

The Canaanite Woman - Great Faith

by Joel Beeke

The sermon emphasizes the importance of growing in mature faith, which is nurtured through trials and absences of God, and is refined and purified through God's silence.

Duration: 1:14:10

Scripture: Job 23:3

Topics: "Genuine Repentance", "Eternal Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a beggar who comes to his family's door asking for a sandwich. Initially, the speaker's grandmother tells him to tell the beggar that they are just as poor as he is. However, when the beggar persists, the speaker's grandmother realizes that he is a genuine beggar and gives him a whole sandwich. The speaker then relates this story to how God tests the authenticity of spiritual beggars. He emphasizes the importance of genuine repentance and belief in the gospel, rather than being consumed by worldly possessions. The sermon concludes with a reminder that we all have one soul to gain or lose in eternity.

Transcript

Matthew 15, 21. Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to him saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David.

My daughter is severely demon-possessed. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and urged him saying, Send her away, for she cries out after us.

But he answered and said, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she came and worshipped him saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.

And she said, True Lord. Yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith.

Let it be to you as you desire. And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Matthew 15, verse 28, O woman, great is thy faith.

Dear friends, we need the simplicity of true saving faith as we have seen in the life of Adam and Eve. We need the submissiveness of true saving faith as we have seen in the life of the Shunammite woman. But we also need great faith, growing faith, mature faith, as we see in the life of the Canaanite woman.

The subject before us this morning, growing in faith, mature faith, great faith, is a very, very important one. And I believe the church needs this subject more than ever before. And I am burdened with it.

I'm burdened with it in my own life. I'm burdened with it in my church and for the worldwide kingdom of God. I believe we have a major problem on our hands.

We ask people how they became converted. That's well and good. It's wonderful to hear.

But too often the testimony stops after the initial encounter with Jesus Christ. And just as so many people take their husbands and wives for granted, once they walk back down the marriage church, once they walk back down the aisle after they're married and they live the way they want to live in the married state, so far too many Christians stop growing early on in their marriage relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. When couples come to me for marital counseling, one of the first questions I ask them is, do you really want a better marriage? And I ask them that question because many people come for help who don't want help.

They come because they want self-vindication. They come because they want to dump on you all that is wrong with their marital partner. And so if they say, yes, I really want a better marriage, I say to them, how much better? On a scale of one to ten, what kind of a marriage do you want? Do you want a five? Do you want a seven? Do you want a ten? What are you aiming for? And if they say, I want a ten.

I want an excellent marriage. Then I say, I think we can work together. Let's work at it together.

And then I ask them, on a scale of one to ten, what was the best your marriage ever was? And almost inevitably they'll say, well, it began as a ten. And I'll say, no matter how good it was, if you really want a better marriage, you can bring it back at least to the point where it once was with God's help. So it is, friends, in spiritual life.

The great problem of most Christians today is this horrible thing that God hates that we call backsliding. That we take God for granted. That we grow stagnant.

We settle in our leaves and we don't grow in grace. And we don't fight the spiritual warfare. And we come to conferences and sermons and other events of the means of grace seeking self-vindication rather than divine growth and divine conviction.

And we are not truly desirous and yearning to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we forget that there are more than 300 biblical imperatives commanding us to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. What would you think of a child that wasn't growing in maturity? A child of two years of age that doesn't want you, Mom, beyond her sight, is a child you understand.

But if that child is 12 years old and can't bear for you to leave their presence, you would say something is wrong with the growth of that child. That child hasn't learned to trust Me. And so it is in spiritual life.

We have to learn to walk by faith. And we learn to grow in faith through trials, through absences of God, through all the ups and downs of His leading providentially in our lives. And the question I lay before you

this morning is, are you growing in faith? But how? How do you grow in faith? Well, the Lord has to do that, of course.

Yes, He does that by His Spirit, through His Word. But we must be using the Word. We must be begging for the presence of His Spirit.

And we must be yearning for lives that grow and reflect mature faith. Mature faith is such a blessing. One mature Christian, an old minister used to say in our congregations, is worth a hundred immature Christians.

Because you see, their lives speak. And they make others jealous of their spiritual life. And they set a higher tone, a higher level of spirituality for the congregation and for other believers to emulate.

And they also help save us from that bane of easy-believism that permeates and infests the church of our day. And beside that, they also foster more fellowship in the church, don't they? When you see advanced, growing, mature Christians, they're talking about Jesus Christ. They're communing with one another.

They're growing in grace. Iron is sharpening iron. In our Dutch background, there was often in days past what they called gezelschaps, fellowships.

God's people would meet together. They'd talk together about the ways of God. They'd help each other along in their spiritual pilgrimage.

And the center of their conversation would be Jesus Christ and Him crucified and Jesus Christ and Him exalted. And oh, how we need such people today. And so this is my burden.

My burden is that I'm so grateful that there are many newborn Christians. But where are the Aquilas and Priscilla's that are showing the newborns a better way? The way to walk in Christ. The way to live soli Deo gloria and in Coram Deo.

