Burning the Bridges to Your Past

When I was a small child, my grandmother used to read me Bible stories—and not from books with large letters and colorful cartoons. I'm talking about King James Version stories from her tear-stained, oversized, white leather-bound Bible.

As I was so young, the only passage I clearly remember was about Lot's wife. Considering Jesus instructed us in Luke 17:32 to "remember Lot's wife" in the end times, I am grateful for the early impression on my soul. Indeed, Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt as she looked back on Sodom and Gomorrah engulfed in flames has burned in my mind for decades now.

The **Holy Spirit** reminds me of this verse at key times when I need to burn the bridges to my past or risk paralyzing my soul with thoughts and memories of things from which the Lord has clearly called me out. There's a saying in the world that urges, "Don't burn your bridges." But sometimes we need to burn them with a passion to follow God into a new thing unhindered.

When Familiar Spirits Speak

Lately, I've noticed a pull to my past. Memories arise of the good old days and what it would be like if things had turned out differently. That's the enemy working to take me back—in my soul—to a place from which God delivered me. The enemy sometimes follows those thoughts with phone calls and emails from past associates. The goal is to get me to look back, to reminisce, to cling to what was good amid the bad. But I remember Lot's wife.

If God has called you out of a place, if God has called out of a relationship, if God has called you out of anything: Don't

give in to the wanderings of the soul that wonder how it could have been or what it would be like if you went back now. Don't look back. It paralyzes your soul. It's impossible to move forward and look back at the same time. It tears you apart. And that's what the enemy wants. Remember Lot's wife.

Of course, sometimes I talk about my past as a testimony of where God has brought me from, but not as a memorial to where I was or who I was with—and only when the **Holy Spirit** leads me to share it for His glory. When we dwell on the past for too long, we open our minds to confusion and all sorts of emotional turmoil. If we chose to leave, we begin to doubt our decision. If we were left, we ponder what we could have done differently. Either way, it's paralyzing. Again, it's impossible to look forward and look back at the same time. Remember Lot's wife.

Following the Spirit of God

All that said, I don't believe in burning bridges unless there's no other choice. The kingdom of God is built on relationships. We need each other. The decision to burn a bridge with anyone, especially believers, should not come easy. Indeed, it should come only through much **prayer** and even weeping. But there are times to set the bridge aflame.

In obedience to the **Holy Spirit**, I once left a church where I had many friends. The leadership painted me with the brush of disobedience on my way out the door. Many members were told I had turned my back on Christ. They burned the bridge between them and me. It was painful, but it was for my own good. It was God protecting me from an unhealthy church system. God was delivering me out of bondage, and the bridge had to be burned so I would not be tempted to go back.

By the same token, I was once forced to burn a bridge with a good friend who began claiming—and telling everyone—that I would be his wife. I knew God had not called me to marry this man whose wife had recently walked out on him. He didn't

realize it, but he was latching on to me to ease his pain. After some months of asking him to stop his pursuit, I finally had to burn the bridge. Led by the Holy Spirit, I cut off all communication. It wasn't pretty or easy, but it was necessary. It was difficult to lose a good friend, but it was God's will. Some months later, he and his ex-wife got remarried. God forbid I didn't heed the voice of the God to burn that bridge!

Pressing On Toward the Goal

Burning bridges isn't always the right response, but sometimes it's the only response. If God wants reconciliation, He is mighty enough to work it out. The key is to remain sensitive to His Spirit.

Whether we're moving on from sin, moving on from places or moving on from relationships the Lord has shown us are not His will for our lives, we need to exit peaceably as much as it depends on us. We need to show the character of Christ as we move on. Sometimes you can move on and still maintain relationship—but sometimes you have to burn bridges so you won't go back to a thing God has made abundantly clear is harmful to your relationship with Him. We have to press on.

Paul put it this way: "But I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 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. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind" (Phil. 3:12-15). Amen.

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