

Don't Look Back – Genesis 19:26

I. INTRODUCTION

II. TEXT

A. *Setting The Scene*

1. You know the story – it's one of the more well known in the Bible.
2. Sodom & Gomorrah were the lead cities of a 5-city region in the southern Jordan Valley.
3. The land was lush with vegetation and the cities were rich.
 - a. wealth meant servants / servants meant freedom from labor for their masters.
 - b. freedom from labor meant time to pursue more wealth, luxury, & pleasure.
 - c. but you know how it goes with pleasure – what thrills today is a bore tomorrow.
 - d. and if you make pleasure your main goal, then you have to keep pushing the edge in order to maintain the same level of pleasure.
 - e. it wasn't long until the major occupation of the people of Sodom & Gomorrah was to find some new pleasure, some new distraction to occupy their time.
 - f. and this meant pushing into places that at one time had been moral taboos.
4. The cities lay along the major trade route that passed between the mighty Egyptian Empire to the South and the Fertile Crescent nations to the north.
 - a. along this ancient highway passed many caravans carrying the trade goods of distant lands.
 - b. these all added to the mix of culture and goods to be bought and sold in the markets of Sodom and Gomorrah.
5. As the years went by, they kept pushing the border of morality further & further into dangerous territory in their pursuit of entertainment & pleasure -
6. Till eventually they became utterly corrupt & brutal, devoid of any moral sense.
7. They were past the point of no-return; all that was left was for them to suffer a slow and agonizing death at their own hands as they consumed themselves.
 - a. the greater danger was that their moral corruption might be picked up by the traders and caravans which passed through them and taken like an infectious disease to other, more distant places.
 - b. there the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah would spring up anew to work even more damage.
8. So God intervened and brought swift judgment on the cities of the Jordan Plain.

B. *Lot*

1. It was swift when it finally came but it was slow in coming.
2. What I mean is, when the judgment of God visited the city it was over quickly,

3. But God delayed the judgment for a long time, giving the people of Sodom & Gomorrah and the other 3 cities lots of time in which to repent of their sin.
4. They used that time of mercy poorly.
 - a. instead of repenting, they only grew more debauched and perverse.
 - b. God even sent them warnings of their need to repent.
 - 1) an alliance of northern kings had defeated them in battle and sacked their city, carrying them away as captives.
 - a) Abraham and his servants had gone after them and miraculously rescued them and restored their goods.
 - b) they'd seen God's mighty deliverance – but they didn't repent.
 - 2) God had also brought them a man named Lot, Abraham's nephew, a man who knew God, to live among them.
 - a) Lot had risen to a place of leadership in Sodom.
 - b) he'd made an attempt to maintain some kind of moral standard.
 - c) but they'd ignored him.
5. And so it eventually came to the place when the time for mercy had expired and all that was left was judgment.
6. We'll be examining this in much greater depth Wednesday evening, but this morning let's fast-forward to the end of the story; You now what happened.
 - a. the angels who had come to Sodom told Lot of the fate of the city.
 - b. Lot tried to convince his sons-in-law to flee but they just thought he was nutty.
 - c. the next morning, Lot packed up his wife and two youngest daughters and they reluctantly left the city.
7. Let's pick it up at v. 15 . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 15-16

15When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.” **16**And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

1. If an angel told you Ventura County was going to be the scene of a massive devastating earthquake tomorrow afternoon at 3 PM, wouldn't you get in your car and drive as far away as possible?
2. Look at Lot's reaction to the warning of the angels – he lingered!
 - a. none of us are going to go out into this street out here and stand in the path of an on-coming truck!
 - b. we see it coming and we promptly get out of the way!
 - c. Lot's just been told that an 18-wheeler with a load of wrath is on the road and headed straight for Sodom, and he just stands there, reluctant to move.
3. What's happened to Lot? Why would he linger in the place that's become the object of God's wrath and judgment?
 - a. simple – instead of Lot being an influence for God on the city, it's the other way around -

- b. Sodom's influence has been on Lot -- against the Lord!
- 4. He's become so attached to his life in Sodom he's reluctant to leave.
- 5. His lingering in Sodom is evidence of a compromised life & backslidden heart.

B. Vs. 17-22

17So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

18Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! **19**Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. **20**See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live."

21And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. **22**Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. ["a little one"]

1. The angels told Lot to take his wife and daughters and run for the hills because God's judgment was going to fall on all 5 cities of the plain.
2. Lot protested and argued with them!
3. Is this bold --or foolish? It's foolish – don't argue with angels – they are the messengers of God!
4. The best thing to say to an angel is "Yes, certainly!"
 - a. but when they tell Lot to find refuge in the mountains, he says, "No!" the mountains are dangerous!
 - b. DANGEROUS?!?!?? The true danger was at that moment on its way from heaven and its target was the entire Jordan plain;
 - c. that's why the angel told them to get out of the plain.
 - d. if an angel says safety is in the hills – then the hills is where you want to be!
5. But Lot wasn't thinking clearly, begged off the flight to the hills and asked to be allowed to go to the little city of Zoar instead.
 - a. Zoar was one of the 5 cities destined for judgment.
 - b. but when Lot begged to be allowed to make that his destination and refuge, the angels consented and exempted it from judgment.

