

REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE:

The Biblical Danger of Looking Back

The Christian life moves forward, from darkness into the light of Jesus Christ. The Bible often warns believers not to look back. Looking back can show that a person still loves the old way of life and is not ready to accept God's rescue. This document explains why believers must leave sin behind. It looks at Lot's wife, Jesus' example of plowing a field, misleading memories of the past, and the need to keep following Christ.

I. Lot's Wife: The Main Example

Genesis gives the clearest example of the danger of looking back. God was going to judge Sodom and Gomorrah for their evil. But He showed mercy by leading Lot and his family out of the city. The angels gave them a direct command.

Genesis 19:17

"And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

The command was simple: run for your life, do not look back, and do not stop in the plain. The warning was meant to save them. They had to leave the sinful city completely, both in body and in heart. Lot's wife did not obey. The Bible tells what happened next:

Genesis 19:26

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

What the Pillar of Salt Teaches

Why was Lot's wife judged so quickly? Her body was leaving Sodom, but her heart still wanted the city. Ezekiel describes the sinful life she was looking back at:

Ezekiel 16:49

"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

Lot's wife looked back at a life of pride, wealth, and ease. Her choice showed that she still wanted the comfort and pleasure of a sinful city. James says that loving the world puts a person against God:

James 4:4

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

The pillar of salt became a lasting warning. A person cannot hold on to a sinful life while also trying to escape God's judgment. A divided heart keeps a person from moving forward.

II. Jesus' Warning: "Remember Lot's Wife"

Much later, Jesus used Lot's wife as a serious warning. In Luke 17, He says the time of His return will be like the days of Lot.

Luke 17:28-32

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife."

Jesus gives a short command: "Remember Lot's wife." When judgment comes, people must not go back for their belongings.

Possessions and a Divided Heart

Why would someone go back for belongings? People follow what they value most. Jesus explained this clearly:

Matthew 6:21

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Lot's wife may have been thinking about what she left at home. Her backward look showed that Sodom still had a hold on her heart. John names three worldly desires that can trap people:

1 John 2:15-16

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Lot's wife showed that she still loved the world more than God. Jesus' warning asks us to examine our own hearts. Are we willing to leave comfort, possessions, and old ties behind to follow Christ? Or do we still want things that will not last?

III. Jesus' Picture of the Plow

Jesus also used plowing to explain why believers must not look back. In Luke, a man says he wants to follow Jesus, but first he wants to go home and say goodbye.

Luke 9:62

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

A farmer using an animal-drawn plow had to look straight ahead. Looking back could make the plow turn and leave a crooked row. In the same way, following Jesus requires steady focus.

What It Means to Be Ready for God's Kingdom

To be "fit for the kingdom of God" means to be ready for God's work. A person cannot plow well while looking backward. Divided attention ruins the work. Hebrews gives a similar warning:

Hebrews 10:38-39

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

In this passage, drawing back leads to spiritual ruin. A person who keeps looking back may finally turn away from God. Hebrews tells believers where to keep their eyes:

Hebrews 12:1-2

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The answer is to look to Jesus. We cannot focus on Him while also turning toward sins that trap us. Like a plow moving in a straight line, the Christian life must stay pointed toward the goal.

IV. How Selective Memory Pulls Us Back

Sin can change the way people remember the past. They may forget the pain their old sins caused and remember only the pleasure or comfort. Israel's trip out of Egypt shows this danger.

Israel Longs for Egypt's Food

God rescued Israel from harsh slavery in Egypt. But when life in the desert became hard, the people began to wish they were back in Egypt.

Numbers 11:4-5

"And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:"

Their memories fooled them. They remembered the food and said they had eaten “freely.” But they had not been free at all. Exodus describes their real life in Egypt:

Exodus 1:13-14

"And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour."

Their work was cruel, and slavery made their lives bitter. Yet they forgot the suffering and remembered only the food. Temptation often works this way. It reminds us of past pleasure and hides the pain, guilt, and spiritual harm that came with it.

Turning Back in the Heart

Stephen explained Israel's sin when he spoke before the Jewish council. He showed that people turn back in their hearts before they turn back in their actions:

Acts 7:39

"To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,"

Before people return to an addiction, a sinful way of life, or a harmful place, they often turn back in their thoughts. They keep thinking about the past and begin to want what they once left behind.

V. A Strong Warning: The Dog and the Pig

Peter uses unpleasant pictures to show how bad it is to return to sin. He describes people who learned the right way but went back to the sinful life they had escaped.

2 Peter 2:20-22

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and

overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Peter supports his warning by quoting an Old Testament proverb:

Proverbs 26:11
"As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."

These pictures are meant to be disturbing. The body rejects vomit because it is harmful. In the same way, repentance means turning away from sin because it harms the soul. Returning to sin is like a dog going back to what made it sick. A washed pig returns to the mud because it has not changed inside. Looking back may show that a person's heart has not truly changed.

VI. Paul's Answer: Keep Moving Forward

The Bible also shows believers how to keep moving forward. In Philippians, Paul explains what he does. Even while in prison, he keeps growing in faith.

Philippians 3:13-14
"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Paul gives believers two daily practices: let go of what is behind and reach toward what is ahead.

- 1. Let Go of What Is Behind: Paul does not mean that we should forget everything. He means that the past should not control us. Because Christ forgives, believers can let go of past sins. They can also let go of failures and successes so that shame and pride do not stop their growth. Isaiah gave the same message:

Isaiah 43:18-19
"Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

- 2. Reach Toward What Is Ahead: Paul pictures a runner leaning toward the finish line. The runner watches the goal instead of looking back. Looking back would slow the runner and might cause a fall.

Paul makes a firm choice: “I press toward the mark.” Believers must choose to move forward and resist old desires and worldly values.

VII. Conclusion: Keep Looking Forward

The Bible’s message is clear: looking back can be spiritually dangerous. Lot’s wife became a warning in Sodom. Peter used the harsh picture of a dog returning to its vomit. Both examples teach that God calls people to leave sin behind.

The Bible tells believers to focus in three ways:

- Look away from the world and its temporary desires. Remember that “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17).
- Look straight ahead and choose your path carefully: “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established” (Proverbs 4:25-26).
- Keep looking to Jesus Christ. He went to Jerusalem, endured the cross to save us, and showed us how to move forward without turning back.

The church should take Jesus’ warning seriously: “Remember Lot’s wife.” Let us leave past sins behind, reject memories that make sin seem good, keep our hands on the plow, and move forward in faith with Christ.