

Lot's wife

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[0 : 00] Now let us turn to the Word of God, to the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 17, in words that you will find in verse 32.

Luke 17, verse 32. Luke 17, verse 32.

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We are all very conscious of destruction and disaster. Sometimes at a local level and other times at a large scale level.

[2 : 08] We hear of earthquakes and of famines. We hear of plain crashes. We hear of wars. And many are living in dread of a holocaust.

And the passage in which our verse tonight occurs is a passage that reminds us of how God in the past destroyed civilizations.

He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. And in the days of Noah, he destroyed the world as it then was.

But we are called upon in these words before us this evening to learn lessons from the past.

And without wishing to enter into any idle speculation concerning the imminency, that's the nearness, of the destruction of the universe and of the reconstitution of the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.

[3 : 30] Yet the fact remains that man in every age is called upon by God to consider where he stands in relation to God in the light of the great eternity.

The scriptures make it clear that we are all either in Christ or out of Christ. But we are either on the road that leads to heaven or on the road that leads to hell.

And the scriptures warn us constantly against loving this world and giving our all for it.

The scripture reminds us that there is a world to come for which we must prepare. In the words of the Old Testament prophet, be prepared to meet thy God.

And in the words of our Savior in our text tonight, remember Lot's wife. Now there are many so-called scholars who dismiss this story as a myth.

[4 : 55] But it is a story in which Christ believed. A story which Christ took as being historically factual.

And it is an incident that occurred in human history from which Christ would have men and women, boys and girls, in every age learn vitally important lessons.

It's a short verse, but it's a very solemn and a very searching verse of scripture. And I would like this evening to look at the verse with you and to consider it under four headings.

As we seek tonight to obey the instruction of Jesus Christ and to remember Lot's wife.

We will see first of all that her conscience appeared to be awaited. But that wasn't enough to save her.

[6 : 08] We see too that the angels wanted her husband to convince her of her need of leaving the city of destruction behind.

And how she is constrained up to a point. She's carried along so far, but not far enough.

And thirdly, we will see that the very angels themselves constrained her to get out of the city. And lastly, we will see that for all the conviction that she knew and the constraints that she experienced, she stands condemned in the word of God.

And she stands as a reminder for us in all ages of the necessity of preparing to meet him. And so we look at the incident from these perspectives tonight.

And the first thing that we will notice is this, that when she hears the message of the ultimate destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, she is not unconcerned about what she hears.

[7 : 39] She doesn't mock as her sons-in-law do. She doesn't in any way react to it in a way that perhaps we would criticize.

In fact, she appears to accept, at face value at least, the message that comes to her. We read that to Lot's sons-in-law, this all appeared, the words of Lot appeared, to be merely pretentious words.

He seemed unto his sons-in-law as one that mocked, but not so to her. She seems even to be awakened and alarmed.

And she goes out of the city with these words ringing in her ears, Escape for thy life.

Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. She is aware of the events of the previous evening, and of the message that the angels had brought.

[9 : 07] And she, at this stage, as she leaves the city, seems to be ready for salvation.

But as the narrative proceeds, we discover that all her early promise comes to nothing.

Although she appears so promising, and although she appears to be delivered, at the end of the day, as we know, she ended up lost.

And I believe that there are several things there for us to consider tonight. Our consciences may be stirred, as we sit week by week, under gospel preaching.

But we must go beyond having a troubled conscience, if we're going to be saved for all eternity. It's perhaps even more alarming, if we can sit under the gospel without even being troubled.

[10 : 19] If we can remain, as the men of Sodom remained, or as Lot's sons-in-law remained. That is even more alarming.

We continue as if there was no God in it. We continue as if there was to be no destruction, at the end of life's journey.

Over the years, we'll hear message upon message, reminding us of the necessity of getting right with God, and of being prepared for eternity.

And yet, for so many, a deaf ear is turned to what is said. And this very passage, which our verse tonight is to be found, tells us, that as it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be, when the ultimate destruction is at hand.

