

Bible Text: Matthew 15:21-28
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If you will, look with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 15. I want to read for us from verse 21 down to verse 28 and speak with you on a very important subject and that is true faith. We hear a lot of people talking about faith, “Keep the faith, brother.” You will hear the expression, but what is true faith?

Well, I know in this particular portion of Scripture what is said is true because it is the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. If I ever have a question as to the meaning of a word or significance of something that involves eternal things, eternity, Christ, salvation, no better place to go than the author himself to ask. And here we see in Matthew chapter 15 beginning with verse 21:

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.”¹

That was completely outside of the parameters of the country of Israel. A few years ago on the news you may have remembered hearing about Tyre and Sidon being bombarded. It is up in an area today that is in the boundaries of Lebanon, but for this here to state that he departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, considering the mindset of Jews, that if the Messiah were to come, he would come particularly for them. And for this one Jesus of Nazareth with whom they already had difficulty, claiming to be the Messiah now to leave completely the country, the geographical boundaries of Israel and go into their... what they considered to be their enemy territory, would have been unheard of. But our Lord did not direct his steps by the likes and dislikes of men. He was on a mission that we are going to read about and hear about today and that is to save his sheep that the Father gave him from every tribe, nation and tongue. And it is a good reminder for any of us not to have a mindset that is closed in the sense of to whom or where God might be pleased to direct his Spirit to save a sinner.

And that is why verse 22 gets our attention.

“And, behold, a woman of Canaan...”²

¹ Mathew 15:21.

² Matthew 15:22.

Again, imagine the history of Israel. Canaan.

...a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 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. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.³

What a blessed narrative that we have here to look at for these few moments and consider how the Lord hears and answers the cry of a needy sinner. I tell my congregation every time I hope that the Lord has brought you as a needy sinner. I think one of our worst evidences of depravity of heart, even as God's children, is the pride and presumption and the cockiness with which we present ourselves before the Lord.

When the Lord reminds you that the only reason any of us is his is because of his mercy and grace. I will tell you that concept, that thought alone humbles me. And I believe a portion of Scripture like this is a reminder of just what kind of sinners the Lord saves.

But here is this woman of whom it says in verse 22 that she was a woman of Canaan. We know that Canaan was condemned overall as a land. That was in God's sovereign purpose. But you stop and think about yourself. Were those of Canaan any worse than any of us sitting here? Not at all. In fact, if you want to look at condemnation, every one of us sitting here was condemned in Adam. When Adam fell, we fell. And so who are we to think that we are any better because we live in a different land or, perhaps, we are raised cutting our teeth on the Bible, that somehow God is going to be any more favorable to any one of us than he would be to a woman of Canaan. You can see how our minds and eyes are blinded by the very sin nature of which we are condemned.

And yet as this woman was brought to him and bowed at his feet and would not move, would not go away, the Lord pronounced her faith and I believe there what he was doing was drawing attention to the quality of faith that was in her. But most assuredly and quickly I would say was not of her no more than any of us could believe apart from the Lord Jesus Christ revealing himself in us.

So this woman, she came, but I will guarantee you she was drawn. It was the Lord drawing her. And so the Lord commended her faith as being a great faith. Now he says there in verse 28, "Great is thy faith."⁴

³ Mathew 15:23-28.

⁴ Matthew 15:28.

There are all to of people who will get all excited about that because they say, “See, it says, ‘her faith.’ She had to produce it. She had to believe. She had to...” I have heard preachers say, “God didn’t believe for her. Christ didn’t believe for her. She believed.”

What they are doing is exalting her faith.

So let me ask you something. I look at your eyes and I say your eyes are pretty. Your eyes are blue or your eyes are brown. Did you have anything to do with your eyes? God gave them to you.

When someone compliments, you know, you have got a pretty face, tell them, “Thank the Lord. I had nothing to do with it.”

You know, we say that, but it has nothing to do with those eyes being something I produce. Ask somebody with eye disease. They have physical eyes, but they can’t see. What makes you to differ from them? It is just the Lord determined to give you good eyesight and this one over here caused them to be blind.

And so even when it says here, “Great is thy faith,”⁵ I like to read it, “Great is the one who is thy faith.” She would never have seen Christ. She would never have come to him. She would have stayed right where she was. Great faith.