Where are those fathers and mothers in Israel? And I'm speaking not just of ministers or of men, but also of women. What great mothers in Israel there have been in ages past. Many of them have fed my soul greatly with their spirituality.

Think only of the 19th century. The wonderful books that some women produced. Think of Ruth Bryan's letters or Sarah Hawkins or Mary Winslow or Anne Dutton.

These women were renowned for their godliness, for the maturity of their faith, for the profound levels of communion with God they reached. And their lives were contagious. And we can say of them as we can say of this Canaanite woman, O women, great was thy faith.

My first congregation, there was an old woman by the name of Mrs. de Bunt. She lived to be in her upper 90s. Any minister that came to town went to see her.

She was so savory. Everything that dropped from her lips seemed to honor the Lord Jesus. And when you were in her presence, you felt you were in the presence of God.

She was a woman great in faith. What a support she was for a minister of the Gospel. I'll never forget coming to her on a Monday morning.

She said, how did it go for you yesterday, Pastor? And I said, well, it was the strangest thing. I said, when I began to preach, I was sweating. I couldn't do it.

It was all my own work. And I said, halfway through the sermon, the Lord came, took it over for me. And I could hardly keep up with Him.

One sentence after another was pulled from my mouth. Oh, she said, I know. I know.

She said, I heard you struggling. She was at home. She was listening over the church phone.

She was too old to come to church. She said, I heard you struggling. And I turned off the church phone and I went into a side room.

And I spent the rest of the sermon praying for you, that the Spirit might descend upon you. And she said, I knew He would come. I had contact with God.

I knew He would answer my prayer. Oh, woman, great is thy faith. Now, we're not going to all be like Mrs. DeBont.

But if you're a Christian, you want your faith to grow, don't you? Don't you want a ten relationship with the Lord? If you love Him, if you're married to Him? And why are we settling for such small levels of faith? Why are we taking our Lord for granted? Why aren't we striving for greater faith, more maturity, closer relationship with Him? Why aren't we putting away this world's shallow, miserable, rotten, stifling entertainment and taking up our Bibles and searching for our Savior in the Bible? Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me. Oh, let us love our Savior. Let us seek to know Him better.

And let us pray that we may be men and women of faith whose lives may be contagious, even if we are not great ones in the earth. Even if others will not look at us and say, well, there's an unusually great person in faith. Surely, even if we bring forth fruit thirtyfold rather than sixty or a hundredfold, surely we ought to be growing.

Surely we ought to be striving to know our Savior better. Well, that's my burden. And I want to share with you.

It's my burden for myself as well. And I want to share with you how God matures a person's faith from this biblical, this third biblical portrait I set before you this morning, the Canaanite woman and Jesus dealings with her. And so our theme really this morning is the church's present need, the need for mature faith.

And I want to look with you at three ways in which the Lord Jesus matures this woman's faith. First, he does so by his apparent silence. Verse 23, but the first, but he answered her, not a word.

Secondly, he matures her faith by his apparent rejection. Verse 24, but second, but he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And thirdly, he matures her faith through his apparent insult.

Verse 26, but he answered and said, it is not fitting to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. So the need for mature faith and we will see that faith matured through apparent silence, apparent rejection and apparent insult. This is a remarkable story.

If you consider how this woman came to Jesus by true faith, we'll see that momentarily. To whom she came to Jesus himself, where she came at his very feet, the urgency of her coming. She came crying out, Lord, son of David, Lord, son of David.

Greek is in the in the in the progressive tense, repetitive tense, son of David, son of David, my daughter, my daughter's grievously vexed with the devil over and over the streets, ringing with her cries. Surely the Lord Jesus is going to answer this beggar right away. Don't you think hadn't she heard in her own land, in her own foreign land, that he hears the cries of beggars, that he heals all who are brought to him, that he will gather little lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and he will answer before we call? Surely Jesus will be ready to answer this woman immediately and send her on her way rejoicing.

But he answered her. Not a word. What a contrast.

A crying woman and a silent Jesus. What an objection. What fodder for doubt.

Didn't the people say to her before she left home, no doubt, why are you going to Jesus of Nazareth? He's the Jewish Messiah. He will have nothing to do with you, the Canaanite, the foreigner, the Syrophenician, the outcast. She rejects that advice.

She comes to Jesus and he answers her. Not a word. Now you would think that this woman would return home and say, it's of no use for me to go to Jesus.

And maybe some of you have done just that. You've gone to him in prayer and you've turned back. But this woman doesn't turn back.

And why not? Because true saving faith cannot turn back from God. True saving faith must have God. God is its object.

Jesus Christ is the object and the subject. Jesus Christ is the noun and the verb and the adjective and the adjective and the adverb of true saving faith and the direct object as well. He is everything and she cannot do without him.

Even silence won't send her away. You too have faced the silence of God, haven't you? Every true Christian who lives by faith knows at least two things in their spiritual pilgrimage. They know the presence of God, the joy of communion with God, but they also know the sorrow of a silent and an absent God.