Jesus tells us, that as in the days of Noah, and of Lot, they ate, and drank, they married, they bought, they sold, they planted, and they built it.

[11 : 42] Even so, shall it be, in the time, that Jesus is speaking about here. And so, there are many, who are so caught up, with the things of the world, that they can't, and won't, listen, to the voice, of God.

And I would say tonight, that whether you are rejecting, or only neglecting, this salvation, which is, offered to you, in Jesus Christ, there can, be no escape, for you.

It may be, that in our congregation tonight, few of us, would say, that we are, rejecting, the message, and the offer of salvation, out of hand.

Few of us, would perhaps, identify ourselves, with the men of Sodom, or even with the sons-in-law, of Lot. Few of us, would believe, that what we are hearing, from the pulpit, is something, we should laugh at, and mock at.

Few of us, hopefully none of us, would classify ourselves, in that kind, of category. And yet, for all that, there are so many, in all our congregations, who go on, throughout their lives, neglecting, so great, salvation.

[13 : 19] And the question comes, to all, who are in that, category tonight, how shall, you, escape? And as you know, that question, answers itself.

In the light, of God's word, there can be, there is, there shall be, no escape. And so tonight, if you find yourself, among those, who are, turning a deaf ear, to the word of God, your situation, in a sense, is even worse, than was the situation, in which, Lot's wife, finds herself, at the beginning, of our narrative.

Of course, there will be those, who think that, the preacher is simply out, to frighten the folks, to con them.

And they ask, how, can you prove to us, that these things, are true? Some speak of, tornadoes, of the pulpit, going all out, to terrorize the timid.

And sometimes, it may be, that that kind of motive, lies behind, some, of our preaching. Because men and women, need to be afraid, of the God, with whom we all, have to do.

[14 : 50] Men and women, boys and girls, yes, boys and girls, need to be shaken up, out of their state, of spiritual lethargy, to a realization, of the fact, that there is a God.

And that God, means what he says, when he calls, on all who hear his word, to flee, from the wrath, to come.

And so we ask tonight, do we believe, the message, that comes to us? Well, from the story of Lot, and his family, we discover, that it's even possible, for us, to take the message, seriously.

Lot, the man of God, believed, what he was told. And yet, yes, Lot, the man of God, lingered, in Sodom.

He lingered there, until, the angels, constrained him, to quit, the city. Is there a Christian, tonight, who's lingering, where he, where she, should not linger?

[16 : 06] The word of warning, comes your way, and mine. If that's, our situation, this evening. But, our main limit, tonight, is not so much, to remember Lot, as to remember, Lot's wife.

and it becomes, clear, as Lot's wife, leaves the city, and looks behind her, that she, has no real longing, no real desire, to get out, of the city, of destruction.

And it's the same, as the gospel, is preached. We may appear, to have a desire, to find God. We may, seem to others, perhaps even to ourselves, to be awakened.

But there is a difference, between, what one might call, natural alarm, and that awakening, which the spirit, of the living God, himself, brings about, in the mind, and heart, of those, whom he saves.

There are those, tonight, who say to themselves, peace, peace, when God says, there is, no peace.

[17 : 33] There are those, tonight, who turn, a deaf ear, to what, God, himself, is saying. There are those, here, tonight, who have, never, seriously, addressed, themselves, to the words, that fall, in our text, this evening, from the lips, of our Lord.

Remember, Lot's, wife. We may be, alarmed, on occasion. We may go, through illness, we may experience, bereavement.

We may know, what it is, to have God, put us in a corner. I'm sure, there are many here, who have, sent up, an SOS, when they found, themselves, with their backs, to the wall.

And we know, that when we're in danger, and we're aware of it, that many of us, cry out, to the God, whom we so often, leave out, of our considerations.

But when the storm, subsides, when the crisis, is over, what are we like then? Do we still, call, on the name of the Lord, when things, are going well?

