

Lot--a Beacon

by J.C. Ryle

J.C. Ryle's sermon on Lot serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of spiritual complacency and the importance of making choices that reflect one's faith in God.

Topics: "Spiritual Complacency", "Pursuit of Holiness"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the story of Lot as a cautionary tale for Christians, illustrating how even a believer can linger in sin and worldliness, ultimately leading to spiritual stagnation. Lot, despite being a righteous man, hesitated to leave Sodom, demonstrating the dangers of complacency and poor choices in life. Ryle warns that lingering can result in a lack of influence for good, both in the world and within one's own family, and encourages believers to pursue holiness and avoid the pitfalls of a half-hearted faith. He calls for self-examination and a return to Christ for those who find themselves in a state of spiritual lethargy, reminding them that true peace and usefulness come from a committed walk with God.

Transcript

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"He lingered" (Gen. 19:16).

The Holy Scriptures, which were written for our learning, contain beacons as well as patterns. They show us examples of what we should avoid, as well as examples of what we should follow. The man whose name heads this page is set for a beacon to the whole church of Christ. His character is put before us in one little word: "He lingered." Let us sit down and look at this beacon for a few minutes. Let us consider Lot.

Who is this man who lingered? It is the nephew of faithful Abraham. And when did he linger? The very morning Sodom was to be destroyed. And where did he linger? Within the walls of Sodom itself. And before whom did he linger? Under the eyes of the two angels who were sent to bring him out of the city. Even then "he lingered"!

The words are solemn and full of food for thought. They ought to sound like a trumpet in the ears of all who make any profession of religion. I trust they will make every reader of this message think. Who knows but they are the very words your soul requires? The voice of the Lord Jesus commands you to "remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). The voice of one of His ministers invites you this day to remember Lot.

Let us examine the state of Lot himself, what the text says of him, why he lingered, and what sort of fruit he brought forth, the whole while paying special attention as an instruction for holiness. The main principle is clear: We must not follow the example of Lot; we must not linger.

Once more, I say, "Lot is a beacon."

1. What was Lot?

This is a most important point. If I leave it unnoticed, I shall perhaps miss that group of professing Christians I want especially to benefit. If I did not make it quite clear, many would perhaps say, after reading this message, "Ah! Lot was a bad man, a poor, wicked, dark creature, an unconverted man, a child of this world. No wonder he lingered!"

But mark now what I say. Lot was nothing of the kind. Lot was a true believer, a converted person, a real child of God, a justified soul, a righteous man.

Has anyone of my readers grace in his heart? So also had Lot. Has anyone of my readers a hope of salvation? So also had Lot. Is anyone of my readers a "new creature"? So also was Lot. Is anyone of my readers a traveler in the narrow way which leads unto life? So also was Lot.

Let no one think this is only my private opinion, a mere arbitrary fancy of my own, a notion unsupported by Scripture. Let no one suppose I want him to believe it merely because I say it. The Holy Spirit has placed the matter beyond controversy, by calling him "just" and "righteous" (2 Pet. 2:7, 8), and has given us good evidence of the grace that was in him.

One evidence is that he lived in a wicked place, "seeing and hearing" evil all around him (2 Pet. 2:8), and yet was not wicked himself. Now to be a Daniel in Babylon, an Obadiah in Ahab's house, an Abijah in Jeroboam's family, a saint in Nero's court, and a "righteous man" in Sodom, a man must have the grace of God. Without grace it would be impossible.

Another evidence is that he "vexed his soul with the unlawful deeds" he beheld around him (2 Pet. 2:8). He was wounded, grieved, pained and hurt at the sight of sin. This was feeling like holy David, who says, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not Your word." "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Your law" (Ps. 119:136, 158). This was feeling like Paul, who says, "I have great sorrow and continual heaviness in my heart . . . for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2, 3). Nothing will account for this but the grace of God.