How does it appear? We don’t find that she came to Christ even with full assurance of faith. It says that she came, but it doesn’t describe that there was any presumption in her incoming. I think there are a lot of people that think, well, if I have got great faith then that means I have got great boldness. Not necessarily.

It is not how you come. It is to whom you come. That is the difference. The Lord commended the faith of those that brought that man on that pallet that couldn’t even walk. And they climbed on the roof and dropped him down to lay him at Christ’s feet. It is not how they came. A lot of people like to preach on that.

“Oh, if we could just have that kind of faith.”

And they preach up how they brought him. It is not that. It is to whom they brought him. And I will guarantee you. If I ask you about your faith an you start talking to me about walking an aisle and saying a prayer and raising your hand and following a preacher and doing whatever preachers says, I don’t care how zealous you are, you have missed Christ, because it is not in what we do, it is in who the object of that faith is.

The key here in verse 22 about this woman’s faith is that she came out of the same coasts, but cried unto him. That is what faith does. She was, in essence, saying, “I know thou art the Savior and I have come to you.” But she didn’t say, “I know thou art my Savior.” She

⁵ Ibid.

wasn't even that presumptuous. She didn't say, "I am assured that thou hast loved me and therefore wilt save me."

See, a lot of people try to reason that way. Well, I have got to believe that God loves me first, otherwise I can't believe on him.

What does that have to do with it?

You know, when the Lord by his Spirit begins to show you your need, if it is the Spirit working it is not how you come, it is to whom you come. He will draw you to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so that is the very first thing that I would underscore with you in this portion of Scripture is that true faith brings the sinner to Christ. True faith brings the sinner to Christ.

Some of the old writers you will read in their writings they talk about coming to faith in Christ. And for a number of years I didn't see anything wrong with that until the Lord opened my eyes to Christ. And one day I was reading and suddenly it dawned on me. This is wrong. Faith is not the savior. Faith didn't die on the cross. Faith did not shed the blood. Christ did. And so now when I read that I will cross through it and I will put: No coming to Christ in faith, coming to Christ according to the faith that is set forth in this book. It is according to how Christ is set forth.

See, this woman to come must have heard.

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."⁶

She didn't just go out on a whim and state, "I will try this man Jesus."

There used to be a billboard campaign back when I was in high school, "Try Jesus." And they would say, "You have tried Coke and liked it, try Jesus." They put... they were promoting... well, they were promoting their Jesus like you would selling Coke or toilet paper. That is not my Lord. He is not to be tried. He was already tried. He is the tried stone and he has proven true in the eyes and the testimony of his Father. We don't come to try him. We come to rest in how he reveals himself.

But that is how this faith is described. I believe that is what our Lord was commending, the quality of her faith and that is why he could say, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."⁷

A lot of people like to jump on that as well and say, "There you go. It says 'even as you wilt.' There is free will."

No, it didn't.

⁶ Romans 10:17.

⁷ Matthew 15:28.

What do the Scriptures say? The Lord makes his people willing in the day of his power, Psalm 110 verse three.

He told... well, if you go over there and look at John chapter six there is two verses that we constantly need to be reminded of. If it were left to us none would come.

You say, "Why do any come?"

Well, look in John chapter six and verse 44. The reason he said to this Canaanite woman, Be it unto thee even as thou wilt,"⁸ it was because he gave here the willing. And so exactly right.

As I have given you to will to come, so you have come. So be it unto you.

Because here in John 6:44 the Lord says specifically, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."⁹

That is why I know that, yes, this woman came out of these coasts, but she was being drawn all the while by the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes he went to them, those of his sheep. Sometimes he drew them to him. But either way, it is the Lord's work to do. None of the glory belongs to the sinner. And we don't find this woman even answering a word after the Lord said that. She didn't have to speak.

I have heard people say, "Well, until you pray the sinner's prayer, God won't hear you."

This woman didn't pray any kind of sinner's prayer. He just said, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."¹⁰

Why? Because she willed it? No. If it could have been her willing it, she wouldn't have even had to come. She could have stayed right there and prayed through. But the Lord drew her to him and then in his appointed time he did that work on her behalf.

