

HOW QUICKLY WE FORGET!

Joe Slater

Thank God for His longsuffering! Paul wrote that God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering are demonstrations of His goodness which leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Peter alluded to that very passage, remarking that "the longsuffering of our lord is salvation" (2 Peter 3:15).

God was longsuffering with ancient Assyria. During the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III, the Lord sent the reluctant prophet Jonah to preach repentance to Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian empire. Jonah knew all too well the atrocities suffered by anyone who resisted Assyrian domination. He would have been entirely pleased had the Lord wiped Assyria from the face of the earth. Was he ever dismayed when every Ninevite from king to slave repented in sackcloth and ashes!

A little more than a century later, however, the prophet Nahum announced the impending destruction of Nineveh and the end of the Assyrian empire. "*It shall come to pass that all who look upon you will flee from you and say, 'Nineveh is laid waste!'*" (Nahum 3:7). Why? They had returned to their former brutal ways: "*Woe to the bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery. Its prey never departs . . . There is a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses*" (3:1-3). How quickly they had forgotten!

Yes, thank God for His longsuffering. But do not presume upon it or take it for granted! Peter said going back into sin is like a dog returning to its vomit or a sow that has been washed returning to wallow in the mire (2 Peter 2:22). Yes, sin is that serious! Paul wrote that it is a grievous error to "*continue in sin that grace may abound*" (Romans 6:1). Instead, let God's goodness lead us to repentance!

The Big Lie

When Jesus warned of the choking effects of "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22), He laid bare a problem which even yet plagues those who call themselves by His name.

Did you know that by the time the average American child begins school, he or she will have been subjected to over 20,000 TV commercials? If each ad averages only 30 seconds, the aggregate amount of time required to soak them all in is just a fraction less than a full seven days.

Even more alarming than the quantity is the content of these sales pitches. Their redundant theme is as simple as it is effective: "If you would **be** more, you must **have** more!"

You and I are being subtly seduced into believing that all our problems, from acne to aging, can be easily and instantly solved – for a price. By merely dropping a few dollars into the caldron of commerce, lost friends can be regained, lost confidence restored, and lost love rekindled. Our happiness hinges on whether or not we have taken the right pill, applied the right lotion, worn the right clothes, or driven the right car.

What we are not told is this: we are being lied to. Big time! When all is said and done, after years of continued watching, believing, and buying, we still feel empty, unfulfilled, and disillusioned. And all the while our children and grandchildren grow more and more confused.

Jesus' words in Luke 12:15 may seem old-fashioned and out of step with modern times, but they are true to the core nonetheless: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses."

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*

REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE! (LUKE 17:32)

Lot's wife, though unnamed, has become for all people of all ages an unforgettable woman. She is a great example of the folly of not following God's commands exactly as he gives them (Gen. 19:12-26).

The study of Lot's wife must begin with Lot's unforgettable decision in Genesis 13. Because of strife between their herdsmen, Abraham decides that he and Lot must separate. He lets Lot choose which direction to go. Lot beholds the well watered plains of Jordan and chooses to pitch his tent toward Sodom. Eventually he moves into that city – an unforgettable wrong choice).

Then comes the unforgettable decision by God (Gen. 18). Due to Sodom's wickedness, God determines to destroy it. But first so he tells Abraham, who pleads for Sodom to be spared (50--45--40--30--20--10); but Sodom's fate was sealed (Gen. 18:17-33).

Now comes the unforgettable opportunity. Lot, his wife, and daughters, are given the time to escape the doom. They have the opportunity to begin a new life; but Lot lingers – what is he waiting for? Finally we see them as they leave Sodom (Gen. 19:1-22).

And now we witness that most unforgettable disobedience on the part of Lot's wife. God's angels had ordered, "*look not behind thee.*" But Sodom had a strong hold on the heart of this nameless woman. She disobeyed and was consumed just as the angels had said (Gen. 19:17-26).

Lot's wife went a little way toward being saved but she had a problem – a divided heart. This is a problem with many today. As we travel life's pathway, let us remember Lot's wife and in so doing make right choices, use our opportunities to serve God, and obey him by giving strict obedience to his commands. Do what he says! It is the only safe way to go!

--Charles Hicks (adapted)