Aura Soraya Angulo-Pichardo 25 April 2023
CD711 –Advanced Communication
Sermon #3 Manuscript

Scripture Passages:

(Anchor Passage)

Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Genesis 19:24-26 (NKJV)

(Supporting Passage in addition to others)

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do,* forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14 (NKJV)

Title- ***Don't Look Back and Keep It Moving!***

How many of you are stuck in the past? How many of you are in situations, relationships, environments, or even jobs you know you shouldn't be in? Environments that you know that God does not want you to be in? Think about some of the consequences, the hurt, pain, tears, shame, anger, confusion, and even depression that has come out as a result of it. I have to admit that I have allowed myself to be in situations I know I shouldn't have been in; it is a part of life; growing up and making mistakes. Recently when I was on my way to work and blasting my old-school R&B playlist Usher's song "Burn" came on. If you've never heard it, you need to asap! The gist of the song is about ending a relationship. The pain and the "burn" that comes with the realization that the end of a relationship has come and you need to move on. In the Intro Usher says:

Girl, I understand why
See, it's burnin' me to hold on to this
I know this is something' I gotta do
But that don't mean I want to
What I'm tryna say is that, I... love you, I just...
I feel like this... is comin' to an end

And it's better for me to... let it go now
Than hold on and hurt you
But I gotta let it burn……

Now, you're probably wondering what an old school R&B jam like "Burn" has to do with what we're talking about today, but just stick with me and I'll show you…..

Making wrong decisions and wanting and allowing ourselves to stay in unhealthy situations and relationships and environments is nothing new. The Bible is full of stories of people doing some pretty stupid things and then having to suffer the consequences of those choices. One story, in particular, is in the Book of Genesis (and I'm not talking about Adam and Eve). I want to talk to you today about the decision of the wife of a man named Lot.

Let me give you a little background and a little context on what is going on in Genesis 19 which tells the story of the Doom of Sodom. Now there were two cities during biblical times, Sodom and Gomorrah that were notorious for their wickedness; they were just a hot mess; worshiping idols, engaging in sexual activity- living VERY sinful lives and this really angered God. Earlier in chapter 18, God warns Abraham that the city will be destroyed because of their wickedness. Abraham pleads with God to spare the righteous people of Sodom, especially his nephew Lot and his family. After some bargaining, God agrees to spare the cities if 10 righteous people can be found in the cities. He originally wanted 50 but went down to 10- It is clear that Abraham had some great negotiation skills! Two angels are then sent to find the righteous people but discover that only Lot and his family are righteous and tell them to leave the City before it is destroyed and not look back.

Genesis 19:24-26 states: Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt". So try to get this image in your head; a whole city is burning down; the utter wrath of God is being displayed; Lot and his family are running away from the destruction; they are literally fleeing for their lives; this is their one and only shot of survival. In the midst of all of this hysteria, Lot's wife looks back at the destruction, the pain, and the anger and as a result, is turned into a pillar of salt; a pillar of salt! I can imagine her entire body, frozen in that one position of her looking back. She was stagnated, she couldn't move, and she would remain in the same situation she was in; no growth, no progress, no blessings. Think about that…..

Has anyone ever heard of something called "Stockholm Syndrome ". The Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as, "the psychological condition of a victim who identifies with and empathizes with their captor or abuser and their goals". As crazy as it seems it is a real thing. There have been many cases of this throughout history. There have been cases where an individual had the opportunity to escape their Captors but chose not too or escaped and then returned. An unhealthy relationship and dependence on the very person or thing that is causing

them pain and suffering is where they choose to remain. In a lot of ways the same thing that happened to Lot's wife is happening to us. We are in a situation that is causing us pain and suffering (for example the City of Sodom to righteous people like Lot and his family must have been a horrible place for them to live) and yet we do what Lot's wife did, we look back. Maybe you went back to a relationship that was unhealthy, unloving, and unsupportive. Maybe you are in a situation right now that you know you should not be in. I know it is hard to leave; we choose to stay in these relationships, situations, and environments that cause confusion and pain for several different reasons.

The question I want to pose to you is why would you choose to remain somewhere where you know, deep down in your heart that God does not want you to be in? He wants nothing but good things for us. We're reminded of this all through the Scriptures: in Jeremiah 29:11 " For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give you a future and hope" …. 1 Corinthians 14:33 reminds us that "God is not the author of confusion but of peace". Meditate on these verses when you need encouragement and need to be reminded of what God wants for you.

If we continue to stay in environments that cause us pain, how can we expect God to Bless us?

I have a close friend, she is one of the sweetest people I know. She has a beautiful empathetic heart, loves the Lord, and is always praying. She always tells me how she is praying for God to bring her a "Godly Man" into her life but nothing is happening. In the meantime, she casually dates, goes back and forth with her ex-boyfriend who was the epitome of a toxic relationship (she admits that too) and is intimate with different men. I tell her how she expects God to step in and do what He does if there isn't any space for Him to work with. I totally understand that there is hesitation, it is a normal and human reaction.. Even Lot hesitated when the Angels told him to leave! In verse 19:16 when the angels tell Lot to take his family and leave it says, "But he hesitated…..". Maybe he had a fear of the unknown, didn't want to leave his possessions behind, doubted that there were better things out of the City- who knows! The point is that he left a life of suffering and pain and kept it moving! As a result, he and his family (of course with the exception of his wife).

So once again I want to pose a question to you- why would you choose to remain somewhere where you know, deep down in your heart that God does not want you to be? Maybe it's time for some of you to reflect on the environments that you are in and ask yourselves the same questions. Will you be like Lot's wife and continue to go back to those things in the past that are causing you pain? Or will you choose to not look back, look forward, and keep it moving? Remember that God wants the best for His children; he loves us and wants us to be happy. I'd like to leave you with just one more verse to meditate on and write on your hearts, Philippians 3:13-14 " Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do,* forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus".