"GREAT IS THY FAITH"

Matthew 15:21-28
5/27/2018

INTRODUCTION:

***What is a great faith?**

I. She had faith in Christ despite enormous <u>OBSTACLES</u> (v. 22)
(A <u>Desperate</u> Faith)

--A <u>Social</u> Obstacle - *"A <u>woman</u> of <u>Canaan</u>"*

--A <u>Sin</u> Obstacle - *"Have <u>mercy</u> on me"*

--A <u>Supernatural</u> Obstacle - *"Grievously vexed with a <u>devil</u>"*

II. She had faith in Christ despite apparent <u>REJECTION</u> (v. 23-26)
(A <u>Persistent</u> Faith)

III. She had faith in Christ for a <u>SMALL "CRUMB"</u> of blessing (v. 27-28)
(A <u>Big</u> Faith)

CONCLUSION: **The <u>Reward</u> of Faith (v. 28b)**

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INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 11 - The Heroes of the Faith

V. 21

Mark's gospel reveals that on this occasion Jesus actually *"entered into a house, and would have no man know it, but He could not be hid. For a certain woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet"* (Mark 7:24-25).

***What is a great faith?**

I. She had faith in Christ despite enormous <u>OBSTACLES</u> (v. 22)
(A <u>Desperate</u> Faith)

--A <u>Social</u> Obstacle - *"A <u>woman</u> of <u>Canaan</u>"*

***"Canaan"* -** the part of Canaan situated on the North West coast (modern-day Lebanon)

According to Mark's gospel: *"The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation"* (that is, she was a despised <u>Syrian</u> from the region of Phoenicia).

She had faith and kept trusting God for a miracle when it seemed everything was against her:

--the fact that she was a <u>Gentile</u> Greek was against her
--the fact that she was a <u>Syrian</u> was against her
--the fact that she was a <u>woman</u> was against her ("for most Jewish rabbis paid little attention to women" - Wiersbe, p. 55)
--and the fact that her daughter had such a <u>serious problem</u> was against her!

--A <u>Sin</u> Obstacle - ***"Have <u>mercy</u> on me"***

"<u>Cried</u> unto Him" - the imperfect tense indicates that she in desperation kept on crying out; she continued over and over again to beg Jesus.

"Have <u>mercy</u> upon me" - In humility she kept saying, "Have compassion or pity on me."

By requesting mercy, she is admitting that she does not deserve to have what she requests.

She recognized that Jesus had the authority to show mercy. She believed Jesus was *"the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth"* (Exod. 34:6).

"By definition, the person who asks for mercy asks for something undeserved. This woman did not come demanding, but pleading. She did not ask Jesus' help on the basis of her own goodness, but on the basis of His" (MacArthur, p. 469).

Faith is of <u>no</u> value, unless it is directed at the right object.

(Faith is not effective if the object of that faith is impotent; also faith is not blind, nor am I speaking about "Faith in faith." Some say: "I believe in love"; "I believe in believing"; or "I believe it will all work out." Such faith is powerless if the true and living God is not the object of it.")

"O Lord" - A testimony that she believed in Christ's authority, sovereignty, and deity. Jesus is Adonai and Yahweh. She was confessing that Jesus was "Lord." (Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:10)

"Thou Son of David" - she believed that Jesus was the Messiah. This was a royal title pointing to Christ's right to sit on the throne of David as Israel's king!

"After the irreverent treatment of the Lord by the Scribes and Pharisees -- who had called Him a drunk, a companion of sinners, and demon-controlled -- it must have been refreshing for Jesus to hear this Gentile woman come to Him with such respect and submission" (MacArthur, p. 471).

--A Supernatural Obstacle - ***"Grievously vexed with a devil"***

"Grievously vexed" - Severely or badly controlled by a demon.

Her demonized daughter was seriously afflicted by a fallen evil spirit, that no doubt affected her intellect (her thoughts); emotion (her feelings), and will. This demon no doubt controlled her speech and actions.