So often as Christians, we act like God is always at our fingertips and we always have communion with him. But if you're honest and I'm honest, there are many a time, aren't there, when we feel the silence of God and what a burden that silence can be. Samuel Rutherford said, the silence of Jesus Christ is the bitterest ingredient the Christian has to drink in his cup of sorrow.

And elsewhere, Rutherford said, the silence of my God is hell for my soul. Do you know that burden of silence? The burden of the bride. I awake and sought my bridegroom and went about the streets of the city saying, saw you him whom my soul loveth.

I sought him, but could not find him. I called him, but he gave me no answer. But the cry of Jeremiah, when I cry and shout, the Lord shut out my prayer, thou hast covered thyself with a cloud that our prayers should not pass through.

God comes and he puts some affliction upon you and you cry to him, but the heavens are as copper and the earth is as desert and you cannot reach him. You cannot gain hold of him. You cannot, as the old Scottish divines used to say, pray until you pray through and lay hold of God.

You try to obey him. You try to obey his mandate in Isaiah when he says, no man stirreth up himself to take hold of me, but you can't take hold of him. You can't reach him.

You cry and you shout and you sigh and you groan and you whisper, but you can't get beyond the ceiling. That's deafening silence. Silence that multiplies the doubts within.

Silence that influences you to cry out with a psalmist as we sing in our Psalter in America, with anguish as from piercing sword, reproach of bitter foes I hear, while day by day with taunting word, where is thy God? The scoffer is sneer. One day when Martin Luther left his home, he said to his dear wife, Katie, God is so silent to me, I think he's dead. And that night when he came back from work, the shades were drawn and Luther hastened his step and broke through the door and said, Katie, who died? She said, you said this morning, God died.

And God used that to break Luther's bondage that particular moment. But you see, don't you know times when it seems that God is so silent that the doubts are multiplied and you scarcely know how to believe? You scarcely know how to go on. And you groan.

Groaning is unutterable. But he seems to hold himself at bay and you wonder why. You think of days gone by.

He was so close. He was so real. He was more real than the chairs you're sitting on.

And you could say the most real thing in all the world is God. But now, so far away, why does God do that? Why is God sometimes silent to His people? That's a very good question. And of course, we don't know all the answers to that question, do we? Because we're mere finite man.

God is the living, the sovereign God. God, you see, looks at the entire puzzle, the entire fabric of our lives at any given moment. He sees all the one thousand pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that make up our lives.

We see only one or two pieces at a time. And so we never know all the reasons why. And that's all right, because God is God.

But there are two reasons, two big pieces in that jigsaw puzzle that we do know. Two reasons that are most consistent as to why God is sometimes so strangely silent in our lives. For the first, let me turn you to John 11, if you'll turn with me, please, to John 11.

There we read that Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. He delighted to stay in their home. You know that, of course.

And Lazarus became very sick and they sent a messenger to Jesus. He said, Lord, verse three, John 11, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. Now look at verse six.

When he heard, therefore, that Lazarus was sick, Jesus abode two days still in the same place where he was. Does that strike you as strange? If I got a call as soon as I stepped off this podium that my wife was sick unto death, I'd get on the next plane and I'd say it was very wonderful to be here, friends, but I have to go right away. My wife is sick unto death.

I love her and I want to be with her. And you would understand, wouldn't you? How strange. He loves her, loves Lazarus, and he stays where he is two days.

Why? Well, how would Jesus get more glory through healing a sick Lazarus? Or through raising a dead Lazarus? And how does Jesus get more glory in our lives? Is it always by coming and answering our prayers right away? Or is it not sometimes by bringing us to our own wit's end in our prayers and even answering our prayers when they've been reduced to ashes? And from out of the ashes, he revives the flame of hope and faith and love and gives his answer when we least expect it. You see, Jesus waited to get glory. That's what it says, verse 4. This sickness is not unto death.

That's not the purpose of it. That's not the end of it. But for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

And so God is often silent in our lives, John is telling us, so that God gets the glory. Now think about it this way. If God answered all your prayers right away, who would you give the glory to? We'd end in ourselves, wouldn't we? We'd end in our prayerfulness.

But God knows how to train us. He knows how to guide us. He knows how to lead us in such a way that him that glorieth shall glory in the Lord.

And that often means silence. And through those silences, God will teach us many lessons. And that brings me to the second reason.

The second reason God is often silent is to mature and to refine and purify our faith. There was once a great 19th century musician and he was asked why his playing of his instrument was so popular and made so much impression. And he said, it's the pauses, it's the silences.

Recently, we had a well-known minister in our church who heard another minister preach. He said to me afterward, the sermon was all right. He said, it was good, but there wasn't enough white space on the page.

Have you ever picked up a book that is written from end to end, no margin? You've got to go like this to read the center. And it's just it's not attractive. There's no white space.

You see, we function with white spaces when we read. We function with pauses in our lives. We're wired in such a way that we need pauses.

We need reflections. We need times of silence. And what God does with us in times of silence, you see, is He gets us to reflect and to meditate.

He brings us into dark tunnels where we give pause and consider His ways. And I can't explain how He does it. But I do know what Peter says.

