

When the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot. --Genesis 19:15

WERE these personages angels, or divine appearances? It matters not: they were messengers sent from God to save. In any case they teach us how to deal with men if we are to arouse and bless them. We must go to their homes ("They turned in unto Lot," verse 3); they stated the case ("The Lord will destroy this city," verse 14); they urged and persuaded ("Up, get you out of this place"); and they resorted to a loving violence ("The men laid hold upon his hand," verse 16). Picture the two angels with all their four hands occupied in leading out Lot and his wife and his two daughters.

I. THE RIGHTEOUS NEED TO BE HASTENED.

1. *In what?* In matters of obedience to their Lord. Few can say, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments"

In coming out from the world. "He lingered." "His wife looked back" (verse 26). The urgency of the command which says, "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate" shows how loath we are to "rise up and come away" In seeking the good of their families. "Hast thou here any besides?" (verse 12). In general quickness of movement in spiritual things. "Escape for thy life" (verse 17). "Haste thee" (verse 22).

2. *Why?* The flesh is weak. Lot was an old man, too much tinctured with worldliness, and he was away from Abraham, the nobler spirit, who had helped to keep him right.

Perseverance is difficult. "I cannot escape to the mountain"
Sodom has a sluggish influence. We often traverse the "Enchanted ground," where sleep seizes on the traveler.
When our worldly occupation is incessant, and takes up most of our thoughts, we are hindered from decision.
Idle leisure is still worse. Men with nothing to do in the world seldom do anything in religion.

3. *By what means?* By reminding them of their obligations, their opportunities, and the days already wasted.

By leading them to consider the flight of time and brevity of life.
By warning them of the sure ruin of their impenitent friends.
By setting before them the fact that delay in duty is sin, and leads to other sins.

II. THE SINNERS NEED TO BE HASTENED.

1. *Sinners are very slow and apt to linger.*

They have settled down in the Sodom of sin. Like the sluggard, they desire "a little more folding of the arms to sleep"
They are bound by many ties to the City of Destruction.

They do not believe our warning. "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law" (verse 14).

They trifle with our message when they dare not contradict it.

Delay is Satan's grand device for their ruin.

Procrastination baffles our persuasions. Delays act like bales of wool dropped over the wall of a besieged city to deaden the blows of a bat taring ram. Felix quieted his conscience by the idea of "a more convenient season"

2. *Our business is to hasten them.*

We must be in earnest ourselves, as these angels were.

We must also be patient, and repeat our pleadings,

We must be resolute, and lay hold on their hands.

3. *We have many arguments with which to hasten them* May the Holy Spirit make them see—

Their imminent danger while lingering.

The sin of loitering when God commands them to escape for their lives,

The fitness of the present above any possible future.

The uncertainty that any available future will come"

The supreme necessity of immediate decision with some; for it may be "now or never" with them: they will "die in their sins" if they do not hear the voice of God today.

Illustrative Odds and Ends

A Christian tradesman bethought him that he had never spoken to a certain regular customer about his soul, though the man had called at his shop for years. He determined to plead earnestly with him the next time he came in his way. *There was no next time*: his customer died suddenly, so that he saw him no more.

When a young man made an open profession of the gospel, his father greatly offended, gave him this advice: "James, you should first get yourself established in a good trade, and then think of the matter of religion." "Father," said the son, "Jesus Christ advises me differently; he says, 'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God.'"

Earnestly may we urge men to seek a present salvation since even the voluptuary pleads against delay in such words as these:—

"O, gather roses while they blow,
To-morrow's not to-day;
Let not one moment vainly flow,
Time fleeth fast away."

Much of the beauty of obedience lies in its being rendered at once, and without question. God's will is done in heaven immediately, because love is perfect there. That child is disobedient who is slow in obeying.

"Brother," said a dying man, "why have you not been more pressing with me about my soul?" "Dear James," replied the brother, "I have spoken to you several times" "Yes" was the answer, "you are not to blame; but you were always so quiet over it; I wish you had gone on

your knees to me, or had taken me by the neck and shaken me, for I have been careless, and have nearly slept myself into hell"

The poor needle-woman with her inch of candle has work to finish. See how her fingers fly, for she fears lest she should be left in darkness, and her work undone.

Some Christians are slow to obey a command *because it has not been laid home to their hearts with power*. Fancy a child saying this to a father, or a soldier to his officer! Something else would soon be laid home with power.

Do not some professors cause sinners to loiter by their own loitering? A man taking a seat at the Tabernacle came to the minister and said, "Sir, do I understand that if I become a seat-holder I shall be expected to be converted?" "Yes," was the reply, "I hope you will, and I pray that it may be so. Do you object?" The answer was, "O Sir, I desire it above everything" Was not the man hastened by the general feeling of hopefulness which pervaded the Church? Assuredly there is much in the atmosphere which surrounds a man. Among warm-hearted Christians it is hard for the careless to remain indifferent.