What she said and what she did was so evil, so bizarre, so unlike her natural behavior, so supernatural, that her mother knew beyond a doubt that her own "flesh and blood," her own beloved daughter was dominated, manipulated, controlled by a messenger of Satan.

This woman's faith was great in light of her pagan culture and background; in light of the little or no written revelation she had about Christ; and in light of the enormity of her daughter's bondage.

II. She had faith in Christ despite apparent <u>REJECTION</u> (v. 23-26)
(A <u>Persistent</u> Faith)

V. 23

"But He answered her not a word" -

Not out of disrespect or disinterest, but Jesus remained silent to:

1) Make sure that everyone heard her request
2) Make a dramatic point

Sometimes the hardest response to accept (from God) is no response at all.

Her persistence became so annoying that she was beginning to get on the disciple's nerves. They began to beg Him and urge Him to send her away, let her go!

"Send her away" - "We are not sure whether they meant, "Give her what she wants and get rid of her" or just "Get rid of her!" In either case, they were not showing much compassion for either her or her demonized daughter" (Wiersbe, p. 54)

With their backs to the women, the disciples gave the reason for their request: "She is behind us crying out and she is not letting up!"

Do something! Anything! Just get this woman off our backs.

V. 24

In order to fulfill some Old Testament promises made to national Israel, Christ went to the <u>Jew first</u> (Ro. 9:4-5).

When He sent the disciples out to witness and perform miracles in Matthew 10, He commanded them saying: *"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the <u>lost sheep of the house of Israel</u>" (Mt. 10:5-6)*

Jesus' mission was to *"seek and to save"* the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He came with an intention to *"save <u>His people</u>* [Israel] *from their sins"* (Mt. 1:21).

He was fulfilling promises made to national Israel:

> Acts 13:32-33a -*"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again"*
>
> Acts 13:23 -*"Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus"*
>
> John 1:11 -*"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."*
>
> Matthew 21:37 -*"But last of all He sent unto them His Son, saying, they will reverence my Son"*

Christ's top priority was to minister to His chosen nation, Israel (to reveal Himself as their Messiah and to offer them the Kingdom), but He always extended Himself to open hearts and never refused a person of any race or culture who came to Him in faith (MacArthur, p. 467).

Not one person who sincerely came to Him was turned away (Jn. 6:37).

On this occasion, Jesus is not saying these things to discourage or to turn away this woman, but to draw out her faith as a testimony.

(EX: How God told Moses He would destroy Israel only to draw out Moses' faith in God's integrity [Ex. 32:10-14; Num. 14:11-20])

When the *"lost sheep of the house of Israel"* rejected their Messiah, He then turned to the Gentiles (which was His plan all along) (cp. Mt. 21:28-22:14).

What God is showing more and more in Matthew's gospel is the growing antagonism and rejection of Christ by the "house of Israel" and the great faith of the Gentiles (cp. the Centurion - see Mt. 8:5-12).

If Jesus had no intention of ministering to Gentiles, He would not have travelled into Tyre and Sidon - Gentile territory!

God intended His Gospel to be *"to the Jew first but also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:1b).. The Great Commission was to *"make disciples of all nations"* (mt. 28:19), to *"preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mk. 16:15), to carry the gospel from Jerusalem unto the *"uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

"Keep in mind that our Lord responded to this woman as He did, not to destroy her faith, but to develop it" (Wiersbe, p. 54).

Jesus purposely "put up the barriers, not to keep her away but to draw her closer. He also used the occasion to show the disciples the value of persistent faith and to help them distinguish between the genuine and the superficial (Ex: in Mt. 19:16-22, Jesus placed barriers before the young man to test the genuineness of his plea for eternal life)" (MacArthur, p. 472).

Though the answer was delayed, though the answer was long in coming, she did not quit. She persisted! She didn't faint in prayer!

