

A Portrait of Saving Faith

Matthew

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the fifteenth chapter of Matthew. Matthew 15. We are continuing to look at some passages that have been on my heart for a while. We finished our exposition of Ezra/Nehemiah a couple of weeks ago. And I want to begin a new book, Lord willing in the New Year, New Testament. I go from Old Testament to New Testament to Old Testament to New Testament. It's how we exposit the Word here. And so, since we finished an Old Testament book, we'll be going to a New Testament book. You can pray for me as I am continuing to consider where we are going. I have several in mind that I am weighing and prayerfully considering. And I will definitely value your prayers for that, that the Lord would have us where he wants us to be in the New Year.

But in the meantime, I wanted to share some passages that have really been ministering to me, and some of these have come from the study that we have been doing on Friday mornings with, I have a Bible study on Friday mornings with men who, anyone who wants to come at 6:30 on Friday mornings, we meet here. And we also have a zoom component now since one of the good things about, it came out of the covid situation was that we now know how to use technology a little better. And so, guys that aren't able to join us for whatever reason can join us by zoom. So, if you're interested, I invite you to be a part of that. But we have been studying, the book is the Gospel Mystery of Sanctification. How a Christian really grows in holiness. And anyway, one of the things we have seen is the essential component that is always, just the heartbeat of the Christian life is faith. It's all about faith. It is believing. And the way that you are holy is you believe Jesus to be all that he is. You receive him not only as the Savior from the penalty of sin, the one who delivers you from the eternal wrath of God and brings you into heaven. He's not just the Savior from the penalty of sin. He is also the Savior from the power of sin. He enable you by his great work and your reliance upon him to be holy.

And if you don't receive him as the Savior of both, you will not receive him. He comes as Lord to give us a hunger for holiness as well as to save us from the wrath of God. Well, faith is the key thing that we keep seeing in that study. And some passages that have been especially used I want to spend time in. And so, today we come to Matthew 15:21-28. The story of the Canaanite woman, or the Syrophenician woman, and her great faith.

And the title of the message is “A Portrait of Saving Faith.” A portrait of saving faith. I think that what Jesus is doing in this passage is really, in a way, it’s like an artist drawing out the colors of this woman’s faith and putting them on display for his glory, and her good, and the good of everyone who would ever read these words throughout the time in history of the church. Now, I say that because when we read, we will see that Jesus weighs our perplexing and confusing at first glance. If you’re reading thoughtfully when you read this passage, you should be astounded because how he acts is not how he normally acts in response to a woman who comes to him in great need and who is from the beginning expressing faith. And the ways of God, as so often are the case, are not our ways. His ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He knows what he is doing. He knows best. And what he does in this woman’s life in this moment is he allows her to experience a time of prolonged suspense. There is a sense in which it had to be somewhat painful for her. And yet, he is doing it for her good. It is the great physician applying the particular specific treatment to this particular soul to give her the fullest benefit and also to show his glory.

We come to this passage. And if you have read this in Matthew or Mark, the two gospels that it’s reported in, you find this essential reality of Jesus’s perplexing ways. But what we see in this is a portrait of saving faith. And so, I want us to look at the passage and then begin to work through it. I think we will be here two weeks, Lord willing. This morning, and Lord willing next Sunday.

Matthew 15:21.

“Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.’ But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, ‘Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us!’ But He answered and said, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ And He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ But she said, ‘Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.’ Then Jesus said to her, ‘O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.’ And her daughter was healed at once.”

Let’s go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we come always to your Word in need of grace. Whether we are mindful of it or not, we are completely helpless apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit and your grace at work in our hearts, in our minds, to open us up to the truth of your Word, to apply it to our souls, to produce in us more faith, more repentance, more love for Christ. We ask, Oh Lord, that you would pour out all grace upon us and make our faith more beautiful, more a testimony to your glory. And Father, for those that do not have saving

faith here, Lord, may today be the day that you bring them to a saving relationship to Christ. We pray this in his wonderful name, Amen.

A portrait of saving faith. Or you might say a portrait of genuine faith, that this passage presents to us this reality. And I say a portrait of saving faith or genuine faith, because the New Testament presents to us the reality that there is a common experience of those who hear the gospel, it's not an uncommon or rare thing, but there will be those who hear the gospel and who have a shallow faith that is not genuine. This faith will often be shown to be temporary, a non-genuine faith is temporary. A true faith perseveres to the end. The perseverance of the saints, something the New Testament teaches. We see this in a number of places a variety of ways. That there is such a faith that is ineffectual. It doesn't produce real change. It does not produce holiness. We saw this when we were looking through James and preaching through James a few years ago.

