

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE.

A Sermon

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“Remember Lot's wife.”—Luke xvii. 32.

It was the purpose of God always to maintain a testimony for truth and righteousness in the midst of this ungodly world. For this end of old he set apart for himself a chosen family with whom he had fellowship. Abraham was the man whom God chose, that in him and in his household the witness might be preserved. This chosen family was called out and separated from its ancestors, and led apart to dwell as way-faring men in the land of Canaan. They were not to go into the cities and mingle with other races, but to dwell in tents as a separate tribe, lest their character should become polluted and their testimony should be silenced. It was the Lord's intent that the people should dwell alone and not be numbered among the nations. Abraham, being called, obeyed, and went forth, not knowing whither he went. His separated life gave great exercise to his faith, and so strengthened it that it became a calm, unstaggering assurance; and this enabled him to enjoy a quiet, sublime, and happy career, dependent only upon God, and altogether above as well as apart from man. With him was his nephew Lot, who also left Haran at the divine call, and shared with the patriarch his wanderings in Canaan and in Egypt. He was not a man of so noble a soul, but was greatly influenced by the stronger mind of his uncle Abraham. He was sincere, no doubt, and is justly called righteous Lot, but he was fitter to be a follower than a leader. He also sojourned in tents, and led the separated life, until it became necessary for him to become an independent chieftain, because the flocks and herds of the two families had so greatly multiplied that they could not well be kept together. Then came out the weak side of Lot's character. He did not give Abraham the choice in selecting a sheep walk, but like all weak natures he selfishly consulted his own advantage, and determined to go in the direction of the cities of the plain of Jordan, where well watered pastures abounded. This led to his dwelling near the cities of the plain, where crime had reached its utmost point of horrible degradation. We read that “he pitched his tent toward Sodom”; he found it convenient

to be near a settled people, and to enter into friendly relations with them, though he must have known what the men of Sodom were, for the cry of them had gone forth far and wide. Thus he began to leave the separated path. After a while he went further, for one step leads to another. He was a lover of ease, and therefore he gave up the tent life, with its many inconveniences, and went to live with the townsmen of Sodom: a thing to be wondered at as well as deplored. He did not cease to be a good man, but he did cease to be a faithful witness for his God; and Abraham seems to have given him up altogether from that day, for we find that noble patriarch enquiring of the Lord concerning his heir, saying, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" And the Lord said, "This shall not be thine heir." Now, this enquiry would have been needless had Lot been still reckoned to belong to the chosen seed, for naturally Lot was the heir of Abraham, but he forfeited that position and gave up his portion in the inheritance of the elect house by quitting the separated life. Lot, although he dwelt in Sodom was not happy there, neither did he become so corrupt as to take pleasure in the wickedness of the people. Peter says that God delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. He tried to bear his protest in the place, and signally failed, as all must do who imitate him. His witness for purity would have been far more powerful if he had kept apart from them, for this is the protest which God demands of us when he says, "Come ye out from among them, be ye separate."

In the midst of the world which lieth in the wicked one Lot lived on, not without greatly degenerating in spirit, until the kings came and carried him away captive. Then by the intervention of Abraham he was delivered from the captivity which threatened him, and brought back again. This was a solemn warning, and you would have thought that Lot would have said, "I will go back to Abraham's way of living, I will again become a sojourner with God. Sodom's walls without God are far less safe than a frail tent when God is a wall of fire around it." His vexation with the conversation of the lewd townsmen ought to have made him long for the sweet air of the wild country; but not so, he again settles down in Sodom, and forgets the holy congregation which clustered around the tent of Abraham. Being still a man of God, he could not be allowed to die in such society: it was not to be endured that "just Lot" should lay his bones in the graveyard of filthy Sodom. If God would save a man he must fetch him out from the world; he cannot remain part and parcel of an ungodly world and yet be God's elect one, for this is the Lord's own word to the enemy at the gates of Eden—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." Did he not also say to Pharaoh, "I will put a division between my people and thy people"? The Lord will sooner burn all Sodom down than Lot shall continue to be associated with its crimes, and dragged down by its evil spirit. And so it came to pass that Lot was forced out; he was placed in such a strait that he must either run for his life or perish in the general burning. Happy had it been for him if he had lived all the while in the holy seclusion of Abraham; he would not then have lost the inheritance for his seed, nor have passed away under a dark, defiling cloud, nor have missed his place