Over here in verse 65 there were a lot of people that followed Christ that eventually turned back, but he said here in John six and 65, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father,"¹¹ the Father drawing him, the Father giving it to that one.

But such is that faith that brings the sinner to Christ. The Lord blessed this woman to come to him and then he commended her for coming. Such is his grace.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John 6:44.

¹⁰ Matthew 15:28.

¹¹ John 6:65.

Now here is a second thing that I would have you to consider concerning true faith and that is that true faith seeks Christ alone.

That little word “alone” is for me what distinguishes the message of Scripture from what you hear people preaching. And typically if they are going to get upset, it is because you add that word “alone,” exclusively.

There are people today that will tell you, shrugging their shoulders, “You know, we believe in Christ. We believe that it is only through his death that we can be saved.”

And the way they say it, you are just anticipating, “But...”

And what they are usually ready to add is, “I also believe that I have got to do something.”

And if you ever want to find out whether a person is truly the Lord’s, has been taught of him. Ask him that question. Is salvation... If you ask them, simply, “Is salvation of Christ?” they are going to say yes. But ask them, “Is salvation of Christ alone, apart from any works of your own?”

There is where you start a fight.

“Well, I don’t know if I could say that.”

And they will start quoting all these verses that they learned from their childhood up, you know.

This woman when the Lord commended her faith and called it great, I don’t believe it was in quantity. Some people say, “I have got to have greater faith. They are thinking in quantity.” It is the quality of the faith. What was great about this faith? Well, it sought Christ alone.

Now you stop and think about it. Here was a woman in a society that looked down on women. Men met apart. Women were to be seen and not heard. If they saw them, they were just busy passing through, taking care of not to speak. But here is a woman in the midst of this crowd who had the audacity in the eyes of some to come right to Christ and to cry out to him.

So that was a strike against her. And yet because it was the Lord drawing her, it would not keep her. She would not let those fears, she would not let that stereotype keep her from coming to Christ. That is what true faith is. True faith doesn’t have to go check with a preacher first. I have got to find out what he is going to tell me and then I will come back and tell you. A lot of people when you begin to talk to them about the sovereign work of Christ in salvation they say, “Well, let me go ask my preacher what he believes about this.”

That right there tells you they haven't heard.

And you consider next that she was a woman of Canaan coming to a Messiah from Israel. So considered to be her enemy by her kinfolk and yet none of that kept her. See, true faith seeks Christ alone. And on God's sovereign purpose he used here the situation with her daughter. It doesn't say exactly what it was, just that she was vexed with a devil. So she was troubled and yet she sought one alone and that was the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then add to it the disciples in verse 23 that came and besought Christ saying, "Send her away for she crieth after us.

The idea of send away was in the word, "quickly heal her, Lord, and get rid of her." That is the idea of "send." Loose her. Take care of her problem and send her on her way. She is bugging us.

You know, the audacity even of the disciples who were the Lord's to think that they could dictate the Lord's timing and how he would work.

Don't we think that sometimes even with regard to people that we know and love that I will just address the Lord, "Lord, this is a burden. If you would just save them..." You know?

It is the Lord's to do with what he will and for us to bow in silence to his will, whether he will or not is his to determine.

And so we see that true faith seeks Christ alone. She looked nowhere else. She would not be deterred.

The third thing I would tell you about true faith—and I trust you can identify with this, because I am not just giving a lesson here on faith. I am describing for you how it is that the Lord in his grace and mercy has been pleased to deal with me in my life as a poor, guilty sinner.

But, thirdly, I would say that faith asks nothing but mercy. You can see her request there in verse 22.

"Have mercy on me."¹²

But just like faith always has an object, so does mercy. Who was she addressing? She said, "O, Lord, thou Son of David."¹³

This is why I say she would have had to have known something of the Scriptures. That was an expression that you would hear from somebody raised in a synagogue under the reading of Scriptures. And yet here was a woman out of Canaan crying unto him for

¹² Matthew 15:22.

¹³ Ibid.

mercy, but not just based on any means, identifying the one way in which God is ever pleased to show mercy to sinners.