I do know that in dark times in our lives of silence, what God is doing, even as He seems to push me away with one hand, He is drawing me, as Peter says, silently with strength in the inner soul with the other hand so that somehow when I come out of that tunnel of affliction and He speaks again with clarity and power in my life, somehow my faith is stronger than it was when I went into the tunnel in the first place. He refines and purifies faith through silence. I believe that I have learned more about God in my life in times of His silence than I have in the times when He hasn't been silent.

In times of silence, I've learned more about His sovereignty, His holiness, His majesty. Yes, His grace too. In times of silence, I learned the wonder that I'm not destroyed.

In times of silence, I reflect on God and I reflect on myself. You see, our text doesn't say this morning, Jesus didn't hear a word. It said He didn't answer a word.

And our problem when God is silent is we think He doesn't hear us. But He hears us. But He's waiting to be gracious.

And He's guiding even our silences to our spiritual maturation and to His own glory. And so Jesus begins to teach this woman. You see, the problem with this woman was she came to Jesus about her daughter.

Have you ever noticed in the Gospels when someone came to Jesus with one of their children, Jesus always had a way of kind of arresting that person's attention, be it the father of the demoniac or be it this woman or others as well, and dealing with the parent. You see, and when Jesus is silent, she says, my daughter is demon possessed. Help my daughter, Lord.

And Jesus is silent. He's beginning to work with the woman, the mother. That's so important.

I've often thought that one reason why the Lord gives us children is to deal with us, because where is the parent who can? Thank God we may not have demon possessed children, but where is the parent who can raise a child rightly? Have you ever met a single parent who says, I know how to do it? The only parent who knows how to do it is the one who's never had a child yet. And so God empties us of ourselves in our parenting. And he gives us times of silence, even in our parenting, that we begin to reflect on who we are when we see the sins of our children, mirroring our own weaknesses and infirmities and sins.

We learn in those silences, don't we? A great deal. So God begins to deal with this woman. See, she comes with true saving faith, doesn't she? She says, O Lord, not Jesus of Nazareth, as she no doubt had been told that he was.

But O Lord, Son of David. She comes with a Messiah title, Son of David on her lips. She has some knowledge.

The Holy Spirit has taught her something of the Lord Jesus Christ and who he is. It's wonderful. But Jesus says, I want to deal with you now, woman.

I want your faith to grow and I will begin to to mature your faith through this reflective. But then Jesus goes on. And surprisingly.

Matures are further through, secondly, apparent rejection. Look at verse 23b, his disciples came and besought him, saying, send her away, for she cries after us. What miserable disciples they were in this case, terrible pastors, selfish.

Proud. Not discerning. First of all, she wasn't she wasn't crying after the disciples.

She was crying after Jesus. They were so self-centered, they thought she was crying after them. How dreadful as ministers, how dreadfully easily we can become self-centered and forget who people are really crying after when they come to us for help.

But what a poor example of indifference. Well, you can argue, of course, on behalf of the disciples that Jesus and the disciples had just come from near Jerusalem, where Jesus' life had been threatened. He had managed to escape.

And now they were in the northern border of Israel. And here this woman is letting the streets be filled with the noise of her crying. And they are afraid that they're going to be arrested and the ministry is going to be curtailed and shut down.

Well, I suppose that's possible. But the bottom line, you see, is this, that these men are being selfish and indifferent and they don't care for this woman's soul. But my question is, why would Jesus let his own disciples treat this woman this way? She's just a poor little babe in grace.

And here she gets this rigorous treatment of rejection. I'll tell you why. At least I know one piece of this jigsaw puzzle.

God has to teach this woman to lose all dependency on men, even ministers, so that she may learn to live out of Jesus alone. That's growth in grace, isn't it? Isn't that growth in faith? When I was converted, I woke my dad up in the middle of the night, three o'clock in the morning to tell him what happened. I told him the whole thing.

I told him with tears flowing and my whole heart, I unveiled everything to him. I made myself totally vulnerable to him. And my dad responded.

He said, I only know of a few people in the whole church that have experiences like that, and they're much older than you are. It was like a cold shower. He didn't believe me.

My own dad. You think that was hard? For two weeks, I was in great confusion of mind. And then I read a statement in some old divine that said, when we are converted off and those closest to us reject us so that we learn to lean on God alone.

And I had my answer. And I've had to learn that lesson a thousand times in my life. You see, this woman is being taught even through the rejection of the disciples.

While you say that, that's quite obvious. I understand that. But why does Jesus, verse 24, why does Jesus go on and seem to reject her? But second, but now he answered and said, I am not sent.

I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Isn't that mysterious? Here's a woman crying, begging, and Jesus seems to push her away. I'm only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

You're lost. You've got that. You've got at least one qualification, but you're not a sheep and you're not of the house of Israel.

Well, how do we understand this? I think Calvin has it right. Calvin basically says something like this. Christ's priestly work as promised seed and Savior in whom all nations would be blessed must be distinguished from his prophetic work during his own personal ministry, during his sojourn on earth, which was primarily confined to the Jews.