among the heroes of faith, of whom Paul writes in the famous chapter of the Hebrews: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Here I must pause, or you will think that I have misread my text, and that I am preaching from the words—"Remember Lot"; and, indeed, I might profitably do so, for there is much of warning in the history of Lot himself. If Christian men are so unwise as to conform themselves to the world, even if they keep up the Christian character in a measure, they will gain nothing by worldly association but being vexed with the conversation of the ungodly, and they will be great losers in their own souls: their character will be tarnished, their whole tone of feeling will be lowered, and they themselves will be wretchedly weak and unhappy. Conformity to the world is sure to end badly sooner or later: to the man himself it is injurious, and to his family ruinous.

But the text saith, "Remember Lot's *wife*," and therefore I must let the husband go, and call your attention to her who, in this case, is "his worse half." When the time for separation arrived Lot's wife could not tear herself away from the world. She had always been in it, and had loved it, and delighted in it; and, though associated with a gracious man, when the time came for decision she betrayed her true character. Flight without so much as looking back was demanded of her, but this was too much; she did look back, and thus proved that she had sufficient presumption in her heart to defy God's command, and risk her all, to give a lingering love-glance at the condemned and guilty world. By that glance she perished. That is the subject of our discourse. The love of the world is death. Those who cling to sin must perish, be they who they may.

Do not omit to notice the connection of the text, for therein our Lord bids us hold the world with a loose hand, and be ever ready to leave it all. When we are called to it we are to be ready to go forth without a particle in our hands. "In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." Life itself they were not to hold dear, but to be ready to lay it down for his sake; for he said, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." To be divided from the world, its possessions, its maxims, its motives, is the mark of a disciple of Christ, and, in order to keep up the feeling of separateness among his followers, our Lord bade them "Remember Lot's wife." She is to be a caution to us all, for God will deal with us as with her if we sin as she did. "The thing which has been is the thing which shall be:" if our hearts are glued to the world we shall perish with the world; if our desires and delights look that way, and if we find our comfort in it, we shall have to see our all consumed, and shall be ourselves consumed with it in the day of the Lord's anger. Separation is the only way of escape: we must flee from the world or perish with it. "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

I. "Remember Lot's wife": and our first call shall be—REMEMBER

THAT SHE WAS LOT'S WIFE. She was the wife of a man who, with all his faults, was a righteous man. She was *united to him in the closest possible bonds*, and yet she perished. She had dwelt in tents with holy Abraham, and seemed to be a sharer in all the privileges of the separated people, and yet she perished. She was dear to one who had been dear to the father of the faithful, and yet for all that she perished in her sin. This note of warning we would strike very loudly, for, commonplace as the truth is, it needs often to be repeated that ties of blood are no guarantees of grace. You may be the wife of the saintliest man of God and yet be a daughter of Belial; or you may be the husband of one of the King's daughters and yet be yourself a castaway. You may be the child of a prophet and yet the curse of the prophet's God may light upon you; or you may be the father of a most gracious family and yet still be an alien to the commonwealth of Israel. No earthly relationship can possibly help us if we are personally destitute of the spiritual life. Our first birth does not avail us in the kingdom of God, for that which is born of the flesh at its very best is flesh, and is prone to sin, and will certainly perish. We must be born again, for only the new birth, which is of the Spirit and from above, will bring us into covenant bonds. O ye children of godly parents, I beseech you look to yourselves that ye be not driven down to hell from your mother's side. O ye relatives of those who are the favourites of heaven, I beseech you look to yourselves that ye die not within sight of heaven, in spite of all your advantages. In this matter remember Lot's wife.

