

LOT'S WIFE . . . and a striking sequence of thought
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(GENESIS 19)

When the disciples asked the Lord what would be the signs of His return, He replied, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come " (Matt. 24:40-42). Mankind divides into two classes, and this fact is revealed throughout the Bible.

Lot Who Lost His Wife-Genesis 19:23-26

Lot was thunderstruck! He could hardly believe his eyes. Even now he wondered if he were dreaming. "Escape for thy life " still rang in his ears, and he was left in no doubt that God had sent two angels to warn him about the catastrophe soon to overwhelm Sodom. Hurriedly he had done his best to persuade the members of his family, but his sons-in-law had laughed him to scorn; they probably said his story was fantastic. His wife and daughters, however, had listened to his words, and now they were to hurry to safety. Alas, Lot was destined to lose his wife. She was a runaway who forgot to take her heart. "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." She heard the same message, she had access to the same facts, but she perished within sight of her husband's refuge.

Abigail Who Lost Her Husband-I Samuel 25

They were a strange couple, as unlike as it was possible to be, and quite unsuited to each other. "Abigail was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but her husband was churlish and evil in all his doings. . . ." (v.3). They were wealthy and well protected; they had been most fortunate, for during perilous days David and his men had safeguarded their flocks and herds. Alas, the wealthy farmer had more money than sense! When David's followers asked for succour-a due reward for help given-they were insulted and driven away. "And behold, Nabal held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and his heart was merry within him, for he was drunken" (v. 36). Within a few hours the hand of judgment approached the household, and in the events which followed, the one was taken and the other left.

The Thief Who Lost His Comrade -Luke 23:39-43.

Did they know each other well? They had been comrades in life; they were now to die together. Matthew reminds us that they went to their crosses using identical language. "The thieves, also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth " (Matt. 27:44). These unfortunate men were both near the Lord; they heard the same words from His lips, and yet their reactions to His message were strangely different. In response to the faith of the penitent thief, Christ said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Alas, only one was taken; the other was left. Sunshine melts wax but hardens clay; and it would seem that God's love acts similarly on human hearts. Some yield-others resist-it depends upon the nature of the individual heart.

The Mill Girl Who Lost Her Workmate-Matthew 24:41

The workroom was a scene of activity; the girls were busy at their machines. Tons of grain were being fed methodically into the waiting rollers; at the end of the line, the gaping mouths of empty sacks waited for the crushings which ran

LOT'S WIFE . . . and a striking sequence of thought as water from the shining steel trays. How different this modern mill from the ancient ones where two women laboriously pushed around the long handle which in turn operated the stone which ground the corn. Two women worked on. One was thoughtful, the other carefree and gay. One was religious; she expected the coming of her Lord. The other was worldly and indifferent to the claims of Christ. The one prayed, the other sneered. Then quite suddenly it happened. "The one was taken, the other left." Consternation spread over the face of the second woman; she was surprised and frightened. Where was her workmate? She had been there a moment before; what had happened to take her away so quickly? And then a shout came from other parts of the mill. Many more people had vanished. It was all a nightmare; the machinery was switched off, questions were asked; but the Lord had come, and "one had been taken and the other left." In this way, and in so many words, Jesus described events to precede His return into this world. Through the medium of the Church, the second advent message is being proclaimed far and wide. Signs among the nations, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the urgent need of our tottering world, suggest that the coming of Christ will soon take place. If he should come today, would we be taken, or left? Would we be ready to welcome Him, or left to remember our stupidity?

The Two Boys in Blantyre

David Livingstone has always been my hero-missionary, and that probably accounts for the fact that I have seized every opportunity to visit the places with which he was associated. Toward the close of my four year's itinerary in Southern Africa, I stood in the most sacred of all African places-the clearing in the forest where the indomitable missionary knelt to pray his way into the eternal kingdom. I remembered the devotion of the carrier boys who later took the body of their friend six hundred miles to the coast, so that it might be taken to his own country. My friends and I spoke of these memorable events, and then had a prayer meeting in which we asked God to kindle such fires of devotion and enthusiasm in our own hearts. Finally we spoke of the incident which has now been told around the world. As the missionary's funeral passed along the crowded streets of London, one old man wept bitterly. Later, this poor fellow explained how he had been the boyhood friend of Livingstone. They had lived and played together in Blantyre, Scotland. When Livingstone surrendered himself to Christ, the boys drifted apart, for his friend remained unsaved. The old man added, "Now Davy is honored by everybody, but I am a poor old drunkard."

No One Ever Asked ME "

Dr. Jerome O. Williams, one of the Southern Baptist leaders in America, has written a delightful book called, Let Me Illustrate. It is easy to read, inspiring, and exceedingly helpful for young ministers. Dr. Williams tells the story of a Negro boy of about twelve years of age. At first, the lad was unwilling to accept a ride in the minister's carriage, for he said his shoes were muddy, and his getting into the clean buggy would spoil it. However, the kindly pastor persuaded the lad to get in; and as they rode along together, they conversed about the community-the schools, and eventually the church. Dr. Williams then said, "Jim, do you know anything about Jesus?" Immediately the lad's face was

LOT'S WIFE . . . and a striking sequence of thought aglow, and his eyes sparkled as he said, " He's de Saviour." Dr. Williams continues: " After asking him if he thought the Lord would save the people of Europe, Asia, and the other continents, and getting a positive answer, I said, Jim, do you believe Jesus will save the colored people? He replied, ' I tells ye, Boss He's everybody's Saviour? ' I looked into his face and said, 'Jim, is He your Saviour? ' With this question his head dropped, his eyes flashed far more slowly as great tears began to trickle down his black cheeks. When he seemed to be ready for further conversation, I said, 'Well, Jim, you must have found something wrong with Him if you cannot accept Him as your personal Saviour.' He was immediate and positive in his reply that there was nothing wrong at all with Jesus as the Saviour, and said again, 'He's everybody's Saviour.' ' Well, then,' I enquired, 'Why have you never taken Him as your own Saviour? ' He was very pathetic as he looked into my face, and with a most pitiful appeal in his eyes said, 'No one has ever asked me to take Him.'"

Dr. Williams explained how the lad could become a Christian, and soon the boy was saying-and again I quote, "' I can accept Him; I will accept Him; I do accept Him. He's my Saviour. I take Him as mine . . . ' When he began to rejoice, he forgot his muddy feet, his wet clothes, and the filled bucket, and spilled buttermilk all over the buggy. . . . As we drove along . . . he came to himself, looked about, and said, 'Law, white man, I oughtta got out o' dis buggy two miles back over yonder! "'

No one had ever asked him to be a Christian. That seems to have been the one supreme mistake made by each of the wise virgins. Instead of seeking to win a sister, the five wise virgins went to sleep. Consequently, when the Bridegroom came, they were taken, but the others were left.

Sir, I was the one left "

He was a fine young man of about 20 years, but his face suggested he had known difficult days. His sister sat alongside, and her eyes were moist. She had prayed for her brother, and now, at the conclusion of a Gospel meeting in Montreal, Canada, her prayers were to be answered. "Sir," he said, " I have just come from Hungary. I was a student when the Communists butchered our people. Actually, I had taken no part in the fighting, but the soldiers made me help carry a stretcher to remove dead bodies from the streets of our city. It was awful, for the night was filled with the sounds of exploding bombs. Then the stretcher dropped, and when I turned to look, my pal who was helping to carry the dead, had himself been killed. His face had been shot away. I felt very sick, but they made me carry on. Yes, I was the one left. I think I know the reason. My sister was praying for me. Oh, sir, I want to be a Christian. Perhaps that is why God spared me."

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