

## A Faith That Wins [or, A "Dog" and Her Master]

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Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

In Matthew 14 we learn about Peter's *"little faith"* (14:31). In Matthew 15 we find a Gentile woman with *"great faith"* (15:28). Only two people in the Bible are said to have *"great faith"*—A Gentile centurion with a dying servant (8:10). And this Gentile mother with a daughter vexed by a devil. She has a winning faith even with "three-strikes" against it.

1. Her **sex**—Culturally inappropriate for a woman to approach a man.
  2. Her **social status**—A Gentile, an outcast, and *"a stranger from the covenants of promise"* (Eph. 2:12).
  3. Her **sect**—A Canaanite under the curse of God—*"Cursed be Canaan."*
- ➡ She was knocking at a closed door. Yet, in spite of the obstacles, her faith won the victory! Notice **five things about a winning faith**:

### I. It was a **PERCEPTIVE faith** (v. 22).

#### A. She came to the **RIGHT PERSON**.

1. Mark 7:25—she *"heard of him..."* Great faith begins by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17).
2. Her faith recognized who Jesus was. She addressed Jesus, *"O Lord, Thou Son of David"* (v. 22). Recognized Jesus as (1) *"Lord,"* ("Master"); and (2) the *"Son of David"* — Jewish Messianic title (Mt. 22:42). Great faith coming from a Gentile!

#### B. She came with the **RIGHT APPROACH**—*"Have mercy on me."*

1. She could only approach Christ on the basis of mercy. She cast herself upon the mercies of God!
  - *"God be merciful to me a sinner"* (Luke 18:13).
  - *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God"* (Rom. 12:1).
  - Daniel based his prayer on God's mercy— *"O my God, incline thine ear, and hear... for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies"* (Dan. 9:18).

2. ILLUS: A woman whose son, a soldier in Napoleon's army, had been condemned to death. As she pleaded with Napoleon to have mercy on her son, he answered: "But he doesn't deserve mercy. This is his second offense." The woman countered, "That is true sire, but it would not be mercy if he deserved it." And Napoleon issued her son's pardon.

## II. It was a **PASSIONATE faith** (v. 22 cf. James 5:16).

- A. It was **VOCALIZED**. Can you hear her passion—"...*CRIED unto him...*" (v. 22). "...*she CRIETH after us*" (v. 23). No doubt she had tears in her eyes as she "*cried unto him.*" She prayed fervently and in great earnest.
- B. It was **VICARIOUS**—Great faith is unselfish. She wasn't asking anything for herself. Her daughter was VEXED by a devil! Desperate situations call for great faith.

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One Mothers Day card read on the front: "Mom I remember that little prayer you used to pray for me every day." Open it up and the inside read: "God help you if you ever do that again!"

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➡ Are you dealing with a child that is out of control? You are at your wits end over some situation? Whatever your need is, take a lesson from this woman—Get to Jesus! He can help!

## III. It was a **PERSEVERING faith** (v. 23-25).

- ➡ This broken-hearted mother had several obstacles to overcome:
- A. The **DISREGARD** of Jesus (v. 23—"...*he answered her not a word*").
    1. Have you ever prayed when it seemed like the heavens were brass and God was not listening? It is during those times that your faith is really tested.
    2. When we pray, it says a lot about our faith, especially when our prayers seem to go unanswered. Too often we give up before the answer comes.
    3. But this mother did not give up, because she had a great faith that wins.

B. The **DISCOURAGEMENT** of the disciples (v. 23).

1. Great faith will overcome the opposition of others.
2. We cannot base our faith on how others treat us.

C. The **DETERMINATION** of the mother.

1. It didn't matter to her that she was being ignored... brushed off... and put down and called a dog (a female dog).
2. All that mattered was her daughter was in trouble—*“grievously vexed with a devil.”* Therefore she was also vexed. She was going to do whatever it took because her child was under Satanic attack.
3. I'm sure every parent can identify with this troubled mother—You'd rather suffer yourself than see your children suffer.

➔ She could have easily become discouraged and given up, but a great faith doesn't give up!

➔ God does not give rich blessings to those who will not persevere for them. A lack of perseverance for God's blessing shows lack of value for His blessing. God does not give valuable things to those who do not show respect for their value.

**IV. It was a PERSUASIVE faith** (vs. 25-27).

A. Her **ADORATION** (v. 25). She worshipped! Mark 7:25 says she, *“came and fell at his feet.”* *“A broken and a contrite heart”* he will not despise.

1. She did not quit when things appeared to be against her. She did not stop worshipping and blame God for her troubles. She did what Job did when he was afflicted—**WORSHIP**.
2. Worship is not complicated—Summed up in three words—*“Lord, help me.”* This time she used no Messianic titles. She came as a sinner pleading for help.

B. Her **ARGUMENT** (vs. 26-27). A great faith overcomes that which would argue against it.

1. Jesus gave a strong argument for not granting her request (vs. 24, 26).

2. Christ's argument was met with even a stronger argument from the woman. She gave Him a reason He could not refuse (v. 27)!
3. She did not deny her condition. She accepted her place as a dog *under the table*, and Christ as her "*master*." Her argument was based on the righteous character of Christ!
  - Prov. 12:10—"**A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.**" She was saying, "Yes Lord, I'm a dog, but You're my *master*. If You are righteous you will take care of your dog!"
  - This woman did what no one else could do during Christ's 3½ years of earthly ministry—She entangled Him in His talk (cf. Mt. 22:15). I think Jesus must have smiled at her response!
  - You really gotta admire this woman's faith!

➡ Great faith gives God a reason to answer that He cannot refuse!

**V. It was a PREVAILING faith** (v. 28).

- A. What else could Jesus do after this woman's demonstration of faith! If He denied her request, He would be unrighteous according to Proverbs 12:10.
- B. Faith is not defined by what you receive from God. Faith is defined by what it takes to stop you from getting through to God!
- C. Faith may be tested, but it will not be disappointed.

**SUMMATION:** Verses 21-28 take place 50 miles outside the border of Israel, in Gentile territory. Immediately after this encounter of Jesus and this Canaanite woman's great faith, Jesus returns 50 miles back to Galilee. There was purpose in everything Jesus did... in every command He made... in every step He took. Why would He make this round trip of 100 miles over rough terrain into Gentile territory for this one woman?

Jesus made even a longer trip when He traveled from His heavenly home all the way to the cross of Calvary? Why? To provide a way for us to be saved for our sin and hell and spend eternity with Him.

She is a **model of saving faith**— If you want to be saved you must accept your position as a sinner (dog) in need of salvation. Recognize Christ as your “master” and call on Him for mercy to save you.

In the two cases of a Gentile exercising “*great faith*,” Jesus healed the one in need from a distance (the centurion’s servant; the woman’s daughter). The spiritual application is the Gentiles were “*afar off*” until Calvary. On the cross, Jesus Christ died for both Jews and Gentiles and made reconciliation possible (Eph. 2).