We saw in James 2 makes a point of that true faith is demonstrated in works. You are not saved by works. You are saved by faith alone apart from works. But true faith does not remain alone. It will be accompanied with works over time as the believer grows in his understanding of the gospel, and of the Word of God, and particularly how to walk by faith. This is one of the areas we get tripped up in. Many true believers are tripped up and not producing fruit, because they are not walking by faith. Now there are others that are not genuine believers. But many believers struggle and wrestle because they don't understand what faith really is and how it is to be at the forefront of their lives moment by moment, day by day. We live by faith.

And so we are looking at this subject, a portrait of genuine faith. And as I said, I have used that title because I think Jesus is in a sense painting a portrait. He is like an artist. I will suggest to you that he knows. Now, when you come to a passage like this, and you find something that is perplexing, and a lot of Scripture if you are reading carefully is perplexing. If you're never perplexed, you're not reading thoughtfully. Because God's ways are not our ways, and he does things that don't make sense to us. And so when you read this, and you see this woman comes. She is in great need. Think about all the other people that come to Jesus in great need. Does he treat anyone like this that you can remember in the gospels? I mean, he asks questions sometimes that are not that different than this in a way, but the normal activity of Jesus in response to those who seek him is to grant their request. We see him healing just generously and liberally. When people bring their people with needs to him, he heals them.

But in this circumstance, a woman in great need and great distress comes to him, and he doesn't immediately respond to her. He ignores her. Apparently ignores her. And she keeps on asking for help, so much so that the disciples are bothered by it. It's annoying and embarrassing. This woman is persistently begging for healing, begging for God's grace, and Jesus is not doing anything about it. I think their idea basically is just send her away. Some scholars think they're asking for him to heal her quickly. It's debatable. I don't think so though. I think that they're probably thinking the way that the text is going to encourage us to think is, "Wow, this is a very unlikely candidate for Jesus to minister to anyway."

But she keeps on, and so they then come to him, and the idea is they then are saying, "Please! Lord, do something!" And he basically just answers them, "I am only sent to the lost sheep of Israel." And she persists, and comes down, and throws herself down at his feet, and says, "Lord, help me!"

And he says, "It is not good to take bread that is meant for the children and give it to the dogs." That is stunning. And what is even more stunning is her response. She agrees with him. "Yes, Lord." It's as if she said, "That's right. But even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." What you see in that is a beautiful picture of the faith that the Spirit of God works in the hearts of those who truly belong to him. It is a wonderful portrait. And I suggest to you that not only did he do it for his glory that he might be magnified, that we might be encouraged. He did it for this woman's blessing, and that through this interchange her faith is deepened and strengthened, and her joy is made full. Even though it seems that it is the contrary that is happening.

One of my favorite Puritan authors is a man named Richard Sibbes. He says this. And I want you to think about this. This is all over the Bible. This principle that God works by contraries. This is now Richard Sibbes that is saying this in his book "The Bruised Reed." He says, "God often works by contraries. When he means to give victory, he will allow us to be foiled at first. When he means to give comfort, he will terrify at first. When he means to justify, he will condemn us first. When he means to make us glorious, he will abase us first. A Christian conquers even when he is conquered. When he is conquered by some sins, he gets victory over other more dangerous sins such as spiritual pride and security." I love that.

God does work by contraries. When he means to exalt, he abases. Think about Joseph. You're going to be the ruler over all the people. He goes into slavery. Then he goes into the dungeon. Think about David. You're now my anointed king, and he spends thirteen years running for his life from Saul. Abraham, you're going to be a father of many nations, and he spends twenty-five long years wondering when God will fulfill the promise, his body getting older, and older, and older every day. And so then don't be surprised if he works the same way in your life and my life. He works by contraries. And he does that in this particular circumstance. He means to bless her, and he apparently though is pushing her away. Doesn't it seem like he is just pushing her away? But he is not. And she knows he is not. And that is the beauty and glory of her faith. That against the apparent rejection, she holds onto what she knows to be true.