The day would come, of course, when he would suffer and die and be raised again and ascended to heaven and send forth his spirit to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. And Peter and the apostles would bring the prophetic message of Jesus to all men. But that time was not yet,

you see.

Calvin says this. It is as if Jesus warns her that she is acting out of turn by trying to raid the table in the middle of the supper. I am not sent, but into the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

To be rejected by people is hard. But if you're a true Christian, to be rejected by the Lord is harder. To be set outside is a tremendous problem.

You remember how Rahab was set outside in Joshua chapter 6. When they came to deliver her, we read in Joshua 6.23 that she was left outside of the camp of Israel. What a difficult problem. But then, two days later, two verses later, it says, she was brought in.

She dwelleth in Israel even to this day. But that experience of being unworthy to be in God's presence, of being fit to be cast away, of feeling rejected. God can use that, you see, to mature faith also, so that faith casts itself in dependency upon the Lord alone.

That's what happens to this woman. Look at verse 25. You would think now she would go home.

Well, she's not of the house of Israel. It's as plain as day. Woman, return to your home.

No. Then, when she's rejected, then came she and worshipped Him saying, Lord, help me. Then she comes.

She falls at His feet. This is the nature of faith, friends. Faith falls unconditionally at God's feet.

Faith prays on and pleads on when it seems there is no answer and no solution. And when faith wrestles with God, it usually uses the most simple of prayers. Sometimes our shortest and simplest prayers are our very best.

Lord, help me. A two-year-old can pray that prayer. And yet, everything is in it.

Notice the difference between her first prayer and her second prayer. Oh Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with the devil. Lord, help me.

Something's going on, isn't it? Not one word about her daughter in the second prayer. Did she care less about her daughter? Of course not. But now God is dealing with her, you see.

And when God deals with us, friends, if we're worshipping with 1,200 people, it seems to us that God is speaking to me alone. And I learn to cry even in the midst of a crowd. Lord, help me.

I notice the Son of David is dropped. The Messiah title. Now she appeals to Him as Lord of Heaven and Earth.

As that great high priest over all nations. Oh Lord. She doesn't understand all that theology, but the principle is there nonetheless.

Lord, art thou not Lord of Heaven and Earth? Art thou not Lord beyond the boundaries of Israel? Help me. I like to compare this little prayer to a golden necklace. You know, in a necklace, of course, how one link interlinks with another link.

Well, here you've got a three-linked, three-word linkage prayer. You've got that little word, Lord, reaching up into the heavens. The Lord of lords and the King of kings reflected in Jesus.

And you've got that word, me, dropping down into the hell of my own unworthiness. And the word, help, has as a top part of its link, it links into the Lord. Because the Lord is our helper in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it reaches down. Thinking of Samuel Rutherford again, he said, my Lord is my helper who reaches down into the very bottom of hell. And from the very bottom dregs of hell, He links into my soul and lifts me up.

His name is help. Bunyan put it so beautifully. You remember when Christian was lifted out of the slough of Despond by a character named Help.

He's brought out of the slough. Bunyan says in the margin, Help is Jesus. Lord, help me.

I cannot let Thee go, Lord. I need Thee. I must have Thee.

I cannot do without Thee. You know what it means to pray like that. Lord, help me.

Personal, me. Real, urgent, short, but with all your heart. Lord, help me.

We know it was with all her heart because it says, she worshipped Him. She worshipped Him. Saying, Lord, help me.

I'm sure many of you know what a beautiful word the word worship is. Proskuneo. Proskuneo comes from two words.

Prosk means toward. And kuneo means to kiss. To kiss towards.

The idea, of course, is that to worship God means that all my mind and all my affections are merged together and go out towards the object of my worship. Her whole being is centered on Jesus. The Jesus who seems to reject her.

She worships Him in the face of rejection. Lord, help me. It's as if she says, Lord, I'd rather die worshipping at Thy feet than live being away from Thee.

Give me Jesus, else I die. You understand that language? Lord, take anything away from me, but don't take Jesus away. I need Him.

He's my Savior. He's my Lord. He's my friend.

He's my kinsman. He's my elder brother. Well, there's 280 titles and names of Christ in the Bible.

And He's all of them to a believer. She worships Him. Lord, help me.

See, she's growing. She's growing in faith. Well, now you're going to say, of course, the Lord is going to help her now.

But, no, there's one more test. One more sifting. One more purifying process as He matures her in faith.

But, one more but, 26, He answered and said, It is not meat, not fitting, not proper, to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. Well, you say, this is worst of all. Because you know, of course, that in Bible

times, most dogs were wild.

And a wild dog was considered like, in America, it would be anyway, to call someone a dog is like calling someone a pig. Pig is a term of reproach in America. I don't know what animal might be used here, but it's a very unchristian thing to do, isn't it? To call someone a pig or some other beast.

And Jesus? Is this our Savior saying to this woman, It is not meat to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs? Whatever is Jesus doing here? Well, this woman had already faced and confronted and accepted her unworthiness. But now He's dealing with her uncleanness. He's maturing her faith.

