

Faith of a Canaanite

Key Verse: *“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 whole from that very hour.”*
—Matthew 15:28

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 15:21-28
—Matt. 15:22

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

had entered a region of Galilee near Tyre and Sidon, whose population were mainly Gentiles. There a Greek woman had a daughter who was possessed by a devil. This terrible situation awakened her sensibilities, as well as her faith. (Mark 7:26) She hurried to the place where Jesus was and cried out to him, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

At first Jesus “answered her not a word.” His disciples came to him and said, “send her away; for she crieth after us.” While the disciples were speaking with Jesus the woman again approached him, pleading, “Lord, help me.” He answered, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” (vss. 23-26) We believe the expression “children” was a reference to the Israelites, with “bread” referring to the favor and promises of God given to them. “Dogs,” on the other hand, was a derogatory term used by many Jews when referring to Gentiles, whom they reviled as godless people.

Understanding the metaphorical language, the woman answered, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the

crumbs which fall from their masters' table." (vs. 27) In her answer we see the humility of the woman. She pleaded that as the little house dogs ate of the fragments of bread from the family table thrown them by the children, so she as a Gentile "dog," might be granted her request for the relief of her daughter from the power of the devil. This she did without claiming she was as worthy as one of the Jewish "children" of his mercy and favors.

Jesus was astonished and well pleased by this demonstration of the woman's faith and humility. He answered, "O woman, great is thy faith!" Her request was granted and her daughter was immediately healed.—vs. 28

In God's sight faith is not only indispensable, but precious. Peter stated that the trial of our faith is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth." (I Pet. 1:7) Indeed, we cannot come to God without faith; we cannot abide in his love without faith; we cannot receive day by day his mercies, blessings, and direction except by faith in his promises.—Heb. 6:12; 11:6; II Pet. 1:4

We can only consider ourselves as his children, begotten of the Holy Spirit and heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, as we exercise faith in his promises to this effect. (Gal. 3:14,22,26) Thus we cannot follow the Lord day by day except as we are willing to walk by faith and not by sight, for this is the test which he places upon all of his followers.—II Cor. 5:7

The oppositions of the world, our fallen flesh, and the devil, seem very harmful to us. Yet they are blessings in disguise, as we exercise faith in God's promises that it will be so. (II Thess. 1:4; James 1:2,3; Heb. 12:11) Let us, therefore, be prepared for the heavenly kingdom glories, blessings, and privileges as we continue to exercise the faith which will enable us to profit by each of the various lessons given to us in the school of Christ. ■