



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 15:21–31

Gospel of Matthew

“Dogged Faith Triumphant over the Silent Messiah”

TRANSCRIPT

We turn to Matthew chapter 15 verse 21 for our Scripture reading. Matthew chapter 15 verse 21. Now, the Lord Jesus has just spoken concerning the traditions of the elders and has set forth the truth that the Word of God is more important than the traditions of the elders and now leaving the land of Palestine he moves over to the land of Tyre and Sidon, and we read in verse 21:

“Then Jesus went from there and departed into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same borders, and cried unto him, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.’ 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 worshiped him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ But he answered and said, ‘It is not right 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 well from that very hour.”

It’s a very striking that our Lord of course should fail to respond at the beginning to this woman’s cries, and we note now the contrast between the attitude that he had in the land of Tyre and Sidon and the attitude that he has in the land of Palestine. So. I am going to read on a few more verses and want you to notice that contrast.

“And Jesus departed from there and came near unto the Sea of Galilee and went up into a mountain and sat down there into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and put them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be well, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.”

May God bless this reading of his Word.

The subject for today in the continued exposition of the Gospel of Matthew is “Dogged Faith Triumphant over the Silent Messiah.” The Canaanite woman whose story is recorded for us in Matthew chapter 15 is one of the secondary figures of the New Testament. She is, of course, not a Peter, nor a James nor a John, one of the important apostles of the Lord Jesus. She is not even a Virgin Mary or a Mary of Bethany. She is not even a disciple, that is, at the beginning of her story. She was not a priest nor a prophet. She was a poor unknown. As someone has said, “She was like one of those figures on in the margin in Rembrandt’s paintings.”

But in spite of the fact she is a secondary character of the New Testament, she has become one of the unforgettables of the New Testament whose praise from the Lord Jesus is matched only by the praise that he gave the Roman centurion. He had said to the Roman centurion, “I have not

seen so great faith, no not in Israel.” And now to the woman of Canaan he says, “O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thy wilt.”

One is a man and one is a woman. One is a man who lived in the land, another is the a woman who lived outside the land, and the two have in common one thing in addition to their praise from Jesus Christ, and that is that both were Gentiles. It is remarkable that these two outstanding instances of faith were instances of faith on the part of Gentiles.

This incident also contains a beautiful illustration of two important matters which I think are very important in the understanding of the Scriptures. And the first is it enables us to understand the purpose of the Lord’s ministry as it relates to Jew and Gentile. It’s sometimes forgotten that the Lord Jesus came in order to minister to Israel first and foremost. Remember, we have had some indications of this in this particular Gospel because when he sent the 12 out, as is recorded in the 10th chapter, he said to them, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” So we have indication that the Lord Jesus expected the ministry that he was bringing to go to the Jew first, and preeminently to the Jew.

And here he says to the disciples, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” Now this is not something that we are making up from the casual citation of two texts out of context. When the Apostle Paul describes the ministry of the Lord Jesus in the Epistle to the Romans, in the 15th chapter, he makes the same kind of distinction. He states that the Lord Jesus was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God—notice he was a minister of the circumcision. His ministry pertained primarily to the Jew, and he stated that it was for the truth of God. That is, to confirm the faithfulness of God in the Word, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. So the Lord Jesus came as a minister of Israel to confirm those promises that had been made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And then he adds, “and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.” Now, mercy is unmerited favor to the miserable. And here, the Gentiles are the recipients of mercy, but it is after his

ministry has first been directed toward the Jew. And he cites Old Testament passages in support of that. So we learn from this passage that there is an order of development in our Lord’s ministry, an order of development in the messianic promises. And here he is ministering before he has turned from the Jews to minister to the Gentiles. And so, we learn from this one of the important purposes of the Lord’s ministry.

Now the second thing that we learn from this incident which is of doctrinal significance is the proper approach to the Lord Jesus. Now in this respect there is no change. That is, the approach to the Lord is always, whether in the Old Testament or in the New, the approach of faith in the Word of God. Habakkuk expressed it in very pithy form when he, reasoning on the basis of what Abraham had done when God called him out, and he looked and saw the stars and believed in the Lord and it was imputed to him for righteousness, Habakkuk the Prophet reasoning on the basis of that passage stated “the just shall live by faith.”