You see, when God matures our faith, one thing that faith does is it shows us that there's nothing in us. William Grinnell put it this way, Faith is a two-handed thing. With one hand, it takes everything of what I am and it wipes it out of the way.

And with the other hand, it reaches out and takes everything that Christ is and draws it to the soul. And that's what faith is doing here for this woman. The Lord Jesus is stripping her down.

She's unworthy. She's a Syrophenician. She has no natural rights.

She has no religious rights. She's a Gentile. She has no citizenship rights.

She's a Canaanite. She's unworthy. But now the Lord wants to teach her that she's an unclean and vile unworthy one.

She's a sinner, a wretched sinner. The Lord wants to teach her that she is in herself but a filthy dog. He's not aiming at cruelty here.

He's maturing her faith. And how will she respond? Will she respond like Abner in the Old Testament? Am I a dog's head and angrily walk away? Truth, Lord. I'm a dog.

Luther said, she gave Christ a master stroke, ensnaring Him in His own words. But He was willing to be ensnared. Truth, Lord.

But give me then, if I'm a dog, a dog's portion. I don't ask for the children's bread to sit around the table and have a whole loaf. A few crumbs will do, Lord.

And if an earthly master will slip a few crumbs off of his table, a few of the leftovers to the dogs that dwell below, certainly thou, who art a loving master, will have a little room in thyself to slip a few crumbs over the edge of the Israelitish table into this Canaanitish heart from thy own heart. Truth, Lord, yet. Oh, what a beautiful, beautiful stretch of faith this woman here exercises.

And this is the way, my friends, to wrestle with God. She's a New Testament Jacob saying, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. Truth, Lord, yet.

I say it with utmost reverence. But this woman here is engaging in holy argumentation with the Savior. And there is such a thing as a holy argument with God.

Job came to that place, didn't he, when the Lord was maturing his faith through his troubles. I think you find it in chapter 23, if I'm not mistaken, where he says, Oh, that I knew where I might find him. And then he adds behind that, yes, verse 4, I would order my cause before him and fill my mouth with arguments.

This is a holy wrestling with the Lord, you see. And we need to know more of that today. We need more of that maturity.

We need more to say like Asaph, truth, Lord, I am as a beast before thee, but wilt thou not have mercy upon me? Truth, Lord, with Paul, I am the chief of sinners, but wilt thou not have mercy upon me? So how do you do it? You take God at his own word. That's what this woman did. She took Jesus at his own word.

Because you notice in the first translation that was read, the word little dogs, that's a good translation. Little dogs was used. And you see what was happening in New Testament times for the very first time, Old Testament times, all dogs were wild dogs.

But in New Testament times, people were beginning to bring in the smaller dogs as pets into their home. And those dogs would sit under the table. And when Jesus said, it is not fit to take the children's bread to cast it to little dogs, she takes up that word, little dogs, she sticks her beggar's foot in the door, and she says, Lord, you have called me a little dog.

Well, let me be a little dog under thy table and give me the portion of goods that falls to me. Let me take thee at thy word. So how do you do that today? Well, William Grinnell said, you take the promises of God and in prayer you turn them inside out and bring them back to God again.

You take the promise and you turn it into a petition. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. O Lord, art thou not my shepherd? Lord, fill me with everything I need.

He leadeth me beside green pastures. Lord, lead me into thy Word. You see, you turn His promises, you turn His beautiful Word back to Him again.

God is tender of His own handwriting, said another Puritan. He loves to read His own letters to you. Show Him His handwriting.

You know, in those old books of prayers of ministers of ages past, I've often noticed that really all those prayers are almost just nothing but a string of texts of Scripture put together in a new order, but it's just text after text after text. They're bringing God His own Word. That's the way to argue with God.

Truth, Lord, I am blind, but hast thou not eyes set for the blind? Truth, Lord, I am poor, but wast thou who art rich? Didst thou not become poor that poor sinners may be made rich in thee? Truth, Lord, I am weak, but art thou not the strong one? Truth, Lord, I am unrighteous, but art thou not the Lord our righteousness? Truth, Lord, I am a dog, but dost thou not have crumbs for dogs? When my dad was nine years old, a beggar came to the door one day. And my grandparents were very poor. They lived in a very little home, just a two-room home.

Very small, very poor. They ate mostly from the garden. Grandfather was an immigrant.

The beggar said to my dad, can I have a sandwich? My dad went to my grandmother and said, there's a beggar in the door. He wants a sandwich. My grandmother says, you go back and tell the beggar that we're just as poor as he is.

So my dad went back and he said to the beggar, we're just as poor as you are. We can't give you a sandwich. And he went to close the door, but that beggar, he stuck his foot in the door.

My dad tried to shut the door. He wouldn't go. He looked up at the beggar.

The beggar looked down at him. He said, one slice of bread. Oh, said my grandmother, he's a real beggar. Give him a whole sandwich. That's what God does with spiritual beggars. He tests our authenticity.

In my first congregation, I had a beggar on my door also. And I began to question what he would do with the money. I was prepared to give him money.

