

THE LITTLE DOGS

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A SERMON
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“But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”
Matthew 15:26-27

“But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.”
Mark 7:27-28

I TAKE the two records of Matthew and Mark that we may have the whole matter before us. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations thereon.

The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanitish woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the center, where the husbandry had been more abundant. In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled His sheaf.

Let those of us who reap after Him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become believers. Let us go even to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the land be under a curse, for even there we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer's crown. Our heavenly Father has children everywhere.

In spiritual things it is found that the best plants often grow in the most barren soil. Solomon spoke of trees and discoursed concerning the hyssop on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon. So is it in the natural world, the great trees are found on great mountains and the minor plants in places adapted for their tiny roots. But it is not so among the plants of the Lord's right hand planting, for there we have seen the cedar grow upon the wall—great saints in places where it has apparently impossible for them to exist. And we have seen hyssops growing upon Lebanon—a questionable, insignificant piety where there have been innumerable advantages.

The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement. And strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers, and doubly glorifies the grace of God. Such was this Canaanitish woman, a cedar growing where soil was scant enough. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of Him in whom she believed, and perhaps had never seen His person at all until the day when she fell at His feet and said, “Lord, help me!”

Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire His eyes caught its glitter, if there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns He failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus. At the sight of it “the king is held in the galleries” and cries “thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.” The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman's faith, and watching it and delighting in it He resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might each one flash its brilliance and delight His soul.

Therefore He tried her faith by His silence and by His discouraging replies, that He might see its strength. But He was all the while delighting in it, and secretly sustaining it, and when He had sufficiently tried it, He brought it forth as gold and set His own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

I am hopeful this morning that perhaps some poor soul in this place under very discouraging circumstances may nevertheless be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith. And though as yet it enjoys no peace and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened this morning by the example of the Canaanitish woman.

I gather from the story of her appeal to the Lord Jesus and her success therein, four facts. The first is, *faith's mouth cannot be closed*. The second is, *faith never disputes with God*. Thirdly, I perceive that *faith argues mightily*, and fourthly, that *faith wins her suit*.

I. THE MOUTH OF FAITH CAN NEVER BE CLOSED, for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre.

She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter, and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter, because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases, and she meant to pray to Him until He yielded to her importunity, for she was confident that He could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ*. He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously, she came and threw herself at His feet, her child's case was very urgent, her motherly heart was very tender and her cries were very piercing. And yet He answered her never a word, as if He were deaf and dumb, He passed her by. Yet she was not staggered. She believed in Him, and even He Himself could not make her doubt Him, let Him try silence even if He would.

It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker here might believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save, and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt. Even if you should pray in vain by the month together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and His power to save to cross your mind.

What if you cannot yet grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you. What if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin. What if no gleams of joy should visit your spirit. Yet believe you Him who cannot lie.

"Though he slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in him." That was splendid faith. It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though he smite me, yet will I trust him," but Job said, "Though he slay me." If He put on the garb of an executioner, and come out against me as though He would destroy me, yet will I believe Him to be full of love. He is good and gracious still, I cannot doubt it, and therefore at His feet I will lie down and look up, expecting grace at His hands.

Oh for such faith as this! O soul, if you have it, you are a saved man, as sure as you are alive. If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort and salvation is yours.

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples*. They did not treat her well, but yet perhaps not altogether ill. They were not like their Master, they frequently repulsed those who would come to Him. Her noise annoyed them, she kept to them with boundless perseverance, and therefore they said, "Send her away, for she crieth *after us*." Poor soul, she never cried after *them*, it was after their Master.

Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes, and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the Gospel is caused by the people's eagerness to hear *them*, whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the Gospel message which they are charged to deliver. Give us any other theme and the multitude would soon melt away.

Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly towards her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the gift she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not

have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. "Send her away," they said, "for she crieth after us." Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat everybody, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped.

Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner, and perhaps even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature. Andrew and Philip and the rest of them considered her very impertinent and presumptuous. But she thought of her little daughter at home and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, and so she pressed up to the Savior's feet and said, "Lord, help me." Cold, hard words and unkind, unsympathetic behavior could not prevent her pleading with Him in whom she believed.

