

# A Night in Sodom — Procrastination.

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*Genesis 19; Luke 17: 26-37.*

## Night Scenes of Scripture

*Seventeen Bible Night Scenes, illustrating and elucidating various truths of the Gospel.*

by W. T. P. Wolston, M.D., 1896.

## Chapter 11

### A Night in Sodom — Procrastination.

In a letter I received this week from a Christian friend, occurs this statement: "The world is ripe for judgment; is the Church ripe for rapture?" Now the first statement is absolutely true. The world is ripe for judgment, and it is coming. The nineteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis describes a scene that was ripe for judgment. In the previous chapter many of you will recollect how Abraham, the friend of God, in actual communion with the Lord, was making intercession for Sodom. Why? He knew that judgment was coming on Sodom.

God had revealed His mind to Abraham. In the seventeenth verse of Genesis 18 we read: "The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" and so He says to him in verse 20: "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." In a moment Abraham had the sense — That is a doomed place. I must get my nephew Lot out of it. He had relations there. If you have any Christian relations, dear unsaved sinner, do not be amazed if those Christian friends become intensely importunate with you about the salvation of your soul. Why? just because, as Abraham knew in his day that Sodom was doomed, and that the judgment of the Lord was about to fall on that unutterably godless place, so now, we Christians know that the very next thing for the world is judgment. Mark that!

The next thing for this poor world is God's judgment. Our Lord has told us in the few verses I read just now from the seventeenth of Luke, that exactly "as it was in the days of Lot . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Without the slightest warning judgment will fall on a Christless Christendom, just as judgment fell on a godless Sodom. Happy the man that is outside of it! Wretched the man that belongs to it! Happy is the man that is clear of it — the man that has got to the mountain top — the spot of safety. You say, What is the mountain top? It is Christ. It is the knowledge of Christ. The mountain top was God's appointed

place of safety from the storm that was about to roll over that doomed city, and engulf every person that was within its precincts.

Mark how importunate Abraham is in regard to Lot and Sodom. Would to God that we Christians were half as importunate! Would to God that we believers in the Lord Jesus Christ were as really in earnest about the blessing and deliverance of the unsaved souls all around us as Abraham was for those in Sodom! You have only to read that eighteenth chapter to see how earnestly he pleads with the Lord. "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" (Gen. 18: 24.) The Lord replies that if fifty righteous be forthcoming, the city shall be saved. And if there be only forty, Lord? Yes! And if there be only thirty? Yes! And if there be only twenty? Yes! And if there be only ten, Lord? Yes! And then he ceases. All the while he was thinking of Lot; and the thought in his heart was — I believe that Lot is a righteous man, though in a wrong position, and there are sure to be a few more like him to make up the necessary ten.

But the only man in all the city that God calls righteous is that man Lot. God, however, understands the deep desire of Abraham's heart, and in the chapter which I have read this evening responds to it. Abraham wants Lot delivered, and God effects it, for we read: "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered" Whom? Lot? No. He interpreted the prayer of Abraham's heart for Lot, and He "remembered Abraham, and *sent Lot* out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt" (Gen. 19: 29).

Nothing can be more blessed than the position of the Christian now, who is importunate with God for precious souls in a doomed scene. In the goodness and grace of His heart, even though there were not the number, that Abraham fondly hoped, in that scene, God rejoiced to answer the desire of Abraham's heart, and brought deliverance to Lot.

It is not the question tonight of how few there be saved, or how many there be saved, but this — Judgment is about to fall upon this godless scene; but before it falls a message is sent by God to you to get you morally out of it. Before the judgment fell upon Sodom heavenly messengers entered its precincts, and though they had much difficulty, they got Lot and his family outside. Ah! what a picture of the difficulty that we have to get sinners persuaded now to flee to Jesus from the wrath to come.

There may be a young man in this hall tonight, who has eluded the gospel, from the first hour of his birth to this very moment. He has eluded it — escaped it, and has thought himself uncommonly clever in turning aside the keen edge of the Word of God, from the preacher's lips, or the importunate fervent entreaty of some loving, tender-hearted relation. He has escaped from the gospel as though it were the plague. Are you this young man? God is giving you, my friend, another, possibly your last, chance of salvation. Procrastinate no longer, I implore you. Trifle with the goodness of the Lord no longer, I beseech you; and if you hear of God's way of escape, the Lord help you to tread it.