[19 : 03] Or do we then, forget, and go on, in our own, self-sufficiency? What I'm saying, in a word, is this, that we can, send up, an SOS, in a crisis, and come out, of that crisis, as hard, and cold, and immovable, as the pillar of salt, into which, Lot's wife, quite, literally, turned.

And so, we may, be stayed, in our consciences, and yet, be lost, forever. And we're to remember, that lesson, from the story, of Lot's wife.

But we see, next, that in our passage, tonight, the angels, wanted Lot, her husband, to tell her, to quit, the city, to take her, out, of Sodom.

Now, it seems as if, Lot, didn't do, as he was told. The angels said, arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here, lest thou be consumed, in the iniquity, of the city, and while he lingered, he dilly-dallied.

And it was the men, who laid hold, upon his hand, and upon the hand, of his wife, and upon the hand, of his two daughters.

[20 : 38] Though he dilly-dallied, the Lord showed him mercy. That's what we're told. The Lord, being merciful unto him. And it was the angels, who brought him forth, and who set him, without, the city.

And although, she is taken out, of the city of Sodom, sadly, she never makes it, to the city, of Sor. she never makes it, to the place, where salvation, is assured.

And, although, we can say, in our passage tonight, that Lot failed, even in the duty, that God gave him to do. Yet, it's clear, again from scripture, that God, often uses, his own people, to speak, to others, about their need, of getting out, of Sodom.

In fact, the thought, occurs in one's mind, that this is a privilege, that the believer, only has, this side of glory. There are no lost souls, in glory, for us to warn, and for us, to tell, about the salvation, that is ours in Christ.

But, there are plenty, lost souls, in Stonway, and plenty, lost souls, in our island, and in our nation, to whom, we are commissioned, to go, with this great gospel, to go, tell the lost, that God sent, his son into the world, not to condemn the world, but so that the world, through him, might be saved.

[22 : 26] And, when we study, the scriptures, we see, on many occasions, how God, uses others, to bring men, and women, to himself.

We go to the Old Testament, and we think of how, Ruth was constrained, to go out, with Naomi, her mother-in-law, all the way, to Bethlehem.

Through Naomi, Ruth appears, to have been, one, for God. Then we move, into the gospels, and we see, the four men, who brought, the paralytic, to Jesus Christ.

Worried of that, wifey, at the well, that, Samaritan woman, who didn't have, much academic, know-how. She had no, theological experience, or expertise, but she'd just, met the saviour.

She'd just, met Jesus. She'd just, come to know, Jesus as the Christ, of God. And what is she, constrained to do, without ever, going to college?

[23 : 35] She's constrained, to go to the, men of her village, and to tell them, of Jesus. And we read, in that lovely portion, of the New Testament, how the men came, and how the men saw, and how the men heard, and how the men believed, and how the men testified.

We know, for ourselves, that this is, indeed, the Christ, the saviour, of the world. God used, such as them, to bring others, to himself.

And yet, having said that, we hear, the words of Jesus, addressed to, many who flocked, to him in his own day. Many of them, in religious garb, all, generation, of vipers, who, has warned you, to flee, from the wrath, to come.

We may know, what it is, here tonight, to be moved, when others, come to know God, God. Maybe, maybe, we've seen a loved one, saved, by, the power, of the almighty one.

And maybe, it's aroused, within ourselves, some kind of desire, to get to know, this God, as well.

[25 : 09] It may be, that we've even, been persuaded, to go, to go, so far, with those, whom we know, have found, Jesus Christ.

We've been aware, perhaps, of some anxiety, concerning, these things. But the question, that arises tonight, for that kind of passion, is this, will you go all the way?

Will you go all the way? Or will you, turn back? God said elsewhere, let us arise, and go up to Bethel, that's to the house of God.

And, I will meet there, said the man of God, an altar, to God, who answered me, in the day, of my distress, and was with me, in the way, which I went.