Being Lot's wife, remember that she had since her marriage *shared with Lot in his journeys and adventures and trials*. We cannot tell exactly when she became Lot's wife, but we incline to the belief that it was after he had left Haran, for when Abraham left Haran we read that he took "Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son," but we do not read of Lot's wife. The name of Abraham's wife is given, but of Lot's wife there is no mention whatever. Again, we read, "Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south." "And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents," but nothing is said about his having a wife. She must have been a person of very small consideration, for even when it is certain that Lot was married, when he was taken captive and afterwards rescued by Abraham, all we find is this: "And Abraham brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people." We suppose that Lot's wife is included under the word "the women." Now the Holy Spirit never puts a slight upon good women: in connection with their husbands they are generally mentioned with honour, and in this book of Genesis it is specially so. Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel have each an honourable memorial, and as no mention is made of Lot's wife we may infer that she was not worthy to be mentioned. She could hardly have been an inhabitant of Sodom, as the Jewish traditions assert, unless she was a widow, as they say, and the daughters mentioned were hers by a previous marriage, for at the destruction of Sodom Lot had marriageable daughters, and it would not seem that Lot had then been separated from Abraham for many years. True, the women of Sodom may have been given in marriage at an earlier age than was usual with the Abrahamic stock, and, if so, Lot's

wife may have been a native of Sodom, for it is possible that he dwelt there for twenty years. More probably, however, either in Canaan or in Egypt, Lot married a Canaanite or an Egyptian woman, a person utterly unworthy to be taken into the holy household, and therefore the marriage is not recorded. It was the custom of that elect and separated family, as you know, to send back to Padan-aram, to fetch from thence some daughter of the same house, that the pure stock might be preserved, and that there might be no connection with the heathen. It was Abraham's desire for Isaac, and he charged his steward to carry it out, saying, "And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the whole earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." This also was Isaac's desire for Jacob, for we read, "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother." It seems to me that Lot had married a heathen woman, and so her name is omitted. Whether it be so or no, it is certain that she had shared with Lot in the capture of the city of Sodom; she had seen the ruthless sword slay the inhabitants, and she herself with her husband had been among the captives, and she had been delivered by the good sword of Abraham. So that she had been a partaker of her husband's trials and deliverances and yet she was lost. It will be a sad, sad thing if there should come an eternal severance between those united by marriage bonds: that we should live together, and work together, and suffer together, and should be delivered by the providence of God many a time together, and should see our children grow up together, and yet should be torn asunder at the last never to meet again: this is a prospect which we dare not think upon. Tremble, you whose love is not in Christ, for your union will have an end. What saith the Saviour? "I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." It matters not how close the association, the unbeliever must be divided from the living child of God. If you cling to the world and cast your eye back upon it you must perish in your sin, notwithstanding that you have eaten and drunk with the people of God, and have been as near to them in relationship as wife to husband, or child to parent. This makes the remembrance of Lot's wife a very solemn thing to those who are allied by ties of kindred to the people of God.

Lot's wife had also *shared her husband's privileges*. Her husband had not forgotten his association with Abraham, and he could not have failed to communicate his knowledge to her. The one God was worshipped, and Lot's wife was present. She knew of the gracious covenant which God had made with his separated people, and she knew that her husband was one of the family. She had cast in her lot with the chosen people of God apparently, though her heart was not in it, and she therefore joined their sacred song and their holy prayer. She saw the daily provision which God made for his people, and the joy which Abraham

had in abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. Even in Sodom her husband kept up such separateness as he could in such an evil place, and she saw the goodness of the man with all his mistakes. When Sodom must be destroyed the angels came to their house, and she herself helped to entertain them. She received the merciful warning to escape as well as her husband, and she was urged as much as he to flee from the wrath so near at hand. Thus is it with many of you who are enjoying all sorts of Christian privileges and are yet unsaved. You come to the Lord's table, and eat and drink of the memorials of his body and blood, and yet you remain unsaved. You seem to be part and parcel of the church of God, and if there is any privilege or advantage a share of it is set before you, if there is any fellowship you are not excluded, if there is any joy it is not denied you. You will have to say at last, "Lord, Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," and, oh, how wretched it will be to hear him say, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." It must be so if your souls are clinging to sin, and you are casting a wistful eye to the ungodly world. It must be so, and if you want a proof "remember Lot's wife."