Remember the scene you are in is doomed. God has "appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given

assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17: 31). Lay hold of this fact that the day of judgment is coming — not the moment of the great white throne — but the day when the Son of Man will deal with this godless scene. The day is appointed, and the One who is to execute judgment is ordained. God has fixed the day. It is appointed. You may have broken many appointments in your day, friend, but you will not break God's appointment in that day. God has appointed the day, and He will make the world, so to speak, keep the appointment. You had better let His grace save you now.

What is the history of this world? It has broken God's law, murdered God's Son, resisted God's Spirit, despised God's gospel, and is now busy frittering away God's Word. There is nothing left now for the world but judgment, and that certainly will come, in a moment when it looks not for it. Do I hear you say, What then shall I do? Come out of it in spirit. Break with it. Get outside it. That is what the gospel does for a man. It brings him outside of it.

But you may turn to me, and say, I find many a Christian pretty much in the world. I know you do; and I doubt not Lot illustrates that kind of Christian. Lot was a man who undoubtedly possessed faith. He is called in the New Testament "just Lot." I have no doubt he was a man who, when in his uncle's company, had heard a good deal about the things of the Lord. He was, however, worldly-hearted. In the thirteenth chapter we find Lot accompanying Abraham out of Egypt, where I have no doubt the former had learned a good many bad ways, for "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15: 33), and a man is always impressed by the *lowest*, not the *highest* company he keeps. When they came out of Egypt there was a little contention between their respective herdsmen, and the result was that Abraham walking in the spirit of grace, said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee . . . If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go the left" (Gen. 13: 8, 9). Abraham's yieldingness is known to all men. "So Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere," and beautifully nourished "even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar" (ver. 10). The city of Sodom was a little distance off, and thither he gradually gravitated as "he pitched his tent toward Sodom" (ver. 12).

That is in the thirteenth chapter. The next thing you read concerning Lot is in the fourteenth chapter — where you find he has got into the city; and is actually taken prisoner along with the Sodomites, by Chedorlaomer and his allies, but is delivered by the intervention of Abraham. You would think that, after that experience he would surely have learned such a lesson, and so profited by the shaking he got, that he would not go back to that place, either he or his family. That is not so. He had not learned his lesson, so when you come to this nineteenth chapter, that is before us, you find he has settled down quietly in the town, and become a magistrate. Well, you say, Is there anything wrong in a man being a magistrate? I am not saying that. I am thankful for every man who wields the civil power, who is a God-fearing person; but do you not see that what Lot wanted was a position in the world, though doubtless his desire at the same time was to improve the world, and to whitewash Sodom — which God had described as "wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly," in fact unmendably bad, and only ripe for judgment.

Now see what took place. Lot was anxious, and vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day today with their unlawful deeds" (2 Peter 2: 7, 8). The fact was he was a converted man in the wrong place. He ought to have been entirely separate from it. He gradually got from the plain into the city, and eventually they made him a magistrate. Doubtless he thought that when he was a magistrate, he would do great things; but what was the result? Did he put the world right? No. And do you think the gospel puts the world right? No, nothing will put the world right but judgment. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26: 9). You say, That is a terribly poor prospect for the world. Yes, you are right. The world is rushing on to judgment; but meantime the gospel comes and carries souls out of it, delivering them from the scene through which they have to pass.

The reception of the gospel has present as well as eternal effects for good. Of those who receive it, we read, that they have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1: 4). That is what Lot's history does not illustrate. Lot and his family got thoroughly into the world, and were tainted with the moral corruption that lust produced. Long breathing a morally polluted atmosphere deadened conscience, and begot evil and unheard-of ways (see Gen. 19: 30-38). That is the lesson I learn from Lot and his children.

