

Beacons of the Bible

Lot's Wife

By [Henry Law](#)

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"But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Genesis 19:26

How wondrous is God's mercy to the children of His love! It is ever tender, and it never fails. By gentle constraint angels draw Lot beyond the walls of Sodom. They set him in the plain. They urge him forward--"Escape for your life--look not behind you." Genesis 19:17. Thus mercy impels him and gives counsel.

"Look not behind you." He obeys, and safely enters into Zoar. He witnesses not the descent of wrath on the doomed plain. His feelings are not racked by contemplation of the overthrow. The writhing misery is behind him. But in Zoar he looks around. He sees not his wife. He tarries, but she comes not. He searches, and what meets his eye? A pillar stands where she had halted. Her figure is transformed to salt!

Do we inquire the cause of this woe? The faithful monitor replies, "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Why did she hesitate? The act was grievous sin, because the precept was precise. "Look not behind you." What excited to this faltering? *The reverting eye betrays the heart. Affections were yet in Sodom.* The pleasures of the godless city had been, alas! too dear. Circumstances had compelled departure. But fond feelings were not yet uprooted. She casts a wistful glance to her bewitching home. She turns to the scenes which had so often charmed. She sighs over the spot of many a seducing joy. Ah! guilty look! It proved inward unsoundness. It gave evidence of reluctant flight. The separation is in person, not in will. She is but partially estranged. Sodom is left, but Zoar is not reached. There is an intervening plain, and in that plain she perishes. A few more steps of self-denial might have conveyed to safety. A few more persevering moments might have brought deliverance. But she pauses, and dies miserably.

This frightful scene thus glares for special admonition. Until the Lord comes, the record lives. While need shall be, it loudly teaches. The lips of Jesus especially enforce the lesson--"Remember Lot's wife." Luke 17:32. Let her image ever stand before you. Let her sad story be engraved on memory's tablet. View it, and learn. Ponder it, and beware. Heed it, and be wise.

But for whom is this Beacon raised? Who are in peril of sinning as she sinned, and falling as she fell? Not they, who are fast bound in chains of ignorance. Not they, whose life is unresisted sin. Not they, who are blind captives in the devil's cell. Not they, who are strangers to the stings of an upbraiding conscience. Not they, who have never trembled lest perdition should be their endless doom. Not they, who have had no glimpse of heaven's glories. Not they, who have never gazed on Jesus' beauty. Not they, who are wholly indifferent to His dying love--His cleansing blood--His all-atoning offerings--His reconciling sacrifice--His curse-removing agonies--His law-fulfilling life--His rising power--His interceding work. No. The warning is to those within whose hearts some rousing work has stirred--who have been shaken from the sleep of death--who have burst many a detaining fetter--whose conscience has been pierced--who have heard the voice, "Escape for your life--look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain--escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." "Turn! turn! for why will you die." Ezek. 33:11. "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Eph. 5:14.

The class is large who thus start for heaven. Some efforts are vigorously made. The city of destruction is left. Some rapid steps commence flight. For a brief time all seems fine. But the march is long. A dreary wilderness must be traversed. Hardness must be endured. Temptations must be trampled down. A fight must be fought. The hand must ever hold the sword. The shield of faith must never be allowed to fall. There is much danger, lest they loiter--be disheartened and look back. To such professors the warning cries, "Remember Lot's wife."

To such, for a while, all may have a hopeful look. But good beginnings secure not happy ends. The morn dawns brightly. The rising beams foreshow a beautiful day. But sudden clouds appear. The skies is dark. The sun descends mantled in gloom and storm. The vernal branches gladden the eye with countless buds. What promise of rich fruit! A night of blight follows. The blossoms fall, and leave a barren stem.

A gallant ship glides gaily from the port. It proudly breasts the waves. Pleased expectation paints a joyous voyage and happy entrance to the distant haven. But a sunken rock is struck, or a fierce hurricane assails, or a leak opens and expands. The vessel sinks, and few survive to tell the woeful tale. How often is healthy childhood marred by the touch of malady! How often is robust youth beguiled by sin into decrepit age. Thus vivid illustrations impress the truth, "One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off." 1 Kings 20:11

It is not easy to hold a long rope straight. Feet often slip, if the ascent be tediously steep. Thus many falter in the heavenward course. "Remember Lot's wife."

Is it asked, how can such regression be? Let obvious instances reply. One for a

while burns with devotedness to Christ. No hindrances deter. But a pause comes. He slackens in his speed. He stops and looks back. What ails him? He has received the truth amid choking thorns. They spring up with ruinous vitality. The love of the world revives. Its show--its vanity--its delights regain their seat. The thought intrudes, "How happy were those early days." "How sweet the goblet of those laughing hours!"