And that was just such an impressive, pithy, brief saying that the Apostle Paul cited it in two places, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews also cited it, so that three times in the New Testament we have it cited from the Old Testament, the just shall live by faith. And of course, the idea is expressed in many other places by others of the New Testament. The Apostle Peter, in one of his greatest messages which he preached in the home of Cornelius, when he comes to the climax of his message states in verse 43, “To him give all the prophets witness,”—this is of the 10th chapter—“that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins,” so that Habakkuk and Paul and Peter and the other writers of the New Testament agree that the proper approach to the Lord Jesus is the approach of faith.

One of the old Puritans, John Flavelle has said, “There be two signal and remarkable acts of faith, both exceedingly difficult: its first act and its last act. The first act is a great venture which faith makes of itself upon on Jesus Christ.” We all who have come to know God through Christ in the act of faith that brings salvation know exactly what John Flavelle is speaking about. And then he goes on to say, “And the last is a great venture too. And that is, to have faith cast itself into the ocean of

eternity upon the credit of a promise.” There are two great acts of faith: one by which we come to know God and the last by which we cast ourselves upon him as we pass from this early life into what Flavelle has called the ocean of eternity. Faith is the principle by which we are attached to God both now and forever.

Now that is beautifully illustrated here. One of the other Puritans has said, “It is the office of faith to believe what we do not see, and it shall be the reward of faith to see what we do believe.” And there is expressed the first and last of these great acts of faith. Someone else has said, and he was a Puritan too, “Heresy is leprosy of the head.” [Laughter] I rather like that statement. [More laughter] Heresy is leprosy of the head, because really the one fundamental source of our heresy is our unbelief. And in the Bible, leprosy is a type of sin. And the sin of unbelief is the fundamental sin. So just as faith is the means by which we are attached to the Lord Jesus for time and for eternity, so to fail is to have, speaking typically, the leprosy of the head.

The Lord Jesus had just been speaking about the traditions of the elders. It had been objected that disciples did not rinse their hands like they were supposed to do according to the traditions of the elders. The Lord Jesus had pointed out that there is something more important than the traditions of the elders; it is the commandment of God. And in the commandments of God it was not stated that they should rinse their hands before they ate their food.

There were certain occasions in the Old Testament in which there was to be rinsing of hands, washing of hands, washing of feet; in fact, bathing of the whole body when the priests were inaugurated or installed in their offices. But there was no Old Testament passage that said that everybody who was a Jewish man should wash their hands as they ate their food. And so he expatiated at length upon the preeminence of the Word of God over the traditions of men. And then for purposes of seclusion he went off into the Land of Tyre and Sidon, Gentile territory, and illustrated by his contact with the Gentiles his disregard for unbiblical concepts of defilement.

Now Mark tells us, and he must [be] used to complement the narrative in Matthew, that he wanted no one to know that he was there in that land, because evidently he had been busily engaged

in spiritual ministry, preaching, teaching, counseling of various types, and as a result of this he was tired. And he went off into the Gentile territory of Tyre and Sidon for a rest evidently, did not want anyone to know he was there, but Mark says he could not be hidden.

I think I know what he was experiencing, and I think anyone who does spiritual ministry whether he is a preacher such as I am, or a Sunday school teacher or simply an individual concerned about others who are lost and who spends time in the attempt to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, that is very trying kind of work and activity, as any of you who have done it know.

And our Lord being a true man, apart from sin, must have known preeminently what it meant to be tired from spiritual ministry. But he could not be hidden, and evidently it was known that the great prophet from Judaea was in the land, and word went out, and a woman, a Canaanite woman—called a Syro-phoenician woman, a Greek—apparently following the disciples, crying out to the Lord Jesus, came to him. And we have the beginning thereby of this great experience.

One of the commentators has said, “The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places.” And this was a dark place, the territory of Tyre and Sidon, and surely the woman called a Canaanite woman is one of the brightest of the jewels whose story is told in the New Testament.

The first request that she makes is given in verse 22. She came out out of the same borders, and she cried out unto him, “Have mercy on me O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.” She was a cultural Hellenist; that is, she was a Greek-speaking person. That’s why she’s called a Greek. But she was under the Syrian administration of the Roman Empire, and that’s why she is a woman from Tyre and Sidon and called a Syro-phoenician woman.

