

## A SERMON ON LUKE XVII. 32.

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*Remember Lot's wife.*—LUKE xvii. 32.

HERE is a warning of Christ's relating to an history recorded by Moses, in which two things are remarkable—(1.) The sin committed by her; (2.) The punishment inflicted on her; what she did, and what she suffered. She remembered too much the place where she had lived, and was loath to get out of it; and when she was got out, her heart hankered after it still. And we must remember the manner how she died, for our caution and warning.

It is brought in here among the predictions of the calamities that were to come upon Jerusalem. And in the parallel place it is thus expressed: Mat. xxiv. 16–18, 'Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains; let him that is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him that is in the field return back to take his clothes.' Now read the foregoing verse here: ver. 31, 'In that day he which shall be on the house-top, 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.'

The comparing these two places together will give us the sense, that where life is in safety, we must not think of loss of goods, lest we lose both; and where eternal life is in danger, we must not run that hazard for any temporal things: for it presently followeth, ver. 33, 'Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it.' For both temporal and eternal life, 'Remember Lot's wife.' And it is either a proverbial expression to hasten their flight, or a profitable admonition.

*Doct.* That it is very profitable for those whom God hath called from a state of wrath and perdition to eternal safety and rest by Christ to remember Lot's wife.

This woman was called out of burning Sodom to a secure place of retreat; but she disobeyed God, and perished in the passage.

To make this evident, I shall—(1.) Briefly give you the history concerning her sin and judgment; (2.) Show why it is profitable for us to meditate on it.

*First,* The history concerning her sin and judgment. You have it,  
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Gen. xix. 26, 'And his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.'

1. Of her sin; she looked back. What fault was there in that? you will say. I answer—

[1.] There was disobedience in it, because it was against the express command of God, given by an angel: Gen. xix. 17, 'Look not behind thee.' Now this commandment of not looking back was not given to Lot alone, but to his wife and children, as the event showeth; for he, nor either, or any of them, was not to look back. Now, to go against an express command of God in the smallest matters is a great crime. As when Saul spared Agag and the fattest of the cattle, against God's command, Samuel telleth him, 1 Sam. xv. 23, that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. It is rebellion and stubbornness when men wilfully transgress God's known commandments, and commit a sin the rather because it is evident to them God hath forbidden it. Now this God taketh as heinously as if it were witchcraft, when men leave God and seek to devils; or idolatry, when they forsake God's true worship, and serve idols; they despise and resist God's known will, and so rob him of his glory, and the service due from the creature to him.

[2.] There was unbelief in it; not believing the words of the angel, God's messenger, who had assured her in the name of God that he would destroy Sodom: Gen. xix. 13, 'Hasten hence, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.' Now she would look back, to see whether the prediction and warning were true. And therefore the author of the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, chap. x. 7, calleth her *ἀπιστοῦσης ψυχῆς μνημεῖον*, a monument of an unbelieving soul. It is a grievous sin to call God's truth in question. But usually disobedience is complicated with unbelief, and men despise the commands of God because they do not believe his threatenings: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' An unbelieving heart will easily be perverted and enticed into a rebellion against God, and those that cannot trust God will not be true to him.

[3.] There was worldliness in it, or an hankering of mind after what she had left in Sodom; and so this looking back was a look of covetousness, a kind of repentance that she had come out of Sodom; for people are wont to look back who are moved with a desire and remembrance of their former dwelling. So Lot's wife looked back because she had left her heart behind her. There were her kindred, and friends, and country, and that pleasant place which was as the garden of God, Gen. xiii. 10. From thence this woman came, and thither she would fain go again; as if she had said, And must I leave thee, Sodom, and part for ever from thee! This certainly had an influence on her, for she was loath to depart; for when the angel warned them all in common, Lot lingered: 'And the men laid hold upon his hand; and when his wife lingered, they laid hold on the hand of his wife, and on the hand of her two daughters; the Lord being merciful to him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city,' Gen. xix. 16. Nay, when they had brought them forth, they were fain to quicken them: 'Escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed,' ver. 17;