Another evidence is that he "vexed his soul from day to day" with the unlawful deeds he saw (2 Pet. 2:8). He did not at length become cool and lukewarm about sin, as many do. Familiarity and habit did not take off the fine edge of his feelings, as too often is the case. Many a man is shocked and startled at the first sight of wickedness, and yet becomes at last so accustomed to see it, that he views it with comparative unconcern. This is especially the case with those who live in towns and cities or with English people who travel on the Continent. Such people often become utterly indifferent about Sabbath-breaking and many forms of open sin. But it was not so with Lot. And this is a great mark of the reality of his grace.

Such a one was Lot--a just and righteous man, a man sealed and stamped as an heir of heaven by the Holy Spirit Himself.

Before we pass on, let us remember that a true Christian may have many a blemish, many a defect, many an infirmity, and yet be a true Christian nevertheless. We do not despise gold because it is mixed with much dross. We must not undervalue grace because it is accompanied by much corruption. Read on, and you will find that Lot paid dearly for his "lingering." But do not forget, as you read, that Lot was a child of God.

2. What the text tells us about him

What does the text, already quoted, tell us about Lot's behavior? The words are wonderful and astounding: "He lingered." The more we consider the time and circumstances, the more wonderful we shall think them.

Lot knew the dreadful condition of the city in which he stood. "The cry" of its abominations "had waxen great before the Lord" (Gen. 19:33). And yet he lingered.

Lot knew the fearful judgment coming down on all within its walls. The angels had said plainly, "The Lord has sent us to destroy it" (Gen. 19:13). And yet he lingered.

Lot knew that God was a God who always kept His word, and if He said a thing would surely do it. He could hardly be Abraham's nephew, and live long with him, and not be aware of this. Yet he lingered.

Lot believed there was danger, for he went to his sons-in-law and warned them to flee. "Up!" he said, "Get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city" (Gen. 19:14). And yet he lingered.

Lot saw the angels of God standing by, waiting for him and his family to go forth. He heard the voice of those ministers of wrath ringing in his ears to hasten him: "Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters, which are here; lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Gen. 19:15). And yet he lingered.

He was slow when he should have been quick, backward when he should have been forward, trifling when he should have been hastening, loitering when he should have been hurrying, cold when he should have been hot. It is passing strange! It seems almost incredible! It appears too wonderful to be true! But the Spirit writes it down for our learning. And so it was.

And yet, incredulous as it may appear at first sight, I fear there are many of the Lord Jesus Christ's people, in fact Christians, very much like Lot. Mark this well! There are many real children of God who appear to know far more than they live up to, and see far more than they practice, and yet continue in this state for many years. Incredibly, they go as far as they do and yet go no further!

They hold the Head, even Christ, and love the truth. They like sound preaching and assent to every article of gospel doctrine when they hear it. But still there is an indescribable something which is not satisfactory about them. They are constantly doing things which disappoint the expectations of their ministers and of more advanced Christian friends. It causes one to marvel that they should think as they do and yet stand still!

They believe in heaven and yet seem faintly to long for it, and in hell and yet seem little to fear it. They love the Lord Jesus, but the work they do for Him is small. They hate the devil, but they often appear to tempt him to come to them. They know the time is short, but they live as if it were long. They know they have a battle to fight, yet a man might think they were at peace. They know they have a race to run, yet they often look like people sitting still. They know the Judge is at the door, and there is wrath to come; and

yet they appear half asleep. Astonishing they should be what they are and yet be nothing more!

And what shall we say of these people? They often puzzle godly friends and relations. They often cause great anxiety. They often give rise to great doubts and searchings of heart. But they may be classed under one sweeping description: they are all brethren and sisters of Lot. They linger.

These are they who get the notion into their minds that it is impossible for all believers to be so very holy and very spiritual! They allow that eminent holiness is a beautiful thing. They like to read about it in books and even to see it occasionally in others. But they do not think that all are meant to aim at so high a standard. At any rate, they seem to make up their minds it is beyond their reach.

These are they who get into their heads false ideas of charity, as they call it. They are morbidly afraid of being illiberal and narrow-minded and are always flying into the opposite extreme. They would sincerely please everybody, and suit everybody, and be agreeable to everybody. But they forget they ought first to be sure that they please God.

