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Moving Past the Past

Spring cleaning is something we do at our house, and if you are unfamiliar with that term, then let me explain it. Once a year, when the springtime starts, we begin to collect all of our extra things around the house. It's quite amazing how much stuff we can accumulate as a family throughout the year. We decide what is still necessary and what is not, then we get rid of all the extra stuff. We then do an extra thorough cleaning in every nook and cranny that we can reach.

We've been doing this healthy practice for many years and thank the Lord for it; otherwise, we would have no space in our home. It requires taking stock of things, and then the hard part is letting things go. Many of us have difficulty releasing things even though we know we don't need it. It's incredible how realizing things of your past can free you up to move forward.

One lady had a small child that passed away, and for years she kept the child's room just as it was. She struggled with grief from the horrible tragedy of her loss. The grieving went from understandably natural to something very unhealthy to the point that she couldn't operate in regular life. She was so crippled emotionally that twenty years later, she was still unable to move forward in her own life and relationships with others.

A good friend stepped in and convinced her with much persuasion to begin to live again. Her first instructions were to go into the child's bedroom and to remove everything. The room hadn't been touched for almost two decades and had become a museum or even a tombstone of her lost child. With her friends' help, she carried box by box out of the house and either gave it away or threw it the trash. She cried deeply with each step, and every box reminded her of her loss. After it was all done, it was as if a great burden had been lifted, and the false grief had finally been broken. She could breathe once again and could step back into life.

Letting go can be an incredible experience as it liberates you to run forward free from the past. It says in Isaiah 43:18-19a, "*Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth;*" We can see God's heart for us is to always move towards our future. One of the main reasons people stop moving forward is simply because they refuse to let go of the past. There is safety in familiarity, even if our experiences are unhealthy. It can be scary to let go of things that we are familiar with even if they cause us hurt.

Change can seem daunting, especially into the unknown, as you trust God to lead your steps. Our life with God begins at rebirth, and we should expect to face many changes and challenges. We can either despise the process or celebrate the challenge of transformation. God has great plans for you, and He has a path to take you there, but He will require faith in Him, and that means that you must trust Him above all things. Many, many moments of releasing the old to embrace the new are ahead of you.

Our natural man fights to hold on to the past as it gives itself the power to rule over you. There can be emotional ties to our past experiences that try to hold us captive. Even the Israelites had a difficult time letting go of slavery when He began to lead them into His plans. They were willing to go back under Egyptian rulers of the past just because of fear of the unknown future.

“And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? “Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.” Exodus 14:10-12

God never meant for our lives to be boring but instead desires for us to experience many renewals and to be in perpetual transformation. The walk of faith holds many adventures with times of success as well as failures, ups and downs, gains and loss, suffering, and recovering. It is always coaxing us forward, and at the same time, our natural man is holding us back. We were never meant to stay stagnant and trapped with the accumulated baggage of the past. The Lord desires for us to spring clean our lives from the past.

It is impossible to focus on God and to stay the same person, which is why releasing the old is so important. Moses gently encouraged the people to trust in God and to walk forward into their future. *“And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. “The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Exodus 14:13-14*

If you are emotionally stuck in the past, let me encourage you today to allow the Holy Spirit to be that Friend and Comforter to you. Let Him persuade you to leap forward into the newness of life with His help. He will walk with you step by step and box by box of letting go of anything holding you back from His beautiful plans.

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