Lot's wife had *shared in her husband's errors*. It was a great mistake on his part to abandon the outwardly separated life, but she had kept to him in it, and perhaps was the cause of his so doing. I suppose he thought he could live above the world spiritually, and yet mingle with its votaries, even as some now do who enter into worldly company and yet hope to walk with God in spirit. He said to himself, "It is very uncomfortable to wander alone in this deserted wilderness, and to dwell in these temporary tents, I wish I had a more abiding dwelling, and could mingle on peaceable terms with those around me." He ceased to look for the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God, and he wanted to take up citizenship here. I should not wonder if Lot's wife influenced him in that way. He was a man of weak mind, and while his uncle had him under his wing he was right enough, except that even then he had what a writer calls "a lean-to religion"; he did not stand alone, but leaned upon Abraham. When he was married it is probable that his wife assumed the ruling place, and guided the way of his life. She began to think that it was a pity that the family should live in such separation, so unfashionable, so rigid, and peculiar, and all that. She tossed her head, and cried, "Really, people must mix with society, and not keep up old-fashioned, strait-laced ways. You might as well be dead as be shut out from life." When her husband had an opportunity of getting out of that rigid style by leaving his uncle she said she would like to go down Sodom way, because it would be nice for the girls, and give them a taste of something liberal and refined. The old style was all very well for such an antiquated couple as Abraham and Sarah, but Lot and herself belonged to a younger generation, and were bound to get into a little society, and find eligible matches for their young people. It would be well for them to dress better than they could learn to do if they always kept roaming about like gipsies. You see, Abraham's people did not study the fashions at all, and were a very vulgar sort of shepherds, who had no ideas of refinement and politeness, and it was a pity that people in Lot's station in life should always associate with mere sheep-shearers,

and drovers, and the like. If they got to Sodom there would be nice parties, and dances, and all sorts of things. Of course the people were a little loose, and rather fast; they went to plays where modesty was shocked, and gathered in admiration around performers whose lives were openly wanton; but then you see one must be fashionable, and wink at a good deal: we cannot expect all people to be saints, and no doubt they have their good points. By some such talk Mistress Lot gained her husband over to her way of thinking. They did not mean actually to go into the worst society of Sodom, but they intended to make a careful selection, and go only a little way. Surely they could be trusted to know where to stop. So they pitched the tent towards Sodom, where it was within an easy walk of the town, a little separated, but not far. If anything did happen that was very bad they could move away, and no harm would be done, but until they saw the harm of it they liked the neighbourhood and the ways of the townsfolk. It was no doubt wise, they said, to go and see Sodom and know the people, for it would be ridiculous to condemn what they had not seen; they would therefore try it, and give the young people some idea of what the world was like. Very sweet the city life became. The free and easy ways of Sodom came to be enjoyable. Not the gross part of Sodom life, that Lot could not bear, and it made Mistress Lot uncomfortable at times, but the liberal spirit, the fine free bearing of the people, their gaiety and artistic culture, were quite to her mind; and so she was right glad when her husband put away the old tent, had a sale of the sheep, and lived as a retired grazier in the west end of the city.

I think I am not mistaken in the conjecture that Mistress Lot's influence brought her husband there, and when there introduced him to the best families, and found suitors for the daughters, who had been fully imbued with the liberal ideas of the place. At any rate, whatever were his faults she was a partaker in them: she was with him in the choosing the plain of Jordan, with him in the pitching of the tent towards Sodom, with him in actually settling in Sodom, and I could almost hope with him in bearing as good a protest as they could against the vilest of Sodom's sins, but certainly with him in giving up the strictness and severity of the separated life. Yet at last she was separated from him for ever; for his errors, notwithstanding their grievous mischief to him, did not utterly destroy the life of God in his soul; as for her, she never had any spiritual life, and now, when she is called to leave Sodom, she shows her love to it by a distinct disobedience of God, and an open turning to the doomed city, and so she perishes. Oh, you that are Christian people because your friends are Christian people, you that associate with us because it happens to be the way in which you were brought up, the time will come when the secret attachment of your hearts towards a giddy world will show itself most clearly, and in a fatal moment you will give a love look towards sin which will prove you not to belong to the people of God. Then will it happen to you according to the word of the apostle, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

II. And now, secondly, "Remember Lot's wife," and recollect THAT SHE WENT SOME WAY TOWARDS BEING SAVED. Mistress Lot so far

believed the message that came to her about the destruction of the city that she was aroused. She rose early as her husband did, and she prepared to leave the house. She ran down the streets, she passed the city gate, she reached the open plain along with her husband. She was willing for awhile to run with him, following his example; she did so for a considerable distance, till she began to think over what she was doing, and to consider what she was leaving, and then she slackened her pace and lingered behind. Remember, then, that she did go part of the way towards safety, and yet she perished: and so many may go part of the way towards Christ, and they may go a little way out of the world, but if their hearts still linger with the ungodly they will perish, notwithstanding all. There is one very solemn thought, and that is, that the angels' hand had pressed her wrist. When they said, "Up, get you gone," and Lot lingered,—the men laid hold upon his hand, and the hand of his wife. So it is expressly said. An angel's hand had pressed her wrist to draw her forth to safety, and she had gone a little way under that sacred constraint; and yet she perished. Some of you may have had spiritual touches upon the conscience and heart, which you will never be able quite to forget, and the responsibility of this will cling to you, though you have drawn back from godliness and your heart crieth after vanity, and lusteth after its idols.