That's what faith does. Faith believes the promise of God against all other competing evidence. And the reality is the other competing evidence is not in reality compelling, or real, or true. Faith holds onto that which is true. It is not a blind leap in the dark. It is a clear apprehension of the truth of God's Word made known to us. Faith is not, something I said last week, it is not something that you decide for yourself and declare like the world thinks. You just need more faith. Just believe. You determine what you want, and you believe it. That's has nothing to do with Christianity. That makes an individual their own god. You determine what you want. You get it. And how wicked it is that that's in

the church. People use the name of Jesus to make those kinds of ridiculous, blasphemous assertions.

You don't find that in the Bible when you carefully look at the Bible, when you understand it, and when you interpret it accurately. You find that nowhere. God is King. God is Lord. And Jesus shows his lordship even in this circumstance. He is free to do what he wants to do with all of us, because he has created us. And as our redeemer, he has purchased us, and he has purchased this dear woman's soul, though she is in the darkest of dark places. He has purchased her. He has gone there to seek her out. And he is free to act like he hasn't to draw out her faith.

One of our great problems is we spend too much time arguing over the ways of God and accusing him of wrongdoing, which is just absolutely ridiculous. We as sinners have no business even accusing him of anything. If we accuse him of wrongdoing, what we should want is justice immediately means we go to hell now. That's what you and I deserve. Everyone on the planet deserves that. And if we want justice, and we insist on it, that's what we should get. We've rebelled against God. We have. We came out of our mother's wombs rebelling against God. I mean, just think about it. Look at little babies. You can see it in the way they cry. As precious as they are, beautiful as they are, what a treasure, the goodness of God made known in that, but yet marred by sin.

You can hear, it's an amazing a nine month old baby can cry with an intensity that tells you that they're mad. It's not just that they're uncomfortable. It's not like, "I'm a little uncomfortable over here. If somebody could find some time, please, when you have a moment mom." "I want what I want now! I want to be my own god!"

John Street says that they're vipers in diapers. That's what we all are. As you get older you learn how to hide that a little better. You know how to cloak it. You learn how to win friends and influence people. But that whole idea win friends and influence people, what is at the center? You are. You are your own god. You are trying to manipulate everything to get what you want. That is the problem. And as long as that's the case, Christ is not on the throne. If you will not submit to him, you will get your will done in some ways in this life, but you will get your will done for eternity, because the essence of the sinful heart is, "I want my will. I don't want your will done. I don't want to be with you." And God says, "Okay, your will be done forever. Have what you want forever."

But the beauty of the gospel is that Jesus is God's Son who is come into the world on an errand to bring a bride to himself, to save sinners, to transform us from the inside out by the power of his blood, the victory of his cross and resurrection, and to bring us to himself now loving God, now delighting to serve him. Yes, still we have the battle with sin. Still we have the battle with the world. Still we have the battle with the evil one. But what does saving faith look like? This passage begins to unpack that for us so that what we are looking at this morning is the elements of saving faith.

Three, in this passage, three elements of saving faith. We could have more other places, but these are three key elements of saving faith in the passage before us. The first is, and

you're going to see this woman demonstrates these, so the first thing we see is she has, this is the first element, an acute sense of your great need. Genuine saving faith has an acute sense of your great need. This woman knows her need very, very well. She says, "Have mercy on me." She cries out for mercy. She knows that what she needs is God to show mercy to her. She has no claim on anything. She is not saying, "Give me what is mine." She is saying, "Have mercy on me. Don't treat me as I deserve, Lord. Have mercy on me."

"My daughter is cruelly demon possessed." Cruelly demon possessed. Her daughter is controlled, violently controlled by a demon. This is just like last week we saw with the man in Mark's gospel. "I believe. Help my unbelief." His son was demon possessed. Here it's her daughter. And Mark, the companion passage in Mark 7, the same woman is described in Mark 7, we're told that it was a little girl that was demon possessed. Her daughter is a little girl that is under the violent control of an evil spirit. What a horrible estate. Precious little girl that is under the dominion of the evil one in such a way that it is controlling her, and manifesting itself outwardly, and she sees that, and she knows there is nothing she can do about it.

You know, one of the things we have to see to see our great need is we have to understand who we are. And secondly, we have to understand what we are able to do. Who we are and what we can do. She knows who she is. And the text tells us. It makes a great point of telling us. A Canaanite woman from that region. A Canaanite woman. I think it's words chosen by Matthew to confront, he's writing mostly to a Jewish audience. So you look at the way he unfolds the portrait of Christ in the gospels here. We can see he is writing to a Jewish audience, more so than the other three gospel writers. Now, they are all writing with Jews in mind. John particularly seems to be writing with Jews in mind as well, but Mark and Luke seem to be written more with Gentiles as well in the forefront of the author's mind as they write. Matthew seems to be writing almost exclusively to Jewish people, encouraging them to believe in the Messiah that Jesus is truly the Jewish Messiah.

