

A Gentile Woman Persists in Faith Matthew 15:21-31

by David Servant

The sermon explores the story of a Gentile woman's persistent faith and Jesus' compassionate response, emphasizing the importance of unwavering belief in God's love and healing power.

Scripture: Psalm 34:17, Matthew 15:28, Matthew 15:30, Mark 9:24, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:6

Topics: "Faith And Persistence", "Gods Compassion"

Description

David Servant delves into the complex story of Jesus interacting with a Gentile woman, exploring various interpretations of His actions. Some believe Jesus was teaching His disciples a lesson by initially appearing prejudiced, while others think He was testing the woman's faith. Despite differing views, the ultimate display of Jesus' compassion and healing power towards the woman's daughter reveals God's love for all. The story challenges us to persist in faith, like the Gentile woman, even when faced with discouragement or apparent obstacles, as God's will for healing is evident in His compassion for all who come to Him.

Transcript

This first story has always been a difficult one to fully understand, because Jesus doesn't act like we'd expect Him to act. We view Him as always kind, compassionate and impartial, but He seems to be uncaring and prejudiced as He relates to this Gentile woman. So how are we to interpret this story?

Some believe that Jesus, in order to teach His disciples a lesson, was at first pretending to act like the average prejudiced Jew. That may well be the correct interpretation, because Jesus did ultimately grant the woman her request, revealing His true compassion for her and her daughter.

Others have suggested that Jesus was simply testing her faith, again by acting as if He didn't want to heal her daughter. Would she persist in believing or would she give up? Was her faith genuine?

And others think that Jesus was being honest in everything He said to her. That is, He was truly sent by His Father to help only the lost people of Israel, and not Gentiles.

This third interpretation is difficult for me to accept for several reasons. First, because if Jesus was sent by His Father to help only the lost people of Israel and not the Gentiles, why then did He apparently disobey

His Father by ultimately healing the woman's daughter? Second, why did He help other Gentiles, such as the Roman centurion? Third, why did He die for the sins of every Gentile in the entire world?

Beyond that, Jesus apparently referred to the woman as a dog, a common, derogatory term that prideful Jews used to describe Gentiles. It's difficult for me to believe that Jesus really felt this woman was worthy of such a demeaning title and more undeserving than Jews of receiving God's help. I can't believe that Jesus didn't feel as much compassion for her plight as He did for anyone else's plight, just because she was a Gentile. Chances are that practically every family reading this devotional is a Gentile family. Is this how Jesus feels about us?

For these reasons, I prefer a combination of the first two possible interpretations. Jesus' own disciples expressed no concern for this poor woman, and requested that Jesus send her away, complaining that her begging was bothering them. This could hardly be considered a commendable action on their part. Christian virtue requires a higher standard than that. So perhaps Jesus wanted to teach them a lesson about God's love of non-Jewish people. I wonder if Jesus was looking right at them when He pronounced the woman's daughter healed. I wonder what they were thinking when He did!

Also, we note that Jesus commended the Gentile woman for her great faith, proven by her persistence, and then immediately announced that her daughter was healed. No one can rightfully say that her faith wasn't severely tested, as it seems that even Jesus tried to discourage her. But her persistent faith paid off.

Finally, perhaps there was more to this story than what we realize. Possibly Jesus knew something about this Gentile woman's private life that truly disqualified her from having any right to approach Him. She may have been a devoted idol-worshipper. Perhaps it was some very perverted and sinful thing she did that provided an avenue for her daughter to become demon-possessed. By ignoring her, Jesus may have been initially sending her a message of her need of repentance.

Regardless of what we don't understand about this incident, the ending makes perfect sense. Jesus, the compassionate Son of God, healed the woman's daughter instantly! God's love is so great!

Q. What do you think would have happened if the Gentile woman had not persisted in faith?

A. Her daughter would not have been healed, even though her healing was obviously God's will. As I've said previously, proud people don't like to hear such things, because they don't want to take responsibility for their unbelief and would rather blame God for their prayers that have gone unanswered. Most of us, like Jesus' twelve disciples, have doubted and failed in our faith. Let's be humble enough to accept responsibility, and wise enough to continue building our faith by feeding it with God's Word and exercising it. Our faith can grow! And praise God that, although He may be disappointed in our lack of faith, He never condemns us for it.

Q. When Jesus returned to Galilee, "a vast crowd brought him the lame, blind, crippled, mute, and many others with physical difficulties, and they laid them before Jesus" (Matthew 15:30). Matthew wrote that Jesus "healed them all" (Matthew 15:30). What does this teach us about God's will for healing?

A. It teaches us that God loves every sick person and it is His will to heal them all. If you had been lame, blind, crippled or mute and had been brought to Jesus that day, you would have been healed. Jesus didn't say to anyone, "I'm sorry, but it is not God's will for everyone to be healed, so I have to turn you away." No,

everyone who came requesting healing was healed. Thus, it is certainly safe to assume that seriously ill people who didn't come that day could have been healed if they would have come. But because they didn't believe, they didn't come, and they weren't healed, even though it was God's will for them to be healed.

Application: There is no doubt that our faith is sometimes tested. What we are believing for often doesn't seem as if it's going to come to pass. But we should be encouraged by the Gentile woman we read about today. Her persistence paid off, and so will ours.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-servant/a-gentile-woman-persists-in-faith-matthew-1521-31/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net