

Remembering Lot's Wife

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[0 : 00] evening to Luke chapter 17, but also referring to the other passage we read in Genesis, where we read a short time ago. So Luke chapter 17, and especially the words of verse 32.

Remember Lot's wife. Remember Lot's wife. Three very simple words, and yet very meaningfully spoken by the Lord, and set before us this evening for our consideration too.

This is yet another of our short series of studies. We've done some eight or nine, I think, already, of the use of the word remember in the scriptures, in the Old Testament, and in the New. And we've seen some of those passages that refer to God's remembering, or an appeal by God's people at times to remember them. And we've seen also other types of remembering. Indeed, we had one this morning in regard to the remembering of the Lord's death in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Now here, the Lord Jesus Christ is dealing with a question, or a matter that the Pharisees had actually initiated, when they asked in verse 20, when the kingdom of God would come. And the kingdom of God, as we find it taught by Jesus, and elsewhere in scripture, has two phases to it. One of these phases, the first phase has already passed. It ended with Christ's ascension. It began with his own entrance into the world. The kingdom of God, as it had drawn near, as John the Baptist put it in his preaching, and as Jesus himself referred to it in different ways. But the kingdom of God, in the second phase of it, that second phase begins with Christ's return, which is why he's dealing here with the revelation, or revealing again, of the Son of Man, who is, of course, himself. And he refers to certain things in the Old Testament, where God's sudden arrival in human life and experience, unexpectedly entered into the situations that are described in the likes of the days of Noah, and also in the days of Lot, at the time when Sodom and the other cities of the plain were destroyed by God in his judgment. And he gives us some of the characteristics of that coming of the Son of

Man, or the revealing of the Son of Man on that day, when he will be revealed. He tells us, for example, in verse 24, that this will be a very clear thing. It's not something that will be debated.

[2 : 49] It's not something that people will ask about, what's happening? What is this? He's saying, or where is it going to happen? For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. You will not need to ask, what is this? When the Son of Man, when Jesus is revealed in his glorious appearance as he comes in his return to the earth.

It's also an unexpected appearance, because verses 26 through to 30 there tell us that, as it was in those days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man. They were doing these things, eating, drinking, marrying. In other words, life was going on as usual. Same in the days of Lot.

They were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building. And then along came God's judgment. Unexpectedly, not looked for, having been ridiculed by some as just a fanciful idea in the minds of some religious people. And yet, indeed, it came as promised. So it's clear it's going to be unexpected for many. It's also going to be final. You see it, verses 31 to 33 there on that day. Let the one who's on the housetop with his goods not come down to take them away. Likewise, one who is in the field not turned back. In other words, this is going to be a final order of things. There's going to be no other coming or other phase of the kingdom of God. This is the final thing. This is the final judgment.

This is God coming, as he has promised, to deal with a finality with human beings and to settle their destiny as he himself sees appropriate. It's also going to be divisive. It's going to separate people one from another. As he says there in verses 34 to 36, I tell you in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken on the other left. Two women will be grinding together. One will be taken on the other left. And all that's saying really is that there will be a division made by this coming of the Son of Man, by this appearance of the Son of Man, by this beginning of the final phase of the kingdom of God as it is finally established in its final phase forever by the coming of Jesus. It's going to be divisive. It's going to separate people who are united in this world and who will be separated then for all eternity. And it's going to be also inescapable. Verse 37, somewhat enigmatic saying, they said to him, where, Lord? And he said to them, where the corpse or where the carcass is?

There the vultures will gather. It's inescapable. You can see it clearly. Wherever you see the vultures gathering, you know what that's about. You know that there's a carcass there. And Jesus is really saying that's really something that should remind you of the fact that the coming of the Son of Man is inescapable. Just as clearly as you see what's going on when the vultures gather, where there's a carcass, well, that's going to be this, this, this is going to be the case with the coming of the Son of Man as well. It's an inescapable and clear and definite moment in human history and sets things for eternity. But we're going to extract from that this one reference to Lot's wife, because he says here, remember Lot's wife. And of course, from that we see immediately that these incidents in the Old Testament were not fanciful fables or myths for Jesus Christ. He believed the Old Testament scriptures to be the truth of God.

[6 : 50] He took these references to the days of Noah and the building of the ark and the flood, and he took these references to Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain to be actual historical events. They were factually correct as reported in the Old Testament scriptures. And he's taking that at face value. And he said to them, this is what I want you to remember. These were not some things that were invented by people. They were actually events in the plan of God, and especially the application of the judgment of God.

