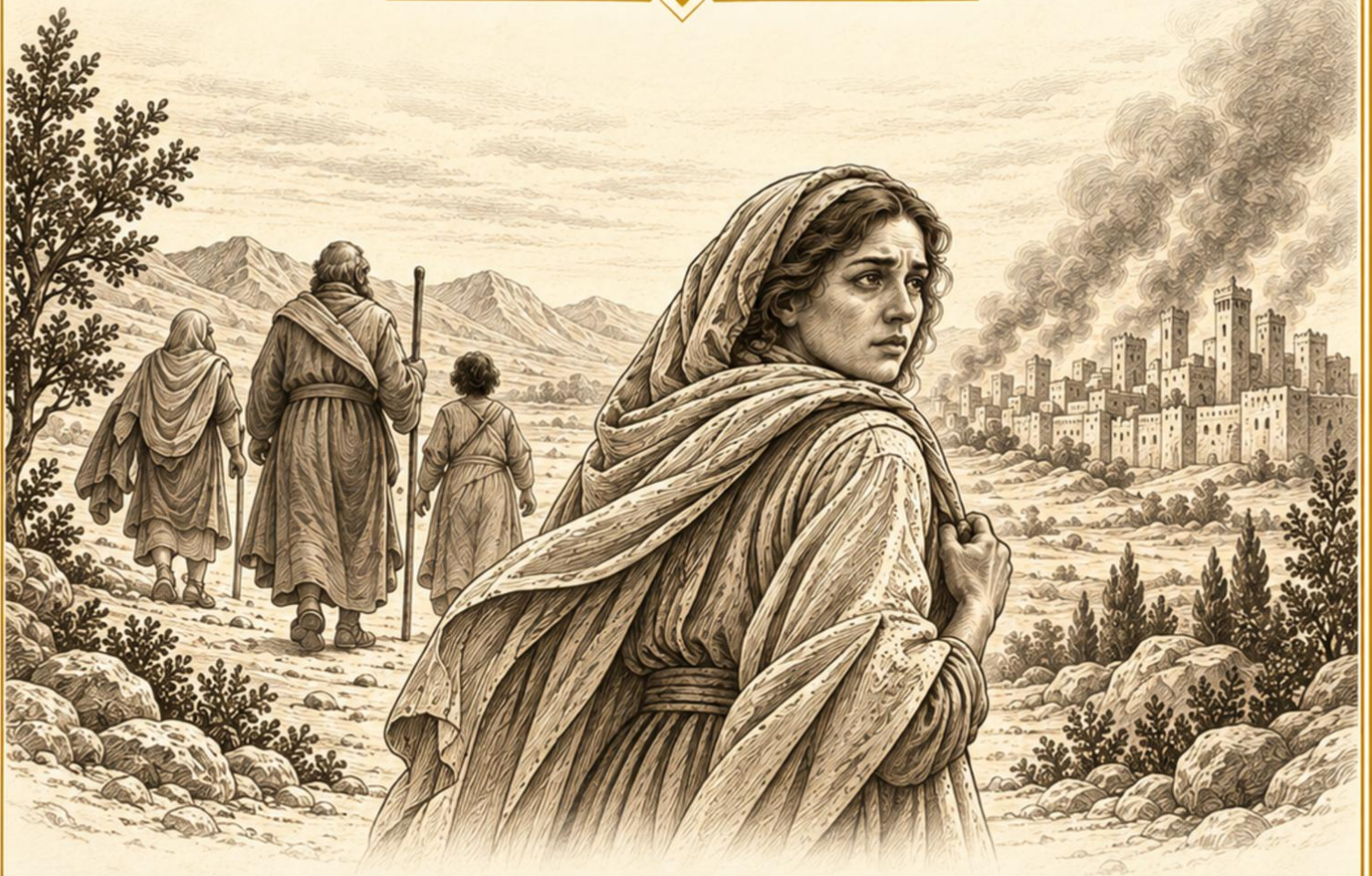


REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

MORE THAN A LOOK

GENESIS 19:15-26 • LUKE 17:32



SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

More Than a Look

Sermon Transcript

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Reason Together Church

Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

If you did not bring a Bible today, that is all right.

You may listen carefully as we read the Scriptures together.

Before we begin, let us pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us together today.

Open our understanding as we open Your Word.

Help us to hear not merely a familiar story, but the warning Your Son commanded us to remember.

Give us humility where Scripture is silent.

Give us courage where Scripture is clear.

Turn our eyes away from everything that competes with obedience.

Fix our eyes upon Jesus Christ.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

If you are visiting with us today, we are grateful that you are here.

We do not pass an offering plate at Reason Together Church.

Our guests are never expected to give.

Members should continue to give through their home church, and anyone may give only as the Lord leads.

There is a giving box available in the back.

There is also a guest card if you would like to share only your first name and email address.

After the service, you are invited to the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free, and so are the refills on conversation.

I will also be available in the Pastor's Study if you have a question, need prayer or simply want someone to listen.

Today we are considering a question that came to me this week.

Someone remembered our earlier study about Sodom and Gomorrah and asked about one brief moment in the escape.

