

Remember Lot's wife

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Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Hugh M.Ferrier

[0 : 00] The Gospel according to Luke chapter 17 and verse 32. This very brief verse. Remember Lot's wife.

A man is by nature an inquisitive creature. And in the midst of the unknown and the mysterious, his curiosity compels him to search for some understanding of that unknown or that which is mysterious.

In the days of Jesus, there was a problem that the Pharisees had, and the problem had caused them considerable speculation.

Their problem was this. When was the kingdom of God going to come? And they had debate after debate and discussion upon discussion upon this very important question.

When was the kingdom of God going to appear? Their concept, of course, of the kingdom of God was essentially human and materialistic.

[1 : 18] And when they thought in terms of the kingdom of God, they thought of that kingdom as something that you would be able to see, something that was tangible, something that you would be able to participate in in a materialistic way.

And here, as our Lord speaks to the Jews, and among them, many of them Pharisees, he shatters this illusion.

And he tells them that their whole notion is mistaken. And he says to them, the kingdom of God is not something that is external or that is observable.

No, says Jesus, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say here or lo there. The kingdom of God, he says, is something that is subjective, something that is spiritual.

The kingdom of God is within you. If you want to know whether the kingdom of God has come, you will know that by becoming a citizen of it, and by being filled with the spirit that is representative of that kingdom.

[2 : 46] But what our Lord does on this occasion is to direct the attention of his disciples to a momentous event that is yet going to take place in God's scheme of things.

And the momentous event is, of course, his own second coming. Now, from the days of the disciples onwards to our own, many people have involved themselves in this great question, when will Christ Jesus return back to earth?

And they ask the question because they want to know how will it be understood by men and women that the return of Jesus is imminent?

Now, we are not told how that event will be accomplished. In some mysterious way, it will be accomplished. But in his apocalyptic vision, that is, in the book of Revelation, John writes this, Behold, he says, He cometh, that is the Lord Jesus, Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.

I don't know how that's going to be possible, but that's what it says in the word of God. Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.

[4 : 37] In other words, in a statement like that, we are being made to understand that there will be nothing secretive, nor will there be anything obscure about the return of Christ in some miraculous way, by perhaps some perceptive power being given to us.

Every eye, no matter in what part of the globe, every eye will suddenly see the descending Christ as he comes back here in clouds of glory.

But what our Lord does do is, he tells us what the prevailing attitude and mood of the world will be prior to his coming.

And what Jesus says here is this, that it will be similar to what it was like in the days of Noah, and in the days of Lot.

What was it like in the days of Noah? Well, Jesus tells us what it was like. He says they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage. What was it like in Lot's day?

[5 : 58] Well, says Jesus, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built it. And why did he say that about these two periods in world history?

He said that because at that time, these people were so preoccupied with materialistic concepts that they failed to take God seriously.

That's what it was like in the days of Noah. They didn't take God seriously, not a bit of it. That's what it was like in the days when Sodom and Gomorrah fell under the fire of God.

They didn't take God seriously. And what Jesus says is this, that when he returns, there will be widespread indifference to his claims.

Perhaps you pause a moment here and you say, you know, I think that it's like that today. There's such appalling indifference and people are not taking God seriously at all.

[7 : 10] You see, when Noah built that ship to preserve alive himself and his family and a selected number of the animals that God had chosen to be selected, to be salvaged out of the wreckage that was to take place at that time, prior to that, as Noah built that ship, he was preaching.

That's why he's called a preacher of righteousness. Every strip of wood, every nail that he hammered into that vessel, everything that he did to make that vessel watertight was a sermon to the people of his generation.

It was as if Noah were saying to them, take heed. God's judgment is going to come. Oh, they ridiculed him.

They said to him, look, why build this gigantic ship miles away from the sea? You're mad. You're out of your mind.

You're deranged. And I suppose if many people were to come into the church this evening and hear me preach like this, they would say, you know, that man's a religious fanatic.

[8 : 33] He's mad. But Noah knew what he was doing because God had said to him, you build this ship because my judgment is going to come upon this generation.

It was the same in the days of Lot. He was vexed at the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. It vexed, it tells us, his righteous soul from day to day in hearing and in seeing their ungodliness. Perhaps there were times when he tried to rebuke, but it was to no avail.

The terrible wickedness went on just the same. And Jesus says this. Luke chapter 18, verse 8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. He's talking about the unjust judge listening to the petitions of the poor woman.

[9 : 47] Nevertheless, he says, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? When the Son of Man comes back, will he find any faith at all in the earth?

Now, the whole point, you see, in our Lord's remarks to his disciples is the need for vigilance and the need for readiness in view of his return and coming judgment.

