

## **Little or Great Faith Pt. 6**

### **The Faith of the Syrophenician Woman**

**Oct 4, 2020**

Mt 15:21-28 Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." 23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." 24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once. (Mk 7:24-30)

#### **Background:**

Earlier in the chapter "some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 'Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.'" (15:1-2). Jesus confronts them for their hypocrisy, for they "transgress the commands of God for the sake their traditions." He tells His disciples that they are blind guides of the blind (15:14).

They depart from there (probably from Gennesaret) and go to the Canaanite district of Tyre and Sidon. From Gennesaret it would have been a forty-mile journey northwest to Tyre on the Mediterranean coast, and another twenty miles or so farther north along the coast to Sidon; a two days' walk from Capernaum. Jesus "entered this house, He wanted no one to know of it;" (Mk 7:24). This Canaanite lady sought Jesus out on His very first day in this Gentile territory.

Of all the Gentile nationalities, those of Canaanite descent would have been among the most abhorred by the Jews. The Canaanites were one of the idolatrous nations Israel was instructed to exterminate when they entered the Promised Land (Dt 7:1-2).

When the Canaanite woman heard of Jesus' arrival, she came to him - she pursued Jesus in her desperation.

**"Tyre and Sidon"** - two Phoenician cities which lay on the Mediterranean coastline to the north of Galilee, Tyre being thirty-five miles from Capernaum, and Sidon a further twenty-five miles north of Tyre. In Jesus' time this area was part of Syria.

**"Canaanite woman"** In Mk 7:26 she was called a Syro-Phoenician woman, who in the modern world would be a woman from southern Lebanon. This woman was a Hellenist, a person who was not only Greek in culture, but whose mother tongue was Greek. She was obviously non-Jewish.

Jesus helped other Gentiles, but within the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

If Jesus had begun a healing ministry in a Gentile land, He would have been rejected by the Jewish populous in general because of their prejudices.

#### **Principles of great faith:**

**Great faith appeals to God's mercy** (no merits of self).

Mt 15:22 a Canaanite woman ... came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me ..."

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy ... (Eph 2:14; Rom 9:15-18).

**Great faith is based on who He is.**

Mt 15:22 "Lord" - This term was either "Sir" or "Master" and "Messiah".

Mt 15:22 "Son of David" – is a Messianic title (2Sam 7:12-16)

Mt 22:42-45 "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." 43 He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 44 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, 'SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET'? 45 If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?"

**Great faith is not persuaded by the opinions or actions of others.**

Mt 15:22 (she) "began to cry out (in distress), saying" - this was done loudly and repeatedly. The woman was following Jesus and his disciples along the road. Jesus ignored her without answering a single word. She persisted so loudly that the disciples became annoyed. They repeatedly urged Jesus to send her away, for she keeps crying out after them.

Mt 15:23 "disciples came and implored Him" The verb tense implies that this was also done repeatedly.

**Those who have great faith are worshippers**

Mt 15:25 "she came and began to bow down before Him";  
The verb knelt is the common word that means "to worship".

Mt 15:25 "Lord, help me" - help = it means help where one cannot help oneself. She came as a sinner needing help, and she offered no argument.

This is true worship in its most basic form - to cast ourselves on God in helplessness, acknowledging the Lord's power, love, and wisdom as our only source of help.

**Great faith is not offended at the dealings of God.**

Her request is ignored by Jesus (Mt 15:23).

He denies her request

Mt 15:24 "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"

Mt 15:26 "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

dogs = In His reply, Jesus did not call her a "dog" the way the Pharisees would have addressed a Gentile. The Greek word means "a little pet dog" (a puppy); and not a filthy mut that ran the streets and ate garbage.

"It is faith's work to claim and challenge loving-kindness out of all the roughest strokes of God."  
(Samuel Rutherford)

**Great faith has a positive response to God**

Mt 15:27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

We may paraphrase her reply: "It is true that we Gentiles do not sit at the table as children and eat the bread. But even the pet dogs under the table can eat some of the crumbs!"

**Great faith persists in asking and trusting when everything seems against you.**

She was a Gentile - her race was against her.

She was a woman – her sex was against her (most Jewish rabbis paid no attention to women).

The disciples were against her, "send her away".

The words of Jesus might have led her to believe that even He was against her.

This woman's faith was great because she persisted

**God answers the prayer** (Mt 15:28 “as you wish”= desire) **of faith.**

**Great faith reaches out to God for the needs of others.**

The Roman Centurion for the boy-servant (Mt 8:5-13).

The Syrophenician Woman for her daughter (Mt 15:21-28).

Little faith is based on personal need.

Financial need (Mt 6:24-34; Lk 12:13-34).

The storms of life (Mt 8:22-27; 14:22-33; Mk 4:35-40; 6:45-51; Lk 8:22-25; Jn 6:15-21)

**References Used:**

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