But as he does, one of the things that he does is to show, he's answering one of the objections that his audience has. Now think about this. Matthew is writing in probably the 50's AD, about twenty or twenty-five years or so after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Twenty or twenty-five years after the birth of the church in the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Twenty or twenty-five years after these events. And by this time already, it's become clear that the Jews are by and large rejecting Jesus. As the gospel is going forth, it's going forth, all of the apostles are Jewish. And as you watch the church formed in Acts, as the gospel spreads throughout the Mediterranean world the apostle Paul and his associates always go first where when they go to a new city? The synagogue! They go to a city far away from Israel. They go to the synagogue. There are Jews there. And they take the gospel to the Jews first. But what's happening is more and more and more the churches are swelling with Gentile converts. The Jews are a small portion of all these churches. The overwhelming majority of Jewish people have rejected Christ. They have rejected their Messiah. And so one of the things that Matthew is doing as he writes this is he is helping them understand that reality. How did this happen?

And he shows them basically, this is exactly what was happening in Jesus's ministry. All throughout Jesus's ministry it was just like you're seeing today in your city, in Rome, or in Corinth, or wherever you are. These Jewish believers that he's writing to that aren't yet fully convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus, you're experiencing exactly what Jesus experienced in his ministry. That the Jews by and large rejected him, and Gentiles were the ones who surprisingly demonstrated faith. Think about Matthew's gospel. What's the first thing he talks about after he tells us in chapter 1 he shows Jesus's Jewish pedigree? Remember that's the genealogy of Jesus. He's the Son of Abraham, the Son of David. He's also the Son of God. He tells us about the angel coming to Joseph. Then in chapter 2, what's the next thing? He doesn't tell us about the shepherds. He tells us about the magi. Who are the people that come and worship? There are no Jews there. It's people from a thousand miles away. They're the ones who know what God is doing, and they come and worship.

And then throughout the gospel, he has moments like this where Jesus encounters extraordinary faith. And you know where the extraordinary faith is with the Gentiles! There is another one in this gospel, Matthew 8. He encounters a centurion who says, "Heal my servant." And he tells Jesus, "Don't bother yourself by coming. You could just say the word. I know you can say the word. I am a man under authority like you are, and I say to this man, 'go,' and he goes, and this man, 'come,' and he comes. So I know you only need to say the word, and my servant will be healed."

And Jesus said, the Bible says, "He marveled at his faith and said, 'Behold, I have not found such faith in all of Israel.'" Then he goes on to say that the Son of man is going to bring many people from many directions and have them sit down at Abraham's table, which was always what the Bible said. Way back to Genesis 12 when God called Abraham in verse 3, Genesis 12, God said to Abraham, "Through your seed," that is through your descendants, "through your seed," that's ultimately Christ, "through your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed." The promise had always been to Israel, but not to Israel as a cul-de-sac, but to Israel as a thoroughfare to the world. To Israel through Israel all the families of the earth would be blessed. This was always God's plan.

And you see it again here in our chapter. The one that he marvels, he doesn't say to her, "I have not found such great faith in all Israel." He had found great faith, but he says, "Oh woman, your faith is great." He doesn't comment like that very often. Her faith blessed the Savior. But she knew who she was. She knew she was a Gentile. She knew she was a Canaanite. She knew she was from the region of Tyre and Sidon. She knew she was in the dark. She certainly knew her daughter was under the dominion of darkness, and she is crying out continually. In fact, the text when it says in verse 22, "she began to cry out," I am reading the New American Standard. "She began to cry out, saying," in the Greek actually literally it's, "she was crying out." It's the imperfect tense, which speaks of continuous action in past time.

Normally, the aorist tense speaks of, is the normal past tense, and it speaks of punctiliar action at a point in time. The imperfect emphasizes it's ongoing action. When it says,

“She began to cry out,” she really was crying out. She was continually crying out. In fact, it’s even made more clear by the participle afterwards “saying.” That’s a present tense Greek participle. Remember tense in Greek is not so much about the time of the action. Present is not just about the time. It’s about the kind. The present tense in Greek is an ongoing continuous thing. So you have the imperfect, which emphasizes ongoing, continuous action in past time accompanied by the present tense “saying.” She was crying out. She was continually crying out, continually saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon possessed.” She is going and saying it over, and over, and over again. She knows she is in need. She doesn’t just say, “Have mercy on me,” though. The second time she speaks to the Lord she says, “Lord, help me!”