Why did Lot's wife look back?

Then I came across an explanation that claimed the Hebrew word meant a longing, desiring gaze.

It claimed that she did not merely disobey.

It claimed that she wanted to preserve Sodom, and therefore became salt because salt is a preservative.

That explanation is memorable.

It is also more certain than the Bible permits us to be.

The Hebrew word does not automatically mean desire.

The Bible never tells us exactly what she was thinking.

The Bible never says the salt represented preservation.

Yet the explanation places its finger upon a serious question.

Was this really only a movement of her eyes?

Or was it more than a look?

Genesis gives us one sentence.

"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

Jesus gives us three words.

"Remember Lot's wife."

Her name is never recorded.

Her words are never recorded.

Her thoughts are never recorded.

Only one action is recorded.

Yet Jesus commanded every generation of disciples to remember her.

To understand her final look, we must begin with an earlier look.

Genesis chapter 13 tells us that Abraham and Lot had become too prosperous to remain together in the same place.

Their herdsmen were quarreling.

Abraham offered Lot the first choice of land.

Genesis 13:10 says, "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where."

Lot saw water.

Lot saw fertile land.

Lot saw room for his animals.

Lot saw economic opportunity.

Lot saw what looked like the best possible choice.

Verse 11 says, "Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan."

He looked.

He chose.

He traveled east.

He pitched his tent toward Sodom.

Later he lived in Sodom.

By Genesis 19, he was sitting in Sodom's gate.

Lot did not wake up one morning and decide to place his whole family in the middle of a wicked city.

He moved there through a progression of reasonable-looking choices.

The first look was not the entire fall.

But the first look set a direction.

That is how compromise frequently works.

It does not announce itself as rebellion.

It asks us to make one practical choice without considering its spiritual destination.

It asks us to value what is visible more than what God has revealed.

It asks us to think about income, convenience, comfort and opportunity while ignoring influence, temptation, witness and worship.

Lot chose what looked best.

Then God spoke to Abraham.

Genesis 13:14 says, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art."

Lot lifted his eyes and chose by appearance.

Abraham lifted his eyes because God told him to look.

Lot selected what he could see.

Abraham received what God promised.

Lot moved toward a city built by men.

Abraham continued to seek a city whose builder and maker is God.

Two men looked.

The direction of faith made the difference.

Years passed.

Sodom became more than an address for Lot's family.

Their house was there.

Their possessions were there.

Their daily routines were there.

Their relationships were there.

Their social identity was there.

Lot remained troubled by the city's wickedness.

Second Peter calls him a just man and says that his righteous soul was vexed by the unlawful deeds around him.

But this presents us with a sobering possibility.

A person can be grieved by the world's wickedness while becoming dependent upon the world's comforts.

We can complain about a culture while arranging our entire lives around what that culture offers.

We can dislike its morality while loving its approval.

We can condemn its sins while fearing the loss of its conveniences.

Disapproval is not the same as separation.

The angels came to Lot's house.

They announced that judgment was coming.

Lot went to warn his sons-in-law.

Genesis 19:14 says, "But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law."

The Bible does not tell us why they did not believe him.

We should not pretend that it does.

But the scene should cause every parent, pastor and Christian witness to examine himself.

Had Lot lived in Sodom so comfortably that his warning sounded inconsistent?

Had his family heard him speak seriously about judgment before that night?

Had years of compromise weakened the force of one urgent sermon?

We cannot spend years communicating that this world is our home and then expect one warning to convince our families that eternity matters most.

Morning came.

Genesis 19:15 says, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city."

The command was urgent.

There was no time to sell the house.
There was no time to organize the furniture.
There was no time to settle every account.
There was no time to wait for visible proof.
They were told to leave.
Then Genesis records something unexpected.
"And while he lingered."
Lot's wife was not the only member of the family who struggled to leave.
Lot lingered.
The man who knew the angels were speaking truth still hesitated.
The man called just in the New Testament still had to be pulled away from judgment.
That does not excuse his wife.
But it prevents us from treating her as though everyone else ran eagerly while she alone cared about Sodom.
The entire household had become rooted there.
Then the angels took them by the hand.
Genesis says, "The men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters."
Do not miss those hands.
Mercy took Lot's hand.
Mercy took his wife's hand.
Mercy took the daughters' hands.
They did not escape because they were faster than everyone else.
They did not escape because they deserved special treatment.
They did not rescue themselves.
Genesis explains it plainly.
"The LORD being merciful unto him."
God warned them because He was merciful.
God urged them because He was merciful.
God took them by the hand because He was merciful.
God brought them outside because He was merciful.
Grace was present before judgment fell.