“O Lord, thou Son of David.”¹⁴

“That one that was foretold in the Scriptures of which I was not even raised under and which renounced me even in those Scriptures, as a Canaanite woman, as condemned. Yet here it is. If you were pleased to show mercy to a Ruth out of Moab, why not to a Canaanite woman out of Canaan.”

Such was her need. Such was her cry. Faith asks nothing but mercy. It doesn't demand.

See, we live in a society of name it, claim it. And that is how I made my first false profession. I was raised and taught that if I just read John 3:16, got down on my knees and wherever it said, “For God so loved the world,”¹⁵ you put your name in there and you take world out and put your name in there, that God has to hear you.

And I held, I say it sarcastically, I held God to account for 15 years of my life based on that, that he had to save me because I prayed the prayer until the Lord so broke me and showed me that even in that I was a rebel to think that anything I did would be the basis of my salvation.

When it pleased God to reveal Christ in me, these lips were shut. And the only thing I could ask for and cry for was mercy. I became a mercy beggar, not a demander, but a mercy beggar.

“Have mercy upon me, O Lord.”¹⁶

But here is the next thing, fourth thing I would tell you about true faith and that is that faith waits. True faith waits on the Lord to work salvation and speak peace.

How many times we live in a society where we go to a vending machine, put in the money and get what we want? We live in a society that entitlement. That is where lawsuits come from. I am entitled to this right.

And that is how people deal with God in their minds and hearts which is a rebellion. I don't see any of that characteristic in this woman. The same one who was seeking her, which was the Lord, he came to seek and to save that which was lost, and drawing her, she would not have come had he not by his Spirit been drawing her, now causes her to wait.

And those of you that have ever trained or raised bird dogs or hunting dogs, I am amazed at how you can make that dog sit and wait until you give the order for him to move. And

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John 3:16.

¹⁶ Matthew 15:22.

that... I mean there could be a bird flying right past its nose. It is going to wait there until you tell him it is time to go. Go get it.

I believe this is what we see here with our Lord. What he was showing in this woman's faith when he said, speaking of it, "O woman, great is thy faith,"¹⁷ the quality of it was such that she was brought to wait until Christ spoke the word, just like a dog. In fact, that is the language that the Lord used over there in verse 26 when he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."¹⁸

It wasn't that he was pushing her away, but he was manifesting to all those around what kind of faith he had given to this woman to even in that statement say, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which come from the masters' table."¹⁹

We get in a hurry. You know, I am as guilty as anybody. I used to think that if I could just stand up and preach the gospel of Christ and exalt him, if there were any elect in the congregation that the Lord would immediately draw them. That was my thinking. And then I look back even my own experience where it was 15 years before the Lord broke me down and taught me. He let me run for a good while and then suddenly jerked in the chain and said, "No more, you are mine."

And that is what I see here, this woman that was brought to Christ was caused to wait. Even though the disciples sought a quick cure, so many times we pray selfishly, especially if it is regard to our children or others that we love. "Lord, do your work immediately. I would love to see it." Well, we wait. We wait on the Lord.

In fact, you notice in verse 23 to her cry he answered her not a word.

You say, well, if it is the Spirit drawing, why wouldn't he answer her? Because it wasn't his time. Yes, she was his. Yes, he would lay down his life for her, but it would be in his time. He answered her not a word. In fact, when he answered, in verse 24, do you notice?

"And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said..."²⁰

To them. he didn't even address this word to the woman. He is talking to his disciples now and she is over here listening. But what he has to say in that word would have nothing of encouragement to her if she was thinking that she deserved this salvation because he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."²¹

¹⁷ Matthew 15:28.

¹⁸ Matthew 15:26.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Matthew 15:23-24.

²¹ Matthew 15:24.

But if you are being brought anyway as a poor, helpless, lost, guilty sinner, why would that discourage you? She knew she was undeserving.

You see, I don't have a battle with God over whether he should save me or not. I know he shouldn't. And so does anyone sitting here or listening to me that the Lord has taught. You know you have nothing to commend yourself to him. And so you remain silent. Yes, Lord, I know. I know.

She waited for him to speak the Word. And yet, you know, the Lord wasn't driving her away because she would be brought to see that, in fact, she was one of those lost sheep of Israel for whom he came to lay down his life. Not of national Israel, but of the true Israel.