There are many, who by the power of God, go all the way, as Ruth went, with Naomi. But there's another, side to that coin, Orpah, turned back, to our own people, to our own gods, to our own destiny.

[26 : 29] Chinagribba, almost, thou persuadest me, to be a Christian. Almost persuaded, now to believe.

Almost persuaded, Christ, to receive. Seems now, some soul, to say, go spirit, go thy way, some more convenient day, on thee, I'll call.

I'll never put it off, until a more convenient season, would arrive. And there's no word, in scripture, of that season, ever, arriving.

So we say, almost, almost, persuaded, come, come today, almost, persuaded, turn, not away, Jesus, Jesus, invites, invites, you, here, angels, are lingering, near, proish, rise, from hearts, so dear, oh, wanderer, come, almost, almost, almost, persuaded, harvest, is past, almost, persuaded, doom, comes, at last, almost, cannot, avail, almost, is, but, to fail, sad, sad, that, bitter, wail, almost, but, lost, is there any such soul, in our midst, this evening, we can refer, to incidents, in history, and indeed, in very recent days, that further, speak to us, of the necessity, of going all the way, in our, going after God, this island itself, was, was, being remembered, by so many, so very recently, new tragedy, on its own shore, 70 years ago, and there are many of us, here tonight, who had, relatives, on board, that fated ship, many of us, here tonight, have relatives, who died, on the very shore, of our own island, whilst others, were saved, and only, a week ago tonight, as we all know, so practically, that,

Boeing 737, BT92, just failed, to ridge, the runway, just failed, to make it, and many, were lost, and I cite, these examples, in order to, seek to drive, home, to one and all, the necessity, of going, all the way, and of, not stopping, short, of finding, salvation, now, of course, it may be, that, there are those, in our midst, tonight, of whom, it is true, not only, that they haven't, gone all the way, but that they've, never even, taken, one step, in the sense, of desiring, salvation, salvation, hopefully, there are few, in our congregation, but there are many, perhaps in the town, who, completely, reject, the gospel, and all, that it stands for, and if tonight, you're here, in that category, and if tonight, you're hot, and bothered, about, the fact, that maybe, some of your loved ones, have found Jesus, and you're annoyed, about it, and your, deepest desire, is that, that none of them, would be Christians, perhaps, for example, among the children, largely due to, an ignorance, that most of us, can identify with, there may be, occasions, when the so-called, strictures, of Christian religion, we may just wish, that we, belonged to a family, where, there were no such, restrictions, but hopefully, for all of us, here tonight, who may be of that mind, that ignorance, will be dispelled, but the gospel, tells us, that that will be, the effect, that it will have, on families, down through the ages,

[31 : 50] Christ, came, to send, daughter against, mother, and daughter-in-law, against, mother-in-law, and the scripture, makes it clear, and this is all, I intend saying, on this point, that if we're, rejecting, the Lord's people, we're rejecting, the Lord himself, and if there is, a bitterness, in our hearts, towards, the people of God, then that's indicative, of a bitterness, of heart, towards God too, Saul of Tarshish, going to Damascus, bent on, exterminating, all Christians, from off the face, of the earth, is met by Jesus, with the words, Saul, Saul, why, persecutest, thou, me, whatever we think, of our loved ones, and of their faith, whether we're, carried along, so far by them, or whether we reject, what they have to say, altogether, as Lot's, sons-in-law did, the end result, will be the same, destruction, and doom, unless we arrive, in Saur, unless we arrive, in the city, of salvation, but there is a, third point, to which I would, like to, draw our attention, tonight, and it's this, that she's not only, to be, carried, so far, by, her loved ones, but even, the angels of God, are employed, in constraining her, to leave, the city, the men, laid hold, not only, on Lot's hand, but also, on the hand, of his wife, and that reminds us, that as the gospel, is proclaimed to us, it's God, who's addressing us, and it's God, who's knocking, at our door, whether it be, as we sit under, the preached word, but whether it be, as we reflect, on our own, individual, providence, it is still,