Let us now look at the way in which he gets at length delivered out of Sodom. The Lord Jesus bids you and me look at and learn from this scene, otherwise He would not have said so emphatically: "As it was in the days of Lot . . . thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed;" and, lest there should be among His followers any lingering in sin or procrastinating, He adds that sharp, short, trite sentence, that I would to God were burned deeply into the conscience of every lingerer here tonight — "*Remember Lot's wife!*" She was a person who was almost saved, but was not. She was within sight of the place of safety, but failed to reach it. She was on the verge of getting divinely appointed security, but missed it. Two things worked in her heart to her ruin. Unbelief and disobedience. She did not in her heart believe that God would judge Sodom, and spite of His plain command to the contrary, she would look back, and in that moment she was cut off, and she stands an everlasting beacon of the awful folly of disobeying the Lord.

Ah! my unconverted, world-loving friend, you think you can have your own way. You can; I admit it; but you will repent it for eternity, unless God bring you to deep repentance here. Lot's wife may well warn you. She stands an everlasting beacon, I repeat, to this world of the insensate folly of a soul that might have been saved, but was not, through unbelief and disobedience. Therefore our Lord cries, with the most emphatic language possible — "*Remember Lot's wife!*" God help you to remember Lot's wife; for if you do not receive Jesus as your blessed Saviour now, you may never have another opportunity; and you will repent in eternity the awful folly of not simply obeying the gospel.

Let us turn to our chapter now, and see how God answers Abraham's prayer. Two angels go to Sodom in the evening. The sun is setting. The shades of night are falling on that city of corruption and lust, as these two messengers, freighted with the thoughts of God, and tidings of deliverance for souls in that doomed city, enter it. I know a man here tonight who has a similar message; and just as these men spoke in Sodom, so I tell you tonight, my friends, that judgment

is about to fall; but you yet have time to escape it. You may have salvation just now. I stand here this evening to tell you of the wonderful way of escape that God is pointing out to sinners, through the death and resurrection of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two angels — I call them heavenly evangelists, because indeed they were such — enter the city. Lot sees them, and accosts them. He feels that there is something about them to which his heart responds. He wants them to go into his house. But no, they are chary about that. They say, "Nay, but we will abide in the street all night" (ver. 2). They would not enter Lot's house. You say, Why not? I think the reason is very simple. They did not think Lot's house was of good repute. The manners of his house were such that the two messengers felt that they would rather stay outside than enter it. Christians, what a lesson for you and me. What is the atmosphere of your house and mine? Is the atmosphere of your house and mine such that God would like to come into them? Is your house one where Jesus is always to be found, and His disciples always welcome? These servants of God felt that Lot's house had not a good savour about it, and they proposed to stay outside.

However, at length, Lot constrains them, and they come in; and no sooner are they inside than the men of the city gather round about, and the true character of the iniquity and godlessness of the place is made manifest. The crowd demands that the strangers be brought out. Lot expostulates with them. He pleads with them. He is even ready to abase his own children to cover and protect these strangers. At length the riot gets so bad that they say to him, "Stand back." Their anger is aroused, and they cry, "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." What moral power has he over them when their passions and lusts are roused? None, and they plainly tell him, "Now will we deal worse with thee than with them." They would have broken in the door; but at that moment the door is opened, and the men draw Lot within.

The next thing we find is that those outside are struck with blindness. Now, mark you, God is striking Christendom with blindness in the very hour I speak — with moral blindness, spiritual blindness. We are drifting with lightning rapidity to the moment of which the second chapter of 2nd Thessalonians speaks, when it says that — "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved . . . for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2: 10-12).

I quite admit that the full application of that scripture will be consequent on the day when the Lord Jesus has come for His people, and when the Church, then completed, has been taken away, and every Christian has been removed out of the scene. Then will judicial blindness fall upon those who have rejected the light, as well as grace and privilege. But although the moment of the full application of the scripture has not yet come, every man, that looks abroad today, and sees what is going on, cannot but be struck with the amount of what I call moral blindness that is passing over Christendom, and more than in any other place under the sun — the land you and I live in — the British Isles, so favoured of God with His Word.

The Bible is being slowly but surely torn to pieces, and committed to limbo. The very men who should have been the conservators of the Scriptures — the professors, the up to date, but, alas! unconverted professors of theology — have stripped it page by page, and book by book,

until, were we to believe these learned infidels, there would not be seven pages of it left for faith to lay hold of, or for the soul to feed upon. Moses, a myth! Isaiah, a fool! Daniel, an impostor! and John not to be believed in! The pseudo-friends of the Bible have been so impregnated with scientific infidelity — with what God calls "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6: 20) — that their evolutionary theories — in the very face of Scripture — lead ordinary newspaper critics to say, "If Professor -'s arguments are sound, the Bible of the future will be a good handbook of biology, and commonsense will take the place of the Holy Ghost." What a scathing rebuke to a professed friend of the Lord Jesus!