In fact, if you look over in Romans chapter two in verses 28 and 29, Paul was a true Jew, an Israelite of Israelites. But look what he says here concerning what it is to be a true son of Israel. As far as I know, I don't have any Jewish blood in me. I might way back there, but so if I was to hear this I would think, "Well, I wonder if that would include me?"

But who are the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Here is what Paul said in Romans two and verse 28.

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly."²²

Thank the Lord I don't have to dress like a Jew.

"...neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."²³

All the while the Lord was saying, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," he was speaking the truth. He was sent for her even though she was of national Israel. She was one of those lost sheep that he came to lay down his life for.

It is not our faith that causes the Lord to be merciful. It is his mercy that causes us to look to him and even believe. Don't ever get that backward. And it was such with this one here.

Do you know what it is to wait on the Lord as a lost sinner? To most people even in sovereign grace circles, congregations, they just change professions. They made a profession here under a free will message and now, ok, that is wrong, so I am going to adopt now this new message. So they just move from one to the other. But, you know, that is just patching up an old wineskin, trying to put new wine in old bottles. You can't do it. I know, because I tried. I got a hold of some doctrine, some truth and for seven years was trying to fit in to a profession that I made back here under false pretenses, false Christ. And it took the Lord by his Spirit to show me I was lost.

²² Romans 2:28.

²³ Romans 2:28-29.

And I have often said to people there is two gracious states that a sinner can find themselves in in this life. One is to be lost. If the Lord ever shows you you are lost, that is grace. But also to be found. This woman didn't find Christ. Christ found her. But he was showing her all the while just how lost she was.

Well, the fifth thing I will tell you about true faith is—to wrap it up here—is that true faith brought her to bow low at Christ's feet. True faith brought her to bow low at Christ's feet.

You notice in verse 25 it was on the heels of the Lord saying, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," he came for a particular people, that she came and worshipped. I now a lot of people that are offended and run off and say, "Well, if you are saying it is all of God's choice and it is by election, I don't want to hear it." They plug their ears and they run their way.

This woman couldn't. She wouldn't go away, because it was the Lord drawing her all the time. That didn't offend her. In fact, it says here, "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."²⁴

It only strengthened and encouraged her in what the Lord was already doing. Do you know that word "worship" is made up in the original of two words? It is the word "before" and the second part of it may shock you, but it is the word "dog."

The Spirit directed Matthew in writing this word to use a unique word for worship. Literally to come as a dog and to bow at the master's feet. That is a picture I can identify with. You know, if you have got a dog trained you snap your fingers, down he goes and he lays there until you tell him to move. That is how you can figure out whose dog it is. I have tried it on some other dogs and they about take your hand off, you know? But if it is your dog, they listen. They hear. They bow. They obey. And that is the Word that is used here of worship. She came. She bowed as a dog.

And don't you know that the Lord having dealt in her heart knew exactly how he was going to show that she was noting but a dog? But she was his dog. See, some people get offended. They don't like the word "worm." They don't like the word "wretch." They have never been lost.

Can you imagine a dog not liking the word "dog"? Come here, dog. You don't think anything of it. It is not disrespect, it is just a reminder of their place. But that is how she came. And when the Lord said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs," you wouldn't think of a dog thinking it had a right to sit up there at your family meal along with everybody else—although I have seen some families treat their dogs better than their children. They have got them up there eating food off the plate with everybody else. Not here.

²⁴ Matthew 15:25.

A dogs place is on the floor at the master's feet. And you can see the response.

“Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”²⁵

She was owning him as the master.

“Do what you will, but all I desire and all I need, all I want is your mercy and is your grace, understanding that that is who you came to save, sinners. That is who I am. And, Lord, apart from you there is no ransom.”

Here was a woman that the Lord in a short while would go the cross and lay down his life for. There is no forgiveness of sins apart from the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, but his drawing her was because she was already his in the sense that the Father had given her to him and he would pay her debt and therein would be all of her hope, all of her righteousness, all of her justification before a holy God.

That is the testimony of faith. It is not about me. It is all about him.

And I trust that the Lord will so grant us an ear to hear.

²⁵ Matthew 15:26.