These are they who dread sacrifices and shrink from self-denial. They never appear able to apply our Lord's command to "take up the cross" and "cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye" (Matt. 5:29, 30). They cannot deny that our Lord used these expressions, but they never find a place for them in their religion. They spend their lives in trying to make the gate more wide and the cross more light. But they never succeed.

These are they who are always trying to keep in with the world. They are ingenious in discovering reasons for not separating decidedly and in framing plausible excuses for attending questionable amusements and keeping up questionable friendships. One day you are told of their attending a Bible reading; the next day perhaps you hear of their going to a ball. One day they fast, or go to the Lord's table and receive the sacrament; another day they go to the racecourse in the morning and the opera at night. One day they are almost in hysterics under the sermon of some sensational preacher; another day they are weeping over some novel. They are constantly laboring to persuade themselves that to mix a little with worldly people on their own ground does good. Yet in their case it is very clear they do no good, and only get harm.

These are they who cannot find it in their hearts to quarrel with their besetting sin, whether it be sloth, indolence, ill-temper, pride, selfishness, impatience or what it may. They allow it to remain a tolerably quiet and undisturbed tenant of their hearts. They say it is their health or their constitutions or their temperaments or their trials or their way. Their father or mother or grandmother was so before themselves, and they are sure they cannot help it. And when you meet after the absence of a year or so, you hear the same thing!

But all, all, all may be summed up in one single sentence. They are the brethren and sisters of Lot. They linger.

Ah, if you are a lingering soul, you are not happy! You know you are not. It would be strange indeed if you were so. Linging is the sure destruction of a happy Christianity. A lingerer's conscience forbids him to enjoy inward peace.

Perhaps at one time you did run well. But you have left your first love; you have never felt the same comfort since, and you never will until you return to your "first works" (Rev. 2:5). Like Peter, when the Lord Jesus was taken prisoner, you are following the Lord afar off; and, like him, you will find the way not

pleasant, but hard.

Come and look at Lot. Come and mark Lot's history. Come and consider Lot's "lingering," and be wise.

3. What reasons may account for his lingering

Who is there among the readers of this present text who feels secure and has no fear of lingering? Come and listen while I tell you a few passages of Lot's history. Do as he did, and it will be a miracle indeed if you do not get into the same state of soul at last.

One thing then I observe in Lot is this: he made a wrong choice in early life.

There was a time when Abraham and Lot lived together. They both became rich and could live together no longer. Abraham, the elder of the two, in the true spirit of humility and courtesy, gave Lot the choice of the country when they resolved to part company: "If you," he said, "will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen. 13:9).

And what did Lot do? We are told he saw that the plains of Jordan, near Sodom, were rich, fertile and well watered. It was a good land for cattle and full of pastures. He had large flocks and herds, and it just suited his requirements. And this was the land he chose for a residence, simply because it was a rich, well-watered land (Gen. 13:10).

It was near the town of Sodom! He cared not for that. The men of Sodom, who would be his neighbors, were wicked! It mattered not. They were sinners before God exceedingly! It made no difference to him. The pasture was rich. The land was good. He wanted such a country for his flocks and herds. And before that argument, all scruples and doubts, if indeed he had any, at once went down.

He chose by sight and not by faith. He asked no counsel of God to preserve him from mistakes. He looked to the things of time and not of eternity. He thought of his worldly profit and not of his soul. He considered only what would help him in this life. He forgot the solemn business of the life to come. This was a bad beginning.

But I observe also that Lot mixed with sinners when there was no occasion for his doing so.

We are first told that he "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Gen. 13:12). This, as I have already shown, was a great mistake.

But the next time he is mentioned, we find him actually living in Sodom itself. The Spirit says expressly, "He dwelt in Sodom" (Gen. 14:12). His tents were left. The country was forsaken. He occupied a house in the very streets of that wicked town.

