

## Cleaning Up After the Storms

Last week I talked about Hurricane Irene's aftermath and this week the clean up has begun. Those who survived the storm are beginning a task that must at times seem overwhelming.

As we talked about last week, often our own selfish actions, persistent habits, and sinful behaviors result in devastating the lives and emotions of others. When we begin the "clean up" process required to bring reconstruction and restoration, we observed:

*Yes there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all...The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.*

How can we make amends for the devastation we have caused others? The process begins with doing something that we men often find very difficult—not just saying, "I'm sorry," but adding to that, "I was wrong." We must look squarely at our part in the problem and accept responsibility for that part, even when that part seems to be almost insignificant in the overall problem. We will find, that when we do that, we have "cleaned our side of the street." And, that is all we are responsible for. We can't change the past or the behaviors of others, but we can do our best to accept responsibility and restore and replace as much of what was damaged as we can. When I enter into that process, my tendency is to conclude my "apology" with a mention of the part that the other person played in the problem. When I do that, I undermine the whole of my recovery plan.

When I make a sincere attempt to make amends for my mistakes, it isn't my task to get the other person to accept responsibility for their part of the problem, change the other person, or even to get them to accept my apologies. My only responsibility is to clean up my side of the street. When I do that, I can walk away feeling clean and fresh, set free from the guilt and shame of the past. Father will be faithful to forgive me my trespasses as I have forgiven those who have trespassed against me.