and the wife lingered behind her husband ; for it is said, 'His wife looked back from behind him,' as inclining still to stay. Now when God would try their obedience, they were to despise their substance and fair dwelling they had left behind, and to show no signs of repentance that they were to come out ; but she looked back. And so shall we, if we be not fully loosened from the world, and our hearts cleave to any earthly thing. Affectation of worldly things draweth us from ready obedience unto God. Till we be thoroughly resolved, we are in danger. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, despised the riches, and pleasures, and treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 24-26 ; and so must all that would be safe ; not only leave these things at God's call, but 'count them dung and dross,' Phil. iii. 8 ; reject them with detestation and abhorrency, so far as they are a temptation, if they would not come into the snare again.

[4.] There was ingratitude for her deliverance from that dreadful and terrible burning which God was bringing upon the place of her abode. When God meant to destroy Sodom, yet Lot found such favour for himself and his family that, in the utter waste and desolation of four whole cities, he was only exempted, and the fifth city, which was Zoar, preserved for his sake. It is said, 'The Lord was merciful to him,' Gen. xix. 16. He could not pretend to it out of any merit ; and might have smarted ; for his choice showed weakness in not resting on God's word : ver. 19, 'I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die.' Only this God required at his hands, that he and his family should make haste and begone. Now, to disobey God in so small a matter was in her great ingratitude. The sins of none are so grievous to God as of those that have received much mercy from him : Ezra ix. 13, 14, 'After such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?' To commit sin after mercy maketh it more provoking ; when the angels of God shall come in an errand from heaven. Nay, the Son of God was amongst them ; for one of the angels is called Jehovah, ver. 24 ; the Lord Christ was one of them. Oh ! think what it is to despise the mercy of Christ, who came from heaven to deliver us ; and shall it be slighted ?

2. Of her judgment. She was turned into a pillar of salt. The judgment was sudden, strange, shameful ; suitable to the punishment which lighted on the Sodomites.

[1.] It was sudden. Sometimes God is quick and severe upon sinners, surprising them in the very act of their sin ; as Lot's wife was presently turned into a pillar of salt. So Zimri and Cosbi unladed their lives and their lusts together, Num. xxv. 8 ; and Herod was smitten in the very act of his pride : Acts xii. 23, 'Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him ;' Dan. iv. 33, 'The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar ;' Dan. v. 30, 'In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.' Thus many times judgment overtaketh the wicked in the very instant of their sin ; and God will give the sinner no time. Therefore we should not tempt and presume upon his patience. If you make bold to sin still, because you have done so long, and yet go unpunished for it, God may break in upon you in an hour that you think not of. The fly that playeth long with the flame yet is burnt at last. Lot's wife had warning to go out of

Sodom over night, but she made no reckoning of that. She was commanded in the morning, not only to go, but to make haste; yet she cared not for that. When her husband and she prolonged the time, yet they were not punished for that; and when they took liking of another place than the angel appointed (the angel saith the mountain, they Zoar), she is not punished for that. But when she would tempt God, and provoke him further, and look back, then God turned her into a pillar of salt. Surely it is the greatest mercy to have grace to repent; but it is also a mercy to have space to repent: Rev. ii. 21, 'I gave her space to repent of her fornication,' &c. But God's patience must not be wearied.

[2.] It was strange. For here a woman is turned into a pillar of salt. Strange sins bring on strange punishment. When Aaron's sons offered strange fire to God, strange fire came from heaven and consumed them, Lev. x. 2. And Job telleth us in general, chap. xxxi. 3, 'Is not destruction to the wicked, and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?' that is, some stroke of justice which is singular and remarkable, whether on persons or nations. The stupid world is not awakened by ordinary judgments, but looks upon them as some chance or common occurrence; and therefore God is forced to go out of the common road, and diversify his judgments, that by some eminent circumstance in them he may alarm the drowsy world to take notice of his hand. As here; when this woman had gone directly against God's command, and would not trust herself with his providence, but out of corrupt affection hankered after the things she had left, God did severely punish her; and her statue and pillar stood for a memorial to all others, to warn them, and season them, not to run into like transgression.

