

*The Miracles of Jesus*  
Miracle # 20

**"The Miracle of the Syro-Phoenician Woman's Daughter"**  
(Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30)

At some point Jesus left the region of Galilee and headed north to the territory around Tyre. This coastal settlement along with its neighbor Sidon, were the principle cities of the Phoenicians. Jesus evidently headed here with the hope of getting some rest from the press of the crowds and the demands of the ministry. But he is immediately recognized by an unknown woman who throws herself at his feet, pleading for his help. The healing of this Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter stands out as Jesus' only known miracle on behalf of a Gentile in Gentile territory.

**Matthew 15:21-28**

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. (22) And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." (23) But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." (24) But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (25) Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" (26) But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." (27) And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." (28) Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.'

**Mark 7:24-30**

"From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. (25) For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. (26) The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. (27) But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." (28) And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs

under the table eat from the children's crumbs." (29) Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." (30) And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed."

Have you ever wondered what grips the attention of the Lord? What it is that gets Him excited? This text reveals the answer to that question; God is excited about faith. Faith always gets our Lord's attention. If you want to get through to God, faith is the way to do it.

The Bible has much to say about faith. Faith is described in numerous ways: as **weak** faith, **strong** faith, **bold** faith, **abiding** faith, **unfeigned** faith and many other kinds. But only two individuals in the Bible are described as having "great faith", and perhaps surprisingly both of those individuals are Gentiles. One is the **Canaanite** woman described in our text and the other is the Roman **Centurion** found in the eight chapter of Matthew.

The question that seems to leap from this story is, "**What does Jesus mean when he says that this woman's faith is "great"?**" Is it great because it is **stronger**, more **mature** or more **sincere** than other's. I don't believe so! It is because of the obstacles that she overcame to display it. It will be demonstrated that, great faith is often tested and hammered out on the anvil of difficulty.

### ***The Background of the Miracle***

Mark 7:25-26

"For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. (26) The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter."

The term "**young daughter**" (v.25) the woman used is literally a very tender term meaning "**my darling little girl**." She is heart broken and desperate, because her little girl has an "unclean spirit." That would indicate that her daughter was **demon possessed**. Somehow she knew what the problem was. We can only guess as to how she became demon possessed. Perhaps she had dabbled in occult pagan practices that were prevalent. The mother may have had an even greater sense of responsibility it is the result of her involvement in some pagan religion.

### ***The Elements of the Miracle*** Mark 7:27-28

## She Kept Asking

Her actions help us to understand that faith itself is worthless and powerless if it is not placed in a trustworthy source. She believed that Jesus was her only hope and that he could and would heal her daughter. She came in faith and Jesus knew it. Her coming was a sign of a turn from her previous life and a sign of a repentant heart. She fell at his feet (literally she **prostrated** herself) and begged Jesus to heal her daughter. The tense used to describe this action means that she did not beg just once, but that she **kept** on begging.

## Let the Children Be Filled First (vv. 27-28)

"But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." (28) And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs."

The response of Jesus may at first seem strange and insensitive to us as we read this passage. But the truth is that her faith is being tested, not that Jesus might know but in order that this woman might know the power of her faith. She in fact has a series of discouraging event that will test her resolve.

First she is discouraged by the Lord's **silence**. Matthew in his parallel account (15:21-28) indicates that initially her pleas are met only with silence. The hardest response to accept is no response at all. In verse 26 we are told that she was "a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth." When she is called a Greek by Mark, He used the term as a synonym for "non-Jew" or **Gentile**. But he also identify that racially she was a Syro-Phoenician or **Canaanite**, a descendent of the original inhabitants of the Promised land. She was a pagan, despised by the religious establishment and considered unclean, a dog and a female at that. Yet she approached Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, and in Matthew's account she said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! (Matthew 15:22). She laid claims to a purely **Jewish** promise. Because she was a Gentile, and she had no claim on Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, he refused to respond. Matthew tells us that, "But He answered her not a word." (Matthew 15:23).

Secondly she is discouraged by the **annoyance** of the Disciples (Matt. 15:23b)

Matthew reveals that the disciple's were annoyed by this woman's insistence as she continued crying after them. They came to Jesus and said, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." (Matt. 15:23b). She continued to plead and she was not only persistent but she was noisy. As

she continued to plead, the disciples became more and more upset with the woman and more and more puzzled about the Lord's lack of response. They said to the Lord, "You need to send her away!"

Third, she is discouraged by the Lord's **Words**. In verse 27 Jesus says, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." His former silence now seemed compounded by his words. The word "dogs," usually used to describe Gentiles, referred to the ownerless scavengers that roamed the streets. The word that Jesus used here is a diminutive form, meaning "little dogs" or "**puppies**" and speaking of household pets.

He pictured a familiar household scene. Although the parents never took the food prepared for the children and gave it to the dogs. This kind of dearly beloved pet would be right in the dining room with the people just waiting for a morsel to be given to them. They were not children, but they had a place in the home.

#### Even the Dogs Eat From The Children's Crumbs. (v. 28)

Her response displayed a great humility. She admits she is not worthy nor did she deserve his help. Matthew in his account tells us that her cry was for "mercy" (15:22). It is unfortunate that we cannot hear the tone of his voice or see the sparkle in his eye or the hint of a smile on his lips, because I believe they were there. The Lord's words gave her a glimmer of hope. With the word "first," he was suggesting there is to be a "**second**." God always intended that the Gospel message have a **universal** impact. The woman focused on that glimmer of hope and saw her chance. She responded, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." Oh how this pleased the Lord! He said "O woman, great is your faith!" (Matt. 15:28).

She admitted that she and her people were outsiders - "dogs" and therefore had no claim to a child's portion. She did not ask that the children be deprived of any part of their rightful portion, but indicated that she had confidence that that God's heart was big enough to include even the most humble of his creatures.

While she had no right to a miracle healing - these were intended as signs and witness to God's chosen people - her faith enabled her to be in a place that a crumb fell into her life.

Her reward was two-fold, she was commended for her faith and she received a cure for her child.

#### **The Effect of the Miracle** (Mark 7:29-30)

"Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." (30) And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed."

The faith that Jesus saw in her was revealed not only in what she said, but also that she went home as He had commanded without further discussion or questions.

Upon arrival at home, she discovered that her daughter had been healed. She had been healed because there had been a recognition of **need**. She had been healed because there had been a **persistence** in asking. This persistence did not change God's heart, it proved her sincerity. She had been healed because there was an acceptance of Jesus as the **answer** to her problems. She had been healed because there was an attitude of **humility** and **surrender**.

## Conclusion

This woman had "***great faith***" because she endured the test sent to her from heaven. She did not collapse, quit, give up or faint because of hardships. She pressed on until the Lord granted her request. Are you passing through a humbling trial? Maybe you have lost a job, failed in a business venture or are going through a trial. Like this woman, humble yourself before the Lord. If heaven seems silent or if your prayers appear unanswered, maybe it is a test. There is always a possibility of a "yes" when He has not answered "No." Whatever you need today, I want to encourage you to come to Jesus. Do you need to be saved? Come to Him! Do you have special needs in your family? Come to Him! Do you need direction? Come to Him! Whatever your need! Come to Him!