C. Vs. 23-26

23The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. **24**Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. **25**So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

26But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

1. When we read this we get the picture that Lot and his family entered the little city of Zoar and as soon as they passed the gate, fire fell from the sky on the other cities.
2. Then Lot's wife turned around and in violation of the angel's command not to look back, she did and so was punished by being turned into stone.

3. Some read this and think of the prohibition parents will tell their children about looking at an eclipse. “Don’t look at it, because if you do, you’ll go blind!”
4. But that’s not what the original words of these verses mean.
5. Lot and his wife weren’t together; she’d lingered and lagged behind on the road to Zoar; her feet slowed by reluctance at leaving her home.
6. She stopped and looked back longingly at what had come to define her life – her house in Sodom.
7. When Lot arrived in the territory of Zoar, the judgment of God fell on the other cities.
8. And when she’d failed to make good her escape because of a compromised heart & reluctant steps, Lot’s wife got caught up in the judgment.
9. We’ll be taking a closer look at the archaeological evidence for Sodom and Gomorrah, the nature of the judgment and what it means when it says she was turned into a pillar of salt this coming Wednesday.
10. This morning, we need to consider the lessons this passage teaches us.
11. We need to consider them because Jesus Himself told us to take careful heed to them.

D. Remember Lot’s Wife

1. In Luke 17:32, He said simply, “Remember Lot’s wife!”
2. He was speaking in reference to the Last Days and the judgment of God that will fall on the Earth during the Great Tribulation.
3. His point was that just as the angels announced judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, so He has announced judgment at the end of the age.
 - a. He’s given the signs and indications of what will mark the Last Days so those living at that time will be able to see and take action.
 - b. just as most of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah went blindly about their business to their ruin, so in the Last Days, most people will refuse to heed the signs and will also go blindly into judgment.
 - c. but God’s people need to heed the signs and prepare.
4. How do they prepare, seeing that they cannot flee to the hills since the judgment will come upon the whole Earth?
5. Just as judgment could not fall on Sodom until Lot was taken out, so God’s judgment will not fall on the Earth until His people are taken out in the Rapture.
6. Lot’s example and the lesson of his wife, teaches us that we need to take a good hard look at our hearts and see if we’re indeed ready for the Rapture.
7. Think of it, when the angels told Lot to run for it, he lingered in Sodom!
8. In light of what Peter says about Lot in 2 Peter 2, it’s a bit hard to understand why Lot hesitated.
 - a. Peter refers to him by the title, “that righteous Lot.”
 - b. he says Lot was grieved at the wickedness of Sodom.
 - c. if that’s the case, we wonder way he was reluctant to leave!
9. Lot hated the wickedness of Sodom, but he loved the luxury & sensuality of the place.
 - a. he had a nice home and a comfortable position there.

- b. the system and culture of Sodom was obscene, but it was also comfy and Lot was loath to leave it.
 - c. he was the classic example of the person who has too much of the Lord to be happy in the world and too much of the world to be happy in the Lord.
 - d. while he hated the immorality, he loved the amenities.
 - e. the judgment of God meant an end, not just to the wickedness, but the end of his comfortable place in the midst of it all.
 - f. it didn't seem quite fair to him! Instead of rejoicing in the mercy of God which compelled the angels to urge him to flee – he only saw God's judgment as the end of his comfort.
-
10. How like Lot we can be, if we're not careful!
- a. we decry the immorality we see around us; the perverse movies and debauched television – the abominable lyrics in the songs today
 - b. the biased media coverage of every topic, the pro-sin slant spun on almost every story in the news.
 - c. things society considered gross sin just 35 years ago are now the story-line of many nightly sitcoms & television dramas.
 - d. just as it was in Sodom, the up-ending of all moral norms seems to have become the norm - and it vexes our soul!
11. And yet, statistically, those who call themselves Christians are found to live little differently from the rest of society.[\[1\]](#)
- a. they watch the same shows, go to the same movies and listen to the same music.
 - b. the divorce rate is little better among them than the national average.
 - c. and many couples, instead of marrying simply live together.
 - d. lying, cheating and stealing are excused if a good enough reason is given.
12. Pollster George Barna does an annual survey of America's Spiritual & Moral condition.
- a. this last year, survey participants were asked to list their Core Values,
 - b. those factors they consider the most important when living their lives and making their choices.
 - c. here's the list in the order they came in, from greatest to the least.
 - d. remember, these are THE core values of Modern Gomorrans, I mean Americans -
 - convenience • time maximization • belonging • comfort • experiences • happiness • independence • flexibility • education options • entertainment • diversity • customization • gender equality • technology • instant gratification • skepticism • image • control • relevance • personal empowerment • self-image [\[2\]](#)
 - e. here's a list of those values which were on the list but which were not identified as bearing on people's decisions - Barna refers to these as "Abandoned Values"
 - discernment • fiscal responsibility • absolute morality • loyalty • conformity