She’s called a Canaanite woman in Matthew, because she came from that part of the land which could be the land of Canaan, and if you remember that when the Children of Israel came into the land, the Canaanites were the great enemies of the children of Israel. So she is a descendant of the ancient race of Israel’s greatest enemies, but she evidently has been exposed to some truth, because when she comes to the Lord Jesus, she cries out, “O Lord thou Son of David,” so she knows that much. She knows that he is a Son of David.

She knows that he has relationship to the elect race, and not only the elect race, but the elect line within the race, so she calls out, “O thou Son of David have mercy upon me!” Well if she was a jewel, and if she was a bright one, it is evident that she was an elect one, too, because it’s only the elect who call out, “O Lord, have mercy upon me.” We do not know her name. Tradition says that her name was Jesta, and the name of her daughter Bernice. (Incidentally, in the *Believers Bible Bulletin* I think that the names have been switched and it’s not the secretary’s fault, it’s my fault. When I read those notes over again, I noticed I had made a mistake there and it might be confusion but I’m thankful it is not too important.) The woman’s name was Jesta according to tradition and her daughter’s name was Bernice.

Now she evidently was in a very bad way because Scripture says that the daughter was grievously vexed with a demon. I like the way Sir John Cheek, one of the ancient commentators, has described her as being “very evil, deviled” and the spelling incidentally in the *Believers Bible Bulletin* is correct. That’s the way he wrote it: Very evil deviled. So the mother of her daughter was very much concerned and desired that the Lord Jesus was would deliver her.

Now if you read the New Testament, you will find that there is no person who has a quicker eye for the manifestation of genuine faith than the Lord Jesus. He has a very quick eye for faith. But here he does not respond. “He answered her not a word,” the Scriptures say. Now, I do not think that he totally disregarded her, I think that the light that the passage ultimately conveys is that he silently delighted in the manifestation of faith, but unfortunately this woman had come with the wrong approach.

Wrong approach? What’s wrong about saying, “O Lord thou Son of David have mercy upon me?” Why if there is anything that we have learned, that’s the right approach. But our Lord Jesus answered her not a word. So it’s evident that in the light of the context that he must be admiring the faith, and yet he doesn’t reply. He’s testing her, testing her on the human level. Of course, he knows that she’s one of the faithful. I think his heart must have leapt within him when he saw her. The one

about whom he and the Father and the Holy Spirit had fought in the ages of eternity past in the council room of the triune God. But nevertheless he is silent.

And the fact that he is silent to this request for mercy is most remarkable. If you ask for humility before God, she had humility. Why she was so humble she never even brought her child. She didn't even ask him to go to the child. Agony? Agony of soul? Why, every manifestation of the agony of soul that a person might have is seen in her words. She has nothing to say but to spread her grief out before him, and recognizing the compassion that she knows that he has, she cries out for that compassion.

She doesn't require any motive to induce him to help, and in her faith she thinks that he is all powerful enough to do something for her daughter, and not only to heal her daughter but to heal her daughter from a distance. She knows that he does not have to enter into the presence of the daughter, in order that she might be psychosomatically healed.

I listen every Sunday morning, as you know, to these humanistic comments that come over the radio from 8 until about 8:15, in which we are encouraged to think noble thoughts. This morning, I was told that I should think constructively and creatively and a few other things. In other words, I should tell myself how great I am, and then I would be able to pray, so be it, Lord, thank you. [Laughter]

Now this woman did not know any of that philosophy, and unfortunately she had to pass through the agony of going to the Lord Jesus and crying out for mercy. If she had been instructed in Unity, perhaps she would have been prepared to deal with this question on her own, but she didn't know anything about that, praise the Lord, [laughter] and a therefore she went to the Lord Jesus.

Now you would think that all the conditions which he usually required were present in her, and usually he met anyone who cried out for mercy with a swift and speedy healing ministry. In a moment we will see that when he went back into the land they brought literally scores of, perhaps hundreds of people to them to him, and he healed every one of them. And they glorified the God of Israel for the healings that he accomplished in the land just a little while after this.



But here is a poor woman, a needy woman, a persevering woman, an humble woman, a faithful suppliant, and as Mr. McLaren says, “The fountain seems frozen from which such streams of blessing were wont to flow. His mercy seems clean gone and his compassion to have failed. A Christ silent to a sufferer’s cry is a paradox which contradicts the whole gospel story, and which we may be sure no evangelist would have painted if he had not been painting from the life.” How true that is. It illustrates again the beautiful inspiration of the Word of God. No one would have ever written a story like this if it were not true to life. No apostle, no evangelist, no Christian could have ever invented a story like this, and the response of the Lord Jesus to the woman. He answered her not a word.

