

The Danger of Looking Back

Genesis 19:26 – But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Introduction:

- The Word of God says that **Lot** “pitched his tent toward Sodom,”
- But **Abraham** heard from God and built an altar.
- **Lot and his wife** had gotten use to the city life.
- **Their life was** a life of fun, fashion, and parties.
- **They were warned** by an angel to “**Get outside!**”
- But Lot’s wife disobeyed

There is a danger in looking back...it takes your attention away from your focus

1. Lot’s Wife Looked Back

- A. She had too much Sodom in her, to leave it.
- B. She didn’t want to go back to small town living (to ordinary, simple living). **She was in love** with the big city life.
- C. An angel told (preached to) her “**Look not behind thee**” (v.17) but she deliberately and defiantly looked back
- D. **Why?** Was the price worth it?

Jesus said: Luke 17:32 Remember Lot’s wife.

- She suddenly had become only a memory.
 - A memory of warning to others.
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2. The Children Of Ephraim Turned Back

Psalm 78:8-10 - ⁷ That they may set their hope in God, And **not forget** the works of God, But keep His commandments; ⁸ And may **not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.**

⁹ The children of Ephraim, *being armed and carrying bows,* **Turned back** in the day of battle. ¹⁰ They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law, ¹¹ **And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them.**

A stubborn and rebellious generation

- A generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.
- The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, **turned back** in the day of battle.

They **kept not the covenant of God**, and **refused to walk** in his law

- A. They were **unstable** and **not determined**. (v. 8)
- B. Their “spirit was **not steadfast** with God” (v. 8)
- C. They “**kept not the covenant**” (v. 10)
- D. They “**refused to walk in His law**” (v. 10)
- E. They “**set not their heart aright**” (v. 8)

God **chose** Jerusalem in Judah to be the place **for the new temple** and **rejected** Ephraim.

- *Ephraim’s soldiers **turned back** from battle!*
- *God works through **those who are faithful to Him**...*

We need to make sure **our heart** is all right!

As David said in

Psalm 57:7 - “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.”

3. Demas Went Back

The Abandoned Apostle -

2 Timothy 4:9-10 - Be diligent to come to me quickly; ¹⁰for **Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world**, and has departed for Thessalonica

- Demas went back not to do evil, nor to indulge in some vile sin.
- But he just simple “***loved this present world***”
- **Demas had left the faith** – He had been one of Paul’s coworkers.
- **He deserted Paul**. He “***loved this world.***”
- **Demas loved worldly values and worldly pleasures.**

He had another love’ ***another love greater than his love for God***

1 John 2:15 - **Do Not Love the World**

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Some people think that **worldliness** only has to do with external behavior –

- **The people** we associate with,
- **The places** we go,
- **The activities** we enjoy.

But **worldliness affects us internally** because it begins in the heart and is characterized by **three attitudes**:

- **The lust of the flesh** – preoccupation with gratifying physical desires.
- **The lust of the eyes** – the accumulation of things. Materialism...
- **The pride of life** – Obsession with our status or importance...

When the serpent tempted Eve, (Gen 3:6) he tempted her in these areas.

When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, these were also his three areas of attack. (Matthew 4:1-11).

2 Corinthians 6:17 - ¹⁷ Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”

- **Separation from the world** involves more than keeping our distance from sinful practices.
- It means staying close to God.
- We are to resist the sinful influences around us **without either giving up or giving in...**

2 Timothy 2:4 - ⁴ No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

- Christians are not ***to go back into the world!!!***

What kind of example do we set to the world, our family and our children... ***when we lay out of church to do something else?***

- All these are signs of “ **loving this present world** ”

4. Offended Disciples Turned Back

John 6:66-69 - From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” ⁶⁸ But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

They were offended by his words:

John 6:53 - Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood*, you have no life in you.

Sometimes people are offended by what the preacher preaches --- but a preacher must “**preach the Word.**”

2 Timothy 4:2-3 - ² **Preach the word!** Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

5. Workers In The Church Sometimes Looks Back

Luke 9:62 - ⁶² But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

What does Jesus want from us?

- **Total dedication, not halfhearted commitment.**
- **We can't pick and choose** among Jesus' ideas and follow him selectively.
- **We have to accept** the cross along with the crown.
- **We must count the cost and be willing to abandon everything else that has given us security.**

“Looking back” --- Wanting to go back --- means **your heart is not in your work.**

- Some people are **not satisfied** with the ordinary.
- They want the prestigious place.
- They want to “**grandstand**” as we used to say back when I played ball.
- Meaning that they were **playing to the crowd** in the stands.

God's living presence is our greatest joy.

- His radiant presence helps us grow in strength, grace, and glory...

David said in **Psalm 84:10** - ¹⁰ For a day in Your courts (**God's House**) is better than a thousand (**Days away from God**). I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (**and riches**)

6. Orpah Turned Back

Naomi said, **Ruth 1:14-15** - Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ And she said, "**Look, your sister-in-law has gone back** to her people and to her gods;

Verse 14 - " Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clung to her. "

There are 2 categories...**the kissers** and **the cleavers**---**which category are we in?**

- Orpha **went back** to her heathen family and her heathen life.
- Orpha **went back** to obscurity. **Ruth went on to greatness**.
- Orpah **did not want** to do what she knew was right.

7. Many Turn Back In Their Hearts

Stephen preaching about how the Jewish nations treated Jesus said:

Israel Rebels Against God – **Acts 7:39** - whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt,

- They pushed God away!!!
- "**In their hearts turned back**" --- they were backsliders at heart.

Returning to Egypt, with its bondage and slavery, that was their desire.

- That was what they wanted.

Proverbs 26:11 - ¹¹ *Dogs return to eat their vomit, just as fools repeat their foolishness.*

CLOSE:

Stephen was an effective administrator and messenger before becoming a martyr

This is clear from the defense he made before the Jewish high council (the Sanhedrin).

He presented a summary of the Jews' own history and made powerful applications **that stung his listeners.**

During his defense **Stephen must have known** he was speaking his own death sentence.

Members of the council could not stand to have **their evil motives exposed.**

- **They stoned him to death while he prayed for their forgiveness.**
- His final words show how much like Jesus he had become in just a short time.

Stephen's life is a continual challenge to all Christians

He was the first to die for his faith, and his sacrifice raises questions:

- **How many risks do we take in being Jesus' followers?**
- **Would we be willing to die for him?**

If not, Are we really living for him?

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