And to drive home this point about vigilance and readiness, what Jesus does here is he recalls the tragedy of Lot's wife.

What are we to consider about that pathetic woman? Well, we are to consider her opportunities, her foolishness and her fate.

And that is the point that Jesus is making as he says, remember Lot's wife. Remember, he says, this woman's privileges. Remember her opportunities.

[11 : 02] Remember her foolishness and don't forget her fate. As you and I consider these aspects in this woman's life, we have to consider our own position.

Let's just think for a little while of her privileges. as we turn back the pages of our Bibles to this awesome event in history when God overthrew the cities of the plain in judgment, we are brought, first of all, face to face with this man, Lot, and his family.

What were the circumstances of that family? Lot was Abraham's nephew. And Abraham, as we read in the Bible, was the friend and the servant of God.

Abraham was the man who was distinguished for his unwavering faith and distinguished for his sanctified life. He was a great man of God, Abraham.

And Lot, his nephew, knew this uncle of his. And not only that, but you can be sure of this, that Lot was the subject of this man's prayers.

[12 : 36] So that Lot was a man who was influenced by godly influences.

Abraham, his uncle, was there to influence him. We read that when Abraham left out of the Chaldees at God's bidding, Lot didn't hesitate to go with him.

And of course, let's remember that Lot himself was a good man. He made mistakes in his life, certainly. But basically, he was a good man.

He was a preacher of righteousness. He was a man who was the subject of God's mercy. Now, why am I telling you this? I'm telling you this in order for you to understand that Lot's wife was surrounded by influences of a sanctified and a godly character.

You see, in that respect, she was far better off than the ordinary citizens of Sodom. I'm sure that that woman listened to her husband on many occasions speak about his godly uncle.

[13 : 55] uncle. And I am sure that when she was in the presence of that godly uncle Abraham, he would remind her, as he would remind his nephew and his own family, of the greatness and the majesty of God.

He would say to them, do you see these desert sands? Do you see these hills? Do you see everything around you?

They have been made by this almighty God, the creator, who is our God. He would remind them of the time that they were in Ur of the Chaldees and when God came to him and spoke to him and said to him, you must leave this place and go to the land that I give you.

I am sure that Abraham would have told them about Adam and what had happened to Adam in the garden of paradise. I am sure that Abraham would have reminded his nephew Lot and his wife of the terrible, disastrous and cataclysmic flood that overtook the world in Noah's day.

She was a very privileged woman. Aren't you a very privileged person?

[15 : 25] About you, you have the revelation of God, that majestic revelation of his in nature. How can anyone in Inverness not believe in God?

Go outside of this town and look at the beauty that surrounds you in nature. Who made it all? And on a night like this as you lift up your eyes to the heavens and see the phenomena of nature above you as you see it below you, you can't but come to this conclusion.

What a God who created these things. But you see it's not only that God has given to you that revelation of himself in nature but God has given to you much more than that he has given to you his word.

This book, the Bible. Here you have God speaking to you in his word. This is the sure unerring word of God.

God. You know my friend if I didn't believe this do you think I would be here wasting my time and wasting yours?

[16 : 48] Do you not think I could devote myself to something more worthwhile if I didn't believe in this? it's because I believe in this with all my heart that I speak to you like this because I believe this word.

I believe this Bible. I believe in it from Genesis to Revelation that it is the word of God the unerring word of God and God is speaking to us from it and telling us what we are to do and what we are to believe.

So you have that indeed you've got much more than Lot's wife ever had. She never had such a full revelation but you've got the whole word of God as I have.

And then too there are other influences that suggest to us the privilege that we have that is perhaps we've come from a God fearing background.

Maybe you've had a parent that prayed for you or a guardian that prayed for you. I feel heart sorry for these youngsters that I see running around the streets and I've got no one to pray for them.

[18 : 17] I used to see them in the city in Glasgow. You felt heart sorry for them. Oh yes they would swear they would curse they would lie they would steal but oh you felt if only they had someone to pray for them.

If only they had a mother to pray for them a father to pray for them. I always felt thankful that I had someone that prayed for me.

You've got someone you can think of and they prayed for you to remember that and they taught you to fear God.

Maybe you couldn't be bothered with them at the time when they taught you to fear God but nonetheless they drove home to your mind the reality of these things and you haven't forgotten

them.

