

# Day 15, Matthew 15

by David Servant

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*Jesus teaches that love for God produces a love for His Word and that there is an undeniable relationship between holiness and answered prayer.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 15:29, Matthew 15:4-32, 1 John 3:22

**Topics:** "Honoring Parents", "Great Faith"

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## Description

David Servant preaches on the importance of honoring parents by providing for their needs in old age, contrasting it with the Pharisees' tradition of neglecting this duty for the sake of their own rules. He warns against church leaders who prioritize man-made doctrines over God's Word, emphasizing that true love for God leads to a love for His commands. Drawing from the story of the Syrophenician woman, he highlights the transformation that comes from humility and persistence in seeking Jesus, ultimately leading to answered prayers and commendation for great faith.

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## Transcript

According to Jesus, honoring one's father and mother could involve providing for their needs in their old age. Keep in mind that, even today, most people around the world depend on their children to take care of them in their old age, as saving money for retirement is impossible in poor nations. It was in this context that the Pharisees taught that one was not obligated to take care of his parents if he had given his money to God. (We can't help but wonder if "giving to God" was the same as "giving to the Pharisees.") So they invalidated God's commandment for the sake of their tradition.

When leaders in the church today teach "as their doctrines the precepts of men" (15:9), it similarly reveals that their hearts are far away from God, as Jesus said (15:8). Love for God produces a love for His Word, and neither traditions, "new revelations," or pop psychology (which all enamor large segments of the modern church) have any attraction to the lover of God. They are, in fact, repulsive to him, because they are actually an assault on the One whom they love so much.

Modern Pharisees, just like their ancient counterparts, are often fixated on their petty practices while ignoring what is truly important, and they are quick to separate themselves from anyone who is not similarly obsessed. While multitudes are starving and millions wait to hear the gospel for the first time, you'll find them deriding those who don't subscribe to their peculiarities. We read today that in Jesus' time, the big concern of the Pharisees and scribes was that His disciples were defiling themselves by eating with unwashed hands, a rule not exactly found among the Ten Commandments!

The Syrophenician woman who came to Jesus on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter was a descendant of the Canaanites, whom God had commanded the Israelites of Joshua's day to exterminate, and for justifiable reasons. They had a reputation for idolatry, child sacrifice, gross sexual perversion, and a hardness of heart that put them beyond redemption. With such a legacy, it is quite possible that the descendants of those who survived were not exactly paragons of virtue, and Jesus' treatment of the Syrophenician woman seems to verify this. Many are troubled by His treatment of her, but don't forget that the New Testament declares that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). Jesus was God and played the part perfectly. He ignored the initial cries of the Syrophenician, just as God ignores the prayers of unrepentant sinners.

What is missed by readers is how this desperate Syrophenician woman was changed as she pursued her daughter's deliverance. When Jesus completely ignored her at first, even as she kept shouting at Him, what message did that send to her? When His disciples asked that she be sent away, He declared that He was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel, another commentary on her unworthy status. She then came to Him and bowed before Him. He told her in so many words that she was an undeserving dog! She didn't debate Him, but rather begged for crumbs, confessing Him as her master. Only then did Jesus grant her request and commend her for her great faith. She had been humbled and repented. (I've written more extensively on this story here.

Let us learn a lesson from this story about Jesus. His Word tells us, "The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29). The apostle John similarly penned, "Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22; see also Prov. 28:9; Ps. 66:18). There is an undeniable relationship between holiness and answered prayer.

For the second time in Matthew's Gospel we read of Jesus feeding thousands of hungry people. Take note they were not just physically hungry, but also very spiritually hungry. God meets the needs of those who seek Him.

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