God, who speaks, it is God, who addresses us, it is God, who is calling, for our attention, because at last, the message, that comes to us, it's not a message, that comes from man, but a message, that comes, in spite of all, the incompetence, of the preacher, from God, himself, of course, there may be those, who know little, of God, addressing them, either in his word, or in his providence, there are those, who remain, so ignorant, as to plead, what almost amounts, to their own innocence, and who cannot, for the life of them, understand, how God, can be just, in their, condemnation, there may be others, who like the men, of Sodom, for all that they hear, or don't hear, go on, in their merry way, go on, as they went on, paying no attention, to God, and to his word, they prefer, the counsels, of the ungodly, to that which,

God, is saying, to them, they may even, be found, in a service, such as this, apparently, making use, of what we call, the means of grace, but in reality, abusing them, by, perhaps even, falling asleep, under the preached word, but, we thank God, that he's even, able to do our work, in that kind of life, some of us know, of those, who went to church, one evening, and sat in the back seat, and asked, the patient beside them, to wake them up, when the minister, was finished, and promptly, and promptly, fell asleep, and the service, went on, and with, a few minutes, to go, they woke up, and the words, that, rang in their ears, as they, woke, was this, you might sleep, in church, but there's no sleep, in hell, and God, was to use, that, word, from, himself, to bring, such a soul, to himself, now, without advocating, that anyone, fall asleep, in church,

I simply mention, the incident, in order, to encourage us, to continue, preaching to, and praying for, even that kind, of individual, but what we have, in our passage, tonight, is somebody, who is constrained, by the very angels, to make a move, out, of Sodom, and that reminds us, that we may, outwardly, as God speaks, through his word, reform our lives, turn religious, which is not the same, as becoming a Christian, necessarily, conform outwardly, to everything, that people, expect of us, and yet, go, no, further, we go so far, but we don't go, far enough, we leave the city, behind, outwardly, that is, as, as Lot's wife, did, but the city, remains, in our hearts, our heart, is still, there, we may perhaps, be, of that group, of men, and women, who, have heard the gospel, for years, have accepted, what it said, but who despair, of ever finding, salvation, and we stop, striving, we stop, seeking after God, if we ever started, and we end up lost, or we may belong, to that group, that sad group, who think, we've arrived, who imagine, that we're safe enough, who then, rest on our laws, take our ease, and the word of God, says, woe, to them, that are at ease, in Zion, we only, rest, in the Lord, we dare not rest, in anyone else, or in anything else, we may belong, to that group, who think that, it's too tough, being a Christian, it's too hard, we count the cost, and we go back, we're, like pliable, and we don't, go the whole way, we count the cost, of becoming a Christian, in terms of this world, but what about, counting the cost, of eternity, what about that, should that not, make us think twice, to be startled, is not to be saved, we must, by the grace of God, embrace Christ, the Christ, with whom God, has made, an everlasting covenant, the God, in whom, and through whom, salvation, is to be, experienced, and so the question, arises tonight, what think ye, of Christ,

God's, escape route, from doom, to heaven, from hell, to heaven, what do you think, of God's, way of escape, of God's, salvation, when he himself, tells us, concerning Jesus, that there is salvation, in none other, neither is there, any other name given, under heaven, among men, whereby, we must, be saved, we're not, to be presumptuous, but we're, to praise God, that by his mercy, we, can be, his children, having said, all that, perhaps, even tonight, we're here, and God, has spoken, and our door, has been, knocked upon, and yet, that's all, we can be, condemned, having gone through, such experiences, even, as Lot's wife, is condemned, in our passage, why is she condemned, because she, disobeyed, the word of God, she paid, no heed to it, and if you go to the sermon, in the mouth, you discover there,