"Great faith does not give up; it is not deterred by obstacles, setbacks, or disappointments" (MacArthur, p. 471).

V. 25

"Worshipped Him" **-**She in desperation and deep humility fell down on her fact in front of Jesus and briefly and to the point pleaded, *"Lord, help me!"*

I'm sure that Christ knowing this woman's deep misery, sincerity, earnestness and need, was touched by her cry for "help."

However, in order to make a point and to draw out her faith for all to see and hear, He responds in a peculiar, seemingly harsh and unfeeling manner.

V. 26

Jesus is saying: It is not right (suitable or proper) to take the children's [the children of Israel] bread [Christ's spiritual nourishment and power] and cast it to dogs [Gentiles].

"Dogs" = little household pet dogs (not filthy, wild, garbage-eating street dogs).

"Dogs" **-** Jesus is quoting terminology used by Israelites toward Gentiles and Samaritans. Back then, many Jews despised and belittled the Gentiles, viewed them as unclean canines.

After such a response, most people would have indignantly said, "So much for your God of love, your message of compassion, and your narrow, bigoted religion. I want nothing to do with a God or religion like that" (MacArthur, p. 4720.

"Her seeking heart would not give up. Like Abraham, she grew strong in faith through God's testing (Rom. 4:20), and like Jacob wrestling with the Lord (Gen. 32:26), she would not let go until He blessed her. She fulfilled the pledge of Jeremiah 29:13-14, *"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, declares the Lord*"" (MacArthur, p. 474).

III. She had faith in Christ for a <u>SMALL "CRUMB"</u> of blessing (v. 27-28)
(A <u>Big</u> Faith)

V. 27
"Truth, Lord" - this woman recognized God's dealings with the children of Israel.

With an "incredible flash of insight" this woman picked up on Christ's own illustration and brought it to a grant conclusion.

This woman humbly refers to herself as a "dog" who would eat any crumb of blessing that would come her way!

"Their master's table" = Israel's Messiah's table

Israel had a banquet full of opportunity, a banquet table of blessings, a feast of miracles, healings, messages, yet they ignored and for the most part did not hunger and thirst for what Christ offered.

Yet the dogs (Gentiles) did. The hungry Gentiles salivated for any morsel of spiritual food that would fall from Christ's table!

(Here in the USA, we have so much, *"rich and increased with goods,"* yet some people in other third world countries do more with *"crumbs"* than what we do with steak dinners!)

This woman is saying: "Lord, just a little crumb will do" Only utter the word and my daughter will be healed!

This woman recognized that even a "crumb" of blessing would be more than adequate!

She would be satisfied with merely a crumb. Just a "tiny left-over" of Jesus' great power could heal her daughter.

V. 28
With much feeling and emotion (just as the lady said, *"O Lord"* [v. 22]), Jesus says, *woman, great is thy faith!"*

Compare her *"great faith"* with that *"little faith"* of Peter and the disciples (8:26; 16:8)

"Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt" - You may have the exact help and miracle that you desire.

CONCLUSION: **The <u>Reward</u> of Faith (v. 28b)**

"That very hour" - at that same time that Jesus said these words, the woman's daughter had the demon leave her body.

Jesus does not need any time at all to accomplish the most incredible of miracles! What He desires gets accomplished the very moment He wills it to be.

This miracle was performed from a distance. Christ did not have to be physically present to perform the miraculous. All He had to do was say the word (or think the thought) and He could heal someone who was on the opposite end of the earth!

Mark adds this detail: *"And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed"* (Mk. 7:30).

I can just imagine the amazement, joy, and wonder of this woman upon seeing her daughter (formerly wild, vicious, foaming at the mouth, out of control) now calmly and peacefully lying on the bed.

This woman wouldn't quit! She kept on asking until she received, she continued seeking until she found, she persisted knocking until it was opened to her (Mt. 7:7).