So we're going to look at this passage, remember Lot's wife. But one other thing before we break it up into three headings or so, you will notice that in verse 22, Jesus actually spoke to the disciples.

And that's very important, because Jesus wasn't just speaking here to people who were around outside of the disciples who had never come to follow him or pay any attention to what he said or show any allegiance to him. He said this to the disciples. So this evening we're taking this text and trying to preach from this text, not in a way that's trying to single out people who are unconverted, though of course we don't want to leave anyone out. It's not simply something that's addressing people who have never yet come to know the Lord. It's addressing me tonight as I preach in this pulpit, to remember Lot's wife, because Jesus is telling me, I said this to my disciples.

And what I was saying here, I was saying to my disciples so that they would be prepared for this day, so that they would recognize that they needed to think about these things as important to themselves as well as to the world in which they live. Every one of us tonight is included in these three words, remember Lot's wife. And the three things we want to remember are just very simply, first of all, her privileges. Secondly, her promising start. And thirdly, her perishing.

Her privileges, first of all. Now Sodom was part of a very ungodly culture, as you know. The descriptions you find not only in the Old Testament, but in the likes of Jude, chapter 7, the second last book in the New Testament, picks up the kind of lifestyle and the kind of society and culture that Sodom was known for in its own day, and for which it was known down through history.

[9 : 34] And as you find there in verse 7 of the short epistle of Jude, it says that just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

That again is taking it as a historical incident, something that indeed actually happened. The culture of Sodom was a culture of ungodliness, of sexual perversion, of that sort of thing, as you find indeed in the chapter we read in chapter 19 of Genesis.

We didn't read the beginning of the chapter, but if you read the beginning of the chapter, and I'm sure you know it anyway, it describes there an incident where the kind of lifestyle and attitude and way of life of so many people in Sodom is just demonstrated there.

And in the midst of that ungodly culture, where Lot in fact had made a very bad choice to begin with, you remember Abraham gave him the choice of where he would settle when the dispute rose between the herdsmen of Abraham and those of Lot, his nephew.

And so Lot said, Abraham said to him, look, there's the land before you. You choose where you want to go with your herdsmen, with your flocks, and then I'll choose mine. And Lot looked out, and he saw this region of Sodom watered, he says, like the garden of the Lord.

[11 : 08] It was good to look at. It was good in a natural sense. It was something that really appealed to the natural senses. It was something that appeared to his business sense. It was something that really was appealing in the ordinary worldly sense, but it was a disastrous choice because that passage then says, but the men of Sodom were exceedingly ungodly, wicked before the Lord.

That didn't come into Lot's reckoning. He just made his choice based upon natural, physical, or ordinary things, and he used that as the basis of his choice.

Don't ever make that choice of your life and of your life's destiny based on worldly considerations, based on things that you can actually see and measure in terms of worldly things, of this life, whatever else you want to call it.

Look at the spiritual aspect of it. How good is it going to be for you spiritually? What's it going to do for you in terms of your soul's well-being? How does it relate to your eternity? Life's choices are so important, and the Bible gives us the basis on which we are to make them.

That's by the way, but that's Lot's choice. And if you read the account of Lot's life in the book of Genesis, it really does not make it very palatable reading.

[12 : 30] He ends the end of the account you have in Genesis of Lot's life is a very sad and sordid one. So that he comes before us as somebody who is not exactly of good standing in the community spiritually.

Nevertheless, we're told that he was a man of God, that he was a believer, he had many faults, and yet he was a believer and had God as his God.

So this woman, his wife, was brought up in that environment, but just think as well that she would have come to know godliness and come to know what it was to worship God, to believe in God, to trust in God, not just from Lot, but she had a much more reliable testimony than she had in her husband.

In the person of Abraham, Lot's uncle, just imagine how she would have been used to what Abraham had passed on, and the teaching he had given his family, and the following generation.

This was a woman brought up amongst all of these privileges. She would have known the revelation of God to his people then. She would have known the teaching that God gave through Abraham as it passed on to the succeeding generations.

[13 : 44] And not only that, but you read, as we read in Genesis, she had the added privilege of hearing angels tell her about what was going to happen to that place in which she was living.

angels actually came specially to say to Lot and to his family, get out of this place because we have been sent by the Lord to destroy this place.

She knew that. She heard that. She had the privilege of knowing what God was about to do to that place. In other words, you could say she had the gospel preached to her.

She had God himself come through the angels to tell her things that were the truth. The truth about how he views human life and how he views sin and how he comes with his righteous judgment.