And this in the end of the nineteenth century of grace! God is striking this land with blindness, you may be certain. Thank God for the men that hold on to, and proclaim His "lord simply. They have the light anyway. Have you not got that light? May God give it to you. What I have been alluding to is really the world — the natural man — tinkering the Word of God; but it has no capacity whatever to grasp its contents. It is only by the Holy Ghost that Scripture is rightly to be understood. The natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God, and that is the lesson which one learns from Sodom in Lot's day. The world is left to its blindness and the next thing is that judgment falls.

We are not told whether the blindness was removed from the eyes of these people, but this we are told, that they groped to find the door, but could not. And now these evangelists address the people for whom they came. And I, too, turn from those who oppose the Lord, and address any who are wanting salvation, and who, when they hear that judgment is coming, are anxious to escape it. The angels say to Lot, in verse 12: "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it" (vers. 12, 13). They have a double commission. They are sent by the Lord to intimate the fact of coming judgment; but, ere the judgment falls, they desire to deliver and bring out, not only Lot himself, but any in whom his heart is interested. How touching are these words" Hast thou here any besides?"

Christian! have you no unconverted sons? Have you no unconverted daughters? Have you no unconverted loved ones? Hear God's solemn query and command of grace: "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place."

God warns; faith hears, and acts accordingly. So we read: "And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city" (ver. 14). His soul is roused, and he goes forth. He is awakened to solemn realities, and is in earnest. If we have not hitherto been in earnest, may God waken us up. Dear Christian friends, what we want is earnestness! I feel how I want it. I long for it. Oh! that we were all truly awakened to the gravity of the situation around us. What ought to mark every one of us is a sense of the value and the danger of immortal souls, and the urgent necessity of impressing every one of them with the fact that judgment is coming, and that there is a way — and one way only — to escape from it. Are you and I wanting our relations, our friends, our neighbours, to be saved?

There seems to have been a *carte blanche* given to Lot. "Hast thou here *any* besides?" He had two daughters in the house, but the angels say, Have you any others in whom you are interested? Go and tell them! He is roused, goes out, and speaks to his sons-in-law. I think I see that scene. It was night, for we are told the morning had not yet come. No, the morning of the day had not come. The morning does not break till the fifteenth verse. It was thus in the dead of night. I think I see Lot. He leaves his house and goes down to the house of his son-in-law. He hammers at the door. He knocks so loudly that every sleeper in the house is wakened. May God wake up every sleeping soul in this hall tonight! Would to God I could waken you, and rouse your godless soul! Lot awoke those he went to. I have no doubt they wondered. "Who knocks?" "I," "You, father-in-law — what is it?" He replies, "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city." What a message! And, coming too, from the man, who had been going to put the city right. "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city," falls on the ears of the suddenly roused ones.

And what now? Does the message produce much effect, when the father-in-law gives it. Now, listen; so much for worldliness; so much for tampering with the world; so much for our hearts being enamoured of the things, and getting engaged with the favours of the world. The men of the world read our lives, and know perfectly well whether we live in the world, and love its things, or not. Lot's family read his life, and here is their comment. Do the sons-in-law mock Lot. Oh, dear, no! They have too much reverence for that. They do not mock him. They listen to his words, hear all he had to say, and draw their conclusion. What is it? "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law" (ver. 14).

I think they said to one another: What has happened? What has come over him? Has he lost his reason? The man that has come into the city to live, and has got into a position in the municipal government thereof, has given us his daughters in marriage, now in the dead of night comes and tells us that the Lord is going to destroy this place. What absurdity is this? Truly he seemed to them as one that mocked. They thought he was, mad, or was playing the fool for a purpose. They did not mock, but judged he was doing so. They declined to believe him, because this message was so totally different from, and out of keeping with all his previous pathway.

