

Remember Lot's Wife

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I am sure all of you have heard somewhere in the past about someone that went back into a burning house to retrieve some possession, only to die for their efforts. I am talking about Fluffy the Cat or some photo album that was so important that they had to go back in and get it and then they gave their life for it. Now, of course, if you had asked this person beforehand, would you die for that autographed Mickey Mantle baseball card or that high school yearbook, they would have said no, or at least you hope they would have said no.

We spend all of our lives accumulating stuff. Don Henley said in one of his songs, "I've never seen a luggage rack on a hearse," meaning you cannot take it with you. And why would you want to? I heard someone on the radio last week say, "Get all you can, can all you get, and then sit on your can."

Prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread, we delevan our homes. We try to remove all the leaven; anything that has got leavening in it, we try to remove it. We also try to clean our houses so that we get rid of any hidden sin. We call this deleavening. Many of us, especially those of us that go way back, use this time for a good overall spring cleaning.

The way I was taught when I was younger is you start at the top and you go to the bottom and you clean thoroughly all along the way. I know there is no leavening in that window pane, but I cleaned it anyway. It is the way I was taught. Well, that is the way we still do it at my house, and as I said, it is just absolutely amazing how much stuff that gathers. So we go through every room.

The kids' rooms have always been worth several garbage bags apiece of stuff that they have accumulated. Now every family has a pack rat and in our family it is Kelly. And when she was younger, Carol and I would go to her room, and we would put a pile on the floor of everything that was going to

get bagged up and taken out. And no sooner did we put it in and she was pulling it back out. You have all got someone like this. You know, "I love that one-armed doll with no hair!" Had not seen it in who knows when, but could not live without it.

Well, this spring, since Carol was not feeling well, the kids tackled this job themselves and Carol would sit on the bed and kind of supervise, but the kids had to make the hard choices of what stayed and what went. That has worked pretty good for Cody. He filled up three of those great big 33-gallon garbage bags out of his room alone. Moved over to Kelly's room. She did not even need a bag. Nothing came out of that room. I think she even has names for those dust bunnies up under the bed.

You know, in preparing this sermonette and doing the research, you may not believe this, but it is absolutely true, the Hebrew word that is translated into the English word stuff, is pronounced phonetically kelly. Totally serious. Look it up in *Strong's*.

Let us turn to the book of Luke, chapter 17, verse 28.

Luke 17:28-32 Likewise as it was in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife."

Three little words there. "Remember Lot's wife." That carries so much meaning for us. Now I am sure we all remember Lot's wife. She was the salt lady, right? Now why? Why is she the salt lady? And why is the memory of her critical to our spiritual life? And thirdly, what does it have to do with unleavened bread?

Let us begin to answer these questions back in Genesis 19. You know, we always speak of Sodom and Gomorrah as two cities because that is the way the Bible terms it. Actually, there were five cities that were destroyed, as

best that I can determine. In five cities, not even 10 righteous people. That is amazing.

A tradition has it that the destruction of these cities happened during the spring holy day season. Although it did occur several centuries before the Feast of Unleavened Bread became a commanded observance, but if you look in verse 3 of Genesis 19, you will see that when Lot had gathered in these strangers, these angels, and taken them home, "he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate."

In verse 12, these men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here besides your son-in-law, your sons, your daughters?" In other words, what family, what friends? Who do you have here? "Take them out of this place!" He is commanded to leave. And in verse 17, "Do not look behind you."

Now Lot was to utterly forsake these cities because to stay, was to die. And of course, you know what happened. His wife looked back. In verse 24 we see that these cities were destroyed by fire and brimstone.

Genesis 19:24 Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.

This is only 400 years since the Flood. It probably was within the living memory of some of the men still alive at that time. And yet God had to once again rain upon the earth, this time Sodom and Gomorrah and the other three cities. This was maybe an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. We do not know exactly how God did this, but He sent a mixture of asphalt and sulfur and salt up into the air, literally red hot mixture. And it rained down upon them.

Now why was Lot's wife encrusted with salt? Because she lingered. She was loath to leave. Josephus said that she looked back continually. Whether she did, whether she looked back once, the point was not so much that she literally looked back, it is where her heart was. She was not ready to leave Sodom and Gomorrah. She maybe wanted her *stuff*. And she was willing to go back into a burning house, in this case a burning city, for it.

This is probably the best example of delevaning I have ever heard of in Sodom and Gomorrah. It is very thorough delevaning. Now again, why did God use salt as an enduring remembrance, a symbol of someone that was unwilling to come out of sin and submit to God? And this reminder, this pillar of salt, stood for years. Josephus again claims to have seen it himself. This is centuries later, and he said he went out to visit it and saw it.