But grace did not make the warning unnecessary.
Grace was the reason the warning had been given.
Once outside the city, one of the messengers spoke.
"Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."
There are four parts to the command.
Escape for thy life.
Look not behind thee.
Do not remain in the plain.
Escape to the mountain.
They were told what to leave.
They were told what not to do.
They were told where not to stay.
They were told where to go.
Biblical rescue involves both separation and refuge.
It is not enough to say that we dislike Sodom.
We must flee toward the place God provides.
Sometimes we want enough distance from sin to avoid its consequences while remaining close enough to retain its comforts.
God did not tell them to relocate to the edge of the city.
He told them to escape the entire plain.
Then Lot began negotiating.
He said the mountain was too far.
He asked permission to enter the little city of Zoar.
Even in the middle of rescue, Lot wanted the terms adjusted.
God mercifully granted the request.
The family moved toward Zoar.
Genesis 19:23 says, "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."
The sun rose as it did every morning.
The city probably looked much as it had the day before.
People would have awakened.
Meals would have been prepared.

Merchants would have expected business.
Builders would have expected to continue building.
Nothing in the brightness of that morning proved that the angels were right.
The family had to flee because God had spoken.
They were not permitted to wait until sight confirmed the warning.
Faith had to move before fire became visible.
This is why the command not to look back mattered.
They did not need to inspect the sky.
They did not need to verify that destruction had begun.
They did not need one final view of the house.
They needed to trust the Word of God and keep moving.
Then verse 24 says, "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven."
The warning became visible reality.
The ordinary morning became a day of judgment.
Verse 26 says, "But his wife looked back from behind him."
The Hebrew verb is *nabat*.
It can mean to look, behold, regard or direct one's attention.
It is not merely the most casual possible word for sight.
But it does not carry an automatic meaning of longing or desire.
The same word is used when Abram looked toward heaven.
It is used when Moses was afraid to look upon God.
It is used when the Israelites looked upon the brazen serpent.
The emotion must come from context, not from a definition invented for a sermon.
Yet the Hebrew gives us something certain.
The same verb appears in the command and in the violation.
"Look not behind thee."
"His wife looked back."
We cannot truthfully say this was not about disobedience.
It was directly about disobedience.
The question is what that disobedience revealed.
Scripture does not tell us exactly why she looked.

Perhaps she was curious.
Perhaps she doubted.
Perhaps she grieved for people left behind.
Perhaps she thought about her home and possessions.
Perhaps she wanted to return.
Any of those suggestions may be possible.
None of them is stated in Genesis.
We must not replace silence with confidence.
The Bible is sufficient even when it does not satisfy every curiosity.
We also read that she looked "from behind him."
That may simply identify her location behind Lot.
It may indicate that she had fallen behind.
The text does not allow us to reconstruct every step.
But it presents a solemn picture.
She had been taken by the hand.
She had been brought outside.
She had begun moving toward safety.
Now she was behind.
Then she looked back.
Turning back often begins by slowing forward progress.
Prayer becomes less important.
Scripture becomes less important.
Fellowship becomes less important.
Conviction becomes less urgent.
The world behind begins to appear more attractive than the road of faith ahead.
Her look was more than a look because God had prohibited it.
Her look was more than a look because her life depended upon trusting His warning.
Her look was more than a look because mercy had already taken her hand.
Her look was more than a look because it interrupted the direction of escape.
Her look was more than a look because Jesus later placed it between earthly possessions and the attempt to save earthly life.
Then she became a pillar of salt.

Genesis presents this as an actual act of judgment.

Some people ask why salt.

The Bible does not provide a sentence explaining the symbolism.

Salt can represent several things in Scripture.

It appears in offerings.

It appears in covenant language.

It seasons and preserves.

It also appears in descriptions of barrenness, desolation and judgment.

Deuteronomy 29:23 speaks of "brimstone, and salt, and burning" and directly compares that desolation to Sodom and Gomorrah.

That is a closer Biblical connection than the claim about preservation.

We may observe that salt preserves, but we may not announce that this was God's hidden explanation.

The Bible does not say that she tried to preserve Sodom and became preservation itself.

That is a striking line.

It is not a revealed interpretation.

The safest conclusion is the one the text gives.

She disobeyed during the escape, and judgment came suddenly.

She received no additional recorded warning after she turned.

Repeated warnings can create the illusion that another warning will always come.

Sometimes people say, "I will respond later."

They assume conviction will return at a convenient time.

They assume the door will remain open.

They assume tomorrow will look like today.

Lot's wife reminds us that judgment can interrupt an ordinary morning.

Then Genesis turns our attention back to Abraham.

Verse 27 says, "And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD."

Verse 28 says, "And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah."

Abraham also looked toward Sodom.

He was not judged.

That proves the physical act of seeing the city was not itself the sin.

Abraham looked after judgment from the place where he had stood before the Lord.

Lot's wife looked during escape in violation of a direct command.

The place from which we look matters.

The reason we look matters.

Our response to God's Word matters.

Verse 29 says, "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow."

God remembered Abraham and acted in mercy.

Centuries later, Jesus commanded His disciples to remember Lot's wife and heed the warning.

God remembered the intercessor.

We are commanded to remember the warning.

Now turn to Luke chapter 17.

The Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come.

Jesus then spoke to His disciples about the days of the Son of man.

He compared those days to Noah's day.

People ate.

People drank.

People married.

People gave in marriage.

Then the flood came.

Jesus compared those days to Lot's day.

Luke 17:28 says, "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded."

None of those activities is inherently sinful.

Eating is not sinful.

Drinking is not sinful in the sense described here.

