

That all should turn

I went the wrong way. We were going to the post office and, on auto-pilot, I started out the road in the opposite direction. I had to turn around.

It was a constant point of humor for my dad that the early Model-T's, with their weak engines, could just not make it up some of the hills where I grew in western Pennsylvania. What made it so humorous in his telling was the solution - put it in reverse. The lower gear ratio made the hills a snap.

For a lot of the Old Testament, as we call it, the invitation to reverse, to turn around, to repent is clearly aimed at the whole people. So is some of the prophet Ezekiel's writing. But most of it takes aim at each individual and puts us separately on the spot Turn your life around! Reverse your evil ways! Why die?

Why indeed! Especially when God has provided a way to turn so easily - repent, confess, admit, and ask forgiveness. What makes it even better is that God promises forgiveness and life: I take no pleasure from the death of the wicked. I want the wicked to change their ways and live. *"Scripture taken from The Message. Copyright ? 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group."*

Ephraim the Syrian (4th century) wrote a prayer about confession that is recited in Orthodox churches every Sunday in Lent. Savor each phrase slowly as you let it probe your heart:

O Lord and Master of my life,
take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give to me, your servant,
the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love.
O Lord and King,
grant me to see my own faults
and not to condemn my brother and sister.
For you are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.

A young monk said to the great ascetic Abba Sisoës, "Abba, what should I do? I fell." The elder answered, "Get up!" The monk said, "I got up and fell again!" The elder replied, "Get up again!" But the young monk asked, "For how long should I get up when I fall?" "Until your death," answered Abba Sisoës.