This woman was actually out of Sodom, and she was almost in Zoar, the refuge city, and yet she perished. How near she was to the little city of escape I cannot tell, but she was certainly almost there, and yet she perished. *Almost saved, but not quite.* Let me repeat those words, for they describe some of you who are present at this hour, and they may be your epitaph if you do not mind what you are about:—**"ALMOST SAVED, BUT NOT QUITE."** Escaped from the vilest form of sin, but not truly in Christ; the mind not weaned from its idols, iniquity not given up in the soul, though perhaps given up in outward deed. O you who are **ALMOST SAVED, BUT NOT QUITE,** "Remember Lot's wife."

III. This brings me to a third point of remembrance, which is this: remember that though she went some way towards escape **SHE DID ACTUALLY PERISH THROUGH SIN.** The first sin that she committed was that *she lingered behind.* Moses tells us "Lot's wife looked back from behind him." That is, the good old man was making such haste as he could; but she, though she had run with him side by side, lingered in the rear—I should not wonder but what the same angel had one of them by the right hand and the other by the left, while the other angel brought the two daughters on behind, but Lot's wife after all slackened her pace and fell behind. That is the first sin with most people who profess religion, but are not true to God: they begin to backslide by creeping along very slowly, they are not half so earnest as they used to be, they lag behind. One service a day is sufficient, a very little reading of the Bible contents them; they do not quite give up the appearance of prayer, but still there is very little of it; they do not see the good of being in such a hurry over religion; they do not see why they should exercise any sacred violence to take the kingdom by force. They linger. It is because after all the world is master of their hearts; they would if they dare be as worldly and as ungodly as others, and they prove their true character by **slackening their pace.**

Having slackened her pace, the next thing she did was *she disbelieved* what had been told her. You must remember that their flight out of Sodom was to be an act of faith; for the angel said, "Look not behind thee." That Sodom was to be destroyed did not appear at all likely, for it was a bright morning. They were to fly with as much haste as if they could see the fire-shower falling, but they were not to see it; their flight was to be urged forward by faith in the angels' words. Faith may be as well exhibited by not looking as by looking. Faith is a look at Christ, but faith is a not looking at the things which are behind. Lot's wife saw the sun rising, so we are told: "the sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar." She saw the bright dawning and everything lit up with it, and it came across her mind—"It cannot be true, the city is not being destroyed. What a lovely morning! Why are we thus running away from house, and goods, and friends, and everything else on such a bright, clear morning as this?" She did not truly believe, there was no real faith in her heart, and therefore she disobeyed the law of her safety and turned her face towards Sodom. Yet, mark you, she had received the angels in her house, she had seen them blind the wicked mob around her door, she had heard their majestic words of persuasion, and felt their kind compulsion: she had plenty of evidence that God was speaking, but she doubted the truth of his word, and here was the very essence of her sin. What if some of you that have mingled with the godly, and have been numbered with them, and have participated in their worship, should, nevertheless, come short because of unbelief! It is by no means improbable, for out of all that came out of Egypt there were only two that entered into Canaan. They could not enter in because of unbelief; their carcasses fell in the wilderness. May it never come to pass with any of us that we shall leave our carcasses outside of the eternal hope because we, too, do not believe in him who is invisible, but must needs walk according to the sight of the eyes.