I said, what will you do with the money? And he said, what is your business? What I do with that money? And he turned around and walked away. How much did he get? Nothing, of course. John Bunyan writes in his list of sins, you know, that famous list where he confesses his shortcomings before God.

High on that list. He said, my problem is I knock at the door of grace, but once or twice and then leave the Lord alone. How do you feel when you have a salesman come to your door and you go answer the door and he's halfway through the neighborhood by the time you get to the door, you don't call after him, do you? You say, well, he didn't want me very bad.

He just knocked once. A beggar sticks his foot in the door. You've got an unconverted child.

You've got a wandering prodigal. You've been praying for 22 years. Keep your foot in the door.

God is maturing your faith through that beggary. You know what would happen to you if all your children were just beautiful, wonderful, strong, Christian, stalwart sons and daughters of Jesus Christ in the faith? You'd be a proud dad. God's maturing you through your children.

Keep that beggar's foot in the door. Show him his promises. Show him his covenant faithfulness.

Truth, Lord, my son is wandering far away. Truth, Lord, I can't reach him. Truth, Lord, I don't deserve him.

He's converted. I was a bad father. Truth, Lord, I made so many mistakes.

But art thou not the God of the covenant? Bring back this child, Lord. Bring back this child. I come from a Pato Baptist tradition, and I'm not trying to push infant baptism here, but I want to tell you a quick story.

My father and my mother had a very difficult time with one of my sisters for a little while. She was 17 years old. She left home.

They didn't know where she was for three weeks. No idea where she was. You can imagine how they prayed.

And one day my dad went by the church. He was elder for many years, and he had the key to the church. He went in the church.

He went in the very spot. You may say it's mystical. It sounds mystical, but he didn't do it mystically.

He went to the very spot where she was baptized as a baby, and he fell on his face at that point. He said, O God of the covenant, God who has promised to take from her seed and her seed seed and to draw them to thyself, O God, hear our cry. Truth, Lord, I'm an unworthy father, but have mercy upon her child.

Is she not named with thy name? She was baptized. Didst thou not say, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost? O God, confirm thy own name. So he wrestled.

When he got home, my mother met him at the door weeping. She said, our daughter just called. He said, when? The very moment he was wrestling on that church floor.

He called her up. She said, I want to come home, dad. Am I still welcome? It's the beginning of her conversion.

You see, God can use the greatest obstacles, the greatest burdens. God used this demon possessed daughter to cause the mother to grow in grace. And every problem you have, my dear Christian friend, whether it's with a child or whatever it is in your life, with a sickness or whatever it is in your life, God is designing every single affliction in your life to mature you in the faith so that you become a wrestler with God and a beggar who sticks your foot in the door at the throne of grace.

You keep your foot there. God is maturing you through every single. So what do we see in this woman? We see what we began with a few mornings ago.

The three great acts of faith. She had saving knowledge, O Lord, son of David. She had saving assent.

She agreed with who she was and who the Lord was. Truth, Lord, I'm a dog. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table.

Thou art my master, my Lord. And she had trust. Then came she in worship.

She put all her marbles in one basket. Lord, help me, Lord, it is either thee or I perish. That's trust.

Now, this woman, friends, puts us all to shame. Just like Adam and Eve, you remember, they heard so little about Jesus and they believed she heard so little about Jesus. She was a foreigner.

She wasn't in church every week. And yet she believed and she trusted and she persevered and she gained the victory. Finally, Jesus answers her, verse 28, O woman, great is thy faith.

Do you notice how he calls it thy faith? It was really the faith he had given to her. He did all this exercising the faith within her. But what he gives, you see, he gives away.

Thy faith, it's like it's like when I have a birthday, I give money to my wife to give money to my child to go out and get a present for me and the child comes and the child comes to give us a present to me and I say, thank you for your gift. You see, so you see, we bring back to God what he what he gives to us. And God has such a delight in his own work in his own people that he says, it's really yours.

Whatever I give to you, I give away to you. God is no Indian giver. God gives everything.

He gives the best he had his son for the worst he could find sinners like you and me. He gives it all. So he gives to this woman, may I say it this way, two loaves of bread, not crumbs.

He sends her away to her daughter and her daughters may hold from that very hour, the very moment Jesus spoke. Imagine she meets her daughter in her right mind, free of demon possession. And the first thing they talk about, of course, Jesus, the wonderful Savior healed, wondrously healed.

It's as if Jesus says to her, woman, here are the keys. Here are the keys to my storehouse. You can go and you can have what you want.

The text says, O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. How did he trust her? How did he trust her to take anything she wanted? Well, because it was his work in her. And he knew that the thing she wanted most of all was himself.

And when we want Jesus himself most of all, the Lord gives everything to us at his time and in his way. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. My friend, if you wait on God, you will never, never be disappointed.

Young people, Satan, I know Satan is trying to whisper in your hearts that it's not worthwhile to serve the Lord. And I say to you this morning, it is only worthwhile to serve the Lord. It is never worthwhile to serve this poor, perishing, wicked world.

This morning as I was meditating on the promenade on a bench, an old gentleman met me, 90 years old. And he said to me, I was saved when I was 20, 70 years ago. He said, I just can't understand what anyone can see in this world.