Verse 25, when she bows down before him. “Lord, help me!” It’s the same word that we saw last week. “Help my unbelief. I believe. Help my unbelief.” If you can do anything, help us. The idea is someone being in distress and completely unable to deal with what they’re facing, and they’re crying for aid. They must have help. They must have aid or disaster is looming. She sees the reality of her situation. She must have help. She knows who she is, and she knows what she can do. It’s interesting the fact that she is a Canaanite woman. She is from the district of Tyre and Sidon. And then Jesus response by not talking to her and then saying that she is like a dog. He’s acknowledging and helping her to acknowledge and even remember who she is, even though she knows it already. He is reminding her of it in a very helpful way. Because you and I, to experience the grace of God, to have real faith, you have to know how great is your need. You have to know who you are, and you have to know what you can do.

Who you are is you are under the wrath of God. You are sinful from birth like David said. King David said, “In sin my mother conceived me. Brought forth in iniquity.” He was acknowledging he himself was a viper in diapers. From the very beginning I was sinful. And all of us are. And she knew that she was sinful from birth. And she knew that she was a Canaanite. And she knew that she was from Tyre and Sidon. And the text, like I said, it was written to Jews. The Jews would have really picked up on that. Tyre and Sidon, really? Tyre and Sidon! This is bad! This is like the worst of the worst. You know where Jezebel was from? She was a Sidonian. Ahab’s wife Jezebel in all of her wickedness and idolatry. She was a Sidonian. In Matthew 11, just four chapters before this, Jesus said something pretty astounding in verses 20 to 24 that tell you something about Tyre and Sidon. He is denouncing the cities, the Jewish cities in which he has been preaching, the Galilean Jewish cities. They’re in the region of Galilee, but there are Jews. They are predominantly Jewish populations in these cities. He’s been doing all these miracles. They’ve been seeing them, and he’s saying, “I’ve done all these signs, and you don’t believe.

So, he says in verse 20, Matthew 11:20, “Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!’” He had done many miracles in Chorazin and Bethsaida. They had seen his glory. They had seen him healing all these people, and they’re not believing. He says, “Woe to you!” Look what he says next. “For if the miracles had occurred in

Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” That is an insult. That is saying, “Listen, the most wicked place you know of, Tyre and Sidon, if they had seen the miracles you’ve seen, they would have repented.

Verse 22, “Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.” Then he says, “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades! For if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.” He’s making Sodom and Tyre and Sidon good parallels. So when the Jewish reader reads, “He went to the district of Tyre and Sidon,” they’re shocked in the first place. And then when it says, “A Canaanite woman,” Canaanite means the people of the land. That all of the wickedness of the people in the land of Canaan is associated with this person. From that region, the region of Tyre and Sidon. They’re sitting there wondering, “Oh my goodness! What is happening?” And the reality is this woman knew exactly who she was, because that’s why she said when he said, “The dogs don’t get to eat from the master’s table,” she said, “Right, Lord. You’re right. I am a dog.”

The reality is that everyone that is not a Jew is a dog according to the Old Testament. And the reality is, listen, the reality is that even the Jews are dogs. This is part of the way God unfolds his revelation. The Jewish people, because of the blessing of the Law, and the Covenants, and the temple worship, they were able regularly to offer sacrifices to God in the Old Covenant. And those sacrifices that God had appointed allowed God’s wrath to be averted, so that they weren’t continually under his wrath. And so, he called them to himself. This was all to point them to Christ. But the Gentiles who have none of that are all into their godless paganism 24/7. Offending God, offending God, offending God! It’s a relatively speaking. Yes, it’s true the Jews relatively speaking looked like the children, and the Gentiles were the dogs. And rather than be offended at that, Jesus says you and I are dogs, consider that a little bit. Is it not true?