Having got so far as lingering and doubting, her next movement was a direct act of rebellion,—she turned her head: she was bidden not to look, but *she dared to look*. Rebellion is as much seen in the breach of what appears to be a little command as in the violation of a great precept. Our fall at the first came from the plucking of forbidden fruit, and this woman's death came by a look! Take care of little things. There is life in a look, and here is a case in which there was death in a look. She looked, but why did she look? I suppose it was this: her heart was that way. She loved Sodom; and the separated life she abhorred. She had led her husband and her children away from the peculiar people of God, for she felt that she would rather mix with the reprobate multitude than with the chosen few. She was not of the spirit that could walk with God alone, she clung to society and to sin. Though she was running for her life she thought of her household stuff, and of the ease of Sodom, and she looked back with a lingering eye because she wanted to be there; and it came to this, that as her eye went back her whole body would have gone back if time had been allowed. She already lingered, she would soon have turned. That one glance betrayed which way her soul was going: a little thing in professors may show what they are, and we may readily betray the inward turning of the soul

by an act as simple as that of turning the neck to look towards Sodom. This was her sin.

Now, dear friends, let us remember Lot's wife each one of us by learning a personal lesson. Here is a hard thing; we must go without the camp, or utterly fail. Can you maintain the life of God and walk with Christ, and be separate from the world? Many of you cannot; you may pretend to do so, but you cannot, it is beyond you. I fear that the number of true Christians in the world is very much less than we suppose. We are encumbered with a host of people who call themselves Christians, but are as much of the world as other people, whose inheritance is in the world, whose pleasure is in the world, whose speech is worldly, and who are altogether of the world; and because they are of the world the world loves its own; and therefore there is little or no strife between them and the world. Alas, I fear the church is not true to itself, and therefore the world begins to love it. It says, "You have come to live with us, and do as we do, and you do not bear your awkward protests as you used to do, and so we need not to burn you as we did your fathers. You are hail fellow, well met! with us, and therefore we will treat you kindly." Only let us live as Christ lived, and we shall find the dogs of this world howling at us as they used to do at our forefathers. My hearers, can you live the separated life? If you can, God help you and bless you in it, but if you cannot, recollect though you do not so go into Sodom as to indulge in its grosser sins, yet the very looking at it, the wishing for it, the desiring to be there shows where your heart is, and your heart's tendency is your true character. You will be judged according to the going of your heart. If your heart goes toward the mountain to escape, and if you hasten to be away with Christ to be his separated follower, you shall be saved: but if your heart still goes after evil and sin, his servants ye are whom ye obey, and from your evil master you shall get your black reward.

IV. Here comes our remembrance of Lot's wife in the fourth and most solemn place, and that is—remember that **HER DOOM WAS TERRIBLE**. "Remember Lot's wife." Remember that she perished with the same doom as that which happened to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, *but that doom befell her at the gates of Zoar*. Oh, if I must be damned, let it be with the mass of the ungodly, having always been one of them; but to get up to the very gates of heaven, and to perish there, will be a most awful thing! To have lived with God's people, to have been numbered with them, to have been joined to them by ties of blood, and then after all to perish, will be horrible indeed! To have heard the gospel, to have felt the gospel, too, in a measure, to have amended one's life because of it, to have escaped from the filthiest corruption of the world, and to have become moral, and amiable, and excellent, and yet still not to have been weaned from the world, not to have been clean divorced from sin, and so to perish,—the thought is intolerable. That same brine and brimstone which fell upon the inhabitants of the four cities overtook Lot's wife. She was on the margin of the shower, and as it fell she was salted with fire, she was turned into a pillar of salt where she stood. Dreadful doom! On the verge of mercy to be slain by justice; on the brink of salvation to be the victim of eternal wrath!

This came upon her of a *sudden*, too. What a picture! She stops as she is flying, she turns her head! She scarcely looks! The gaze is not long enough to single out her own house—and, lo, she is turned into a pillar! The fire-salt has fallen on her! She will never move again! She had not time to start or turn, and, with her neck just as it was, she stands as a statue of salt, a warning to all who should pass that way. I do not suppose Lot's wife to be standing there now, as some travellers have imagined: the pillar was not even there in Christ's day, for if it had been, as Bengel very properly remarks, our Lord would have said, "See Lot's wife"; but as she was not there he said, "Remember" her. Her doom came on a sudden, without a further warning or a moment's time to consider. What if sudden death should strike some of you down at this moment? You professors who still love the world, what if you now fell dead? You professed Christians who sneak in among the ungodly to have a suck at their pleasures, suppose you should be struck down in the theatre one of these days! You that pretend to be Christians and frequent the dancing saloon, suppose you should fall dead there! It would not be a new thing under the sun, for God deals severely with those who profess to come under his covenant; he has jealous laws for those who join his church and yet have not the grace of God in their hearts. These men die not the death of common men, but are often overtaken by strange punishments, that the world may see that the Lord hath set a wall of fire around his church, which none may break through on peril of their lives. Ananias and Sapphira entered the church, but they could not live there; a glance of Peter's eye and they fell dead before him. Such judgments still purge the ranks of the professing church, as all that observe must know, for the Lord will be sanctified of them that come near to him. "For this cause," saith the apostle, "Some are sickly among you, and many sleep," because the discipline of God goes on in the midst of his visible church. He lets the world alone till the fire-shower comes, but to those that profess to be his people he is always a jealous God. I speak strong things; strong things are wanted in these compromising days. May the Holy Ghost impress these weighty facts on all your hearts.