He said, I love the Bible. I devour the Bible. I just love that expression.

I devour the Bible after 70 years. I taught myself Hebrew and Greek, he said, when I was 50 years old. And I love the Bible and I search it every day.

Dear young people, to serve the Lord is the most exciting thing of all. You won't get crumbs when you serve the Lord. You'll get full loaves of bread.

The world will give you crumbs. Filthy, polluted, dirty crumbs. Poisonous crumbs that will spoil you and make you sick and bring you to hell.

Don't follow this world. It's so empty, so terribly empty. Follow the Lord.

Perhaps you heard that wonderful story about Richard Cecil, contemporary of John Newton. Richard Cecil was very discouraged. Let me just give you this illustration and then one closing application.

Very discouraged because he was preaching and preaching and preaching and like every preacher experiences, people didn't follow what he was saying. One day he sat in his study window discouraged. He looked out the window and he saw a pig farmer going to market.

And lo and behold, all the pigs were following the pig farmer like faithful disciples walking right behind him to the slaughterhouse. And he followed the pig farmer. He wanted to know how the pig farmer did it.

The pig farmer came out of the slaughterhouse. He said, how do you get pigs to follow you to their own death when I can't get people to follow me to their eternal life? Oh, the pig farmer said, didn't you see what I had in my pockets? Didn't you see that as I walked along, I just dropped a few crumbs now and then of this pig food. And the pigs are so hungry, even for a few crumbs, they'll follow me right to their slaughter.

My friend, I don't ask you just if you're young, I ask you whoever you are, young and old, will you destroy your life for the poor pig food of the prodigal son? For a few drops of it, a few crumbs of it, will you follow it? Will you follow Satan who drops it in your pathway, even to the slaughterhouse of everlasting dereliction and hell? Will you not turn from your evil ways and repent and live and believe the gospel and become a beggar? Oh, there's greater joy in being a non-possessing beggar at the feet of the throne of grace than there is in being a possessive whirlwind with the whole world at your feet. What shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul? You're going to eternity, my friend. You've got

one soul to gain or lose.

I keep quoting Rutherford this morning. Let me do it one more time. He said, if you had a thousand souls, you couldn't afford to give up one of them to the world.

He said, I would want my Savior to have all one thousand of them. Don't risk your one soul. But maybe you have one closing question for me.

This woman was unworthy. This woman was a sinner. How could Jesus bestow all these wonderful things upon her when she was this heathen, Canaanite-ish woman? Well, the answer, my friends, is Christ himself.

How did Christ teach her through his apparent silence? Because Christ faced the real silence before his own father. He faced the closed heaven. He was pushed away not just with one hand and drawn with the other, but pushed away with both hands.

And he cried out in the most awesome, deafening silence the world has ever known, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He cried that out so that you as a believer may never face anything more than apparent silence. You may face the shadow of silence at times, but he endured the substance of it for your sake. And so he shall not be silent forever.

David's prayer will be answered. Be not silent unto me, lest if thou be silent unto me, I become like them that go down into the pit. It will never happen, because Jesus Christ went down into the pit under the silent hand of a heavenly Father.

He faced the real silence. And he faced the real rejection. He was thrust away by his Father in Heaven.

Thrust away by his disciples. Thrust away by the very realm of nature. The sun won't shine upon him.

Thrust away by the demons of hell hanging between earth and heaven. Rejected by all. No friendly eye to look upon him and have mercy upon him.

Total rejection so that you would never be forsaken of God. And that all the rejection you face would be but the shadow to follow in his footsteps, he who endured the substance. And he was insulted like no man ever was.

He was called something worse than a dog. He was called Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. He was mocked.

He was spat upon. If you're the Christ, come down from the cross and save yourself and us. And he could have come down in a moment.

He could have vindicated himself. He could have destroyed all those around the cross. He could have shown his power.

But he stayed on that cross to go on being insulted so that he could take your place. So that all your insults could only be shadows. And that he would bear the substance for you.

And so what does he do? You notice my three points at the beginning were apparent silence, apparent rejection, apparent insult. He is really never silent to his people ultimately. And he never rejects them and

he never insults them.

But he uses these apparent things to lead you to himself. And to mature your faith that you would grow in communion with him with whom you are in union by faith. Lord, increase our faith.

Amen. Let us pray. Oh, great God of heaven, forgive us for settling at such a low ebb in our life of faith.

Forgive us for responding so wrongly to thy silences, thy seeming rejections and insults. Forgive us, Lord, for not pressing on after thee. For not worshiping thee and crying out, Lord, help me.

Forgive us for taking for granted the gospel. Oh, God, don't don't allow us to become gospel hardened and heaven hardened and law hardened and hell hardened. Well, let the great truths of eternity and of thy son and of thy gospel bind themselves upon us.

Save us from ourselves and save us unto thee and cause us to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, God, help me. Help us and have mercy upon us.

In Jesus name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2477.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/joel-beeke/the-canaanite-woman-great-faith/>

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