Ah, poor sinner, perhaps you are saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such and such a good Christian man has dealt very bitterly with me. He has doubted my sincerity and questioned the reality of my repentance, and caused me the deepest sorrow. It seems as if he did not wish me to be saved."

Ah, dear friend, this is very trying, but if you have true faith in the Master you will not mind us disciples, neither the gentlest of us, nor the most rough of us, but just urge on your suit with your Lord till He deigns to give you an answer of peace.

Her mouth, again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine, which appeared to confine the blessing to a favored few. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman's heart like a talent of lead. "Alas," she might have thought, "then He is not sent to me. Vainly do I seek for that which He reserves for the Jews."

Now, the doctrine of election, which is assuredly taught in Scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for, if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage. And yet often to the uninstructed ear the doctrine of the divine choice of a people from before the foundation of world acts with very depressing effect. We have known poor seekers mournfully say, "Perhaps there is no mercy for me. I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed." They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life.

Ah, dear soul, if you have the faith of God's elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God, you will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of heaven.

What though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel, yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the spirit, and therefore the Syrophenician woman was included even where she thought she was shut out, and you may also be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you.

At any rate, say to yourself, "In the election of grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I? Others have been included who were as full of distress as I have been on account of sin, and why should not I be also?" Reasoning thus, you will press forward, in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of Scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

The mouth of faith in this case was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness. Christ spoke of *dogs*, He meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs, she did not at all dispute it, but yielded the point by saying, "Truth, Lord." She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog.

I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the boon she sought for on account of any merit of her own. She depended upon the goodness of Christ's heart, not on the goodness of her cause, and upon the excellence of His power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea. Yet, conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered. She cried, notwithstanding all, "Lord, help me."

O sinner, if you feel yourself to be the worst sinner out of hell, still pray, believingly pray for mercy. If your sense of unworthiness be enough to drive you to self-destruction, yet I beseech you, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God. For your salvation rests in no measure or degree upon yourself, or upon anything that you are or have been or can be. You need to be saved *from* yourself, not *by* yourself.

It is yours to be empty that Jesus may fill you. Yours to confess your filthiness that He may wash you. Yours to be less than nothing that Jesus may be everything to you. Suffer not the number, blackness, frequency, or heinousness of your transgressions to silence your prayers, but though you be a dog, yea not worthy to be set with the dogs of the Lord's flock, yet open your mouth in believing prayer.

There was besides this a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences.*

"It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful, to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she did not quite see all that He might have meant, but what she did see was enough to pour cold water upon the flame of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched. It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill. For her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or did not mean, she would not cease to trust Him, she would continue to urge her suit with Him.

There are a great many things in and around the Gospel which men see as in a haze, and being misunderstood they rather repel than attract seeking souls. But be they what they may we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish, I perish."

Beside the great stumbling stone of election there are truths and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born again, about inbred sin and all sorts of things. In fact, a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus, but he who gives Christ the faith which He deserves says, "I fear none of these things. Lord, help me, and I will still confide in You. I will approach You. I will press through obstacles to You, and throw myself at Your dear feet, knowing that him that cometh to Thee Thou wilt in no wise cast out."

II. FAITH NEVER DISPUTES WITH THE LORD.

Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought him." She cried, "Lord, help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. If faith disputed—I am uttering a solecism—she would not be faith, for that which disputes is unbelief.

Faith in God implies agreement with what God says, and consequently it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says whether discouraging or encouraging. She never has a "but" or an "if," or even a "yet" to put in, but she stands to it, "You have said it, Lord, and therefore it is true. You have ordained it Lord, and therefore it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says.* She said, "Truth, Lord." What had He said? "You are comparable to a dog!" "Truth, Lord; truth, Lord, so I am." "It would not be meet that the children should be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs." "Truth Lord, it would not be fitting, and I would not have one of Your children deprived of grace for me." "It is not your time yet," said Jesus, "the children must *first* be fed, children at the meal times and dogs after dinner. This is Israel's time, and the Gentiles may follow after. But not yet." She virtually replies, "I know it, Lord, and agree thereto."

She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord's dispensing His own grace according to His sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who cavil at divine sovereignty. It would have proved that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She disputes not as to the Lord's set time and order.

