

August 2

Scriptures: Read Acts 26

Key Verse: “I... declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God and do works befitting repentance.” (Acts 26:20)

Overview

I think most of us have done it. Maybe several times. We sin, are stricken in our conscience, confess, and sin the same sin again. For some it's a lifelong cycle—sin, confess, sin. And it's not mechanical, either. When we confess, we really mean it. In fact, we often confess with tears, but seem unable to extricate ourselves from the cycle. So our conscience takes a beating—being a victim of one's selfishness to being a victor over one's selfishness?

Well, it's not easy, but there is an answer. It's called “repentance”. Repentance means turning around and walking in the opposite direction. And that opposite direction points to God.

As Paul speaks to King Agrippa, he makes the point: we “repent and turn to God” (step 1) and “prove repentance by deeds” (step 2). It's not enough to be sorry, we've also got to do something new, because repentance is essentially recreative and restorative.

For example, the only way to effectively deal with the sin of stealing from your neighbor is to confess, repay, and renew your commitment to good neighborliness. Tell him what you did. Pay him back what you've stolen (with interest). Ask him for forgiveness. Renew your pledge (spoken or unspoken) to be a good neighbor. And then, for the rest of your life, don't ever steal again. Let your track record from that moment on be clean.

And remember, as moving as confession may be, if you just do that and stop, there'll be no healing. Confession is emotional. Repentance is volitional—it involves your will. Your choices will reflect your repentance. And your repentance will make your life new again.

Prayer

O God, we know that John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles all began their ministry with a call to repent. Help us to remember, today and every day, the supreme importance of genuine repentance. Thank You, Jesus that you came to save us from our sins as well as forgiving us for our sins. Your blood cleanses us from all sin as we walk in Your light. Amen.