Now you can imagine if you may that here we have the Lord, the twelve apostles—evidently she had met them before they went into the house, and she was crying after them, and as they got in the house she came in, still crying after him. So you can see the Lord and the twelve apostles walking along followed by this frantic vocal woman, crying out, have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David.

Now he could keep silent, but they couldn’t. Weak nerves often make some seem more compassionate. But we are not to gain the false impression. There are lots of people who think that they are showing compassion when they get involved in spiritual things and often they get involved in the wrong way. And here we have the disciples getting involved in the wrong way, and so they say to the Lord, “Send her away Lord, she’s crying after us.” Evidently, they meant send her away healing healed. Do something about it quickly because she’s disturbing us. Notice the emphasis on the pronoun, us. She cried after us. Not after thee, but after us. We’re disturbed by this woman who’s troubling us.

Now the Lord Jesus’ silence is not because he was not compassionate. His silence someone has said is the silence of higher thought. You see there is something even more important than healing this needy woman. You know what it is? It’s the will of God. The will of God takes preeminence and predominance over even the cries for mercy of this woman.

Well what will of God? Why the one of God that the gospel should go to the Jew first and then to the Greek. And that order of development must be preserved even though this woman cries out for mercy. The silence of higher thought explains a lot of our Lord’s activities, because the will of God dominated him and human ideas take second or third place.

Of course, the greatest silence of higher thoughts is reflected by the suffering on the cross when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And there is going on in the innermost being of the messianic king the struggle with the penalty of human sin, which means that he is suffering the anguish of hellfire upon the cross. The silence of higher thoughts explains a whole lot of our Lord’s activity. And there on the cross, the sun may speak and veil itself and the earth may speak in a great earthquake, but there is something going on between the Son and his God that’s not even expressed in words.

Well now the Lord replies to the disciples here in his second response, what would he do about this shrieking woman? Well, his answer reveals the reason for his silence. After the apostles come and say send her away for she crieth after us, he answered and said, “I’m not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” Ah, there’s the answer. There’s the explanation for the silence. You see, the messianic promises have an order of development.

Now you won’t understand the Bible if you don’t understand this. The messianic promises have an order of development. They were given in the Old Testament to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob, developed through the many messianic passages of the Old Testament, expanded in the covenant made with David and his seed, and finally expanded to include the forgiveness of sins with specific reference in the new covenant that Jeremiah unfolds. But the covenants are covenants with Abraham and his seed. The covenants belong to Israel. Gentiles may have mercy, but the covenants belong to Israel. And the order of development is to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Now as the apostle puts it in Romans chapter 15, “He was a minister of the circumcision too for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” That’s the purpose of the

ministry of the Lord Jesus. So there is an order of development in the messianic promises. That’s why he first preached to the nation. That’s why he sent the twelve out and said, don’t go to the Gentiles, don’t go into the cities of the Samaritans, go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Now this should not be of great difficulty for us. If we read the Word of God we shall see that this is true. One of the Lutheran commentators, R. C. H. Linsky, has seen this. He has stated, “The divine plan according to which Jesus was commissioned was to work out redemption in the Jewish nation and not elsewhere. As soon as it had been worked out, it would be carried to all the world.”

Now we learn from the Old Testament passages that there was provision for the nations or the Gentiles but the order is to the Jew and through the Jew to the Gentile. It’s very much like bowling, to use a rather down to the alley illustration. You know that to knock down all of the pins, you have to put that bowling ball just at one or two points on the alley. And if you hit certain pins the pins will do the rest. And so a good bowler, so I am told, strives to have that ball hit a certain place, and if he hits that place he knows that inevitably the rest of the pins are knocked down. Now the pins that mean the salvation of the world are those that touch the nation Israel. For when Israel as a nation comes to faith, it is through that that the world receives the gospel. Now that is what is being spoken about here when the Lord Jesus says, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Well, evidently the woman had not heard all of this that was going on. She comes up, I suppose unhearing, and with beautiful shamelessness she falls at his feet and says, “Lord, help me!” I must say I love that. Another commentator has said, “Heart prayers are short prayers.” How true. There come times in our experience, many of you know this, when we don’t have time or the energy to utter a long, flowery prayer. We fall on our knees and frequently we cannot even say any words, but just something like, O God, and he knows. He knows the struggles. He knows all of the details. And we simply express to him the burden. This is a prayer very much like that: Lord, help me.