[3.] It was shameful; for she is made a public and lasting monument of shame to herself, but of instruction to us. Where there is sin at the bottom, there will be shame at the top. If ever God open the conscience, we ourselves shall be ashamed: Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?' What fruit then? But besides it bringeth a blot; besides that φόβος διαίτου ψόγου, God setteth us forth as spectacles of public shame. Some God hangeth up in chains of darkness, as warnings to the rest of worldly sinners. Sin brings dishonour to God; and therefore no wonder if it do bring dishonour to us. If we be not tender of God's name, he will not spare ours. Besides the wound in the conscience, there is a blot and a stain that will not easily be washed off. God threateneth his people that they shall be a proverb and a taunt to all that pass by, Jer. xxiii. 8, and Lam. ii. 15.

[4.] It was a judgment suitable to that which was inflicted on the rest of the Sodomites. All Sodom was turned into a salt sea; the cities were destroyed by sulphur and brimstone; but the country about was filled with salt, that it might be fruitful no more: for it is said, Deut. xxix. 23, that 'if Israel kept not covenant, the land shall be burned with brimstone and salt; neither shall it be sown, nor bring forth, nor shall any grass grow in it; like as in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah;' and Zeph. ii. 9, 'As I live, saith the Lord, Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah;

even the breeding of nettles, and pits of salt;' so that the cities being consumed, the land did lie in heaps and pits of salt. Now proportionably, Lot's wife, by her lingering and liking to this place, was turned into salt also, and those that like the sins of a place shall partake of their plagues. When we are called out of mystical Babylon (Rev. xviii. 4, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues'), surely it concerneth us to be thorough with God; for those that seem to escape may be overtaken with the judgment of the place, and led forth with the workers of iniquity.

*Secondly*, I must show how profitable it is for us to meditate on this instance, even for all those who are called from wrath to a state of rest and glory.

1. That it concerneth such not only to consider the mercies of God, but also now and then the examples of his justice, that 'we may serve him with fear, and rejoice with trembling,' Ps. ii. 11. We are in a mixed estate, and therefore mixed affections do best. As we are to cherish the spirit or better part with promises and hopes of glory, by which the inner man is renewed day by day, so we are to weaken the pravity of the flesh by the remembrance of God's judgments, not only threatened, but also actually inflicted; for instances do much enliven things. When the apostle had reckoned up the judgments of God on the Israelites in the wilderness or passage to Canaan, he maketh this use of it, 1 Cor. x. 11, 12, 'Now all these things happened to them for examples, ὡς τύποι, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come: wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' Now, what was done to them may be done to us; for these judgments are patterns of providence; and if we would blow off the dust from the ancient providences of God, we may easily read our own doom or desert at least. The desert of sin is still the same, and the exactness of divine justice is still the same; what hath been is a pledge and instance of what may be. And scripture history is not only a register and chronicle of what is past, but a kind of calendar and prognostication of what is to come. Mark, again, this must be considered by him that seemeth to stand, or to have good advantages by grace. Here was a woman taken as a brand out of the burning, and in a fair way of escape, yet afterward perished, and is set up as a public monument of salt, to season the rest of the world. All these things are warnings to us; and the most spiritual ought to take heed by them. So our Lord Christ, when he mentioneth the disastrous end of those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, would have all make this use of it. Luke xiii. 5, 'Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.' He would have us make use of judgments for our caution and warning, to quicken and increase our repentance. *Electorum corda semper ad se sollicite redeunt*—Tender hearts apply all to themselves; they find it an help: it doth not weaken their confidence and joy in the Lord, but it doth increase their caution and watchfulness.

2. That not only modern and present, but ancient and old judgments are of great use to us, especially when like sins abound in the age we live in, or we are in danger of them as to our own practice.

