

*Two monks, on their way to the monastery, met with an exceedingly beautiful woman at the riverbank. Like them, she wished to cross the river, but the water was too high. So, one of the monks lifted her on his back and carried her across.*

*His fellow monastic companion was irate and thoroughly indignant. For two hours he berated his brother about negligence in keeping to the rules of the order on account of his contact with that beautiful woman. "Have you forgotten your vows? How could you stoop to touch that woman and carry her on your back?" And on and on and on. The offending monk patiently abided this sermon. Finally, he interrupted and said, "Brother, I dropped that woman at the river. Why are you still carrying her?"*

Each week we proclaim some variation of Paul's words from scripture, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will FORGIVE OUR SINS and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But are we able to leave these things to God? Are we able to drop those things that weigh us down and that we cannot begin to carry on our own. To be certain, we struggle daily with entrusting and turning over to God that which is good and pleasing and which we'd just as soon understand as belonging only to us. But we likewise do not always fully entrust to God those things of which we might be ashamed. Instead, we mouth the words of confession and forgiveness, but continue to hold onto, dwell upon, and re-live these events and experiences in our lives like a pebble that is somewhere in our shoe, digging into our foot, that we cannot or will not shake out.

In this season of Lent, what are you holding onto that God has called you to leave along the side of the river? What precious promises of life are you delaying or postponing because it feels like you haven't suffered enough yet for a wrongdoing, or done enough to point out the wrongdoing of another? Before you take any further steps bearing that weight you're feeling on your life, ask yourself truly and honestly if it's a weight that you are supposed to be bearing, or if it is one that God has already openly received.