacting the minds, the hearts, the souls of so many girls and women.”

~Melissa L. Johnson, *Soul-Deep Beauty: Fighting for Our True Worth in a World Demanding Flawless*

“...the promises of the law are conditional, promising life not freely, but to those who fulfill the law; therefore, they leave people’s consciences in doubt, for no one fulfills the law. But the promises of the new covenant have no such condition attached. They do not require anything of us; they do not depend on any condition of our worthiness but freely give us forgiveness of sins, grace, righteousness, and everlasting life for Christ’s sake.”

~Martin Luther (1483-1546), famed religious reformer

“...our conscience must be instructed and prepared beforehand, so that when we feel the accusation of the law, the terrors of sin, the horror of death and the wrath of God we may remove these dire sights and fearful ideas from our minds and replace them with the freedom purchased by Christ, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, life, and the everlasting mercy of God. Although the contrary feeling may be very strong, we must assure ourselves that it will not last long (Isaiah 54:8). But this is very hard to do. Therefore, it is easier to speak of the freedom that Christ purchased for us than it is to believe it.”

~Martin Luther in his Galatians Commentary (1535)

“Unless this freedom be comprehended, neither Christ nor gospel truth, nor inner peace of soul, can be rightly known.”

~John Calvin (1509-1564), Genevan religious reformer

“True freedom is to be one’s true self, but my true self is made for loving, and loving is self-giving. So in order to be myself, I have to deny myself and give myself. In order, then, to be free, I have to give up my freedom. In order, then, to live, I have to die to my self-centeredness. In order to find myself, I’ve got to lose it.”

~John Stott (1921-2011), English pastor and theologian

SERMON – “Standing Firm in Freedom” – *Pastor Don Willeman*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Galatians 4:28-5:6 (ESV)*

Galatians 4

²⁸Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” ³¹So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Galatians 5

¹For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

²Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope

of righteousness. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

⁷You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

¹²I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.