

Looking Back

The sun had risen over the land when Lot reached Zoar. Then the Lord rained burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the sky. He overthrew these cities, the entire plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and whatever grew on the ground. But his wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. – Genesis 19:23-26 HCSB

Things were so bad in Sodom and Gomorrah that the Son of God Himself came down to see if what the inhabitants had done justified the cry that had come up to Him.¹ Apparently it was as bad as He'd heard, and He decided to make the cities an example to those who were going to be ungodly.² But He sent the two angels that had accompanied Him to earth on into Sodom³ for a rescue mission.

What they found would have horrified any decent person. The unrestrained immorality of the Sodomites distressed Lot. He tormented himself day by day with the lawless deeds he saw and heard.⁴ And yet, he had directed his gaze toward the fertile valley of Sodom and decided to live there anyway.⁵

This materialistic outlook also affected his choice of a wife and the manner in which he raised his children. When we make the gathering of wealth, comfort and status our primary focus it has long-term damning consequences.

The angels miraculously saved Lot, his wife and two unmarried daughters. They brought them out of a horrible riot in which the daughters could have been gang-raped. They clearly indicated that the whole valley was about to undergo a horrible destruction and that the family should run for their lives without looking back. Yet, Lot's wife did.

The Hebrew word translated "look" in this passage is "nabat." And it does not imply a simple curious glance. It means "to regard with pleasure, favor or care; to behold or consider."

Lot's wife had been saved from the rampant immorality, materialism, xenophobia, homosexuality and crime of Sodom. More – she'd been saved from a fiery death. And yet she continued to look upon that festering boil on the lovely face of God's creation with pleasure, regard and care and it killed her.

The Bible doesn't actually say at what speed she was transformed into salt. Obviously God could have done it instantaneously if He so chose, but it simply says that she turned into salt. The fact that these cities were likely built on a peninsula on the Dead Sea might have something to do with that.

Regardless of how the transformation was accomplished, there is a lesson to be learned here. We have been saved from the rampant immorality, violence and sin of this world. More – we've been saved from an impending fiery doom. And yet, from time to time we look back on the world's ways with regard, pleasure or care. We long for the old, dark paths we used to travel.

But when we do, be sure that we are immobilized; turned into spiritual dead weights.

¹ Genesis 18:20-21

² 2 Peter 2:6

³ Genesis 18:1-3, 22 cp 19:1

⁴ 2 Peter 2:7-8

⁵ Genesis 13:10-11