Thus to Israel's children the luxurious fare of Egypt reappeared. They thought of the past, and longed--Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the ISRAELITES began to crave the good things of Egypt, and the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. "We remember all the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic that we wanted." Numbers 11:4-5. The manna from heaven was despised. The dainties, though eaten in slaves' chains, excited regret. The love of worldly things regained ascendancy. They looked back.

Let the sad case of DEMAS next be viewed. He stood a foremost champion in the cause of Christ. He braved all peril. Paul's chain deterred him not. He was not ashamed of the noble prisoner. The apostle, writing from his cell, claimed him as a fellow-laborer--Philemon 24. Surely his heart is garrisoned by grace! Surely he will be faithful unto death! Surely by the glories of the cross, the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world! A few years pass. The undaunted Paul is again a prisoner at Rome. Is Demas still beside him? Does he still share the peril and the shame? The witness is--"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. The baubles of the world, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," presented their seductive charms. Paltry desires still smouldered in his heart. A breath of temptation rekindled the base flame. He looked back, and left the company of Paul. Unhappy man! The sequel is not known. It may be, that bitter tears bewailed his wretched fall; and agonies of penitence sought pardon. This the eternal world will tell. We only know his affections were bewitched, and he went back.

Sometimes timidities arise. A foul brood of doubts--distrusts--dismays--flap trembling wings. The path, at first so pleasant, is infested by lions. Doubtless the prize is precious. But the conflict demands much cost. Nerves must be strained. No respite can be given. Unflinching continuance must be braved. A few steps are made in glad alacrity--their endurance becomes hard. There is the fatal pause. There is the dastard look behind. "Remember Lot's wife."

ORPAH and Ruth showed much attachment to the widowed Naomi. They both arise to flee from Moab. But the way was long. Hardships were before them in the land of Judah. Naomi warns them of the risk. "Go return each to her mother's house." "Return, my daughters." They both were melted into tears. They both glowed with affection. But one was firm. The other trembled. The journey--the distance--the doubtful home darkened the scene. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth, cleaved unto her."

PETER saw Jesus. He desired to be with Him. He boldly left the ship to tread the sea. He viewed the raging billows. He marked the howling wind. He trembled. He looked away, and he began to sink. Thus doubts and fears often check the onward course. "Remember Lot's wife."

Sometimes the early steps of YOUTH seem heavenward. The world allures not. Godly friends are loved. Godly work delights. But soon a change occurs. The world, which once was as a faded flower, now presents fragrance. But whence this decline of godliness? The pious parent is removed. The faithful pastor's ministry is ended. The friendly monitor is no longer near. Thus "Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him." 2 Kings 12:2.

Sometimes ALTERED CIRCUMSTANCE is shipwreck to the soul. When state is humble, and means are contracted, the spirit is lowly, and God has unrivaled sway. But if prosperity applies its testing wand--if riches smile where poverty once frowned--then it appears that outward condition is not real grace. Israel's hard days were Israel's best days. How tender is the admonition, "Thus says the Lord, I remember the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness in a land not sown!" Jer. 2:2.

There is a striking word in the records of Jehoshaphat. "He walked in the first ways of his father David." 2 Chron, 17:3. Royal advance was no real gain to David. It brought declension. The lowly shepherd felt more of heaven than the king. He walked more closely with his God in the green meadows, than in the gilded palace.

Let then this picture of Lot's wife give caution. But let it not discourage. *If grace be real, it may have many falls; but it will rise to fight more vigorously, and to gain final triumph.* He who begins the good work will perform it to the day of Christ--Phil. 1:6. Water from lofty source will rise to lofty height. Fire will live beneath much rubbish. The true child of God will continue in the faith grounded and settled, and will not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Behold the veteran PAUL. He appears bearing the scars of many a conflict--battered by many a blow--wearied by a lifelong race. He reviews the past. The scene is trial--strife--fierce warfare. But he survives to bless God, and to adore sustaining grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. 15:10. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me--the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return." 2 Tim. 4:7-8

But perhaps some reader sighs--I am as the wife of Lot. Once I ran well--but I have looked back. Old pleasures tempted. I have yielded. Can there be hope for one so vile? Yes. Hope cannot die while Jesus lives. You may have sinned thus

grievously--but you are not transfixed a monument of relentless wrath. You yet live. You stand on praying ground. Space is yet granted. The throne of grace is yet before you. Abundant promises in rich profusion call. "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married unto you. Return, backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding." Jer. 3:14, 22. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord. Say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Hos 14:2. Plead the precious blood, whose virtue never dies. It can wash out your crimson dye. Fly to the cross. You cannot perish beneath its screening shade. In Jesus' name wrestle with the God of all grace. Restoring grace will help you. The quenched Spirit will burn again within you. You will run your remaining race, "looking unto Jesus." The sight of Him will pale all other luster. The eye which sees Him is blind to sublunary tinsel.

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