We are not told the reasons for this change. We are not aware that any occasion could have arisen for it. We are sure there could have been no command of God. Perhaps his wife liked the town better than the country for the sake of society. It is plain she had no grace herself. Perhaps she persuaded Lot it was needful for the advantage of his daughters, that they might marry and get settled in life. Perhaps the daughters urged living in the town for the sake of gay company; they were evidently light-minded young women. Perhaps Lot liked it himself in order to make more of his flocks and herds. Men never want reasons to confirm their wills. But one thing is very clear: Lot dwelt in the midst of Sodom without good cause.

When a child of God does these two things which I have named, we never need be surprised if we hear, by and by, unfavorable accounts about his soul. We never need wonder if he becomes deaf to the warning voice of affliction, as Lot was (Gen. 14:12), and turns out a lingerer in the day of trial and danger, as Lot did.

Make a wrong choice in life, an unscriptural choice, and settle yourself down unnecessarily in the midst of worldly people, and I know no surer way to damage your own spirituality and to go backward about your eternal concerns. This is the way to make the pulse of your soul beat feebly and languidly. This is the way to make the edge of your feeling about sin become blunt and dull. This is the way to dim the eyes of your spiritual discernment, until you can scarcely distinguish good from evil, and stumble as you walk. This is the way to bring a moral palsy on your feet and limbs and make you go tottering and trembling along the road to Zion, as if the grasshopper was a burden. This is the way to sell the pass to your worst enemy, to give the devil vantage ground in the battle, to tie your arms in fighting, to fetter your legs in running, to dry up the sources of your strength, to cripple your energies, to cut off your own hair, like Samson, and give yourself into the hands of the Philistines, to put out your own eyes, grind at the mill, and become a slave.

Settle these things down in your mind. Do not forget them. Recollect them in the morning. Recall them to memory at night. Let them sink down deeply into your heart. If ever you would be safe from lingering, beware of needless mingling with worldly people. Beware of Lot's choice! If you would not settle down into a dry, dull, sleepy, lazy, barren, heavy, carnal, stupid, torpid state of soul, beware of Lot's choice!

a. Remember this in choosing a dwelling place or residence. It is not enough that the house is comfortable, the situation good, the air fine, the neighborhood pleasant, the rent or price small, the living cheap. There are other things yet to be considered. You must think of your immortal soul. Will the house you think of help you toward heaven or hell? Is the gospel preached within an easy distance? Is Christ crucified within reach of your door? Is there a real man of God near, who will watch over your soul? I charge you, if you love life, not to overlook this. Beware of Lot's choice.

b. Remember this in choosing a calling, a place, or profession in life. It is not enough that the salary is high, the wages good, the work light, the advantages numerous, the prospects of getting on most favorable. Think of your soul, your immortal soul. Will it be fed or starved? Will it be prospered or drawn back? Will you have your Sundays free and be able to have one day in the week for your spiritual business? I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to take heed what you do. Make no rash decision. Look at the place in every light, the light of God as well as the light of the world. Gold may be bought too dear. Beware of Lot's choice.

c. Remember this in choosing a husband or wife, if you are unmarried. It is not enough that your eye is pleased, that your tastes are met, that your mind finds congeniality, that there is amiability and affection, that there is a comfortable home for life. There needs something more than this. There is a life yet to come. Think of your soul, your immortal soul. Will it be helped upwards or dragged downwards by the union you are planning? Will it be made more heavenly or more earthly, drawn nearer to Christ or to the world? Will its religion grow in vigor, or will it decay? I pray you, by all your hopes of glory, allow this to enter into your calculations. "Think," as old Baxter said, and "think, and think again," before you commit yourself. "Be not unequally yoked" (2 Cor. 6:14). Matrimony is nowhere named among the means of conversion. Remember Lot's choice.

d. Remember this, if you are ever offered a situation on a railway. It is not enough to have good pay and regular employment, the confidence of the directors, and the best chance of rising to a higher post. These things are very well in their way, but they are not everything. How will your soul fare if you serve a railway company that runs Sunday trains? What day in the week will you have for God and eternity? What opportunities will you have for hearing the gospel preached? I solemnly warn you to consider this. It will profit you nothing to fill your purse if you bring leanness and poverty on your soul. Beware of selling your Sabbath for the sake of a good place! Remember Esau's mess of pottage. Beware of Lot's choice!

