

DO NOT LOOK BACK— *Let Go of Regrets and Longings*

BY JERRY LAZARUS

Q. ...In the reading of Aug. 7th, [262-25 Q&A 5], please explain what is meant by “Look not back. Remember Lot’s wife.”

A. Looking to the front ever, for as one looks towards the light the shadows fall behind and do not become stumbling blocks to individual development. Thoughts are things, and while the past that is passed may be used as stepping-stones to higher things, looking back causes one to stumble, even as Lot’s wife looked upon that left as longing for those satisfying elements that made for the carnal, rather than the spiritual life. (262-28)

SOME YEARS AGO, I had an unsettling conversation with a relative, and my attempts to reconcile were in vain. In the following weeks, I recalled the troubling conversation several times. I wanted peace, so I sought guidance through prayer. Later, when I was sitting in meditation, my mind returned to the same troubling thoughts. Then I “heard” within: “Do not look back; you serve Me.” At that moment I realized that I had been repeatedly looking back and dwelling on lower-level thoughts of ‘he said, she said.’ In doing so, a part of me was living in the past. With the meditation experience, I chose to let go of the past and felt completely freed. And in this freedom, I’ve been able to serve wholeheartedly.

The message, “do not look back,” refers to the admonition the angels gave to Lot and his family while fleeing Sodom right before its destruction. Lot’s wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt. (Gen. 19:1-27) Jesus makes reference to this specific event, admonishing: Do not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife—a passage that the readings repeatedly used. There are a few reasons why we should not look back.

A Pillar of Salt

Stories in the Bible represent “conditions, circumstances, experiences” of each

individual. Sodom and Gomorrah are two cities that represent “reckoning with sin.” What were the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah? “Arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease,” and they “did not help the poor and needy.” (Ezek. 16:49-50) The self-aggrandizing people of the two cities were spiritually bankrupt, and they ignored repeated warnings given prior to their destruction.

If a person is hedonistically nostalgic, as in the case of Lot’s wife who craved the decadence of Sodom and Gomorrah, she’s looking back. Lot’s wife did not look back with mere innocent curiosity or to savor a happy memory, but she had a longing and desire for self-gratification.

Salt is a preservative. Lot’s wife turning into a pillar of salt is symbolic of being preserved in the desires of the past, rather than leaving them behind.

Cayce told a woman that “*the love of those things that bring pleasure and ease in the material associations in life—these are not at fault, but do not worship those.*” (410-2)

There is nothing wrong in enjoying the finer things of life, but not hedonistically so. When Jesus turned water into wine, was it not the best wine at the wedding? But Jesus also said, “life is more than food,



and the body more than clothing.” We are to spiritually grow and serve others, without falling prey to hedonism.

The Hindu scriptures speak about a concept called *vairâgya* (renunciation, non-attachment), meaning letting go of the attachment or mental clinging to material desires and burdens of the past. Such attachments can be completely dispelled by first choosing to do so, followed by meditating on the supreme light within.

The Promised Land

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah have a symbolic meaning in the Bible, so too does Egypt. Egypt represents “*the release from bondage.*” (281-33) On God’s guidance, Moses led the Israelites in Egypt out of bondage and into the Promised Land. Along their 40-year journey, from the very start, they faced numerous obstacles. There were constant unknowns, and God led and guided them day by day.

Despite Moses’ repeated miraculous works, the majority of the Israelites did not share his conviction or faith in God.



The consuming thoughts of the past rob us from fully and joyously living in the present.

They were plagued by doubt in God's promise, rebelling against the obstacles and difficulties they faced. They repeatedly looked back to Egypt, complaining to Moses on various occasions: "Why did we ever come out of Egypt?"... "If only we had died in the land of Egypt!"... "Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

After having set out on the path where God is leading a person, if he continually doubts, he's looking back. That's why Jesus said, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62)

'Return to Egypt' is the cry of the soul, showing it would rather be in bondage than endure an unfamiliar journey to freedom. The journey to the Promised Land is metaphorical of the soul's journey back to God. The soul runs into unknowns in the form of obstacles and difficulties, for it needs to develop faith in God and patience in the *process*—so as to attain its Christhood. In that journey, it needs to leave behind the earthly appetites that bind it to materiality, by not looking back.