[41 : 51] Jesus speaking, of the man, who builds his house, on rock, and of the man, who builds his house, on sand, and Jesus explains, what he's saying there, by telling us, that the man, who builds his house, on the rock, is the man, who hears the word, and heaps it, and practices it, in his life, the man, who builds on sand, is the man, who hears the word, but disregards it, and fails, to apply it, to himself, and when the storms, come, the house, on the rock, stands firm, and the house, on the sand, falls down, and it's like that here, she disregards, the word, of the Lord, she looked back, and she knew, it was wrong, to do something, because worried, that she looked back, from behind him, she thought, her husband, wasn't senior, maybe he wasn't, but another was, her husband's eye, may not have been upon her, her daughter, she, her daughters, may not have been watching her, she, sneakily, glances behind her, and God sees her, and God moves, into a midjudaction, and God, turns her, into a pillar, of salt, now we're not going, to speculate tonight, on the many reasons, that may lie behind,

Lord's wife, looking back, but we're reminded, by what happens, of the goodness, and of the severity, of God, behold therefore, the goodness, and the severity, of God, on them which fell, severity, but toward thee, goodness, if, thou continue, in his goodness, otherwise, thou also, shall be, cut off, she'd been warned, against disobeying, she'd disregarded, the warning, she'd made light, of the word of God, she looked back, with this consequence, because her looking back, was nothing short, of outright rebellion, and rebellion, against God, always results, if we persevere, in it, in our ultimate, condemnation, and destruction, and so, in this story, we are reminded, of the necessity, of forgetting, these things, which are behind, whatever they are, however, precious, they may have been to us, and reaching forth, unto those things, which are before, of pressing, toward the mark, for the price, of the high calling, of God, in Christ,

Jesus, Jesus, Roger Bannister, was the first man, to run a mile, in under four minutes, three months, later, John Landy, broke his record, by 1.4 seconds, three months, after that, the two of them, met together, for what was, an historic race, as they moved, into the last lap, the other contestants, were trailing, far behind, Landy, was ahead, it looked, as if he would win, but as Landy, neared the finish, he was haunted, by the question, where is, Bannister, as he later, reviewed the race, for a newspaper, reporter, Landy said, if I hadn't, looked back,

I would have, won, the race, he never won, because he looked back, let's wife, looked back, from behind, and she never, made it, to see her, she never, came alive again, we may never, be alarmed again, by the message, that has perhaps, alarmed us, so often, my spirit, shall not always, strive with men, that was spoken, in the days of Noah, and the men, of whom it was spoken, were destroyed, no man, worried, having put his hand, to the plough, and looking back, that's to the things, behind, is fit, for the kingdom, of God, remember, it's that, same Christ, who's, telling us, in this world, tonight, to remember, Lot's wife, who calls on us, to follow him,

God forbid, that any of us, and yet, it's almost, inevitable, that some of us, will be, of them, who draw back, and to perdition, God grant, that all of us, be of them, that believe, to the saving, of the soul, tonight, the two roads, are set before us, if we're, claiming, to have started out, on the road, that leads to life, let us, persevere, by the grace of God, to the end, for he, that persevere, to the end, shall be saved, but, saith God, if any man, draw back, my soul, shall have, no pleasure, in him, what about, ourselves, tonight, are we prepared, to go,

[48 : 00] God's way, and by his grace, continue, in his way, until we arrive, in heaven, and, home, may God, constrain us all, to go all the way, with himself, for Jesus said, amen, let us, pray, amen, let us, pray, amen, there comes, a time, we know not when, a place, we know not where, that seals, the destiny of men, for glory, or despair, oh God, having heard, the message, you are dressed, to us, by, thyself, tonight, may we remember, Lot's wife, and may we, realize, that, the story, that we have been, studying together, is one that is, of relevance, as far as, we ourselves, are concerned, and indeed, of relevance, for every society, in every age, and for every man, woman, and child, in every age, as well, help us then, tonight, to remember,

Lord's wife, help us, to flee, from the wrath, to come, and not to rest, until we know, that our rest, is indeed, in Jesus, and in his finished work, Lord, grant it, for each one of us, for thy glory, sake alone, amen, amen, peace,