Jesus said, "Let the children first be filled," and she does not dispute the time, as many do, who will not have it that now is the accepted time, but are as much for postponing as this woman was for antedating the day of grace. She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen. She never wished Israel to be robbed for her. Dog as she was she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the divine household shifted and changed for her.

She assented to all the Lord's appointments. That is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God, even if it seem adverse to herself, which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible, and assents to God's word whether it be like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay.

If the word of God be true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it. It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God declares. In yielding lies safety. Say, "Truth, Lord," and you shall find salvation.

Note that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped Him in it*. "Truth," she said, "but yet thou art my Lord. You call me, 'dog,' but You are my Lord for all that. You account me unworthy to receive Your bounties, but You are my Lord, and I still own You as such." She is of the mind of Job, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the LORD, and shall we not receive evil?" She is willing to take the evil and say, "Whether the Lord gives, or whether He refuses, blessed be His name. He is still my Lord."

Oh, this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the disputatious spirit and not only assents to the Lord's will, but worships Him in it. Let it be what it may, O Lord, even if Your truth condemns me, yet still You are Lord, and I confess Your deity, confess Your excellence, own Your crown rights, and submit myself to You. Do with me what You will."

And you observe, when she said, "Truth, Lord," *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her*. "Lord," she said, "You have classed me among the dogs." She does not say, "Put me among the children," but she only asks to be treated as a dog is. "The dogs eat the crumbs," says she. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed, "Let it be as it is. If it is Your will, Lord, it is my will," only she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair. May we have such a faith as hers, and never enter into controversy with God.

III. Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that FAITH ARGUES, though it does not dispute.

"Truth, Lord," said she, "yet the dogs eat the crumbs." This woman's argument was correct, and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord's own premises, and you know if you are reasoning with a man you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying, "I am no dog." But she says, "Yes, I am a dog." She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem*, such as was never excelled in this world. She took the words out of His own mouth and vanquished Him with them, even as Jacob overcame the Angel.

There is so much force in the women's argument that I quite despair this morning of being able to set it all forth to you. I would, however, remark that the translators have greatly injured the text by putting in the word "yet," for there is no "yet" in the Greek. It is quite another word.

Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." "No," said she, "it would not be meet to do this, because the dogs are provided for, for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. It would be very improper to give them the children's bread, because they have bread of their own. Truth, Lord, I admit it would be improper to give the dogs the children's bread, because they have already their share when they eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. That is all they want, and all I desire. I do not ask You to give me the children's bread, I only ask for the dog's crumbs."

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position.* “I am a dog,” said she, “but Lord, You have come all the way to Sidon. Here You are close on the borders of my country, and therefore I am not like a dog out in the street. I am a dog under the table.”

Mark tells us that she said, “The dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.” She as good as says, “Lord, You see my position. I was a dog in the street, afar off from You, but now You have come and preached on our borders, and I have been privileged to listen to You. Others have been healed and You are in this very house doing deeds of grace while I look on, and therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table. Therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs.”

Do you see, dear hearer? You admit that you are a sinner, and a great sinner, but you say, “Lord, I am a sinner that is permitted to hear the Gospel, therefore bless it to me. I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such. When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of Your people, I am there to hear it. Whenever the saints gather together, and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up and wishing that I was among them. But still Lord, since You have had the grace to let me be a hearer of the Gospel, will You reject me now that I desire to be a receiver of it? To what end and purpose have You brought me so near, or rather come so near to me, if after all You will reject me? Dog I am, but still I am a dog under the table. It is a favor to be privileged to be among the children, even if I may only lie at their feet. I pray You, good Lord, then, since now I am permitted to look up to You and ask this blessing, do not reject me.” To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman, and that she used it well.

Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship.* “Truth, Lord,” she says, “I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their master’s table.*” See the stress laid there by Matthew, “From their master’s table.”

“I cannot say that you are my father. I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but you are my Master, and masters feed their dogs. They give at least the crumbs to those dogs which own them as their lord.” The plea is very much like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, “Make me as one of thy hired servants,” only his faith was far less than hers.