• consensus • tradition • continuity • respect • submission to authority • accountability • discipline • purity • good citizenship • thrift • sacrifice • patriotism • career • idealism

13. After giving this list, Barna then says this,
While the values system of the typical Christian is not identical to that of the typical nonbeliever, there is more similarity than distinctiveness between the two. All too often, the values of the Christian Body bear little resemblance to the biblical principles those individuals have been taught.^[3]
14. In other words, many Christians talk the talk, but don't walk the walk of Biblical Faith & Obedience to God.
15. But that's not news to us is it? We know there are a lot of hypocrites & fakers who claim to be believers but who're frauds.
16. Jesus's words in Luke 17 are a challenge to US precisely because He spoke them to His disciples – to those men He had selected to follow Him.
 - a. these are the very men who would later be called the apostles and who framed the foundation of the Church.
 - b. it was to them, sincere and genuine followers to whom Jesus said, "Remember Lot's Wife!"
 - c. learn the lesson she teaches – hold it near and dear so you don't follow her example or that of her husband.
17. Lot and his wife had come to define themselves by their lifestyle in Sodom.
 - a. it may not have been the lifestyle OF Sodom, but it was at least IN Sodom.
 - b. it was a house, wealth, possessions, relationships, comfort, position.
 - c. even when the news came that it was all about to end, Lot was so attached to his lifestyle he couldn't let go and had to be taken forcibly out of the city.
 - d. then instead of fleeing to the place of safety the angels commanded, he pleaded to be allowed to go just a short distance away – he wanted to stay in the area!
 - e. he just couldn't see himself living any other way than what he'd grown accustomed to!

E. Two Loves

1. The people of God are constantly challenged with the choice of one of two loves.
2. There are two suitors who vie for our affection – God & The World.
3. We must choose between the two, and having chosen, we must then safeguard and reinforce that choice.
4. You see, the world will never give up singing its seductive siren song, seeking to sink its sinful clutches into our hearts, tearing us away from the Lord.
5. In 1 John 2:15-17 we read –

15 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.

- a. these two loves are mutually exclusive!

16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of

life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

- b. just as Sodom and Gomorrah passed away in a moment of judgment,
- c. so this world will pass away, and all that's been invested in it will dissolve!
- d. a love of the world will lead to loss, while the love of God will result in eternal reward.

6. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus spoke of the two great loves we must choose between –

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

- a. mammon has become synonymous with money,
- b. but originally, mammon was a spirit that promised pleasure & satisfaction.
- c. Jesus is saying that ultimately we will either love and serve God or we will love and serve ourselves.
- d. if we chose self, then we'll aim our lives in the direction of acquiring that which will maximize our pleasure and minimize our pain = in the world, that boils down to the pursuit and acquisition of money!
- e. but mammon and God are mutually exclusive masters; both lay absolute claim to our loyalty and love.
- f. just before this Jesus said - [Matthew 6:19-21]

19“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- 7. Listen, there's nothing wrong with having wealth, with owning a home and having possessions.
 - a. many of the men and women of faith in scripture were people of wealth and power.
 - b. it isn't about having possessions – it's only a problem when the possessions have you!
 - c. it's only a problem when you count your treasure, your wealth in the world rather than heaven.
 - d. we ought to have only one treasure, only one thing we value above all others; one thing we would never relinquish, even at the cost of our lives = and that is the Lord Himself!
- 8. Lot and his wife seemed willing to give up their lives rather than leave Sodom!
 - a. in fact - she did!
 - b. Lot escaped by the skin of his teeth.
 - c. they were willing to give up their lives because they defined their lives by Sodom, by this world and not the Lord who had come to save them!
- 9. This is the essence of Jesus's warning to His people –
 - a. what are you living for?
 - b. what is life for you – the world or God?

III. CONCLUSION

A. A Warning

1. Jesus's exhortation to remember Lot's wife stands as a solemn & sober warning that it's possible for us to allow the world to grab our hearts and seduce us away from Him.
 - a. some may actually stumble and fall away – as Paul said Demas had in 2 Tim. 4:10.
 - b. others may end up more like Lot – safe in heaven but only by the skin of their teeth, as it says some will in Jude 23.
2. Lot's treasure was in Sodom.
 - a. though he believed in God and had seen His gracious & merciful hand of deliverance & blessing many times before -
 - b. the things he put value in were the things of earth rather than heaven.

B. Where's Your Treasure

1. Where's your treasure today? What are you investing in?
2. How influential is the world in your choices?
3. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to keep, to guard our hearts with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.
4. Who or what holds your heart today? Who plucks its strings and plays it's secret melody of love?
5. The Lord, or the world?

[1] Barna, George, *Boiling Point* pgs. 75-87

[2] *ibid*, pg. 87 (abbreviated list)

[3] *ibid*, pg. 88