By Patricia J. Smith

Throughout His Word, God admonishes us in various places and through various prophets not to forget important truths He knows can easily slip the human mind. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Ex. 20:8. “That ye remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.” Num. 15:40. “Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. Remember his marvelous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.” 1 Chron. 16:11, 12. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...” Ecc. 12:1. “Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.” Is. 46:9. “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statues and judgments.” Mal. 4:4. “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.” 2 Tim. 2:8.

Not just another Bible story to read and forget

One of the most serious of these “Remember” phrases is a little three word sentence in Luke 17:32, which is a part of Jesus’ prophecy concerning the condition of the last days and how His people are to face the coming crisis. Our Lord’s three word warning is one that no one living in these evil days can afford to ignore who truly desires to meet Him in peace at His soon return.

From this prophetic warning of Jesus in Luke 17:28-33, it is obvious that He did not consider the history of Lot and his family’s escape from Sodom just before its destruction to be just another Bible story to read, hear, know and forget. Clearly He believed that this history of Lot, his wife and family, Sodom and the surrounding cities to be true, having last-day applications to which we are to take heed. Thus He warns us, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

In Sodom, they carried normal, legitimate activities to excess

“Likewise, also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.” Luke 17:28. In Ezekiel, further light is shed on the lifestyle of the people of Sodom.
that called for such great punishment from the God of heaven - a lifestyle that was called by the Lord Himself grievous sin in Gen. 18:20, and which was shared by the inhabitants of Gomorrah and surrounding cities. “And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous.” This sinful lifestyle was very easy and selfish. “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” Ez. 16:49.

Jesus gives warning against loving the things of this world

Material, worldly possessions were uppermost in the minds of these people to the point where they refused to help others less fortunate than themselves. Does this not also describe the way that very many people are living in 2012, with so much new technology and electronic “toys”, and a 24/7 round of entertainment and frivolity, with no care for anyone that is not like themselves!

In verse 31 of Luke 17, Jesus gives a warning against loving the things of this world; a warning similar to the one the angel gave to Lot and his family as they left Sodom. “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.” Gen. 19:17.

Remember Lot’s wife

Jesus’ warning contains the same element of not turning back, not returning for material wealth. “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.”

Then to help us grasp more fully the extreme seriousness of not looking or turning back for our worldly possessions, Jesus adds that little three word warning, “Remember Lot’s wife”, that we may never forget the perils of disobedience to the word of God.

With just these three words, our Lord brings to mind the vivid picture of the destruction involved in having worldly goods our all-absorbing focus, which leads us to turn back for earthly treasure. These three words are a powerful deterrent that will disengage the mind from believing the modern-day prosperity gospel and “keeping up with the Joneses”, if only Christians will heed the warning entailed in them.

The focus of prosperity gospels is obtaining worldly possessions

Those who preach the prosperity gospel while disregarding the duties and self-denial required to be a Christian have not heeded Jesus’ warning. Instead, they have imitated Lot’s wife in focusing on worldly possessions, ever wanting more and more stuff. Pastors who have this worldly emphasis do not truly and faithfully represent our humble Lord and Savior. Although He was the Majesty of heaven, He so disregarded earthly wealth as He lived a man among the people, that He had nowhere to call His own. “And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Matt. 8:20.

The saving of souls is to be the priority

Time and again in calling His disciples, Jesus emphasized the importance of saving souls over having material wealth. “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him.” Matt. 4:18-22.
In similar fashion and demonstrating the same utter disregard of earthly wealth, Jesus called Levi Matthew the publican to follow Him. “And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.” Mark 2:14.

“Matthew “left all, rose up, and followed Him”. There was no hesitation, no questioning, no thought of the lucrative business to be exchanged for poverty and hardship. It was enough for him that he was to be with Jesus, that he might listen to His words, and unite with Him in His work.” DA 273. Unfortunately for her, Lot’s wife did not deny herself, seeking the good of others, as did Christ and His disciples. Her fate demonstrates the danger of having the heart set on possessing material goods, making wealth a god and losing out on salvation.

Her treasure was in Sodom

Lot’s wife turned a deaf ear to the warnings from God through His angels; three times dire warnings were given; warnings that meant they must disregard their possessions and family in Sodom and flee for their lives. This she did not want to hear, for her treasure was in Sodom, and so was her heart.

More than likely, she heard the angels’ warning to her husband, while they were still in the house. “And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.” Gen. 19:12, 13.

The angels could force her to leave the city, but could not force her to change her will

The second warning was given by Lot himself to their sons-in-law. Lot repeated the warning of the angels to his family, saying, “Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.” Genesis 19:14. One cannot help but wonder if Lot’s wife also mocked at these warnings in her heart, considering her later action of disobedience.

After the angels had brought them out of Sodom, Lot and his little family were given the third, most urgent warning to flee and escape to the mountain, for to stay in the plain would be dangerous. Lot’s wife was not only disobedient to the voice of the LORD through His angels, but she was also ungrateful to Him, disregarding His mercy. She did not consider His great love and kindness toward her family and herself in sparing their lives that they did not perish as did the other inhabitants of Sodom. Her focus, on that terrible morning after they had fled Sodom, was not on the goodness, kindness, long-suffering and mercy shown to them by the God of Abraham, but on her material possessions and unbelieving family left behind in Sodom.

Disobeying God’s clear instruction is a dangerous thing

Boldly, and in utter defiance of God and His mercy, she disobeyed and looked back. The punishment for staying in the plain and not escaping to the mountain was to be consumed, but the punishment for looking back had not been as clearly specified. Perhaps she thought that looking back was such a little thing, that it would be overlooked, and nothing would happen to her. Perhaps she decided that she could go with her two daughters and her husband to the little city of Zoar to make a new life with more peace of mind if only she could get one last look at her beloved home in Sodom. Whatever she thought, it was just an excuse that led her to disobey the clear instructions given by God’s heaven-sent messengers.

No second chance after looking back

She turned and looked behind her, back toward Sodom and Gomorrah as they were being consumed by fire and brimstone from the LORD out of heaven. She looked one more time at Sodom, and that was her
last look, not only at Sodom, but at any thing in life. She was not given a second chance; she was not given time to repent, confess and heed the warnings. No, she had no excuse for her willful disregard of God’s word, and she was immediately punished and turned into a pillar of salt.

One can only imagine the shock, dismay and horror of her husband and daughters as they discovered her fate. As Lot was ahead of her, he would not have seen her turn into salt. But maybe her daughters were behind her and witnessed the tragic transformation. She may have turned so quickly, that before the young ladies could utter a word, her rebellious act was completed. It is not difficult to imagine the helpless wailing, the grief-filled mourning of those two daughters as they ran their trembling fingers over the salty pillar etched with their mother’s features! Never before had they heard of such a thing, and together with their father, they wondered at the terrible cost of such a small act.

**The deceitful, carnal heart is easily led to trust in possessions**

The history of the rich young ruler is another sad warning against the human heart’s natural tendency to love material wealth to the detriment of the soul. After he had turned his back on eternal life and following the Lord Jesus Christ, choosing instead his “great possessions” (Mark 10:22), Jesus told His disciples these words that still ring true in our day, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” Mark 10:23.

The Word tells us the disciples’ reaction to His statement, which led to His repeating the truth. “And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!” Mark 10:24.

Because having wealth makes life easier and brings honor and prestige with men in this world, the carnal heart which “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (see Jer. 17:9), is easily led to trust in great possessions for influence with God and an easy entrance into the future, immortal life. Thus the twice-repeated warning of Jesus to His disciples about the powerful influence that riches has against the kingdom of God.

**God’s warnings lead us to put our full trust in Him**

Throughout His Holy Word, God gives us even more very serious warnings against this tendency to place trust in riches instead of God; a tendency that is so strong that even those who claim to be born-again Christians come under its spell. These warnings lead us to put our full trust in the Lord and to view worldly wealth in its true misleading, deceitful, and short-term character.

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” Matt. 13:22. “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.” Prov. 11:28. “For riches are not forever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?” Prov. 27:24. “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.” Prov. 28:20. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matt. 6:19-21. “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” 1 Tim. 6:17.

**Outward display does not portray character**

When God does allow one of His disciples to have wealth, as He did with Abraham and Solomon, it is a great test of character to see if the wealth will be appropriated to the glory of God and the blessing of others. It was Solomon, the decadent king, who said, “Then I looked
on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” Ecc. 2:11.

In the preceding ten verses of this chapter, Solomon used the personal pronouns “I”, “mine”, “me”, “my”, and “myself” forty times, showing that the focus of his wealth was pleasing himself. He used his God-given wealth selfishly and found all this activity toward self-gratification “vanity and vexation of spirit” and profitless.

Worldly possessions and pleasure were not Abraham’s chief aim in life

On the other hand, Abraham, the Friend of God (James 2:23) valued people’s welfare above personal wealth and the pleasure it can bring. Even though God had blessed him to be “very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Gen. 13:2), when he and his 318 trained servants went to rescue Lot from the hands of the five kings and their armies, he wanted none of the spoil for himself, but said to the king of Sodom, “I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich.” Gen. 14:22, 23.

When Abraham, Sarah and Lot left Haran after Terah’s death, they took with them all their substance and the souls (persons) they had gotten in Haran. The Spirit of Prophecy brings out the fact that included in this company were converts to the true God. “During their stay in Haran, both Abraham and Sarah had led others to the worship and service of the true God. These attached themselves to the patriarch’s household, and accompanied him to the land of promise.” PP 127.

Heed our Savior’s warnings

Abraham and Sarah. Our treasure then will be laid up in heaven, away from the decaying effects of moths and rust, safe beyond the reach of every conniving thief.

Those who don’t look back will gain eternity

By the grace of God, we will be preparing to join the redeemed throng who will enter into the joy of their Lord, when this world is over. “With unutterable love, Jesus welcomes His faithful ones to the joy of their Lord. The Saviour’s joy is in seeing, in the kingdom of glory, the souls that have been saved by His agony and humiliation. And the redeemed will be sharers in His joy, as they behold, among the blessed, those who have been won to Christ through their prayers, their labors, and their loving sacrifices. As they gather about the great white throne, gladness unspeakable will fill their hearts, when they behold those whom they have won for Christ, and see that one has gained others, and these still others, all brought into the haven of rest, there to lay their crowns at Jesus’ feet and praise Him through the endless cycles of eternity.”


Patricia is a second-generation SDA writer who loves to study and share the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. She enjoys biking, rock collecting, and spending time with family. She resides in Louisiana with her husband and two children.