God biddeth the Israelites go to Shiloh, and see what he did to it for the wickedness thereof, Jer. vii. 12. And the apostle saith, the Israelites in the wilderness were our figures and examples, 1 Cor. x. 6, that 'we should not lust as they lusted, nor murmur as they murmured, nor tempt Christ as they tempted.' And another apostle tells us, that Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth for an example to those that should afterward live ungodly, Jude 7. If others have smarted for disobeying God, why not we, since God is impartially and immutably just, always consonant and agreeable unto himself? His power is the same, so is his justice and holiness. If we will not be warned by threatening nor example, we sin doubly; as he that will run into a bog wherein others have plunged themselves before is guilty of double folly—of adventuring rashly, and not taking warning. This is one great benefit that we have by the historical part of the word, that it does not only preserve the memory of the saints, that we may imitate their graces and enjoy their blessings, but also recordeth the sins and punishments of the wicked, that we may avoid their judgments. As here, Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt to season after ages.

3. This particular judgment is monumental, and so intended for a pattern and spectacle to after ages; and it is also here recommended by the Lord himself: 'Remember Lot's wife.' He exciteth us to look upon this pillar; and therefore certainly it will yield many instructions for the heavenly life.

[1.] This seemeth to be a small sin. What! for a look, for a glance of her eye, to be so suddenly blasted into a pillar of salt! This seemeth to be no great fault; but it teaches us that little faults in appearance many times meet with a great judgment. There may be much crookedness in a small line; and the matter is not so much to be regarded as the majesty and authority of God that commandeth; as in garments the dye is more than the stuff. A man may be more wicked in committing sin in a small matter than in a great; partly because it is against a plain commandment; partly because the sin might have been easily left undone, because the temptation was not great, and we stand with God for a trifle. But that I may at once vindicate God's dispensation, and enforce the caution, I shall prove—

(1.) That sin is not to be measured by the external action, but by the circumstances. Eating an apple, to a common eye, is no great matter; but God hath laid a restraint upon it, and that was the ruin of all mankind. Moses's words, Num. xx. 10–12, 'Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch water out of this rock for you?' But 'he spake unadvisedly with his lips,' Ps. cvi. 33. God found unbelief in them, and therefore he shut him out of the land of Caanan. God knew this woman's heart, and could interpret the meaning of her look. We cannot put a difference between the look of Abraham and the look of Lot; yet the one was commanded, and the other forbidden. Abraham is allowed to look to Sodom: Gen. xix. 28. 'And Abraham got up early in the morning, and looked toward Sodom; and behold the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.' Yet Lot and his family are forbidden to look that way. We cannot distinguish between the laughter of Abraham and the laughter of Sarah: Gen. xvii. 17, 'And Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, saying, Shall

a child be born to him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?' Compare Gen. xviii. 12, 'And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, Aiter I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' And she is reproved: 'And the Lord said, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?' The one was joy and reverence; the other was unbelief and contempt. We cannot distinguish between the Virgin Mary's question, Luke i. 34, 'How shall this be?' and Zachariah's, Luke i. 18, 'And how shall I know this? for I am an old man:' and he was struck dumb for that speech, ver. 20. But though we cannot distinguish, God, that knoweth the secret motions of the heart, can distinguish.

(2.) This woman's sin is greater than at first appeareth. For here was—(1.) A preferring her own will before the will of God. God said, Look not back; but she would look back. (2.) There was a contempt of the justice and wrath of God, as if it were a vain scarecrow: 1 Cor. x. 22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' (3.) Here is also a contempt of the rewards of obedience, as in all sin: Heb. xii. 15, 16, 'Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right.' (4.) There was an abuse of the grace offered for her escape and deliverance. Warning is given by an angel, and offer to save herself and all that belonged to her; as none sin against God, 'but they despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance,' Rom. ii. 4. Oh! therefore look not on sin at a distance, but make a narrow inspection into it. All these four things are in every deliberate sin, seem it never so small.