The worst point, perhaps, about the perishing of Lot's wife lay in this, that *she perished in the very act of sin*, and had no space for repentance given her. In the instant she turned her head she was a pillar of salt. It is a dreadful thing to die in the very act of sin, to be caught away by the justice of God while the transgression is being perpetrated. Yet such a thing may happen, and let those who profess to be Christians and yet parley with sin "remember Lot's wife," and how swift God is to deal out his judgment against professors who betray his holy name and cause.

I cannot help going back to the text I started with, which was one of my own making, and that is, "Remember Lot." Though Lot himself was a righteous man and escaped from the doom of the wicked city, yet I cannot help tracing the death of Lot's wife in some degree to her husband. When a man walks with God and imitates God he gets to be a great character—that is Abraham. When a man walks with a holy man and imitates *him* he may rise to be a good character, but he will be a weak one—that is Lot. But when one walks with Lot, the weak

character, and only copies him, the result will be a failure—that is Lot's wife. It is like the boy's copy book. If he will copy the top line the boy makes an Abraham line; but if the next time he does not look at the top line, but imitates the second—that makes a Lot line, very far short of the first. If he next copies No. 3, the Lot line, the result will be a poor affair—that is Lot's wife. Beloved, we are to live having the perfect Father for our example, looking and following in his steps, and if we do so by the power of the Spirit we shall reach a grand, noble, Abrahamic character. But suppose you get to imitate some good man, and he is your standard, you will make a second-rate Christian, it will be a weak affair, like Lot. And then if your wife and children get copying *you*, oh, the mischief that must come of it! Lot ought to have been more firm, more steadfast, more thorough. He had no business to have gone to Sodom. If he had said to his wife, "No, my wife, we belong to a chosen people. God called us out of Haran, and away from the gods of our fathers, that we might live a separated life, and here I am going to stop, and you must stop with me," she would have had to obey, or even if she had not done so, Lot was not to do evil to please his wife. She could not have learned the ways of Sodom—she might have given her heart still to the world, but she could not have been so clearly mixed up with it, and her daughters could not have been so ill-moralled as they were if he had resolved to live apart from the town's people. I believe that fathers and husbands ought to take the lead in the management of their families, and parents are bound to arrange their households after a godly fashion. Do not say, "Oh, we cannot manage our families." You must do it. Eli failed in this, and, instead of being firm, he timidly said, "Do not so, my sons." Poor dear old Eli, he did not like to get into trouble with his sons by finding fault with them. But what did his softness cost him? The Lord smote his family because he had not ordered his household aright. If Christian men leave their families to go anyhow they choose, they will soon find the Lord has a controversy with them; and if the children and if the wife should after all perish, it will be a horrible thought for the head of the household, even if he be a saved man, that it was his ill example which caused their ruin. It was partly Lot's own doing that his wife became what she was. If Lot had never gone to Sodom his wife would not have perished near it. Look to yourselves lest ye lead others astray. Keep near to God and you will be blessed and become a blessing to others. Abraham did not have this trouble with Sarah, nor Isaac with Rebekah, for they walked with God, and their influence was felt in their tents. Live near to God, and let your own life be according to the command which God gave the patriarch—"Walk with me and be thou perfect," and you shall see that he will bless your household, and your children after you; but if you do not thus walk before the Lord you will have to "remember Lot's wife." May God add his blessing on these words. for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis xix. 12—26,
and Luke xvii. 20—23.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—179, 849, 658.