

## Family First

*Then the angels said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here: a son-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of this place, for we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against its people is great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were going to marry his daughters. "Get up," he said. "Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. – Genesis 19:12-14 HCSB*

I recently read of a man who claimed to be committed to *mitzvah*, or acts of kindness. He gave everything he had away to beggars, strangers – whoever happened to wander by. He even took out loans when he ran out of money in order to be able to keep giving to the poor.

Yet, he refused to give financial assistance to his own son for the wedding of the rabbi's granddaughter. Instead, only minutes later, the man gave money to a poor stranger. When his son understandably questioned his actions, the man answered, "You are my son. Others will help you. Who will help him?" He also gave a stranger money for shoes, while refusing his own daughter money to buy herself some shoes, though she was walking around barefoot.

I can categorically state that his attitude was wrong. The Master emphatically condemned this type of behavior when He said, **"You splendidly disregard God's commandment, so that you may maintain your tradition! For Moses said: Honor your father and your mother; and, Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death. But you say, 'If a man tells his father or mother, "Whatever benefit you might have received from me is "Corban" (that is, a gift committed to the temple), "you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. You revoke God's word by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many other similar things."**<sup>1</sup> Paul agreed, calling a man who will not care for his own family as "worse than an infidel."<sup>2</sup>

The famous evangelist Billy Sunday learned this lesson the hard way. He spent an amazing amount of time on the road, preaching to thousands and fighting an embittered battle against alcohol. But he was gone so much that he lost all three of his sons to alcohol. One fell from a hotel window. Another died in an automobile accident after a night of partying. The last died in an airplane crash. Within fifty years of his death, Mr. Sunday had no known living descendants.

Like Lot when he learned of his world's impending fate, our first concern must be to reach our families. If we are unable to do so, it is unlikely that we will be able to reach anyone else.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 7:9-13

<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy 5:8