Throw It Down

01/30/16

1 Peter 5:7

*Cast all your anxiety on him because He cares for you*.

There are times in our lives when it is difficult to leave the familiar behind, and venture into uncharted waters. We resist change because it is unfamiliar, uncertain, and sadly to say, we typically expect the worst from unknown situations. Often, fears or feelings of unworthiness take over in times of challenge or as we face the unexpected or unknown.

But we have learned that on the other side of fear is freedom. On the other side of our feelings of unworthiness is an expanded sense of purpose and a greater vision of self.

It is natural to experience doubts, fears, and challenges. But the longer we resist these energies, and try to manage them ourselves, the longer we are tormented by their presence. I’ve heard it said that the more the mind attempts to control things the more those things control us. The more we hold onto the useless and outgrown the more stunted and out of sorts we feel.

I once had a pair of jeans that were two inches too short. They looked absolutely ridiculous, but they felt so good; so I turned them into cutoffs. Perfect solution.

Sometimes we need to make adjustments that work for us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritual growth. Lizards do this: as they grow they shed their old skin to reveal their new perfect skin underneath.

I have seen this happen in my life over and over again. There was a time after a failed marriage that I struggled with my self-worth and relationships. I finally admitted that I had basically no control over my situation, so I released that worry. I affirmed that God had the right and perfect person for me.

One of the people I confessed this to was a fellow teacher and friend. She was also a musician, and we enjoyed seeing each other, even though we were both dating other people. This lady once asked me what I thought my next wife was going to be like. I told her that I really had no idea, but that she would be perfect for me. My friend went on to describe the man she would marry – a short stocky baritone, probably a doctor or lawyer, and they would live at the Lake. Ironically, I got exactly what I was open to. But my friend, who I married a short time after this, did not get anything she was looking for. I’m not sure what the lesson here is, except that God has plans for us, whether we know it or not.

We have all heard the expression “Let go and let God.” Never has this been more clearly demonstrated than by Moses. Moses was a great man of God. But he was filled with doubts, fears and uncertainties, yet God used him anyway. From the burning bush, God told Moses that he would send him to Egypt to talk to the Pharaoh so the people could be freed. Moses was reluctant and thought maybe the people wouldn’t listen to him. God asked him what was in his hand. Moses said, “…a staff.” God said to throw it down.

Moses, being rather slow of mind and tongue probably said something to the effect: God, this is just an old stick. Surely You must want a better stick. I’ve had this one for a long time, and it fits my hand well. If you want a stick, couldn’t you go find your own stick? That way you could choose just the right wood and shape…

But God said, “Throw down the stick!” But I don’t want to throw down my stick. Throw it down! But… Throw it down! But… Throw it down! OK.

Moses didn’t want to let go of his rod, but at last he released it. When he did, it was transformed into a snake.

Now what would you do if you threw down a 4 to 6 foot long stick, and it changed into an equally long snake! Run? Scream? You’d probably run first, and then scream later. And that is exactly what Moses did; he ran.

Then God told Moses to pick up the snake by the tail. Now we all know that if you’re going to pick up a snake you pick them up just behind the head so it can’t bite you. So Moses probably said something to the effect, “Now God, I let you have my stick. I listened and followed your instruction, and I let you have my stick. Now I don’t want that stick any more. That’s your stick, and I’m going to find another stick, because that one’s yours and I’ll just go now and find another…

Pick up the snake! But Lord, I don’t want the snake or the stick, because… Pick up the snake! I don’t want to pick up the snake, and certainly not by the tail… Pick up the snake! But… Pick up the snake! OK.

Moses finally picked up the snake, and when he did it was transformed back into a stick again. But it was not Moses’ staff any longer; it was God’s staff. From that point on, everywhere Moses went and used that staff it expressed the power of God…because it had become God’s tool, God’s instrument.

We are told in Isaiah 43:18: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.” God transforms the ordinary into something totally new that He can use.

What is the stick in our lives? What are we clutching to our hearts, not wanting to let go? Is it concerns and worries about our relationships, old hurts, our health, money issues, time, our children, our job, expectations, or fears about the world? It would be wonderful if we just threw down our fears at the feet of God, so that they would be transformed – so that they become God’s concerns, and He can now use it and do with them as He would. We can throw down our expectations and say, “This God, or something better.” Or maybe it’s our boss or spouse. Throw the spouse down before God and know they will be transformed into something new, and will be used to express God’s power. How about our children and loved ones? Why not release them into God’s loving care and know they will be healed and made over into an expression of God’s newness.

How about ourselves? Can we surrender ourselves to God, offering to be renewed, transformed, and changed into a living expression of Spirit?

It takes great resolve to release the old. It reminds me of something I read about the South American natives who devised a method of trapping monkeys. They take a gourd or some similar object and drill a hole just large enough for a monkey’s hand to pass through; they add some extra weight to the gourd with sand or pebbles, then put a nut or some fruit inside and place the gourd where a monkey will find it.

The monkey sticks his hand through the hole to get the food — but it cannot get its clenched fist back out and the gourd is too heavy for the creature to carry. Because the monkey will not let go of its prize, it becomes trapped. The animal gives up its freedom to hold on to a small piece of food.

The old that we cling to, the outgrown that we clutch to our hearts will ultimately enslave us. But what we offer to God is changed and frees us; it expands into something new and more than we could imagine.

So when we face difficulties, challenges and uncertainties, we listen for God’s voice. He is saying, “Throw them down! I will make them a Divine expression. Throw them down, and I will change them. Then when you pick them up again, they will have become new, reborn, transformed into greatness.

Let us pray….