"Every Saint Has a Past"

We may feel the weight of guilt and shame from our past actions: jealousy, arrogance, impatience, belligerence, or something worse. We may even have done the right thing by asking God for forgiveness. Yet, when a person keeps revisiting his past offenses even after he has asked God for forgiveness and felt the forgiveness, he's looking back. (262-121) (See article, *Forgive and Forget, Venture Inward*, Jul-Sep 2013; also available on my website: jerryazarus.com.)

When our change of heart is not sincere and complete, now and then we're drawn back to the past. At other times it's not the sincerity that we lack, but seeking Christ's help to quicken the process that is absent.

What we keep alive stays alive. What we have feared, nurtured, and preserved, stays with us—good or bad. Guilt and shame can keep us bound to the past, causing feelings of unworthiness and doubt. We may be so strong in our self-condemnation, so minimal in our turning within, so tenuous

in our faith that we fail to bring about a real change. We need to let go, release, and begin a new life with a renewed spirit. Instead of being mired in the past, we give Christ a place in its stead. Look at Peter. He denied Jesus by cursing and swearing, but he wept and repented, later becoming a teacher and healer.

Oscar Wilde said, "Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future." It's not so much that we have past transgressions, for "all have fallen short," but that we're sorry and learn our lessons and change for the better. Cayce put it another way: It's "*not how I faltered, but did I seek His face again?*" (281-7) Let our enthusiasm for change *not* be fizzled out by material prerogatives and emergencies, self-justification and excuses.

After the prodigal son squandered his inheritance by "loose living," he decided to arise and go to his father, leaving his wayward life behind. He had a genuine change of heart—humbling himself, he sought his father's forgiveness and found himself in the fullness of his father's mercy. Neither the father nor the son revisited the past, but only celebrated the present. (Luke 15:11-31)

Cayce told a woman: "*There is ever then no influence greater than, I will arise and go to the Father!*" (1554-6) And to a man, he said: "*yield not to self*" but fill the mind with the thought: "*I will arise and go, trusting in the Father and His promises that though I wander far afield, though I have erred in word and act, I will accept that forgiveness and make the start to correct in myself in such a manner that I may claim those promises [that are] mine now.*" (378-23) No matter "*how far astray*" we may have gone, the will can override any influences "*provided that will is made one with the [Christ] pattern.*" (5749-14)

No More Regrets

It's one thing to have shortcomings, but another to shortchange ourselves by looking back on "false hopes and experiences" or fears, disappointments, or discouragements. They can have a paralyzing effect. The consuming thoughts of the past rob us from fully and joyously living in the present: "I shouldn't have gotten even with my neighbor," "I should have chosen a different career," "I shouldn't have fired my

employee," or "I had a terrible childhood." Such thoughts and regrets of the past can confuse and overcome us.

When a 55-year-old man asked Cayce to what extent his "childhood home influences" had incapacitated him, Cayce answered: "*Just as much as the individual entity lets it...*" (4083-1)

Instead of blaming others or moping over the past and crying, "woe is me," we can set our sights toward a new tomorrow. We cannot recreate the past, but we can create the future. However, we cannot create a better future by standing on the problems and weaknesses of the past, but on the strength of what we know to do today.

While we're leaving the past behind, let us try not to do those things in the present that would "*bring later regrets, for these are the kind of canker that does undermine.*" (369-16)

The Brightness of God's Promises

God has promised: "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool." (Is. 1:18) When we've turned away from our past and centered ourselves in service of the Christ, our minds, bodies, and souls are cleansed.

We can do as Paul says, "putting behind thee those things that so easily beset, looking forward to the mark of the high calling as is set in Him." (Phil. 3:13-14)

"*Let us not look upon the shadows that drag us down but upon the brightness of God's promises.*" (303-14) With this outlook, we will bring a new hope and an awakening of our innate abilities. Then, why put it off for another day, another lifetime? Let us stand in the strength of the Christ and not in the weakness of self. 📖

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