That is the point. They could not reconcile the two things. They could not reconcile this startling message, given in the dead of night, with the fact that he had voluntarily come to, and lived in the city, loved its society, its company and its pleasures, and though pained by its sins, nevertheless chose — after being taken once out of it — to remain as a citizen in it. They could not understand this. "He seemed as one that mocked."

What was the effect of Lot's exhortation? I do not believe there was any effect. I think his sons-in-law went back to their beds, to continue the slumber, out of which they were so unexpectedly roused to hear of coming judgment of which they were incredulous, because of the bygone ways of the herald. Lot completely failed in his mission. It is of no use for us to proclaim "judgment to come" to our neighbours, if it be patent and manifest that our hearts are engrossed with the world's things. There is no use in our speaking of the future, if it be plain that we are only living for the present. The effect of such inconsistency must be to rob our testimony for God of all power. Oh! what a lesson to learn in Sodom! May we each heed it.

Lot having failed in his mission, returned to his house. Unbelief destroyed his relations, and procrastination almost destroyed him. This is evident. Manifestly he lingered, and would have stayed yet awhile in Sodom, but we read: "When the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; *lest thou be consumed* in the iniquity of the city" (ver. 15). Lot's outside testimony had absolutely failed, and inside the house it was not much better, but his wife and his two daughters evidently are impressed by the testimony of the two strangers. As far as Lot's influence outside was concerned, it had not the weight of a feather. Not one solitary soul in all Sodom believed him, and, I repeat, there is to me in this a most pregnant lesson.

Mercy always rejoices against judgment, and this scene is no exception to this principle. "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city," was Mercy's voice to Lot. She, so to speak, says to Lot: "You cannot now impress other people. You have had your chance, and you have missed it. You might have been God's witness in Sodom. You have failed in this, and lost your opportunity. Now, ere judgment falls on it, escape yourself." And what does he do? He lingers. He procrastinates. He starts, if I may so say, the sad history of the race of procrastinators of whom you read so much in Scripture, and see so many around you.

Lingerer, you have often thought of coming to the Lord but you have procrastinated. Young man, son of Christian parents, you know perfectly well the deep desire of their hearts for your salvation, and you have felt that you ought to come to the Saviour, yet you linger. Lingerer, procrastinator, you know full well that your only safety and wisdom lie in coming to the Saviour, and you mean to do it some day, but still you linger. What folly is yours. More souls are eternally lost through procrastination in coming to Christ, than by open, glaring sin.

But, to follow our story, we read: "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; *the Lord being merciful unto him*; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city" (ver. 16). Oh, what grace! It is just like God's grace to take a lingerer by the hand. Give me your hand tonight, friend, that I may lead you to Jesus. Let me lead you to the Saviour! Will you not do it? I wish you would do what a woman did once in this very hall. While speaking, I had said, "Oh, give me your hand, and let me lead you to Jesus." As the meeting separated, I met her. Tears ran down her cheeks, as I asked, "Are you decided?" "Thank God, I am," she said. "And when did you come to Jesus?" "Tonight while you were speaking. When you put out your hand and said, 'Give me your hand,' I put out mine, and I came to the Lord on the spot, and He saved me then and there!" Now, that is just what I want you to do tonight. Give me your hand, and let me lead you to Jesus. Oh! be saved tonight! Be won tonight. Be really decided for Jesus tonight! Be on the Lord's side. Procrastinate no longer.

But you may ask, What do you mean by procrastination? I daresay you read it when you were a child at school. Procrastination simply means putting off until tomorrow, what should be done today. Its meaning was burned into me by a copy slip I used in my school days. Hundreds of times I wrote it "Procrastination is the thief of time." I should like a similar copy slip to be put into every school today, and I tell you how I would alter it — "Procrastination is the thief of souls." There is not a man in hell tonight that meant to be there. There is not a single soul lost

that ever meant to be so. Each meant to get right with God some day, but put it off just one day too long, and died suddenly in sin. And you mean to come to Jesus some day. Why put it off, then?

