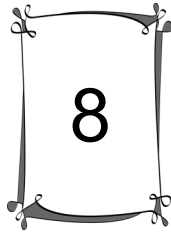


The background of the cover is a photograph of a scenic landscape. A paved road curves through a valley, bordered by a fence. To the left, a railway track with overhead power lines runs parallel to the road. The trees are in autumn, with yellow and orange leaves. In the distance, a large mountain peak is visible under a cloudy sky.

# **Sermons of Robert Murray M'Cheyne**

**8. Lot's Wife**

Sermons  
of  
Robert Murray  
M'Cheyne



Lot's Wife

***“But his wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt” Gen. 19:26.***

There is not in the whole Bible a more instructive history than that of Lot and his family. His own history shows well how the righteous scarcely are saved. His sons-in-law show well the way in which the Gospel is received by the easy, careless world. His wife is a type of those who are convinced, yet never converted — who flee from the wrath to come, yet perish after all; whilst the angels’ laying hold on the lingering family, is a type of the gracious violence and sovereign mercy which God uses in delivering souls.

At present I mean to direct your thoughts to the case of Lot’s wife, and to show the following.

***Doctrine.*** — Many souls who have been awakened to flee from wrath, look behind, and are lost.

**I. Many flee, under terrors of natural conscience; but when these subside, they look back, and are lost.**

So it was with Lot’s wife. She was not like the men of Sodom — intent upon the world and sin — quite unconcerned about their souls. She was not like her sons-in-law — she did not think her husband mocking — she was really alarmed, and really fled; and yet her terrors were like the morning cloud and the early dew, which quickly pass away. When the angels had brought them out of the gates of Sodom, they said: “Escape for thy life, look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” And as long as these dreadful words were ringing in her ears, doubtless she fled with anxious footstep. The dreadful scene of the past night — the darkness — the anxiety of her husband — the pressing urgency of the noble angel — all conspired to awaken her natural conscience, and to make her flee. But now

the hellish roar of the wicked Sodomites had ceased — the sun was already gilding the horizon, promising a glorious dawn — the plain of Jordan began to smile, well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord. Her sons-in-law — her friends — her house — her goods — her treasure were still in Sodom; so her heart was there also. Her anxieties began to vanish with the darkness — she determined to take one look, to see if it was really destroyed — she “looked back from behind him, and became a pillar of salt.”

So is it with many among us. Many flee under terror of natural conscience, but when these subside, they look back, and are lost. Some people pass through the world without any terrors of conscience — without any awakening or anxiety about their souls.

*Some are like the men of Sodom*, intent upon buying and selling — building and planting — marrying and giving in marriage; or they are greedy upon their lusts, and they have no ears to hear the sounds of coming wrath. As a man working hard at the anvil hears no noise from without, because of the noise of his own hammer; so these men hear nothing of coming vengeance, they are so busy with the work of their hands.

*Some are like the sons-in-law of Lot*. Yon shrewd, intelligent man of business thinks that do but jest. We seem to them as one that mocks. They are so accustomed to see behind the scenes in other professions, that they think there must be deceit with us too. And when they can point to an insincere, ungodly minister, then their triumph is complete. These shrewd men think that ministers put serious words into their mouths, as other men put on suits of solemn black at funerals, just to look well, and to agree with the occasion. They think that ministers put frightful things into sermons just to frighten

weak people, and to make the crowd wonder. Now these shrewd men are seldom, if ever, visited with terrors of conscience. They slip easily through the world into an undone eternity.

*Some, again, slumber all their days under a worldly ministry.* When God, in judgment, takes away the pure preaching of the Word, and sends a famine of the bread and water of life, their souls grow up quite hard and unawakened. They grow proud, and cannot bear to hear the preaching of Christ — they stop their ears and run — they hate, they detest it. These souls often pass through life without the least awakening, and never know, till they are in hell, that they are lost souls.

*But many worldly people have a season of anxiety about their soul.* A dangerous illness, or some awful bereavement, or some threatening cloud of Providence, stirs them up to flee from the wrath to Come. They are quite in earnest — they lay by their sins, and avoid their sinful companions, and apply diligently to the Bible, and attempt to pray, and seem to be really fleeing out of Sodom; but they dure only for a while; their concern is like the morning cloud and the early dew; it quickly passes away. The sun of prosperity begins to rise; their fears begin to vanish; they look behind, and are lost.

Are there none here who can look back on such a course as this? You remember when some providence awakened you to deepest seriousness — some sickness, or the approach of the pestilence, or some fearful dealing of God with your family, or the approach of a sacrament, made you anxiously flee out of Sodom. O how different you were from the gay, laughing, unconcerned world! You did not think ministers were mocking then. You read your Bible, and went down on your knees to pray very earnestly. But the storm blew over; the sun

began to rise, and everything around you began to smile. You began to think it hard to leave all your friends; your sins; your worldly enjoyments; and that perhaps the wrath of God would not come down. You looked back, and this day you are as hard and immovable as a Pillar of salt. ***“Remember Lot’s wife.”***

Learn two things:

(1). That an awakening by mere natural conscience is very different from an awakening by the Spirit of God. No man ever fled to Christ from mere natural terror. “No man can come to me,” saith Christ, “except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” Seek a divine work upon your heart.