All of that was known to her. She had all of these privileges. And yet she perished. She had the gospel of her day.

[14 : 56] But she was not saved. She had all of these privileges. And yet she was lost. And tonight we have a very privileged position.

We have the gospel. We have the gospel in much greater fullness than Lot's wife ever had. We have the gospel in greater fullness than even Abraham had. Or Isaiah. Or any of the Old Testament saints.

Because you have the gospel subsequent to following the arrival of Christ himself in the world. And all that he has done and accomplished is there set down for us now in the written scriptures.

We have a closed Bible. We have a Bible that's now finished by God. He has caused it to be written. And is there in its entirety. And we have the gospel message using the word of God.

Where God has given us such an advantage, such a privilege of having this revelation. Do we really know how more privileged we are than Lot's wife ever was? But where are we with all these privileges tonight?

[16 : 04] You remember Jesus spoke to people in certain cities in which he had done many of his miracles. He included in that the city of Capernaum and Bethsaida and Chorazin.

But he also mentioned Sodom. And you find in Matthew chapter 11 which of course is the chapter that you associate with that great invitation or appeal of Jesus to come to him and find rest in him.

Yet in that same chapter in Matthew 11 verse 23 you find him saying to these unrepentant cities I tell you he said it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

And you Capernaum will you be exalted to heaven you will be brought down to Hades or to hell. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day.

But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. Now these are incredibly solemn words.

[17 : 26] There was the Lord performing all these miracles that he was doing in Capernaum and the people of Capernaum were rejecting him and finding fault with him and even accusing him of simply having a devil.

And you and I tonight in Stornoway have all of these privileges. How will it be for us when the coming when the Son of Man again is revealed? How will it be for us when we have to meet with Jesus?

How will it be for us on the day of judgment? Will it be more tolerable for Sodom than for some of us? Oh, surely not.

Surely not. Sure, we're not going to misuse our privileges. Fall short of salvation, having all of these advantages.

Well, she had all of these privileges and she perished. And to me, that saying tonight as a disciple of Jesus, you have all of these privileges and if you neglect them, you'll perish as well.

[18 : 29] Whatever I confess, whatever I'm saying of myself, if I abuse or neglect my privileges and fall away, then I'll perish.

She had the privileges. Secondly, her promising start. Now you remember, as we read, that when we remember Lot's wife, we don't just remember her privileges, but remember that she, we remember that she came out of Sodom along with Lot, her husband.

It's interesting, isn't it, that there's an indication there of Lot himself and the way in which his life was so deficient of real, proper, 100% commitment to his God and to responding to his God's word.

It's remarkable, isn't it, in that context that we read in Genesis 19 that it says, quite specifically, Lot lingered. Lot lingered.

As the angels had come and taken them along out of the city and announced to them what they were going to do to that place, Lot actually lingered as he was being brought away from that place.

[19 : 38] You can just imagine him saying, well, I've invested so much in this place. Am I really going to lose all my investments? I've given so much of my life to this place. I've run my business in this place.

I know so many people in this place. Am I really going to have to turn my back on them? Am I really going to have to leave them all just now, just so that I can be saved? Just so that I can actually not get caught up in the disaster that these angels are saying is going to come on this place?

He lingered. Don't linger over the things of your soul. If Christ is worth following, it's worth following now, immediately.

Why should you say about this Jesus, yes, I recognize in the Bible what he is? Why should you say about the coming judgment of God, yes, I realize how the Bible describes it and yet you keep on lingering if you're lingering tonight.

Remember what you're lingering about. There's nothing more serious than our relationship with God, our relationship to God's judgment and God's righteous view of our lives.

[20 : 43] And so as he lingered, thinking I'm sure as much as we said of his investments in Sodom and how he was now being taken away from all of that, the angels were told grasp them and led them out of the city.

There's another privilege and it's certainly part of this woman's promising start. She not only had all of this in her privileges but she started out from Sodom. She was taken by the angels.

She was taken indeed by the hand by the angels. You imagine an angel coming to take you by the hand out of this place of which they have said this is going to be destroyed. The Lord has sent us to do that so come, follow me.

They grasped them. They took them by the hand out of the city and there they are on their way. And there's an important note in Genesis 19, 16 which says the Lord being merciful to them.

this is all to do with the Lord's mercy. While it describes it in language that really is in a sense showing that they were being forced on in the journey by the angels, it's the enforcement of mercy.