“Lord, if I do not stand in relation to you as a child, yet I am Your creature. You have made me and I look up to You and beseech You not to let me perish. If I have no other hold upon You I have at least this, that I ought to have served You, and therefore I am Your servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to You at least under the covenant of works if I do not under the covenant of grace, and oh, since I am Your servant, do not utterly reject me. You have some property in me by creation, at any rate. Oh, look upon me and bless me. The dogs eat what falls from their master’s table, let me do the same.”

She spies out a dog’s relation to its master, and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children.* Here I must tell you that it is a pity that it was not, I suppose, possible for our translators to bring clearly out what is after all the heart of the passage. She was pleading for her *little* daughter. And our Lord said to her, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the *little* dogs.” The word is a diminutive, and the woman pitched upon it. The word “dogs” could not have served her turn one half as well as that of “little dogs,” but she said, “Truth, Lord, yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs.”

In the East, as a rule, a dog is not allowed indoors. In fact, dogs are looked upon there as foul creatures, and roam about uncared for and half wild. Christianity has raised the dog, and made him man’s companion, as it will raise all the brute creation, till the outrages of vivisection, and the cruelties of the vulgar, will be things unheard of except as horrors of a past barbarous age.

In the East a dog is far down in the scale of life, a street wanderer, prowling for scanty food, and in temper little better than a reformed wolf. So the adult Easterns do not associate with dogs, having a prejudice against them, but children are not so foolish, and consequently the Eastern children associate with the little dogs. The father will not have the dog near him, but his child knows no such folly, and

seeks out a little dog to join him in his sports. Thus the little dog comes to be under the table, tolerated in the house for the child's sake.

The woman appears, to me, to argue thus—"You have called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs, but then the little dogs are under the children's table. They associate with the children, even as I have been with Your disciples today. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them, and would be glad to be among them."

How heartily do I wish that some poor soul would catch at this and say, "Lord, I cannot claim to be one of Your children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me, and speak kindly and comfortably to me, and they pray for me, and desire my salvation. So Lord, if I am not a child, yet You call me a little dog, so I am, but give me a little dog's treatment, give me the crumb of mercy which I seek."

His argument goes further, for *the little dog eats the crumbs of the children's bread with the child's full consent*. When a child has its little dog to play with while he is eating, what does the child do? Why, of course, it gives a little bit to the dog every now and again, and the doggie himself takes great liberties and helps himself as much as he dares. When a little dog is with the children at meal time it is sure to get a crumb from one or other of its playmates. And none will object to its eating what it can get.

So the woman seems to say, "Lord, there are the children, Your disciples. They do not treat me very well. Little children do not treat little dogs always so kindly as they might, but still, Lord, they are quite willing that I should have the blessing I am seeking. They have a full portion in You. They have Your presence. They have Your Word. They sit at Your feet. They have obtained all sorts of spiritual blessings. I am sure they cannot grudge me so much less a boon. They are willing that I should have the devil cast out of my daughter, for that blessing compared with what they have is but a crumb, and they are content that I should have it. So Lord, I answer Your argument. You say it is not meet until the children are filled to give bread to dogs, but Lord, the children are filled and are quite willing to let me have my portion, they consent to allow me the crumbs. Will You not give them to me?"

I think there was another point of force in her plea, it was this, *the abundance of the provision*. She had a great faith in Christ and believed big things of Him, and therefore she said, "Lord, there is no great strength in Your argument if You do intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for You have so much that even while the children are being fed the dogs may get the crumbs, and there will be enough for the children still."

Where it is a poor man's table and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed. But when it is a king's table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings—not the bread the master *casts* down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful.

"No, Lord," said she, "I would not have You take away the bread from Your own children. God forbid that such a deed should be done for me. But there is enough for Your children in Your overflowing love and mercy, and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a crumb compared with what You are daily bestowing upon others."

Now, here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ's point of view*. "If, great Lord," said she, "You look at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take You at Your word, and plead that if I be a dog to You then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for Your great power and goodness to bestow on me." She used a diminutive word too, and said, "A little crumb." The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children's table. What bold faith this was!