Rowland Hill was perfectly right when he labelled it "Procrastination — the recruiting officer of hell." What? "Procrastination the recruiting officer of hell!" Yes. There is nothing leads a man to perdition like procrastination — putting off till tomorrow what should be done today. That is what it means. And what should you do today? Bow at the feet of Jesus. Make up your mind for the Lord. Decide for the Lord. You have thought on many a previous occasion that you would be a Christian; but you could not make up your mind. Oh! tonight, be the Lord's. May the Lord's mercy meet you, as it met Lot. "And *while he lingered*, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him." The infinite mercy of that God has spared you till now, and again gives you the opportunity of salvation through this simple message. I wish from the bottom of my heart that I could draw you to Jesus, and get you morally outside this doomed world, as God's angels eventually led out Lot and his family.

By this time it was morning, and the sun was up. The inhabitants of Sodom were beginning to stir about; and I think I see that company going down the street. It would be a strange sight to the Sodomites, doubtless. Two angels, and each with two captives. One had Lot in one hand, and his wife in the other. The other angel had the two daughters by the hand. They were being fairly dragged out. And is that the way men get converted? you ask. Very often. It was the way I got converted. The Lord really dragged me out of the path of folly and sin I had been so long in. It is really grace that does it. Think of it! I have little doubt the people of Sodom sneered, and the sons-in-law laughed, and that many a joke was made that day as they saw Lot and his family setting forth. Scoffer, you are welcome to your jokes; but you will repent them in the eternal damnation of hell. You will repent your sneers at preacher and preaching, and at Christ my Master, and at God's true people. You will yet repent of all your unbelieving folly, but, let me beseech of you, repent of it ere it be too late.

Yes! without doubt fine fun these Sodomites had, as they saw Lot led to the outside of their city, and then treating his exodus as nothing but a joke, they resumed their ways of sin, and business went on as usual. "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded," says our Lord. They held their market; their exchange was opened; business men met in it; and in came the peasants with their produce from the country. The housewives went out to buy the food for the day, and everybody was busy. The sons-in-law would no doubt be there — godless men they were — and they would be telling their friends how the old father-in-law had come in the dead of night, and roused them with a foolish story about their city being about to be destroyed. Why, it never was more prosperous. Look at the sun. It never shone more brightly. Yes, quite true, "the sun was risen upon the earth, when Lot entered into Zoar" (ver. 23), and outwardly all was unchanged in nature, and in the city. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" or "outward show" (Luke 17: 20) is our Lord's remark, which leads to His comment on Sodom's case. Note this, for God is not going to give the world one single bit of warning, when He judges it, any more than He gave Sodom. Its only warning was the angels leading Lot out of it, and that warning they clearly despised, just as careless men despise the fact that God is saving many by the gospel now, just before the Lord comes again.

And now what about Lot? Led outside the city, he and those with him are put on the road to safety; but being on the road is not enough — they must reach the spot of safety. Hence the emphatic injunction that now rings in his ears: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (ver. 17). Sinner, have you really escaped to Christ? "Escape for thy life," is the word. "Look not behind thee," do not turn back; "neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." That is also God's monitory word to you, my friend. Have you escaped for your life? Then look not behind. Tarry not. Reach the only spot of safety, Christ. Your life is in danger. Soul, your eternal destiny hangs in the balance tonight. Know this, that there is nothing but judgment for those who tarry in the plain. There is no safety until you reach God's appointed spot at the mountain top. There is no safety except in Christ, in the blessed Saviour, who died and lives again. If you trust in Him, He will save you for time and for eternity.

Fairly outside the city, Lot pleads for a little bit of a respite — a little bit of the world, so to speak. It is a strange thing how the heart clings to what is to be judged. He says, "Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; oh, let me escape thither . . . and my soul shall live" (ver. 20). He gains his point, and goes to Zoar instead of to the hill-top. And now what do I read? "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." As Lot got to the place of comparative safety the doomed places around were destroyed; for "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17: 29). Short-lived indeed was Sodom's fate after Lot's departure.

At Zoar Lot had safety, but he had not quietude, for he had not implicitly, obeyed the Lord. The soul that turns to God in a half-hearted way is safe, but he is not very happy. Many a man who believes in Jesus is not at peace, I will tell you why. He does not fully follow the Lord. He has not got enough energy of soul, perhaps. You have just enough of Christ to make you miserable. There are many men of that sort, and Lot illustrates them. He is safe, but not at rest in Zoar, so presently he goes on to the mountain top, to the real place of safety (ver. 30). The real place of safety for you and me is to be in Christ, and then to be occupied with Christ, to be delighting in Christ, as He now is accepted in glory. We need not only to trust Him, not only to believe in Him, not only to rest in the work that He finished for us, but to have the heart occupied with Christ, and Christ alone.