Now, I want you to notice something, that the Lord Jesus hasn't said anything to her yet. And her faith is not silenced by his silence. I dare say that many of us have had a problem with the silence of God. We have prayed, and we have not received any particular answers. That is so far as we can tell. We have prayed and sometimes we have received the reverse of that which we requested. We prayed for healing, and not only did not healing come but further sickness has come. We have prayed for a job and not only that, not only did we not get the job; we may have lost the one we had. But her faith is not silenced by his silence.

Now, I guess the final expression of this marvelous truth is given by Job, when after all of his difficulties in which he apparently lost everything, he cries out, “Though he slay me,”—not smite me—“though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” And so having been rebuffed by the silence of the Lord Jesus, her faith is not silenced. You see, there is something deep down within when a person comes to true biblical faith. There is something deep down within, wrought by the Holy Spirit of God, that brings conviction that he does answer his word.

He is true to his truth, even though we may not understand. And even though circumstances may suggest the opposite, he is true to himself. Now you don't gain that by asking for four reasons for it: scientifically, archaeologically, historically, biologically, or whatever it may be. That comes from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Reformers and others called it the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit by which God testifies to the truth of his Word. And every genuine believer knows exactly what we are talking about. It's not something subjective—subjective only in the sense that it touches the inner man—but it is the objective work of God, giving us that conviction that he is true to his Word. And evidently this woman, she's a jewel remember, and an elect jewel, she has it.

Now I want you to notice one other thing. Her faith is not silenced by the doctrine of election. Yes, that's right. Her faith is not silenced by the doctrine of election. She has said, O thou Son of David. She knows something about these messianic promises. In a moment the Lord Jesus will say it's not right to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And she even comes and says,

“Truth Lord”—I’m a dog. I’m not one of the children. So she is not silenced by the doctrine of election.

There are a lot of people, unfortunately, that seem to be disturbed by the doctrine of election, and allow this great doctrine in which we should rejoice—the Lord Jesus said remember, rejoice that your names are written in heaven. This is something to be happy about. She doesn’t allow the doctrine of election in which on the surface it appears that she’s not included to disturb her. This doctrine of the divine choice of a people from before the foundation of the world acts with a very depressing effect on some people—the non-elect—and acts with a very depressing effect on the elect, often, until they have been wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, then they begin to rejoice in the thing that used depress them. Strange people these Christians.

“We’ve known poor seekers mournfully to say,” Mr. Spurgeon used to say, “perhaps there’s no mercy for me. I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed.” It always puzzles me when we read in the Word of God that the gospel is for sinners—that’s a pretty broad term, sinners. As a matter of fact, it includes everyone in this room, and in the room over there too, and those sitting out in the hall as well. Maybe especially you out in the hall [laughter]. Sinners, that’s comprehensive enough to include every son of Adam and Adam too. Why this should be disturbing to some I don’t know. But nevertheless, this woman is not disturbed by doctrines of distinguishing grace.

Now the Lord turns to her and finally he says to her, you might expect him to say right now, well you’ve manifested great perseverance in holding out up to the moment, your daughter is healed. No, the Lord Jesus can be on the surface very cold and very, very unkind. He turns to the desperate woman, who is disturbed not so much for herself as for her daughter, and he says, “It’s not right to take the children’s bread and to cast it to the dogs.” What a response.

Now surely she’ll be discouraged. That was a frank kind of refusal. But nevertheless this woman, having been wrought upon by the Holy Spirit you see, and having been by the Holy Spirit brought to the conviction that the Word of God is true, and having this inmost feeling that there is

mercy in the heart of the triune God, and pondering his words under the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, she lays hold of the test the Lord is presenting to her, grasps the the the mitigating factors and takes his own words and uses them against him so to speak.

Now Mark tells us something that’s not found in Matthew, and you must see it to understand these mitigating factors which she lays hold of. It’s over in chapter 7 of the Gospel of Mark in verse 27, for there is a clause with which our Lord introduced those words that Mark records that Matthew does not. But Jesus said unto her, “Let the children first be filled”—let the children first be filled—“for it is not right to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” Now she understands that when he says let the children first be filled that that implies a later feeding for the others. And then she catches the term for dog.