You may not know how valuable salt was in biblical times. Many countries actually used salt as a currency, a means of exchange. Later on, the Roman soldiers were given a ration of salt as part of their wages, and when that became too cumbersome to administer, the Roman army just gave them a little extra money each time they got paid, and that was to buy salt with. So our word salary comes from the Latin word solarium, meaning salt money.

So in wishing for her stuff, her valuables, her physical wealth, God covered her with wealth, in a manner of speaking. He actually suffocated her with riches. Now why is her memory critical to our spiritual life? Very simply, where is our heart? Is it here in this world?

You know, when Abraham gave Lot his choice of land back in Genesis 13, Lot very selfishly took the best. And back in chapter 13, it described the plain of Jordan, what is also known as the Valley of Sodom, as well watered, like the garden of the Lord. That is the land that Lot chose. And he pitched his tent it says, toward Sodom. But he was outside the city. He was out in the plain.

Over the next 12 to 14 years, somewhere in that time period, Lot moves into the city. And he becomes, depending on the commentary, a local magistrate, a city councilman. One commentator thought he was the mayor. Very good case to be made that he was the mayor of the city. Maybe he should have stayed where he was. It appears to me, and it is my own personal opinion, that he invited the infection of sin by moving right into the middle of the city.

Let us turn to II Peter, chapter 2, verse 7. Well, actually in verse 6 you can see that we are talking here about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, how they were turned into ash.

II Peter 2:7-8 And delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds).

Lot was a good man. He was a righteous man. But living where he was, involved the way he was with the city, seeing the sin around him every day, it agitated him. It vexed him. It is impossible to be that involved with the world and not have the leaven filter into your own life.

I did not read verse 16 back in Genesis 19, but it mentioned that he lingered and the angels wanted him out. He lingered. I do not think Lot lingered for his stuff. I think that he thought he could save these people. I think that he was so attached that he felt he had a good shot at salvaging these people. He had married a woman from Sodom. He had raised his children there. As a nephew of Abraham, he was probably a local celebrity. So he had put down roots, very deep ones. And for a pilgrim, such as we are, that can be fatal.

We have to live and work in this world. We have discussed this before, but there are situations that we put ourselves into that can make our life harder. It can try our conversion. It is one thing for you to be a light to your neighbor, your co-workers, whoever. It is another thing entirely to, say, move in next door to a crack house and think you are going to convert them by your example, versus situations that make your life tougher.

Even though we have to live in this evil world, it is hard, but we have to not be overcome by the sins that we see around us.

Now, John 17, verse 15 has been read at least twice in these last couple of weeks, but let us look at it one more time.

John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

That is the first part of the equation that we are going to be in this world, but we are asking that God protect us from Satan and from the evil around us. The second part to that is Romans 12, verse 2. How do we handle that, being in the world?

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So just like Lot, we are to come out of and utterly forsake the sins of this world in order that we escape the plagues that are going to happen to this end-time world. Hopefully not to us, but in Lot's wife's case, she did leave. She made it outside the city—whether they pulled her, whether they took her out. In any event, she was outside the city, but her heart was not in it. She did not want to leave what she was leaving behind.

However, Christ said,

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

I think that one speaks for itself. As a matter of fact, while I am thinking about it, from this morning's offertory, what it ended with was our time is in the future. It is looking ahead, not behind.

Philippians 3:13-14 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Some of you might remember, some of you old-timers, a baseball player named Satchel Paige, and since I remember him, I must be an old-timer, but I was awfully young when this happened. But all I remember is that he had several rules for life or rules for good living. I forget how he termed it, and I do not remember how many there were, six or eight, I do not know. And I only remember one. But it was, "Don't look back. Something might be gaining on you." And I think that fits with these last two verses. Look ahead.

Now if the connection with Unleavened Bread and Lot's wife is not clear, let me see if we can put it this way and tie it up a little bit. The Feast of

Unleavened Bread pictures obedience to God, keeping His commandments, the principles as well as the law. While eternal life is clearly a gift of God, it is also clear that God expects us to do our part. That we are to be willing and actually striving to obey Him.

These Days of Unleavened Bread picture the part we play in the plan of salvation, the keeping of His law, of His commandments. Now Satan, of course, does not want us to do that. He would prefer that we stay with Sodom and Gomorrah, that we would be slaves to sin, and we would continue in bondage.

On the other hand, God expects us to be growing, to be overcoming, to be more like Him, to build the character that He has and endeavor to put the sin out. I happened to notice the *Forerunner* down here. And it is the one in color and it shows the future of Israel. It shows the flame. The top half of the picture is picturing the world in flames. That is literally and figuratively what we have to look forward to. The people in this world have the flames just as Sodom and Gomorrah did. That is what is coming.

Now when God says "Go!" will we? Or will we look back thinking about our stuff? So the bottom line is "remember Lot's wife."