Buying and selling are not sinful.

Planting is not sinful.

Building is not sinful.

The danger was not that everyone was committing an obviously scandalous act at the same moment.

The danger was that ordinary life occupied them completely while judgment approached.

They lived as though the schedule would continue forever.

They planned meals without thinking about God.

They signed contracts without thinking about eternity.

They planted for another harvest without preparing to meet their Judge.

They built houses in a city whose time had expired.

Respectable busyness can be a form of spiritual unreadiness.

A person does not have to commit Sodom's most notorious sins to be unprepared for Christ.

A life can be busy, productive, comfortable and morally respectable while God is almost entirely absent from it.

Jesus said, "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

Then He said, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

Jesus' primary subject was His coming.

Lot's wife is not merely an illustration about breaking a bad habit.

She is an end-times warning about readiness for Christ.

Then Jesus speaks about a man on a housetop.

"He which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away."

Do not miss the word "stuff."

Jesus placed Lot's wife beside the temptation to return for possessions.

The possessions were not necessarily wicked.

The danger was allowing them to become more valuable than obedience and life.

We own things.

Then, if we are not careful, the things begin to own us.

We say, "It is only a house."

But we cannot imagine surrendering it.

We say, "It is only money."

But we arrange our morality around protecting it.

We say, "It is only a position."

But we will compromise truth to keep it.

We say, "It is only a relationship."

But we will disobey God rather than lose it.

Anything we refuse to surrender to Christ has the potential to become the thing toward which we look back.

Immediately after speaking about the stuff in the house, Jesus says, "Remember Lot's wife."

Remember that she was warned.

Remember that she was shown mercy.

Remember that she was taken by the hand.

Remember that she was brought outside.

Remember that the command was clear.

Remember that the morning looked ordinary.

Remember that she began moving toward safety.

Remember that she looked back.

Remember that judgment was sudden.

Then verse 33 says, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

The popular explanation I mentioned earlier reverses the order.

It says that this sentence immediately preceded "Remember Lot's wife."

It actually follows it.

But it is certainly part of Jesus' interpretation.

Do not return for the stuff.

Remember Lot's wife.

Do not make preserving earthly life your highest purpose.

The Greek words do not establish a wordplay with salt as preservation.

The force comes from the whole warning.

If this present life becomes our supreme treasure, we will lose what we are trying to keep.

If we surrender our lives to Christ, He gives life that judgment cannot take away.

Lot's wife had great spiritual privilege.

She was married to a man the New Testament calls just.

She belonged to Abraham's extended family.

She heard a warning from heavenly messengers.

She saw supernatural intervention.

She felt an angel take her hand.

She walked beside people being rescued.

But no one is saved through a spouse's faith.

No one is saved through a parent's prayers.

No one is saved by attending the right church.
No one is saved by knowing a pastor.
No one is saved by living near spiritual things.
Every person must personally repent and believe the Gospel.
We must also be careful here.
Genesis tells us about her physical judgment.
It does not provide an explicit statement about her eternal destiny.
We should not use one verse to prove that a saved person can lose salvation.
We should not claim to know with certainty that she never possessed faith.
The Bible has told us what we need to remember.
Physical proximity to rescue is not a substitute for personal trust in the God who rescues.
There is another pastoral distinction we must make.
Not every memory of the past is a sinful backward look.
Some people hear this story while grieving someone they love.
They remember a spouse who died.
They remember a home they had to leave.
They remember a season that ended.
They remember family members who live far away.
Grief is not rebellion.
Memory is not automatically unbelief.
The Bible itself commands us to remember many things.
The question is not whether you remember what lies behind.
The question is whether your attachment to it prevents obedience now.
Paul wrote in Philippians 3, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark."
Paul did not suffer amnesia.
He remembered his testimony.
He remembered his sins.
He remembered God's mercy.
But he would not allow the past to govern the direction of his calling.
Israel looked back toward Egypt in a different way.
They remembered the food and forgot the bondage.

They remembered what satisfied their appetites and forgot the chains.
A backward-looking heart often edits the past.
It remembers the comfort and removes the cost.
It remembers the pleasure and removes the slavery.
It remembers the familiar and removes the reason God brought us out.
Jesus also said in Luke 9:62, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
A plowman looking backward cannot cut a straight furrow.
Christ is not condemning every passing temptation.
He is exposing divided allegiance.
The kingdom cannot remain one interest among many competing masters.
What are you looking back toward today?
Is it a sin that still appears beautiful in memory?
Is it an identity Christ has called you to surrender?
Is it a relationship that asks you to choose between affection and obedience?
Is it a possession that has become your security?
Is it the approval of people who will not follow where Christ leads?
Is it resentment over something God has already commanded you to release?
Is it a former version of yourself that you are afraid to leave behind?
Do not answer too quickly.
Lot's wife was already outside the city when her direction was tested.
She looked back once.
But the story of the family had been moving toward Sodom for years.
The final look revealed the seriousness of direction.
There are several different responses to the warning inside this one family.
The sons-in-law heard the warning and remained in Sodom.
Lot heard the warning and lingered until mercy pulled him forward.
Lot's wife left the city but looked back during the escape.
The daughters continued with their father into Zoar.
Abraham was outside Sodom, standing before the Lord and interceding.
The same judgment approached them all, but their responses were not the same.
Some laughed.