She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price. She thought it worth ten thousand worlds to her, but yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is He in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing. If a man give a crumb to a dog he has a little the less, but if Jesus gives mercy to the greatest of sinners He has none the less, He is just as rich in condescension and mercy and power to

forgive as He was before. The woman's argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest, and best of all, she believed most marvelously.

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality, arguing according to the eternal purposes of God. For what was the Lord's grand design in giving the bread to the children, or in other words, sending a divine revelation to Israel? Why, it always was His purpose that through the children the dogs should get the bread—that through Israel the Gospel should be handed to the Gentiles.

It had always been His plan to bless His own heritage that His way might be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations. And this woman somehow or other, by a divine instinct, fell into the divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret, or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument. In other words, it ran thus—"It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed. Lord, I do not ask You to cease giving the children their bread. Nor do I even ask You to hurry on the children's meal, let them be fed first, but even while they are eating let me have the crumbs which drop from their well-filled hands, and I will be content."

There is a brave argument for you, poor coming sinner. I leave it in your hands and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it, and if you can turn it to good account you shall prevail with the Lord this day.

IV. Our last and closing head is this, FAITH WINS HER SUIT.

This woman's faith first *won a commendation for herself*. Jesus said, "O, woman, great is thy faith." She had not heard of the prophecies concerning Jesus. She was not bred and born and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a believer, and yet did become a believer of the first class. It was marvelous that it should be so, but grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord before in her life, she was not like those who had associated with Him for many months, and yet, with but one view of Him, she gained this great faith. It was astonishing, but the grace of God is always astonishing.

Perhaps she had never seen a miracle, all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come, and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was He, and on this she relied.

O brethren, with all our advantages, with the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ, and understanding the doctrines of the Gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament, with many years of observation and experience, our faith ought to be much stronger than it is. Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus Himself commending her says, "O woman, great is thy faith."

But her faith prevailed further, that it *won a commendation for the mode of its action*, for, according to Mark, Jesus said, "Go thy way; *for this saying* the devil is gone out of thy daughter." As if He rewarded the saying as well as the faith which suggested it. He was so delighted with the wise, and prudent, and humble yet courageous manner in which she turned His words against Himself, that He said, "For this saying the devil is gone out of thy daughter."

The Lord who commends faith afterwards commends the fruits and acts of faith. The tree consecrates the fruit. No man's actions can be acceptable with God till He Himself is accepted, but the woman having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire*, "The devil is gone out of thy daughter," and he was gone at once. She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest, which she had not done since the demon had possessed her. Our Lord, when He gave her the desire of her heart gave it in a grand manner, He gave her a sort of *carte blanche*, and said, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

I do not know that any other person ever had such a word said to them as this woman, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It was as if the Lord of glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman's faith. The Lord grant to you and me in all times of our struggling to be able thus by faith still to conquer, and we cannot imagine how great will be the spoil which we shall divide when the Lord shall say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The close of all is this, this woman is a lesson to all outsiders, to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the house of God, who perhaps have been negligent of all religion for almost all your lifetime. This poor woman is a Sidonian. She comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before, one of the accursed seed of Canaan, and yet for all that she became great in the kingdom of heaven because she believed.

And there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the church of God should not be in the very center of it, and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole. O you poor outcasts and far off ones, take heart and comfort, come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in His hands.

This woman is next of all an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavors after salvation. Have you been praying, and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord, and do you seem to be more unhappy than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment, and believed that you made them in the divine strength, and have they failed?

Yet trust in Him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, whose promise has not lost its truth, and whose arm has not lost its power to save. Cling to the cross, sinner. If the earth sink beneath you, cling on. If storms should rage, and all the floods be out, and even God Himself seem to be against you, cling to the cross. There is your hope. You cannot perish there.

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for herself, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner do not do it in a cold-hearted manner. Plead as for your own soul and your own life. That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own, and with tears entreats an answer of peace.

Lastly, recollect that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter. Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. Even among poor beasts and birds, how powerful is a mother's love. Why, the poor little robin which would be frightened at the approach of a footstep, will sit upon its nest when the intruder comes near when her little ones are in danger.

A mother's love makes her heroic for her child, and so when you are pleading with God plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you also, "O woman, great is thy faith; the devil is gone out of thy daughter; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 15:1-31

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 551, 540

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.