That's a privilege an inestimable privilege and as I look around the congregation this evening and see young boys and girls here and I'm thankful to see them that's a wonderful thing for these boys and girls that they've got praying fathers and praying mothers that's a wonderful thing there's hope for you if you're a youngster here and you've got that but more this woman had been given divine instructions for her safety and well-being you see there was no jubility in the command that had been given to her it was clear it was positive we read that on that never to be forgotten day in Sodom the heavenly messengers came to her household informed the family the city was doomed their only hope was in flight and not only did these heavenly messengers deliver this message to them but they exercised as much persuasion and pressure as it was possible and legitimate for them to exercise and arise arise they said take thy wife thy two daughters which are here lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of this city escape for thy life look not behind thee neither stay thou in all the plain escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed could there could there have been anything more specific more clear now as we consider the implications of the word of

[21 : 24] God isn't it true in our own experience that God is speaking to us what is God saying to us God is saying to us through his word you're living in a world that is doomed you're living in a world that is going to perish I was quoting the other Sabbath and it might fit in here and I say it again because I think it's worthwhile saying of the story that I heard about the two men who met each other and the one said to the other it's good to see you in the land of the living you know the other man said I'm in the land of the dying but I hope soon to be in the land of the living and isn't that true with regard to this world of ours it's the land of the dying and this world of ours is doomed to pass away and what

God is saying to us is escape escape for your life escape to Christ go to him have we made use of our privileges but notice her foolishness now if we are going to ask why did the Lord single this woman out for our consideration it was in order that we might see how unworthy she was of this proffered mercy you see you notice about this woman her careless attitude to her privileges and to her opportunities that's the first thing that you notice this was a time for this woman to pay heed to the solemn warnings given regarding this impending disaster in other words

God had to be taken seriously but instead of realizing the importance of carrying out meticulously the command of these heavenly messengers this woman adopted an attitude of absolute complacency a couldn't care less attitude now what of us in the light of the warnings in the light of all that we know is going on around us I speak to you about death you might say that's a morbid subject and you shouldn't be speaking to us so much about death well nonetheless I speak to you about it because it's spoken about here and I speak to you about it because of the need for being prepared against that eventuality and you know hardly a month goes by but I've got to say we'll pray for so and so who have had a bereavement and if you look back the newsletters it's nothing but lists of those who have passed away in the congregation or of friends in the congregation who have lost loved ones and isn't that in itself speaking to us and reminding us that here we have no continuing city and isn't that a warning to us that we mustn't be complacent that we must take life and God seriously you see in the days prior to the flood and Jesus has been speaking about these days they treated God with appalling indifference they gave themselves over to gluttony to sensuality it says the wickedness of man was great in the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually it was a generation that refused to take the preaching of Noah seriously and what is our attitude to the gospel is it one of carelessness you know when Jonah was given the commission to go to Nineveh and to preach to that great city they repented they believed this man who had come to preach judgment why are we not believing well there was her complacency but there was also too in this woman's attitude her shocking disregard of

God's instructions the warning given by God through the angels was we will destroy the city because the cry of them is waxen great before the Lord and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it and the command was specific as we have already stated look not behind thee neither stay thou in all the plain escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed in other words what was God saying to that woman he was saying to her you've got to renounce your past way of life you've got to get away from these unwholesome ungodly sinful influences you must get out of that environment you must start all over again that's what God was saying to that woman and to Lot and it's fatal you know when we disregard the commands of

[27 : 37] God are we being guilty of that disregarding the commands of God we've been listening to his pleadings we've been giving consideration to the word of God but what is it are we ignoring it all but another thing in the experience of this woman was her sinful worldly mindedness oh yes she had a comfortable home in Sodom there can be no doubt at all about that her husband you see had a position of influence it tells us that he sat in the gate of the city and you don't sit in the gate of a city among the councillors among the rulers unless you have a position of influence and he had that position and with the position well he had the money too it was a lucrative job he had and so you can be sure of this that she had her comforts and of course

Sodom was a city that was known for its sensuality and for its permissiveness the very word Sodom today suggest to us sensuality permissiveness but you see living in that environment surrounded by these comforts surrounded by these permissive influences she couldn't but be affected in one way or another and the time had come now for God's people at that time to show their abhorrence of the place called Sodom by them turning their backs upon it forever and that's why these angels said to her you must turn your back upon Sodom you must leave this place and start all over again but not so

Lot's wife she looked back her heart you see was in Sodom the place that offered her so much happiness her heart was still there now when God asks you and when he asks me to forsake what is not in keeping with his way of holiness it's to say the least fool hardiness on our part to cling to that that was the tragedy in the case of the rich young ruler Jesus said to him you know he said if you want to come with me to heaven if you want really to get there then you must part with this thing that has become the obsession in your life get rid of your riches and come and follow me ah but he loved his great possessions he he couldn't do it he departed from