(2). Learn how far you are from the kingdom of God. You are quite lost. You are unmoved and unaffected by all we can say. You do not weep — you do not beat upon the breast — you do not flee, though we can prove to you that you are lying under the wrath of the great God that made you. Yet you do not stir one step to flee. Oh! how like you are to the pillar of salt — how likely it is that you will never be saved.

## **II. Many flee when their friends are fleeing; but they look back, and are lost.**

So it was with Lot’s wife. Of all the things which helped to awaken that unfortunate woman, I doubt not the most powerful was the anxiety of her husband. If he had not been anxious, I doubt not she would have been as stupid and unconcerned as her neighbours around her. But when she looked upon the anxious countenance of her beloved lord — when she saw how serious and earnest he was in pleading with their sons-in-law, then she could not but share in his anxiety. She had partaken of all his trials, of all his prosperities, and of all his troubles, and she would not leave him now. She clave unto him — she laid hold on the skirt of his garment,

determined to be saved, or to perish with her husband. So much for the amiable and interesting affections of nature; but nature is not grace — natural affection carried her out of Sodom, but it did not carry her into Zoar; for she looked behind him, and became a pillar of salt.

Now, there is reason to think that this is true of some in this congregation — that they flee when their friends are fleeing, but look back, and are lost.

Nothing is more powerful in awakening souls than the example of others awakened to flee. It was so in the case of Ruth, when she clave to Naomi, saying: “Where thou goest I will go.” It was so in the case of the daughters of Jerusalem, when they saw the bride in anxious search of her beloved: “Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?” It is foretold that it shall be so in the latter day, when “ten men shall lay hold on the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.” It was so in the time of John the Baptist, when many of the Pharisees; and Sadducees came to be baptized, and John said: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

There is something very moving in the sight of some beloved one going to join the peculiar people of God. When he begins to flee from his old haunts of pleasure — no longer to laugh at wicked jest — no longer to delight in sinful company — when he becomes a reader of the Bible, and prays with earnestness, and waits with anxiety on the preached Word — it is a very moving sight to all his friends. No doubt, some are made bitter against him; for Christ came to set the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; but some are awakened to flee along with him.

Are there none here who were moved to flee because some dear friend was fleeing? Is there no wife that was awakened to flee with her husband, but grew weary and looked back, and is now become like Lot's wife? Is there none here that was made truly anxious by seeing some companions anxious about their soul? They wept, and you could not but weep; they felt themselves lost; and you, for the time, felt along with them. They were very eager in their inquiries after a Saviour, and you joined them in their eagerness. And where is all your anxiety now? It is gone, like the morning cloud and early dew. You looked behind, and are now unmoved as a pillar of salt.

It was quite right to flee with them — it was right to cleave to them; for if not, you would certainly be hardened; if you stand out such moving invitations, nothing else will persuade you. If it was right to flee, it is right to flee still. Why should you look back? They are going to be blessed, and will you not go with them? They are fleeing from wrath, and will you not flee with them? *“Remember Lot's wife.”* Have you made up your mind to separate eternally? If not, why then have you let them go? Why have you given up the first good movement in your breast? Flee still — cleave to them, and say: “We will go with you.”

### **III. Some are laid hold of by God, and made to flee, who yet look back, and are lost.**

So it was with Lot's wife. Not only were natural means made use of to make her flee, but supernatural means also. Not only was she moved by sudden terror, and by the example of her husband, but she was drawn out by the angels: “And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and



set him without the city” (Verse 16.). She shared in the same divine help as her husband — God was merciful to her as he was to her husband. The same mighty hand was put forth to save her, and actually plucked her as a brand out of the burning; but, observe, the same hand did not pull her into Zoar, nor lift her away to the cave of the mountain. Grace did something for her, but it did not do everything. She looked back, and became a pillar of salt.

So is it, we fear, with some among us. Some seem to be laid hold of by God, and made to flee, who yet look back, and are lost. Now, there are a great many among us of whom we have no right to say or to think that they have ever been laid hold of by God.

*There are many among us who seem to live in utter ignorance of their lost condition* — who plead the innocence of their lives even when Death is laying his cold hand upon them. There are some poor souls who seem to die willing to be judged by the law. I have lived a decent life, they will say; I have been a harmless, quiet-living man; and I can see no reason why the wrath of the great God should ever come upon me. Oh! brethren, if this is your case, it is very plain that you have never had a divine awakening. The power of God alone could awaken you to flee.