(3.) Because we think we may preserve the smaller sins for breed, and that God is more severe in remembering these than we are faulty in committing them. Therefore think of and seriously consider that small sins are the mother of great sins, and the grandmother of great punishments. As little sticks set the great ones on fire, and a wisp of straw often enkindleth a great block of wood, so we are drawn on by the lesser evils to greater, and by the just judgment of God suffered to fall into them, because we made no conscience of lesser. The lesser commandments are a rail about the greater, and no man grows downright wicked at first, but rises to it by degrees. So for punishments. Nahab and Abihu for strange fire; Ananias and Sapphira keeping back part, Uzzah for touching the ark; the Bethshemites for looking into the ark. We may make little reckoning of sin, but God doth not make little reckoning of sin; or else why hath he given us these instances? So that this advantage in the spiritual life we have by this instance, that no sin should be accounted small that is committed against the great God.

[2.] This was a sin committed by stealth: as she followed her husband, she would steal a glance, and look towards Sodom; for it is said, Gen. xix. 26, 'His wife looked back from behind him.' God can find us out in our secret sins; and therefore we should make conscience, as not to sin openly, so not by stealth. Achan was found out in his sacrilege, how secretly soever he carried it, Josh. vii. 18; Ananias

and Sapphira in keeping back part of what was dedicated to God, Acts v. ; Gebazi in affecting a bribe : 2 Kings v. 26, 'Went not my spirit with thee?' meaning the light of his prophetic spirit. Lot's wife would lag behind, and look to Sodom, fearing a rebuke from her husband, but she met with a rebuke from the Lord. The apostle saith, Eph. v. 12, 'It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.' A serious christian is ashamed to speak of what they are not ashamed to practise. But though you can hide it from men, you cannot hide it from the all-seeing eye of God. Uncleanness usually affecteth a veil of secrecy ; therefore it is said, 'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,' Heb. xiii. 4. God will judge them, because usually this sin is carried so closely and craftily, that none but God can find them out. Well, then, let no man embolden himself to have his hand in any sin, in hope to hide it ; for nothing can escape God's discovery, to whom all things are naked and open. God knew what the king of Syria spake in his secret chamber : 2 Kings vi. 12, 'Elisha the prophet telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber.' God knew the secret thoughts of Herod's heart, which it is probable he never uttered to his nearest friends, concerning the murdering of Christ : Mat. ii. 13, 'Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.' In short, to be an open and bold sinner in some respects is worse than to be a close and private sinner, because of the dishonour done to God, and the scandal to others, and the impudence of the sinner himself ; but in other respects secret sins have their aggravations.

(1.) Because if open sins be of greater infamy, yet secret sins are more against knowledge and conviction. The man is conscious to himself that he doth evil, and therefore seeketh a veil and covering, would not have the world know it. It is a sin with a consciousness that we do sin : James iv., 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' If you live in secret wickedness, envy, pride, and sensuality, and would fain keep it close, this is to rebel against the light.

(2.) This secret sinning puts far more respect upon men than God ; and this is palliated atheism. They are unjust in secret, unclean in secret, envious in secret, declaim against God's children in secret, sensual in secret. Ah, wicked wretch ! art thou afraid men should know it, and art thou not afraid God should know it ? What ! afraid of the eye of man, and not afraid of the great God ? Thou wouldst not have a child see thee to do that which God sees thee do : Jer. ii. 26, 'The thief is ashamed when he is found,' saith the prophet. Can man damn thee, and fill thy conscience with terrors ? Can man bid thee depart into everlasting burnings ? Why art thou afraid of man, and not of God ?

(3.) The more secret any wickedness is, it argueth the heart is more industrious about it, how to bring it to pass with least shame and damage to ourselves ; as David plotted Uriah's death : 2 Sam. xi. 14, &c., 'David wrote a letter to Joab, saying, Set Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire from him, that he may be smitten, and die.' So Josh. vii. 11, 'They have stolen, and dissembled also, and put it among their stuff.' So Acts v. 9, 'How is it that ye have agreed



together to tempt the Spirit of God?' In secret sins there is much premeditation and craft and dissimulation used. Oh! therefore avoid these sins.