The man who simply looks to Christ in faith for salvation, and does not break thoroughly with the world, is never very happy. You will find him troubled by doubts, and fears, and uncertainty. That was what happened to Lot. He was saved, but he was not happy till he went to the spot to which God bade him go.

And now one word about Lot's wife. We read that she "looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Half-hearted soul! "Remember Lot's wife." Nearly saved, but not quite! Near to the place of safety; but not in it. Are you almost converted, but not quite? To be "almost persuaded" is of no avail. "Remember Lot's wife!" if such be your state.

It is quite possible that you may have been impressed, and been made somewhat anxious, before today. Possibly you have been brought under the sound of the gospel by some Christian friend against your will. Do you believe its tale? It is true. But you say, I cannot believe that God will judge a scene like this. "Remember Lot's wife." That was the thought, I believe, that Lot's wife indulged in as she walked along. She lingered a bit behind her husband, and then came up this thought — I do not think the Lord will judge the place after all. Although her body was outside Sodom, her heart was within it. Thus thinking she determined — spite of the word, "Look not behind thee" — to have a little bit of a look, and just at the moment she was entering Zoar, the place of safety, she disobeyed God, and judgment overtook her. This foolish woman disobeys the plain command of the Lord, "Look not behind thee." Unbelief led to disobedience. She evidently did not believe that God would judge Sodom, and harbouring the thought, Was it true? she turned, and "she became a pillar of salt."

Friend, have you learned the lesson of the pillar of salt? A stranger travelling through that scene afterwards, and looking over the blackened country as he journeyed, would, with surprise, be attracted by the bright and shining pillar, untouched by smoke, which met his view. Small wonder if he said, "What means this?" Lot's wife did not fall in the judgment of Sodom. It was a distinct judgment by the hand of God on unbelief, which He always judges sooner or later. Disobedience, too, He always judges.

And there that pillar of salt stood, a witness to the awful folly of the soul that disobeys God. My dear unsaved friends, may God cause you to learn the proper lesson from that beacon. And what is it? Be whole-hearted. Be simple and sincere. Do not procrastinate. Believe in Jesus fully. Receive Him, and let Christ, the heavenly Saviour, be the object of your heart, and from this moment set out to serve Him. "Remember Lot's wife." You must push on in faith and be saved, or you will be cut down in unbelief shortly. You must reach the spot of safety, or be cut off. She was very near the place, but not in it; and how she resembles lots of souls in Christendom today!

Perhaps you say, Whom do you mean? Unsaved friend, "thou art the man." Thou hast been moved, touched, reached, almost saved, but thou art still outside the place of safety. Possibly your friends think you are all right, but God knows, and you know also in your conscience, that you are not all right; and the future will show that, too, if you die in your sins. Oh! God give you just now to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to be Christ's fully, and to walk in His service till He come? I trust that whatever you and I forget, we shall each of us, day by day, "remember Lot's wife."

Haste, traveller, haste! the night comes on,

And many a shining hour is gone;

The storm is gathering in the west,

And thou art far from home and rest.

Haste, traveller, haste!

Oh! far from home thy footsteps stray  
Christ is the life, and Christ the way,  
And Christ the light. Yon setting sun  
Sinks ere the morn is scarce begun.

Haste, traveller, haste!

The rising tempest sweeps the sky,  
The rains descend, the winds are high  
The waters swell, and death and fear  
Beset thy path — no refuge near.

Haste, traveller, haste

Oh! yes; a shelter you may gain,  
A covert from the wind and rain  
A hiding-place, a rest, a borne,  
A refuge from the wrath to come.

Haste, traveller, haste

Then linger not in all the plain;  
Flee for thy life, the mountain gain  
Look not behind, make no delay;  
Oh! speed thee, speed thee on thy way.

Haste, traveller, haste!

Poor, lost, benighted soul, art thou  
Willing to find salvation now?  
There yet is hope — hear mercy's call

Truth, life, light, way, in Christ is all.

Haste, traveller, haste!