Now in the Greek, this is a word that’s very interesting. It is not the usual word, *kuon* for “a dog.” This is a word that refers to a domestic pet. Now in the East, in these days, the dogs were savage, unclean, ownerless animals that prowled the streets, very much like wolves. But there were some pet dogs that were kept in the families. Evidently, some children had picked up some of the puppies and brought them in the house and they were kept in the house, so they belonged to the household. And like most children and families with dogs, those dogs flopped on the floor underneath the table, and as crumbs fell off the table they got something to eat, and I can imagine the children feeding them also from underneath the table as well. They had the same kind of life that we have.

Now I know that from personal experience of 15 years, but 15 years was enough, no more dogs in our family [laughter] in the house. But nevertheless, you can see what she has done is she has picked up this one little word, doggie—the word is a diminutive—“doggie” we might say. So, the children must first be fed, for it’s not right to take the children’s bread and to cast it to the doggies. So she picks up these two words, first, which implies a later feeding, and doggie, which implies that this is a pet dog in the midst of the family and does have a part in the family itself, though a secondary place.

Now what is the bread? Why the bread is the messianic promises. What is meant by the children? Well, the lost sheep of the House of Israel. So the bread which the lost sheep of the House of Israel feeds upon is the messianic promises. What are the crumbs? Why the crumbs are the application of the messianic promises to the Gentiles. As Isaiah says in chapter 42 verse 6 and chapter 49 verse 6 in two of the greatest of the messianic promises, Israel and the Gentiles were the recipients of the messianic promises, though there is a certain order. The Lord Jesus was to be a light for the nation Israel in order that they might be a blessing to the Gentiles. So she argues on the basis of the Old Testament revelation concerning the order of development in the promises of God.

Now after she has said that, then she says in these amazing words, “ruth Lord, yea Lord.” In other words, I am a dog, I’m a Gentile, it’s true. I am not included directly in the messianic promises. I grab that. I’m a dog. I’m a Gentile. You know what that means for you? You [know] what the existential force of that is? You’re dogs. That is, most of you. There are probably some Jewish people in the audience. You’re of the lost sheep of the House of Israel. I hope you are the seed of Abraham, the elect seed.

You know it’s interesting, I I know there are some Jewish men in this audience, and there were some in the morning audience at 8:30, and do you know Jewish people don’t oftenly break out in a smile in the midst of a Christian gathering when the gospel is being preached. But I noticed this morning as I looked out, I caught the eye of one Jewish man whom I know is a Jewish man and he was just smiling. He is a Christian. But he was just smiling and a I look out over this audience and I know there are some Jewish men, I’ve already caught the eye of one and he is smiling too.

Why shouldn’t you smile? These are great promises, which the Old Testament has given to the seed of Abraham. The critics have found some national scorn in the words of the Lord Jesus and have criticized him for it, but she found hope for the hopeless when he said, suffer the children first to be fed, but then the doggies may eat of the crumbs.

Now she doesn’t dispute, I say, the fact that she’s a dog, that she’s a Gentile, and you know what that means? She doesn’t dispute the doctrine of sovereign grace. She doesn’t dispute the fact

that God has a certain purpose for a certain group, and a certain purpose for another group. She admits she’s a dog, but she argues from his own words for a crumb.

Now a crumb is going to turn out to be pretty big, because it’s the healing of her daughter, and her own salvation and the reward of faith is which the Lord says, “O woman great is thy faith,” for a crumb from the God of Israel is great, let me assure you.

Now she also says, “Truth, Lord yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” Did you notice that word master? She affirms in that that the Gentiles have an inferior place so far as the order of development in the messianic promises are concerned, and she submissively accepts the Gentile place.

I know of some Christians to whom the salvation of the Jew and the giving of them the messianic promises is a crow that they can hardly even as Christians take. How terrible that is. How terrible that is. We all know that the Jews are not a pleasant people. They’re almost as bad as the Gentiles. We’re human beings. Abraham was a Gentile at one time. Don’t you see this is the human race we’re talking about. Their masters. I like that submission, and coming from a woman too, what a beautiful picture.