Some reader may perhaps think, "A believer need not fear; he is a sheep of Christ; he will never perish; he cannot come to much harm. It cannot be that such small matters can be of great importance."

Well, you may think so. But I warn you, if you neglect these matters, your soul will never prosper. A true believer will certainly not be cast away, although he may linger. But if he does linger, it is vain to suppose that his religion will thrive. Grace is a tender plant. Unless you cherish it and nurse it well, it will soon become sickly in this evil world. It may droop, though it cannot die. The brightest gold will soon become dim when exposed to a damp atmosphere. The hottest iron will soon become cold. It requires pains and toil to bring it to a red heat; it requires nothing but letting alone or a little cold water to become black and hard.

You may be an earnest, zealous Christian now. You may feel like David in his prosperity: "I shall never be moved" (Ps. 30:6). But be not deceived. You have only got to walk in Lot's steps and make Lot's choice, and you will soon come to Lot's state of soul. Allow yourself to do as he did, presume to act as he acted, and be very sure you will soon discover you have become a wretched lingerer like him. You will find, like Samson, the presence of the Lord is no longer with you. You will prove, to your own shame, an undecided, hesitating man in the day of trial. There will come a canker on your religion and eat out its vitality without your knowing it. There will come a slow consumption on your spiritual strength and waste it away insensibly. And at length you will wake up to find your hands hardly able to do the Lord's work and your feet hardly able to carry you along the Lord's way and your faith no bigger than a grain of mustard seed; and this, perhaps, at some turning point in your life, at a time when the enemy is coming in like a flood, and your need is the sorest.

Ah, if you would not become a lingerer in religion, consider these things! Beware of doing what Lot did!

4. What kind of fruit his lingering brought forth

I would not pass over this point for many reasons, and especially in the present day. There are not a few who will feel disposed to say, "After all Lot was saved: he was justified; he got to heaven. I want no more. If I do but get to heaven, I shall be content." If this be the thought of your heart, just stay a moment and listen to me a little longer. I will show you one or two things in Lot's history which deserve attention and may perhaps induce you to alter your mind.

I think it of first importance to dwell upon this subject. I always will contend that eminent holiness and eminent usefulness are most closely connected, that happiness and "following the Lord fully" go side by side, and that if believers will linger, they must not expect to be useful in their day and generation or to be very saintly and Christlike or to enjoy great comfort and peace in believing.

a. Let us mark, then that Lot did no good among the inhabitants of Sodom.

Lot probably lived in Sodom many years. No doubt he had many precious opportunities for speaking of the things of God and trying to turn away souls from sin. But Lot seems to have effected just nothing at all. He appears to have had no weight or influence with the people who lived around him. He possessed none of that respect and reverence which even the men of the world will frequently concede to a bright servant of God.

Not one righteous person could be found in all Sodom, outside the walls of Lot's home. Not one of his neighbors believed his testimony. Not one of his acquaintances honored the Lord whom he worshiped. Not one of his servants served his master's God. Not one of "all the people from every quarter" cared a jot for his opinion when he tried to restrain their wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn," said they, "and he will needs be a judge" (Gen. 19:9). His life carried no weight; his words were not listened to; his religion drew none to follow him.

And, truly, I do not wonder! As a general rule, lingering souls do no good to the world and bring no credit to God's cause. Their salt has too little savor to season the corruption around them. They are not "epistles of Christ" who can be "known and read of all" (2 Cor. 3:2). There is nothing magnetic and attractive and Christ-reflecting about their ways. Let us remember this.

b. It is also telling that Lot helped none of his family, relatives or connections toward heaven. We are not told how large his family was. But this we know--he had a wife and two daughters at least in the day he was called out of Sodom, if he had not more children besides.