*There are many among us who live in the daily practice of sin* — some who carry on small dishonesties, or occasionally use minced oaths — who walk in the counsel of the ungodly. O brethren! if this be your case, it is quite plain that you have never had a divine awakening. When a man is made anxious about his soul, he always puts away his open sins.

*There are many among us who live much in the neglect of the means of grace* — some who very seldom read the Bible when alone, or never but on Sabbath-days — some who do not

pray regularly, nor with any earnestness — some who are very careless about the house of God, contented if they attend it only once on the Sabbath-day who make no conscience of being up bedtimes, and ready for the house of God in the morning — who allow the silliest excuses to keep them away — who loiter about on the Sabbath-day — who devote it to most unhallowed visiting, or walking in the fields — making it the most unholy day in the week. Oh! dear souls, if this be your case, then it is quite plain you have never been laid hold on by God. You are as dead and unawakened as the stones you walk upon. You are living in the very heart of Sodom, and the wrath of God abideth on you.

But there are some among us of whom we think that they have been laid hold on by God, and made to flee. There are some who show evident marks that God has been making them flee out of Sodom. The marks are these:

*They have a deep sense of their lost condition.* They have an abiding conviction that the time past of their lives has been spent under the wrath of the great God that made them; their concern goes with them wherever they go; and anxiety is painted on their very countenance. Is this your condition? Then you have indeed been awakened by God.

*They dare not go back to their open sins.* They break off quite suddenly from their little dishonesties, their swearing, or evil speaking — they separate from their wicked companions and filthy conversation — they feel that death is in the cup, and they dare not drink it any longer. Is this your case? Then there is reason to think you have been awakened by God.

*They are anxious users of the means, of grace.* They search the Scriptures night and day — they pray with earnestness — they are unwearied in waiting on ordinances — suffer no trifle to keep them away from the, house of God — they seek for

the Saviour as for hid treasure — listen for his name as the criminal for the sound of pardon. Is this your case? Then it seems likely that God has been merciful to your soul — that God has been making you flee out of Sodom, and escape for your life.

But the text shows me that many who have been thus awakened look back, and are lost. ***“Remember Lot’s wife.”*** She was brought quite out of Sodom, and yet she looked back, and became a pillar of salt. She was awakened, yet never saved. Now, there is reason to fear this may be the case with some amongst us.

*Some awakened soul begins to despair of ever finding Christ.* They begin to blame God for not having brought them into peace before now; and so they give up striving to enter in at the strait gate — they look behind, and are lost.

*Some awakened souls begin to think themselves saved already.* They have put away many outward sins, and prayed with much earnestness. Their friends observe the change, and they think they are surely safe now — that there is no need of fleeing any farther; so they look behind, and become a pillar of salt.

*Some awakened souls begin to tire of the pains of seeking Christ.* They remember their former ease and pleasures — their companions — their walks — their merry-makings; so they look behind, and perish.

*Speak a word to awakened souls.* Some now hearing me may be at present under the awakening hand of God. You have deep convictions of your lost condition, you have put away outward sins, and wait earnestly on every means of grace — there is every reason to think that God has been merciful to you, and has laid hold upon you. ***“Remember Lot’s wife.”***

Learn from her:

(1). That you are not saved yet. Lot's wife fled out of Sodom, led by the angel's hand, and yet she was lost. An awakened soul is not a saved soul. You are not saved till God shuts you into Christ. It is not enough that you flee — you must flee into Christ. Oh! do not lie down and slumber. Oh! do not look behind you. ***“Remember Lot's wife.”***

(2). That God is no ways obliged to bring you into Christ. God has made but one covenant — that is, with Christ and all in him; but he has nowhere bound himself to men that are out of Christ. He may never bring you to Christ, and yet be a just and righteous God. Do not demand it of God, then, as if he were obliged to save you, but lie helpless at his feet as a sovereign God.

*Speak a word to those who are beginning to look back.* There is reason to think that some who were once awakened by God have begun to look back.

*Some of you have begun to lose a sense of your wretched and lost condition.* Some of you have quite another view of your state from what you had.

*Some of you have gone back to old sins* — to old habits, especially of keeping company with the ungodly; and some, there is reason to think, are trying to laugh at their former fears.

*Some of you have turned more careless of the Bible, and of prayer, and of the ordinances.* At last sacrament there were many very eager to hear of Christ; and where are they now? There is reason to fear that much of that concern is gone that many have lost their anxiety — that some are looking back.

Now, ***“remember Lot's wife.”***

*It will not save you, that you were once anxious* — nay, that you were made anxious by God. So was Lot's wife, and yet

she was lost.

*If you really look back, it is probable you never will be awakened again.* Consider that monument of vengeance on the Plain of Jordan — speak to her, she does not hear — cry, she does not regard you — urge her to flee again from wrath, she does not move — she is dead. So will it be with you. If you really turn back now, we may speak, but you will not hear we may cry, but you will not regard — we may urge you again to flee, but you will not move. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