Christ a sorrowful man Demas too is another beacon of warning he complied he went so far but then he allowed the materialistic things of the world of his time to get the better of him and you know the tragedy is this that Lot's wife was almost saved almost but her worldly mindedness proved to be a ruin what is it that is keeping you back from being a committed Christian what is it is it some inordinate desire that you have for something are you like perhaps maybe the foolish farmer and you say well

I've got to increase my barns I've got to do this I've got to do that I've got to do the other thing and you know there's many a man today and he's burning himself out to get all that he wants out of this world and he's hoping he's going to enjoy it with a good retirement and he never sees it he never sees that retirement you see you've heard the story which we've told before of the man who was shown magnificent land and he was told now you run round the piece of land that you want and the piece of land that you run round that will be yours well he thought this was great this was easy all he had to do was to run round acres and it would all be his so early in the morning he started off he said out mile after mile he started making his long circular tour and as the day was passing he looked over his shoulder and he thought to himself look at all the land

[33 : 15] I've now got but you see when he came to the finishing point he collapsed his heart gave out and he didn't need all that land all he required was six foot to bury his body is it worth neglecting your soul is it worth my neglecting mine for a few paltry things that this world can offer is it worth bartering our soul for the carefree flamboyant life that offers us unlimited scope in our quest for happiness it's not worth it and how the devil makes things so attractive for us you know the story that I've told of

Roland Hill with his bag of beans the man with his bag of beans one day Roland Hill was watching this man walking along the street pigs were following him and as the man walked on his way these pigs kept trotting after the man and lo and behold the man took them into the slaughter house to be slaughtered and afterwards Roland Hill said to him how did you do it well the man said I had a bag of beans and I just tossed a few of the beans and the pigs kept trotting after me to get them and that's how I got them to the slaughter house and you know the devil has his bag of beans and he keeps throwing these beans along the way that leads to hell and people are so foolish they trot after him just to eat one of his beans her fate well she was overtaken in the swift and catastrophic judgment of God oh it's reasonable to suppose that she was well aware of what had happened in paradise long ago

I reminded you of that how Abraham would have spoken to her about Adam and Eve how God had driven them from the garden because of their disobedience and no doubt that she knew of the unprecedented flood that swept away all civilization in the days of Noah and what was made clear

to her was this that when God speaks about what he's going to do God will perform it and so she proved to be unworthy of the mercy that was offered to her because she disbelieved God she turned her back on God she dismissed what God was saying to her and she remains to this day an abiding monument of God's displeasure she looked back she was encased in salt the particles of salt descending began to solidify in that area and although today there is no trace of the pillar of salt there is plenty of trace of what happened on that eventful morning long ago because down by the shores of the Dead

Sea they say that you get an awesome feeling as you look over that part where Sodom and Gomorrah once were and it's nothing but deadness nothing can live in it but here Christ's word perpetuates the memory of God's wrath which overtook this woman for her flagrant disobedience and listen to the writer to the Hebrews wherefore says that writer we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him you might say are you not speaking too much to us on these things one day we'll not be here the congregation that used to grace this church some 90 years ago are gone they've gone to the reward every worshipper that sat in these seats where you are now sitting they've gone if the

Lord will tarry for another 90 years you will be gone and so will I see you at God's judgment seat as you will see me I don't want your blood on my conscience I don't want you to be able to say why didn't you warn me why didn't you tell me why didn't you speak to me more forcefully I want to meet you there as I hope to be there myself by the grace of God I want to meet you there in peace and for you and I to enjoy an eternity together with Christ will you be there remember

[39 : 57] Lot's wife what opportunities she had she let them slip don't you let them slip if I could only say something more I speak to the young people I would like to see the young people coming to Christ and you middle aged fellows and women but what's so heartbreaking sometimes is when you see an old man or an old woman and they're tottering on to the grave and they haven't got long to go and they're not ready ah that's the sad bit and when you have to conduct their funeral service you're always exercising caution and you know that the relatives would like you to say oh he's in glory or she's in glory and you can't say it you daren't say it you daren't give any false hope but oh how different it is when they've died in christ and you can visit that home and you can say don't cry unnecessarily your husband your wife your child has gone home to heaven and you don't have to weep for them don't sin away your privilege remember

Lot's wife close in with christ take him as your saviour let us pray oh lord we pray that we might be found among thy believing people forbid that at the end of the day we should be lost but may we oh lord remember Lot's wife think of her privileges think of the opportunities that were hers and as we do so may we remember the privileges that are our own and the opportunities and as another opportunity was given to us this evening to be at peace with thee through christ our saviour forbid that we should dismiss it but may we oh lord be resting on christ and on him alone for our security take away our sins for the redeemer's sake amen