But whether Lot's family was large or small, one thing, I think, is perfectly clear--there was not one among them all that feared God!

When he "went out and spoke unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters," and warned them to flee from the judgments coming on Sodom, we are told, "he seemed to them as one that mocked" (Gen. 19:14). What fearful words those are! It was as good as saying, "Who cares for anything you say?" So long as the world stands, those things will be a painful proof of the contempt with which a lingerer in religion is regarded.

And what was Lot's wife? She left the city in his company, but she did not go far. She had not faith to see the need of such a speedy flight. She left her heart in Sodom when she began to flee. She looked back from behind her husband in spite of the plainest command not to do so (Gen. 19:17) and was at once turned into a pillar of salt.

And what were Lot's two daughters? They escaped, indeed, but only to do the devil's work. They became their father's tempters to wickedness and led him to commit the foulest of sins.

In short, Lot seems to have stood alone in his family! He was not made the means of keeping one soul back from the gates of hell!

And I do not wonder. Lingering souls are seen through by their own families and, when seen through, they are despised. Their nearest relatives understand inconsistency, if they understand nothing else in religion. They draw the sad, but not unnatural conclusion, "Surely, if he believed all he professes to believe, he would not go on as he does." Lingering parents seldom have godly children. The eye of the child drinks in far more than the ear. A child will always observe what you do much more than what you say. Let us remember this.

c. Lot left no evidences behind him when he died. We know but little about Lot after his flight from Sodom, and all that we do know is unsatisfactory. His pleading for Zoar because it was "a little one," his departure from Zoar afterwards, and his conduct in the cave--all, all tell the same story. All show the weakness of the grace that was in him and the low state of soul into which he had fallen.

We know not how long he lived after his escape. We know not where he died, or when he died, whether he saw Abraham again, what was the manner of his death, what he said or what he thought. All these are hidden things. We are told of the last days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, but not one word about Lot. Oh, what a gloomy deathbed the deathbed of Lot must have been!

The Scripture appears to draw a veil around him on purpose. There is a painful silence about his latter end. He seems to go out like an expiring lamp and to leave an ill savor behind him. And had we not been specially told in the New Testament that Lot was "just" and "righteous," I verily believe we should have doubted whether Lot was a saved soul at all.

But I do not wonder at his sad end. Lingerer believers will generally reap according as they have sown. Their lingering often meets them when their spirit is departing. They have little peace at the last. They reach heaven, to be sure; but they reach it in poor plight, weary and footsore, in weakness and tears, in darkness and storm. They are saved, but "saved so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:15).

I ask every reader of this message to consider the three things which I have just mentioned. Do not misunderstand my meaning. It is amazing to observe how readily people catch at the least excuse for misunderstanding the things that concern their souls!

Refusing to linger does not automatically make one useful to the world. Consider Noah, who preached one hundred and twenty years without effect. Nor will the refusal to linger guarantee the conversion of family or friends. Even many of King David's children were ungodly. The Lord Jesus was not believed by His own brethren.

But I do say it is almost impossible not to see some connection between Lot's evil choice and Lot's lingering and between Lot's lingering and his unprofitableness to his family and the world. I believe the Spirit meant us to see it. I believe the Spirit meant to make him a beacon to all professing Christians. And I am sure the lessons I have tried to draw from the whole history deserve serious reflection.

And now let me impart a few parting thoughts to all who call themselves believers in Christ. I have no wish to make your hearts sad. I do not want to give you a gloomy view of the Christian course. My only object is to give you friendly warnings. I desire your peace and comfort. I would sincerely see you happy as well as safe, and joyful as well as justified. I speak as I have done for your good.

You live in days when a lingering, Lot-like religion abounds. The stream of profession is far broader than it once was but far less deep in many places. A certain kind of Christianity is almost fashionable now. To belong to some party in the Church of England and show a zeal for its interests; to talk about the leading controversies of the day; to buy popular religious books as fast as they come out and lay them on your table; to attend meetings; to subscribe to societies; to discuss the merits of preachers; to be enthusiastic and excited about every new form of sensational religion which crops up--all these are now comparatively easy and common attainments. They no longer make a person singular. They require little or no sacrifice. They entail no cross.