Now the final thing that she argues is that she says, truth Lord, yet the doggies eat, the doggies do eat. She says they eat, and they eat from the table of the children. What is she arguing? She’s arguing the plan of Salvation. She’s arguing the fact that the promises made to Israel have Gentile application, ultimately. You may remember the Psalmist praying in Psalm 67 something like this, “O Lord bless us, O Lord save us, O Lord deliver us, that thy saving health may be known by the the nations.” They recognized in the Old Testament that the salvation of Israel was the key and the clue to worldwide blessing.

Well, I’m not surprised then to read that Luther says, “She catches him in his own words.” One of the modern commentators has said, “She has done what none other could do, namely entangle the Savior in his own talk. She has flung the sack of his promises at his feet, and he cannot step over it.” And so she’s argued from the little clues and hints that he has given that she does have



a place, and the Lord Jesus is overcome in his humanity. “O woman, great is thy faith.” O woman, great is thy faith.

What a beautiful illustration of belief in the heart bringing the confession that brings salvation to the soul. It is the expression of something God has wrought in her heart. Campbell Morgan has said, “Against prejudice she came, against silence she persevered, against exclusion she proceeded, against rebuff she won.” And Matthew Henry said, “Great believers have what they will.” And he said be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

Many you have heard me quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon many times, because I do like to read Mr. Spurgeon’s sermons. Spurgeon was the grandson of a preacher. That’s one of the reasons he was such a great preacher himself. His father was a very godly man. His grandfather was a very godly preacher. And he used to tell of an incident about his grandfather, when his grandfather had a large family and a very small income. Many children, very little income. He loved to preach the gospel. He continued to preach the gospel, but he had such little income that he had to have a little farm. And he had a little farm, and he had one cow which furnished all the milk for his many children.

I noticed just a few days ago a notice in the paper of the death of a well-known doctor in our community who used to make house calls upon our children. I can still remember it. He was one of the last of the house calling doctors, and a great man he was. We often sat down with him and spoke about our children to whom he ministered when we were going through the seminary. I noticed that he died with five sons and six daughters. A very prominent man in this city. And I noticed too that three or four of his sons were Lutheran ministers. He was a Lutheran, a very godly Lutheran.

Mr. Spurgeon’s grandfather was a man like that, and one day, the cow died, and his wife came to him and said, “God has promised to supply all of our needs but the cow is gone. Now how is God going to provide for the children now?” And Mr. Spurgeon said, “Why the Lord is able to give us 50 cows if he wants to.”

And that very day a group of Christians were meeting in London and as a committee were dispensing funds for poor ministers, and they went down the list and they came to the end, they had ministered to everybody, but they had five pounds left over, and someone spoke up and said, you know there is a Mr. Spurgeon who lives over in Essex, and he is a very godly man and he is a poor preacher, we ought to give him the five dollars.

And someone else said, I know that man, I'd be embarrassed to give him only five pounds. Let's give him 10. So they said all right, and someone else spoke up and said, I'd be embarrassed to give him 10. I'll give five more if somebody else will give five. So they got together 20 pounds, which was quite a bit of money in those days, and they sent it to him, and the next day or so he got the letter and when he opened it up and he saw the 20 pounds fall out, turned to his wife and said, “Now mother, can't you trust God for an old cow?”

Well our time is gone and I only want to remind you of one thing or two things. Of course, the importance of understanding the plan of the ages, otherwise we shall not understand an incident like this, and then second, the importance of coming to him for hope and health now.

I imagine, I am just going to imagine just for a sentence or two. I imagine that this woman was a heathen woman and if she was, she worshiped Astarte. Now this goddess was simply a heathen goddess, and she had been a worshiper of Astarte and all that went with this. And everything went wonderfully until the time came when trouble came to her home and when she appealed to her goddess, nothing happened. You see, the gods of the world, the gods of the pagans are fine until the need for a real God comes, and then there is no help.

You may be trusting in naturalism, materialism, the many different forms of humanism that exist today, but let me assure you that when the time of deep trouble comes, they will not help. There is only one who helps, and that is the one who has responded to the woman's faith and has said, “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” When the demons come, only the Son of God can help.

If you are here today and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus, I remind you that he died for sinners, and if the Holy Spirit has brought you to the conviction that you are a sinner, you're

“Dogged Faith Triumphant over the Silent Messiah” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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a candidate for the salvation that he offers. May God help you to come to the first great act of faith, and may that lead on to other acts and finally the great final act by which you are ushered into the presence of the Lord for eternity. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be unto all who love him in sincerity.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.