[3.] The next lesson which we learn hence is, that no loss of earthly things should make us repent of our obedience to God, but that we should still go on with what we have well begun, without looking back: Luke ix. 62, 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' A man that hath undertaken the service of Christ must go through with it. In ploughing there is no looking back. The people of Israel, when they found the inconveniences of the wilderness, were making themselves a captain to go back to Egypt. The apostle saith, Phil. iii. 13, 'Forgetting the things which are behind, I reach forth to the things which are before.' We should not mind or look at anything behind us that would turn us back and stop us in our way to heaven. The world and the flesh are the things behind us, we turned our backs upon them in conversion. If either of these would call back our thoughts or corrupt our affections, we must renounce them, detest them. The things before us are God and heaven; and is not God and heaven better than the world and the flesh? Surely God should be pleased before the flesh, and heaven sought after rather than the world. A crown of endless glory is better than all the vain delights and pomp of this world; and therefore we should not grow weary of walking with God, and look to the things behind us so as to forfeit and hazard the things which are before us. Thus you see many useful instructions may be drawn, to make us persevere in the heavenly life, and carry it on with more success.

*Use.* From the whole—

1. Remember that in getting out of Sodom we must make haste. The least delay or stop in the course of our flight may be pernicious to us. Persons convinced of their danger are always in haste: Mat. iii. 7, 'Who hath forewarned you to flee from the wrath to come?' And the heirs of promise are described, Heb. vi. 18, to be such as 'have fled for refuge, to take hold of the hope which is before them.' No other pace is comely here but flight. Alas! we are apt to linger when God calleth us; and though there be fire and brimstone in the case, yet we are loath to depart, till God by a sacred rescue pluck us out of that woful estate wherein we are by nature. David lingered not: Ps. cxix. 60, 'I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.'

2. That till our resolutions be firmly set for God and heaven, and there be a thorough bent and bias upon our hearts, and the league between us and our secret lusts broken, after we have seemed to make some escape, we shall be looking back again: 'For where our treasure is, there our heart will be,' Mat. vi 21. As in the instance of Lot's wife; her heart hankered after what she had left behind. And therefore, till the heart be effectually turned from the creature to God, weaned from the love of its secret lusts to the love of Christ, the back bias of corruption will recover its strength, and we are ready to revert to our misery, whatever profession we have made, and hopeful beginning we have had.

3. That to look back, after we have seemed to escape, doth involve

us in the greatest sin and misery. The apostle tells us, 2 Peter ii. 20, 21, 'If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness,' &c. Their sin and judgment had been less if they had not professed to have yielded to God so far. Partly because a revolt in them is treachery and breach of vows; for we turned our back upon the world and all the allurements thereof when we consented to the covenant, and resolved to follow Christ in all conditions, till he should bring us into a place of rest and safety. And partly because it is a profession of our mistake by experience; as if upon trial we found the world better, and God worse, than ever we thought them to be: Micah vi. 3, 'O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee?' Partly because they have had some relish and taste of better things, Heb. vi. 4. Now light and taste about the ways of God do much aggravate sin; partly because the devil is most furious against such: Mat. xiii. 45, 'The last state of that man is worse than the first.' Well, then, if men be not really and effectually changed in their hearts, and do only make profession, they may be ensnared, and made slaves to their lusts again.

4. That if we would not go back, we must not look back. The devil will not say at first, Go back to Sodom, though that is it which he intendeth; but rather, Look back, hoping the person which yields to look back will go back in the end. Sin is bashful and shameth to beg too much at first; it asketh but a little, and that little will draw on more; and so corruption insensibly steals upon us, and our hearts are drawn off from God. Therefore watch against the first declinings; these are the cause of all the rest. Evil is best stopped at first; the first breakings off from God, and remitting our zeal and watchfulness. He that keeps not a house in constant repair will be in danger of having it fall down upon him. So, if we grow remiss and careless, and keep not a constant watch, temptations will increase upon us.

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