[22 : 01] It's the power of God's mercy. It's the way in which God is concerned that they do not perish. perish. And so we, the angels, grasp them by the hand and it looks now that she's safe.

She's made it. She's no longer in Sodom. She's outside the city. She's on the way to safety. But it's only a beginning.

That's not the end. It's only a beginning. She's not yet safe. And so it is so often in the teaching of Jesus himself.

One of his most famous parables is the parable we call the parable of the sower. But it would be more accurate to call it the parable of the soils because it describes four different soils into which seed fell as a sower went out to sow.

And he told the disciples the meaning of that parable that the seed was the word of God. That the soils were the different kinds of hearts that people had in relation to the sowing of the seed.

[23 : 21] Some fell on hard compacted ground. The birds of the air picked it up and he says that's what happens to some people. They just let Satan come and pick the word out of their hearts.

The second kind of soil was shallow soil. Soil that had no depth. You couldn't get a firm root in it. The thing is the seed when it went into the soil that was shallow sprang up very quickly because of course being shallow it heats up very quickly.

And as the seed fell into it and as it rose up so quickly so it looked very promising. It was a great beginning and then because it had no root because it was shallow because it didn't have the ability to go down into the soil to get further nourishment it withered and died when the sun got up.

third soil the thorny soil the seed that fell amongst the thorns fast growing thorns vigorous thorns and in describing the meaning of that to the disciples Jesus said that's how it is for many people who come to receive the seed of the word of God into their lives but the seed is choked as it begins to grow it gets choked and he said it gets choked by two things the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word the cares of this life the things that you would associate with a place of worldliness the things where you would put the things of the world first above the things of God and the things of the soul and the things of eternity it chokes the word and it doesn't grow any further then the fourth soil is the good soil and it brings forth an abundant harvest tonight we are one of those soils one of those four soils describes me or you and you know which one you fit and surely it is the fourth one because the other two while promising and while having a promising start for the seed actually came in the end not to produce the harvest at all so to the disciples

Jesus is saying remember Lot's wife remember her privileges and despite her privileges that she perished and remember the promising start she made and yet it was just a start she didn't follow through with it right through to being actually safe and in 2nd John that little letter of John the second epistle he writes to those that that will receive the letter and remember they too were living in days when there was a lot of false teaching that he was trying to counter and countering with his letters and 2nd John verses 8 to 9 this is what he says watch yourself he's just been talking about many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh such a one as the deceiver and the antichrist watch yourselves so that you may not lose what we have worked for but may win a full reward everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide or remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God watch yourselves he's saying so that you do not lose the things for which we have worked or which for you have worked in terms of coming to appreciate the teaching of the Bible to appreciate what it says about God and about yourself and about our fall into sin and about God's salvation in Jesus Christ and the provisions of all of that we know all of that we have these privileges and in a sense we're here tonight at least in this sense we're here tonight because we have begun we are on this way towards heaven we are whether we think of it in terms of being saved or otherwise what I'm saying is that under the gospel it is indeed the beginning of things at least for us if not more but what Jesus is saying is remember Lot's wife because just having the gospel and being under the gospel and being with God's people is not itself the full extent of your life or your safety or your security we need to have

[28 : 03] Jesus himself thirdly her perishing she looked from behind Lot which suggests again we're picking things from the chapter we read in Genesis she was behind Lot which suggests that even there she was also really not committed in her mind to following those who were leaving and to leaving Sodom behind and she then looked back and she became a pillar of salt looking back for her was not just a mere glance backwards towards Sodom we mustn't think that the catastrophe that overtook her was just simply because she looked back and then she became a pillar of salt a pillar of that sort of stuff that you find in the likes of the Dead Sea and places like that where these pillars in different places in the world you find them something like that it's not just a glance back this is indicative of something much more something deeper what it's saying about Lot's wife is she looked back in the sense in which she really regretted having left that place she really wanted to go back to that place if at all possible her heart was still in Sodom her feet were on the way out of Sodom but her heart was still in Sodom and as she lingered on the way with her heart in Sodom as she became still and looked back and stopped the catastrophe that overtook Sodom reached her as well and she perished under that deluge of sulfur and brimstone that God had sent in judgment in the Christian's journey in Pilgrim's Progress