Some lingered.
One looked back.
Some continued forward.
One stood before God and prayed.
Where are you in that picture?
Perhaps you hear every warning as an exaggeration.
Perhaps you believe the warning but keep delaying obedience.
Perhaps you have begun to move, but part of your allegiance remains behind.
Perhaps you are continuing forward even though the road is difficult.
Perhaps God has placed you in the position of Abraham, praying for people who do not yet understand the danger.
The answer is not to compare ourselves proudly with the weakest person in the story.
The answer is to hear what God is saying to us.
Jesus did not tell His disciples to mock Lot's wife.
He did not tell them to speculate about her name.
He did not tell them to search the desert for a formation shaped like a woman.
He told them to remember.
Biblical remembrance is more than storing a fact.
When Israel remembered the Lord, they were to act according to His covenant.
When the church remembers Christ at the Lord's Supper, we proclaim His death and examine ourselves.
When Jesus says, "Remember Lot's wife," He calls the event into our present decision.
Remember her before possessions ask you to return.
Remember her before ordinary life persuades you that judgment is distant.
Remember her before delay hardens into refusal.
Remember her before a small act of disobedience appears harmless.
Remember her before proximity to Christians makes you assume that you personally belong to Christ.
There is also a difference between being removed from danger and loving the Deliverer.
The angels could take her hand.
They could place her feet outside the city.
They could point her toward safety.

They could speak the warning clearly.
They could not exercise trust in her place.
Parents can bring children to church.
They can place a Bible in their hands.
They can teach the Gospel accurately.
They can pray faithfully.
They cannot repent for their children.
A husband can love his wife, pray for her and live the Gospel before her.
He cannot believe for her.
A pastor can preach the truth, answer questions and plead with a congregation.
He cannot place saving faith inside another person's heart.
Religious privilege is a gift, but privilege creates responsibility.
The question is not only what light you have received.
The question is how you have responded to that light.
Some people imagine that clear warning is unloving.
Genesis shows the opposite.
The warning was part of the mercy.
If the angels had wanted the family to perish, they could have remained silent.
If God wanted sinners to remain comfortable until judgment, He would never send a preacher.
Love does not hide a burning building from the people inside it.
Love sounds the alarm.
Love points toward the exit.
Love takes a hesitant hand when there is still time.
The Gospel contains wonderful promises because God is loving.
The Gospel also contains solemn warnings because God is loving.
We should never preach judgment with delight in the suffering of others.
We should preach it with tears, urgency and an open invitation to the refuge.
The command not to look back also tested whether the family would accept God's judgment as righteous.
They were not told to stand and enjoy the destruction.
They were not authorized to gloat.
They were told to trust God and leave the condemned place in His hands.

Sometimes looking back is connected to the secret belief that God has taken something from us that we deserved to keep.

We obey outwardly while inwardly prosecuting God for the loss.

We say He is Lord, but we continue to argue that our plan was better.

We move forward physically while rehearsing the complaint that obedience cost too much.

Scripture does not tell us that Lot's wife thought those exact thoughts.

It does require us to examine whether we do.

Following Christ has a cost.

Jesus never concealed that cost.

He spoke about taking up the cross.

He spoke about loving Him above father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters and one's own life also.

He spoke about forsaking all that competes with discipleship.

The cost is real.

But nothing left for Christ can compare with Christ Himself.

The house in Sodom was temporary.

The city was temporary.

The possessions were temporary.

The social position was temporary.

The Word of God remained true when every visible security became smoke.

That is why readiness for Christ cannot be postponed until the world becomes less attractive.

The world will continue presenting reasons to stay.

There will always be one more purchase.

There will always be one more project.

There will always be one more achievement.

There will always be one more conversation we imagine must happen before we obey.

Jesus says the day will come suddenly.

Two people will be near each other, yet a final separation will occur.

Shared location will not create shared readiness.

Each person must belong to Christ.

The church should live with bags packed spiritually, not because we despise life, but because Christ is our life.

We work faithfully.
We love our families.
We care for our homes.
We plant and build responsibly.
But we refuse to make temporary things ultimate things.
We receive gifts with open hands so that God never has to pry them from clenched fists.
Ask yourself a difficult question.
If Jesus came today, what unfinished earthly matter would make you say, "Not yet"?
What would you run downstairs to retrieve?
What would you insist upon taking with you?
What would make you ask for one more day before surrender?
The answer may reveal your treasure.
Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
The solution is not merely stronger self-denial.
The solution is a greater sight of Christ.
When He becomes our treasure, lesser treasures can return to their proper place.
When His promise becomes more substantial than what we see, faith can move through an ordinary sunrise.
When His cross shows us the depth of mercy, obedience is no longer payment for rescue.
It becomes the grateful response of those who have been rescued.
There is a look that brings life.
In Numbers 21, poisonous serpents had bitten the people.
God told Moses to lift up a brazen serpent.
Those who looked according to God's promise lived.
The power was not in the muscles of the eye.
The look expressed faith in God's provision.
Isaiah 45:22 says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."
Hebrews 12 tells believers to run with patience, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."
Lot's wife looked back toward a judged city.
The Gospel calls us to look unto a crucified and risen Savior.
Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

