

Theme: The Syro-Phoenician woman is a paragon of humility and faith, accepting her utter need for God's grace and actively seeking until she receives it.

I. Intro - A Tough Passage At First!

- A. We think of Jesus as caring - and this seems so harsh!
- B. We think of Jesus as loving Gentiles - a dog???
- C. What is happening in this event in Jesus' ministry?

II. Jesus Retires To Tyre

A. Jesus goes to Tyre in secret

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. Mark 7:24

- 1. Jesus has been in conflict with the Pharisees
- 2. He goes to Tyre, a Gentile region (Lebanon)
- 3. He is trying to stay hidden - probably to rest and teach the disciples
- 4. However, once again it is impossible for His Presence to remain unknown for long

B. The Syro-Phoenician woman interrupts

In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. Mark 7:25-26

- 1. Another attempt for rest & instruction is interrupted
- 2. This time it is a woman with a demonized daughter
- 3. The woman is a Gentile (Greek) from Syrian Phoenicia

C. An unclean person in an unclean land

- 1. Tyre and Sidon is the area Jezebel came from
- 2. The prophets often rebuked Tyre and Sidon for their wealth & abuse of power (Ezek 26-28; Zech. 9:3-4)
- 3. Tyre and Sidon had sided against Israel in the time of the Maccabees (1 Macc. 5:15ff)
- 4. Josephus said the people of Tyre were "notoriously our bitterest enemies" (Against Apion 1.13)
- 5. This is a woman, a Gentile, a Phoenician the ancient enemies of Israel!
- 6. V. 26 reads like a crescendo of demerit: she is a woman, a Greek Gentile, from infamous pagans of Syrian Phoenicia. Even Levi the tax collector must have raised his eyebrows at this woman who has the pluck to beg "Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. - James Edwards
- 7. But Jesus had taught about Elijah and a widow from this area!

I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. Luke 4:25-26

- a. God had sent Elijah to a woman just like this!
- b. Jesus has been so compassionate to so many!
- c. Jesus had just taught the external things and people did not defile, but the sin in our hearts (Mark 7:1-23)!
- d. Surely none of this will matter to Jesus! Surely He will speak kindly and drive out the demon!

III. A Shocking Statement!

A. Jesus gives a shocking reply to this poor woman!

“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” Mark 7:27

1. Did Jesus just compare her to a dog?
2. Dogs were often considered unclean and accursed - especially by rabbis who declared “The peoples of the world are like dogs.”
3. Has Jesus become like the Pharisees?

B. A parable that weighs the heart

“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” Mark 7:27

1. Jesus’ words are yet another parable
2. Israel is the children of God, and Jesus was sent to them first, not to the Gentiles.
 - a. The OT declared that Messiah would come to Israel, and later it would spread to the Gentiles.
he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” Isaiah 49:6
 - b. There is a priority that Jesus and the Gospel were first offered to Israel, and only then to the Gentiles.
 - c. We see this in the book of Acts and in the epistles
Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly:
“We had to speak the word of God to you first.
Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.

⁴⁷For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” Acts 13:46-47

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 1:16 Same language - died with Christ, will live with Him

1. Paul and Barnabas had to preach to Jews first - and after they rejected the Gospel, then they went to the Gentiles.
 2. Notice they applied Isaiah 49:6, which was about the Messiah, to their ministry in behalf of the Messiah.
 3. Paul states this at the beginning of Romans - the Gospel goes first to the Jews, and then to Gentiles.
3. The bread of Jesus’ power and work is for the children (Israel) and not for the family dogs around the dinner table (Gentiles).
 4. But surely the woman will not understand this parable - even the disciples have not been able to understand Jesus’ parables!
 5. Even worse - if she does understand surely she will be offended!
 6. But this is what Jesus is doing - He is speaking this truth in a parable to weigh her heart!
 7. How will she respond - with pride or humility, with rejection or faith?

IV. A Response of Humble Faith!

A. The woman understands the parable and answers!

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Mark 7:28

1. She understands the parable - a first in the Gospel!

2. Jesus probably looked at the disciples hoping they were paying attention - she shows more understanding than they have thus far!
3. She has not just heard the parable - she has penetrated to its meaning and applied it to herself.

B. A humble response

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Mark 7:28

1. She accepts her role as the “dog under the table”
2. Pride would reject this - I am no dog!
3. Pride rejects God’s word of the truth of our position - we don’t like being compared to dogs, clay pots, dead bones, spiritual harlots.
4. The Pharisees constantly rejected Jesus statements that revealed their need for repentance and cleansing, proudly clinging to their place rather than humbly embracing God’s Word.
5. But this woman is a paragon of humility, understanding and embracing her true position before Jesus.
6. She recognizes that she has no right to the mercy of God - if she is to be helped it will be all of grace!

C. A faith-filled response

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Mark 7:28

1. She accepts her position but presses back for grace and mercy!
2. “But the dogs get crumbs that fall; that is all I need!”

3. A brilliant reply that displays not only humility but deep faith - Jesus does not need to take anything away from others because He is so mighty that driving out the demon is like bread crumbs falling from the table.

4. Matthew makes it clear that Jesus saw this as faith!

Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Matthew 15:28

5. This faith is a step beyond humility. Her humility allowed her to understand her situation and place before God, but her faith caused her to press to Him and continue asking for mercy.
6. Faith is not fatalism but rather an active, persistent pressing into God and His Word to understand and receive God’s promises to us.
7. Faith does not just sit and wallow but rather persists in clinging to God, being willing to press God to intervene and save.
 - a. She is like Jacob who wrestled with the Angel of the Lord in Genesis 32 until he received a blessing and the new name of Israel.
 - b. She is like the widow with Elijah who trusted God enough to risk her last bit of food to feed Elijah - and received food for the rest of the famine.

D. Epilogue - humble faith receives God’s provision

Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Mark 7:29-30

1. Jesus loves her humble, faith-filled answer!
2. Her daughter is delivered from the demon!

V. Applying the Word

A. Humility & faith - a word to those who are not Christians

1. If you are not a Christian do you humbly recognize your place before God and your inability to save yourself?
2. We are offended when Jesus reveals our sin and our utter inability to save ourselves - this is our modern sickness.
3. We say that God helps those who help themselves - but God helps the helpless and leaves the rest to help themselves!
4. God sends no one away empty, except those who are full of themselves. – DL Moody
5. Be like the Syro-Phoenician woman - humbly accept God's verdict and cry out in faith!
6. Look to Jesus - even the crumbs from His Table can save and deliver you!

B. Humility & faith - a word to those who are Christians

1. This does not end when I become a Christian!
2. How do I respond to God's humbling Word?
3. How do I respond to humbling circumstances?
4. When you perceive that you are being humiliated, look on it as the sign of a sure guarantee that grace is on the way. Just as the heart is puffed up with pride before its destruction, so it is humiliated before being honored... It is the possession of a joyful and genuine humility that alone enables us to receive grace. - Bernard of Clairvaux
5. When I am humbled, do I get discouraged and walk away, or do I press into God by faith?

6. Where are you being humbled right now? Be like the Syro-Phoenician woman - press into God in faith!

C. The Lord's Table

1. Here we confess our sin and need for God
2. Here we are assured that our sins are forgiven
3. Come in humility and faith! (1 John 1:5-2:2)

Humble Faith

Mark 7:24-30

September 17, 2023

Communion

James 4:6 and Jude 1:2

Teaching keywords: Humility; faith; Israel; Biblical characters; healing

The Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." As you humbly walk with Him this week, may grace, mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance. James 4:6; Jude 1:2

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