If you really examine your heart, are you not worthy of a much more insulting descriptive term than that? Dog is too good for me. She didn’t take issue with it. She knew who she was, and she knew what she could do. You have to know who you are, and you have to know what you can do. And she knew what she was, who she was, and she knew what she could do. She could do nothing. She had nothing to bring. I mean, this is a part of what saving faith, this is where it begins. It begins with an accurate, an acute sense of your great need. I see that I am in desperate circumstances. I am under the domain of darkness. She knew that. Her daughter was cruelly demon possessed. She couldn’t do anything about it.

She lived in a dark pagan city. It was like Las Vegas. I mean, I can’t even get there. Or New Orleans at Mardi Gras. Or wherever. All the wicked places that you could imagine, she is there. The gospel is not around at all where she is. So really, Las Vegas and New Orleans don’t qualify, because there are Christians around there. She is in the absolute darkest place, and she knows it. And her daughter is a daily testimony to the dominion of darkness over her. And she knows she can do nothing about it. But she has heard of one who can. Into that darkness, someone has come, because Tyre and Sidon aren’t that many

miles away. Fifty miles or so from where Jesus has been ministering. And all of those miracles that have been done in Bethsaida, in Chorazin, in Capernaum, have been recounted. She's heard that the Jewish Messiah, people are beginning to talk of it. This may be the Jewish Messiah.

And so she comes with an awareness of her great need. It's so important for us to be willing to face our great need, and this is one of the places.

Let me tell you something. God wants you to see that. The reason he took her down like he did was to show us this is the way he deals with you. He works by contraries. If he wants to save you, if he wants to comfort you, he will first terrify you. We read earlier, if he wants to justify you, he will first condemn you, because you have to come to the sense of knowing I really am under condemnation, because if I don't find Christ, I will die in my sins. We all tend to think that we're much better off than we are. We pretend. We're like Nero fiddling while Rome burns. Whistling in the dark. Spitting in the wind. We are doomed, and we need to be saved.

And one of the things that saving faith learns to do is it learns to remain there under the afflicting hand of God as God exposes your sinfulness and the greatness and magnitude of your spiritual need. Listen to this from the book I was talking about earlier, "The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification." Walter Marshall writes this, "When you understand that you cannot find any way to escape out of this sinful and miserable condition by your own reason and understanding without supernatural revelation and supernatural action, then you're ready to look to Christ." He says, "So therefore, we must not be afraid." Listen to this. "We must not be afraid then." Listen very carefully, because it's our nature to want to run from conviction. It's our nature to want to run from the light. But saving faith learns to stay under the light, and invite God's scrutiny, and to invite him to expose our sinfulness, because that's where we find Christ.

Look what he says. "We must not be afraid as some are to know our own vileness and sinfulness. Neither must we be willing to think ourselves better than we are. But we must be heartily desirous and glad to know the worst of our own condition. Yea, when we have found out the worst that we can of ourselves, we must be even then willing to believe that our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked beyond all that we know." Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" When you know the worst of yourself, the saving faith says, "I don't know the half of it." Because that's reality!

It's only the lies of Satan and our prideful heart that tell us we're not that bad! And so, God knows how wicked we are. And he is lovingly, graciously trying to drive us to his Son. And so, he sends the Law to us. I love this. Galatians. I think it's 3:26. The Law is a taskmaster, or a tutor, to lead us to Christ. God gave the Law. The Law is perfect. There is nothing wrong with the Law. Not at all. It is a perfect expression of the holiness of God. And the believer learns to delight in God's Law, just like Psalm 119. Read it. That's an Old Testament believer before Christ came, and he is delighting in the Law of God.

He has been redeemed. He's got saving faith. Because you know what happens when you come to the Law? You get convicted.

When you really come to the Law rightly, you get convicted, and convicted, and convicted, and convicted. You get exposed. And this is the lovingkindness of God. In fact, Jesus when he came, what did he do? Matthew begins his first major sermon of Jesus in chapter 5 reporting to us Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount. And right after he does the Beatitudes, he goes into a series of an exposition of the Law of God. Jesus preached the Law. There are some people that think you don't need to preach the Law nowadays. That is a false teaching in Christianity. And the easy-believism heresy that needs to be, you need to get away from.

The Law of God is beautiful. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it he says. Not one jot or tittle is going to pass away from the Law. What does he do in Matthew 5? He says, "You have heard it said, but I say to you. You have heard it said you should not commit murder, but I say to you that if you're angry with your brother without cause you're guilty of murder. If you call your brother a fool, you're guilty of murder. You've heard it said you should not commit adultery, but I tell you, you shall not lust for a woman in your heart. If you lust for a woman in your heart, you have already committed adultery."