He was buried.
He rose again the third day.
He bore the judgment sinners deserve.
He offers forgiveness and eternal life as a gift of grace.
He is not merely telling you to run away from destruction.
He is the refuge to whom you must run.
You are not saved by running fast enough.
You are not saved by leaving enough possessions.
You are not saved by performing enough good works.
You are not saved because an angel took Lot's wife by the hand.
You are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
Turn from your sin.
Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
Call upon Him today.
Do not wait until judgment becomes visible.
Do not assume another warning will always come.
Do not return to the house for the stuff.
Do not exchange eternal life for temporary security.
Remember Lot's wife.
But do not spend the whole sermon looking at Lot's wife.
Look unto Jesus.
Lot's wife is the warning.
Jesus is the refuge.
Lot's wife tells us not to turn back.
Jesus gives us Someone worth moving forward toward.
Let us pray.
Heavenly Father, thank You for the mercy that warns before judgment.
Thank You for the mercy that reaches for sinners and calls us to safety.
Forgive us for the times we have valued what is visible above what You have spoken.
Forgive us for lingering near what You have commanded us to leave.
Show us anything that has begun to possess our hearts.
Give us faith to obey before sight confirms the danger.

Comfort those who carry honest grief and help them distinguish memory from divided allegiance.

Strengthen those who are leaving sin, destructive circumstances or a former way of life.

For anyone who has never trusted Jesus Christ, bring that person to repentance and faith today.

Fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Keep us ready for the day when the Son of man is revealed.

We pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

As we close, remember that the lesson is not that Christians must never think about yesterday.

The lesson is that yesterday must never become our master.

Remember God's mercy when He took that family by the hand.

Remember the clarity of His warning.

Remember the ordinary sunrise before judgment.

Remember that religious privilege cannot replace personal faith.

Remember that possessions cannot preserve eternal life.

Remember that partial movement is not the same as settled allegiance.

This week, ask God to show you what you would find hardest to surrender if obedience required it.

Then place that person, possession, plan or memory into His hands.

If you would like to talk or pray, I will be available in the Pastor's Study.

Please join us at the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free, and there are free refills on conversation.

Go forward by faith.

Look unto Jesus.

And remember Lot's wife.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

More Than a Look

Pastor's Commentary

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley
Reason Together Church

Commentary Purpose

This commentary explains the principal passages behind More Than a Look. It is designed as a public-facing companion to the sermon. It distinguishes the express statements of Scripture from reasonable inference and later tradition while keeping Jesus' command in Luke 17 at the center of interpretation.

Commentary in Brief

Lot's wife is remembered not because Scripture records a long biography but because Jesus selected her as a warning. Genesis establishes a direct command, a merciful rescue, a backward look and immediate judgment. Luke 17 places that event within teaching about the sudden revelation of the Son of man, returning for possessions and attempting to preserve earthly life.

The text does not disclose why she looked. Longing, curiosity, unbelief, grief and attachment have all been proposed. The responsible conclusion is narrower and stronger: she did what God had prohibited at the moment when faith required forward obedience.

The title describes the moral context rather than a secret lexical meaning. It was more than a look because it was the one act God had singled out during escape. The study therefore preserves both restraint and urgency.

1. Genesis 13:10-13 - Lot Lifted Up His Eyes

The story of Lot's wife does not begin in Genesis 19. Genesis 13 describes the direction chosen by the household years earlier. Lot saw the well-watered plain and selected what appeared economically desirable. The text then adds the moral information that the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

Lot's movement occurs by stages. He beholds, chooses, journeys east and pitches toward Sodom. Later passages locate him inside the city and at its gate. The narrative does not condemn prudent care for livestock, but it exposes the danger of evaluating a future solely by visible advantage.

The phrase "like the garden of the LORD" intensifies the visible attraction of the plain. The region looked Eden-like while containing Sodom. Appearance and moral reality stood in tension. The reader knows what Lot's eyes alone could not disclose.

This does not make every prosperous place spiritually dangerous. It teaches that prosperity is an inadequate compass when detached from the character and calling of God.

2. Genesis 13:14-18 - Abraham Looked by Promise

After Lot separates, the Lord tells Abraham to lift up his eyes. The verbal and narrative contrast is important. Lot looks and chooses. Abraham looks because God commands and receives what God promises.

The study's theology of sight must therefore remain relational. Looking is not inherently sinful or righteous. Faithful sight responds to God and receives the world through His Word.

Abraham responds by moving his tent and building an altar. Sight governed by promise leads to worship. Lot's sight leads toward Sodom. The contrast prepares readers for the different looks in Genesis 19.

3. Genesis 19:12-14 - A Warning That Sounded Like Mockery

The angels direct Lot to gather everyone belonging to him because the outcry against the city has become great. Lot warns his sons-in-law, but he appears to them as one who mocked. The text does not explain their disbelief.