But to walk closely with God; to be really spiritually-minded; to behave like strangers and pilgrims; to be distinct from the world in employment of time, in conversation, in amusements, in dress; to bear a faithful witness for Christ in all places; to leave a savor of our Master in every society; to be prayerful, humble, unselfish, good-tempered, quiet, easily pleased, charitable, patient, meek; to be jealously afraid of all manner of sin, and tremblingly alive to our danger from the world--these, these are still rare things! They are not common among those who are called true Christians; and, worst of all, the absence of them is not felt and bewailed as it should be.

In a day like this I venture to offer counsel to every believing Christian who has the ears to hear. Do not turn away from it. Do not be angry with me for plain speaking. I bid you, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). I bid you not to be slothful, not to be careless, not to be content with a small measure of grace, not to be satisfied with being a little better than the world. I solemnly warn you not to attempt doing what never can be done--I mean, to serve Christ, and yet keep in with the world. I call upon you and beseech you to be a whole-hearted Christian, to follow after eminent holiness, to aim at a high degree of sanctification, to live a consecrated life, to present your body a "living sacrifice" unto God, to "walk in the Spirit" (Rom. 12:1; Gal. 5:25). I charge you and exhort you, by all your hopes of heaven and desires of glory, if you would be happy, if you would be useful, do not be a lingering soul.

Would you know what the times demand? The shaking of nations, the uprooting of ancient things, the overturning of kingdoms, the stir and restlessness of men's minds--what do they say? They all cry aloud, "Christian, do not linger!"

Would you be found ready for Christ at His second appearing, your loins girded, your lamp burning, yourself bold and prepared to meet Him? Then do not linger!

Would you enjoy much sensible comfort in your religion, feel the witness of the Spirit within you, know whom you have believed, and not be a gloomy, complaining, sour, downcast and melancholy Christian? Then do not linger!

Would you enjoy strong assurance of your own salvation, in the day of sickness, and on the bed of death? Would you see with the eye of faith heaven opening and Jesus rising to receive you? Then do not linger!

Would you leave great broad evidences behind you when you are gone? Would you like us to lay you in the grave with comfortable hope and talk of your state after death without a doubt? Then do not linger!

Would you be useful to the world in your day and generation? Would you draw men from sin to Christ, adorn your doctrine, and make your Master's cause beautiful and attractive in their eyes? Then do not linger!

Would you help your children and relatives toward heaven and make them say, "We will go with you," and not make them infidels and despisers of all religion? Then do not linger!

Would you have a great crown in the day of Christ's appearing and not be the least and smallest star in glory and not find yourself the last and lowest in the kingdom of God? Then do not linger!

Oh, let not one of us linger! Time does not, death does not, judgment does not, the devil does not, the world does not. Neither let the children of God linger.

Does any reader of this thesis feel that he is a lingerer? Has your heart felt heavy, and your conscience sore, while you have been reading these words? Does something within you whisper, "I am the man"? Then listen to what I am saying. It is not well with your soul. Awake, and try to do better.

If you are a lingerer, you must just go to Christ at once and be cured. You must use the old remedy; you must bathe in the old fountain. You must turn again to Christ and be healed. The way to do a thing is to do it. Do this at once!

Do not think for a moment your case is past recovery. Do not think, because you have been long living in a dry, sleepy and heavy state of soul, that there is no hope of revival. Is not the Lord Jesus Christ an appointed Physician for all spiritual ailments? Did He not cure every form of disease when He was upon earth? Did not He cast out every kind of devil? Did He not raise poor backsliding Peter and put a new song in his mouth? Oh, doubt not, but earnestly believe that He will yet revive His work within you! Only turn from lingering, and confess your folly, and come--come at once to Christ. Blessed are the words of the prophet: "Only acknowledge your iniquity." "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:13, 22).

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-ryle/lota-beacon/>

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