John Bunyan tells us he came to a city or a town called Fair Speech and he came into the company of someone that's called Byens who belonged to that city or town of Fair Speech and as he got into conversation with Byens Christian asked him did he have any relatives in that city in that town oh yes he said I've got relatives there who are they oh well he said one of my relatives is actually Lord Fair Speech the one from whom the town has taken its name and he says I've got other relatives there such as Mr. Smooth Mr. Facing Both Ways Mr. Anything and in fact he says the minister there is actually a relative of mine too his name is Mr. Two Tongues and he's my mother's brother but Bunyan was saying of course through that wonderful illustrative way of his was that it's no use as being facing both ways as Jesus himself put it you cannot serve

God and mammon you cannot please the world and please Jesus at the same time we have to make our choice and in making our choice it's not enough simply to begin we have to continue through in following Christ in placing our confidence in him daily in seeking his help to build up our lives after all that's why he says in Matthew 6 to the disciples again of course and this is so important lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where you won't find moths coming in to corrupt or to or corrosion coming in to what you invest in heaven make your investment in heaven and it'll be safe there or what you find in Luke chapter 6 well known passage of building on the rock and not on the sand

Colossians chapter 3 if you have been then risen with Christ seek those things which are above not those things that are on the earth and then finally 1st John chapter 2 verses 15 to 17 remember that famous passage as well do not love the world or the things in the world if anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him but all that is in the world the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride and possessions is not from the father but is from the world and the world is passing away along with its desires but whoever does the will of God abides forever friends I'm saying this to you not because as I said it doesn't apply to myself or to those who are professed believers here and this passage that calls on us to remember

Lot's wife yes it's hard going it's difficult to preach and it's difficult to accept it's full of solemn things had something in a sense we would not choose ourselves really to look at and to analyze and to put to ourselves but God has not called me to be Mr.

[33 : 38] Two-Tongues and I hope I never am that to you because I would be misleading you to a lost eternity her privileges and her promising start and her perishing are there so that we will remember Lot's wife and remembering means literally take this to heart act on it don't be like her there's an incident recorded from back in 1875 and it happened off the coast of Normandy where you find Mont Simicel standing on a small island and the sea there goes out about five miles and when it comes back in it comes back in with such speed that if you're not out of the way it'll just overtake you and you will drown and there were two women out quite far out painting or drawing a sketch of some ruins that were actually exposed by the tide being out and the older one of them said to the younger one come on let's go don't let's risk anything further let's go it's time to go before the sea comes back in and the younger one said as the other one was then going away into the distance she said just let me finish this sketch and then

I'll join you so she kept on sketching and as she sketched she was so absorbed in what she was doing she didn't really notice that the tide was coming in with such speed and it overtook her and she drowned and sadly that's how many lives are even under the gospel just let me finish this and then I'll do it just let me finish this day just let me finish what I'm doing just now and then I'll give more serious consideration to eternity to salvation to Jesus friend remember Lot's wife remember the Bible tells you that the sun was risen upon the earth the day that Lot entered into Zawar there will be many people I'm sure and Sodom on that day seeing the sun rising on the earth coming to look at its beauty and saying to themselves looks like it will be another lovely day today and that day ended with

God's catastrophe in his judgment don't don't presume on anything without Christ don't linger over the things of your soul remember Lot's wife please let's pray gracious Lord we do give thanks for the many solemn things that you tell us in your word for we know that they are designed for our good and Lord when we read such passages and dwell upon them when we read Psalms where your judgment is so clearly brought forth help us we pray to do it intelligently believingly and help us to embrace the teaching that your word itself contains help us never to be neglectful of those things that are warnings to us in your word and to concentrate instead entirely on the warmth of your promises help us we pray to keep them together so that we may come in our faith to respond to both promise and warning in a way that would seek to place ourselves in the security of your grace hear us now we pray and accept our worship for

Jesus sake amen our final psalm this evening is psalm 11 again they're very solemn words that we're using of course they relate very closely to the subject matter of our study this evening psalm 11 on page 13 we're going to sing verses 4 to 7 the truly wondrous cross the Lord is in his holy place the Lord is on his heavenly throne his eyes observe the human race and in his sight each one is known verses 4 to 7 let's stand to sing these verses in conclusion the Lord is in his holy place the Lord is on his heavenly throne his eyes observe the human race and in his sight each one is known the

Lord is out and all the just the righteous one he grows and tests but all wars through the wickedness and violence his soul detests upon the wicked he will reign his dying gold and sulfur hot a scorching wind will meet all there such punishment will be their lot for

[40 : 10] God the Lord is righteous still in righteousness he takes delight and they alone will see his face through God in heart and life of pride I'll go to the main door this evening after the benediction now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore amen gr man but no he str but he he was there and son canción on you