Pastoral application should be searching without becoming speculative. A compromised witness can make an urgent message sound implausible, but Scripture does not explicitly accuse Lot of hypocrisy in this conversation. The stated fact is that the warning was delivered and rejected.

The sons-in-law illustrate the way judgment can appear unbelievable until it arrives. The warning came through a family member whose continued presence in the city may have made departure seem unlikely. Whether or not this explains their reaction, the text portrays unbelief as fatal.

4. Genesis 19:15-16 - He Lingered

Morning brings urgency. The angels tell Lot to arise lest he be consumed. The narrative then says that he lingered. This detail prevents a simplistic contrast between an eager husband and a reluctant wife. The household's roots in Sodom made departure difficult.

The messengers seize each person by the hand. Genesis interprets this action as the Lord's mercy. Rescue begins with divine initiative. The hands of mercy do not eliminate the command that follows, but they establish that deliverance is gift before it is journey.

The mercy clause is grammatically connected with the angels' forceful action. Divine compassion is not sentimental passivity. Mercy may urge, seize and remove when danger is immediate.

This also protects the Gospel application from moralism. The message is not that better people escape by superior determination. God acts first in mercy and calls the rescued to trust His Word.

5. Genesis 19:17 - Escape and Do Not Look Back

The command combines urgency, prohibition and destination. Lot must escape for his life, refrain from looking behind, avoid remaining anywhere in the plain and flee to the mountain.

The Hebrew prohibition and the description of the wife's action use the same verbal root, *nabat*. Its ordinary lexical range includes looking, regarding and beholding. It does not intrinsically mean a longing gaze. The narrative's certainty lies in correspondence: the prohibited action is the action she performs.

The command is addressed in the masculine singular to Lot, yet the family is moving under his representative leadership and the consequence shows its relevance to all. The study need not invent a separate conversation with his wife in order to affirm her responsibility.

The command not to remain anywhere in the plain prevents a minimalistic escape. The family is not to negotiate how near it can remain to destruction.

6. Genesis 19:18-23 - Negotiated Mercy and an Ordinary Sunrise

Lot asks to enter Zoar because he fears he cannot reach the mountain. The request reveals continuing weakness, yet the messenger grants it. The passage repeatedly displays mercy amid urgency.

The sun rises when Lot enters Zoar. The detail makes the morning appear ordinary until judgment falls. Obedience had to rest upon God's warning rather than visible catastrophe. This supports a legitimate sermon observation: faith sometimes acts by refusing to demand a confirming sight.

Lot's request for Zoar shows that weakness and mercy continue together. God does not approve every fearful calculation, yet He grants the immediate refuge. The narrative's compassion makes the wife's later act more solemn, not less.

The sunrise becomes especially important when Luke 17 describes ordinary activities continuing until the day judgment fell. Both passages expose the unreliability of outward normalcy as proof of safety.

7. Genesis 19:24-26 - The Look and the Pillar

The Lord rains brimstone and fire and overthrows the cities, the plain, the inhabitants and what grew upon the ground. Lot's wife looks back from behind him and becomes a pillar of salt.

The phrase "from behind him" locates her behind Lot and may indicate that she had fallen back. The text does not say how far she was behind or whether slowing preceded the look. Such reconstruction should remain tentative.

Scripture also does not explain the choice of salt. Salt can express covenant permanence in some passages and devastation in others. Deuteronomy 29:23 is especially relevant because it joins brimstone, salt and burning while naming Sodom and Gomorrah. The popular idea that she became a preservative because she tried to preserve Sodom is not stated by the text.

The terse narration refuses sensational detail. There is no speech from the wife, no description of facial expression and no explanation of duration. The silence itself disciplines interpretation.

Later art often freezes her in a backward pose, while geological explanations imagine encrustation by regional salt. Neither picture is the inspired explanation. The theological certainty is divine judgment upon prohibited turning.

8. Genesis 19:27-29 - Abraham's Different Look

Abraham returns to the place where he stood before the Lord and looks toward Sodom. He sees smoke rising like the smoke of a furnace. His look carries no condemnation.

This contrast demonstrates that the physical act was not the entire moral issue. Abraham looked after judgment from a place of communion. Lot's wife looked during escape against a specific command. Verse 29 grounds Lot's deliverance in God's remembrance of Abraham.

Abraham's location is described relationally: it is where he stood before the Lord. His view of Sodom follows intercession and submission to divine justice. This is not fascinated spectatorship but sober witness to the truth of God's word.

God's remembrance of Abraham does not imply that God had forgotten him. Biblical remembrance often describes covenantal attention expressed in action.

9. Luke 17:20-30 - The Days of the Son of Man

Jesus answers a kingdom question and then prepares His disciples for the days of the Son of man. Noah's generation continued eating, drinking and marrying until the flood. Lot's generation continued eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting and building until fire fell.

The listed activities are ordinary rather than inherently immoral. Jesus' emphasis is absorption and unreadiness. Life continued without serious regard for divine warning. The comparison prevents the church from limiting the lesson to spectacular vice. Respectable routine can also exclude God.

Noah and Lot create a paired pattern: warning, ordinary life, decisive separation and sudden judgment. Jesus does not invite date-setting. He calls for readiness when the timing cannot be controlled by human plans.

The church must therefore resist two distractions. One is sensational speculation that ignores faithful living. The other is comfortable routine that denies any practical expectation of Christ's return.

10. Luke 17:31-33 - Stuff, Remembrance and Life

Verse 31 forbids the person on the housetop to return for goods and the person in the field to turn back. Verse 32 then says, "Remember Lot's wife." Verse 33 warns that the person seeking to save his life will lose it, while the one who loses his life will preserve it.

The sequence interprets her as a warning against backward movement when the day demands immediate response. Possessions are especially prominent. Jesus does not explain the salt or define her private emotion. He identifies the enduring danger: attachment to the present life can become fatal when it competes with the call of God.

The KJV word "stuff" is usefully plain. The goods in the house may be lawful and valuable, yet they are not worth turning back for when divine judgment arrives. The moral weight lies in comparative value.

The saying about saving and losing life echoes Jesus' broader discipleship teaching. Surrender to Christ may appear as loss within the present age, but clinging to the present age cannot secure eternal life.

11. Luke 9:62 and Philippians 3:13-14 - What Looking Back Is Not

Jesus' saying about the plow exposes divided allegiance. A plowman who continually turns cannot maintain a straight course. Paul similarly presses toward the mark rather than allowing what lies behind to govern his calling.

Neither passage requires emotional amnesia. Scripture honors remembrance, testimony and grief. The pastoral distinction is between remembering the past and granting it authority over present obedience. A grieving believer should not be accused of becoming another Lot's wife merely because memories remain tender.

A church must apply this distinction tenderly. Survivors of trauma, immigrants, grieving spouses and people separated from family may experience involuntary memories. The passage does not authorize spiritual accusation against normal human sorrow.

The danger arises when memory becomes governing allegiance, when nostalgia rewrites bondage as freedom or when the past is used to resist a clear present command.

12. Numbers 21, Isaiah 45 and Hebrews 12 - The Saving Direction

In Numbers 21, those who looked upon God's appointed provision lived. Isaiah calls the ends of the earth to look unto the Lord and be saved. Hebrews directs believers to run with patience while looking unto Jesus.

These passages clarify that spiritual life does not come from eye movement. The look expresses faith in the One God has provided. Lot's wife serves as warning, while Jesus remains the object of saving faith and continuing perseverance.

John 3 connects the lifted serpent with the lifting up of the Son of man. The saving direction culminates in Christ crucified. The sermon can therefore move from warning to Gospel without treating the Old Testament event as a mere moral example.

Hebrews 12 places looking unto Jesus within a race requiring endurance. Christian perseverance is not sustained by staring at the road behind but by the sufficiency and completed work of Christ ahead.

13. Questions the Passage Does Not Answer

The Bible does not reveal Lot's wife's name, birthplace, thoughts, reason for looking or eternal destiny. It does not identify a surviving salt formation. It does not say she looked for daughters or refused salt to guests. Those details arise from later traditions.

Responsible interpretation does not fear an unanswered question. Biblical sufficiency means Scripture gives everything God intends to give for faith and obedience. It does not mean every historical or psychological curiosity receives an answer.

Traditions can be studied as evidence of how communities interpreted the text. They should be labeled by date and authority. Their devotional popularity does not convert them into Biblical facts.

Humility about silence strengthens rather than weakens preaching. The sermon can speak with full force about disobedience, mercy and readiness because those themes are actually present.

14. Pastoral Counsel

The warning addresses people surrounded by spiritual privilege. A faithful spouse, believing family, church attendance and exposure to Scripture cannot substitute for personal repentance and faith. At the same time, the narrative should not be forced into a complete doctrine of eternal security because it records physical deliverance and physical judgment without describing regeneration.

Believers should examine attachments honestly. A possession, relationship, ambition or identity becomes spiritually dangerous when it is valued above obedience. The answer is not contempt for God's good gifts. The answer is receiving them as gifts that may never become gods.

Families should also consider the cumulative power of direction. Lot's household did not form its attachments in one night. Repeated choices created a life that became painful to leave. Preventive discipleship asks where present habits are carrying the household.

For believers who have already left destructive circumstances, the church should provide patient community. A command to move forward must be joined with practical care, prayer and truth so that the former life is not romanticized in loneliness.

15. Christological and Gospel Conclusion

Genesis displays both judgment and mercy. The Lord judges the cities and mercifully takes Lot's household by the hand. The Gospel reveals the ultimate refuge. Jesus bears judgment for sinners, rises from the dead and calls all people to repent and believe.

The final direction of the study must therefore be positive as well as cautionary. Remember Lot's wife, but look unto Jesus. She is the warning Christ chose. He is the Savior to whom the warning sends us.

The command to remember comes from the same Jesus who gives His life for sinners. His warning is not cruelty. It is the speech of the Savior who knows the reality of judgment and offers Himself as refuge.

The final call is not merely "try harder not to look back." It is "look unto Jesus." A superior treasure displaces inferior masters. Faith moves forward because Christ is worthy.

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