You see what he is saying is he is not abrogating the Law. He's taking the Law deeper into the heart. He's showing the true intent of the Law. And what he's doing, why is he doing that? He's wanting to show you and me what miserable, hopeless sinners we are. Who's not guilty of murder in this room? How many times have I murdered? I do it all the time driving. God forbid. I am trying to repent of that. You can pray for me the next time you are driving and you have that same temptation. Pray for me. I am serious. I am praying about that. I am learning to pray for the people who cut me off or who do things that aren't real wise in their driving, because they're souls. They are eternal souls. What does it matter?

You see the murderous heart of man would be angry that somebody gets in my way, messes up my agenda. I didn't make that light. I would have made that light. Who cares?

Adultery. Who's not an adulterer among us? Let him who is without sin cast the first stone. Every one of us has to be shown the depth of our wickedness, and so, as Marshall is saying, don't run from that. When the Lord shows you your sin, don't run from it. Listen, don't delight in it. No, of course not. But willingly sit under the knife of God's Word. The Word of God is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword, Hebrews 4:12, that it divides joint and marrow, soul and spirit. It's a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

He's saying when you get under the Word of God what happens is that it cuts into your heart, and it exposes all of the wicked thoughts and intentions of your heart. Well, now, that doesn't sound like a good place to be. Well, it's only a good place to be because when you get there now you can run to Christ. Now you're ready to run to Jesus. Until

you get there, you're not ready. That's why there is shallow faith. People that run to Jesus before they've ever really known their sin. They believe in a shallow way that is not saving. So what do you need to do? You need to face the ugliness of who you are according to God's Word. You need to stay under the Word, to wait on him in the Word, and to cry out to him to show you the magnitude of your great need so that you can run to Christ and see what a glorious Savior he is.

So what he is doing with this woman even as he is taking her down a little bit. Now she is already in a pretty good place. But the beauty of our Savior is he doesn't leave you where you are. You may have made great progress in your Christian life. I've got good news for you. Tomorrow he's still going to be working to take you even farther in your growth in grace. Now at first glance, that's kind of rough. That means you're going to suffer. That means you're going to have your sin exposed. That means you're going to be reprov'd by other people from time to time. You're going to be told that you're not all that you think you are. And if you will learn to embrace those things, a wise man loves correction. Only a fool is right in his own eyes. And a wise man learns that, like Paul said, I glory in my infirmities, for when I am weak, then I am strong. When I know how weak I am, how helpless I am, I run to Christ, and I become strong in the Lord. That's God's way.

He's doing that with this dear lady. I mean, she is already there. She is already saved. I think she is saved when she comes actually. Her first profession is impressive. But the Lord doesn't leave her there. Look at her first profession. So actually the first point is that acute sense of your great need. The second point is real confidence in Jesus's ability to save. You have to have first of all an acute sense of your great need, and secondly real confidence in Jesus's ability to save. What she says in that first thing that we're told she says when she is crying out saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is cruelly demon possessed." She knows she needs mercy, and she knows who he is.

She has real confidence. She knows her need, but she also secondly has real confidence in Christ's ability. She believes that he is the Lord. Three times she calls him Lord in this passage. Verse 22, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David." Verse 25, she falls down and says, "Lord, help me!" Verse 27, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs get to eat the crumbs. Three times she says, "Lord." She knows he's Lord.

That could be that she is just using a term of respect, but I think the fact that she uses it three times is saying that she knows something more about him. She has somehow in the providence of God in hearing about Jesus, seeing her great desperate need, she has believed that he is the Son of God, he is the Messiah, and she has come now to him to implore him to act on her behalf. She believes he is able. She doesn't just say, "Lord." She says, "Son of David." This only occurs like six times in the whole gospel of Matthew.

Chapter 1 he is proving that Jesus is the Son of Abraham, the Son of David. Chapter 21 the crowds hail Jesus as the Son of David at the appointed time that God made it happen, Palm Sunday, when Jesus is welcomed in Jerusalem. It was so urgent in that moment

that, remember Jesus says, “If these are silent, the stones would cry out. This is the day that God is going to declare me to be the Son of David, whether you want to or not. It’s going to happen.” There is only a handful of other times where somebody does. And here you have it on the lips of this Canaanite woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon. She says, “Son of David.”

To say Son of David is essentially to say, “You are the Christ. You are the long awaited Messiah. You are the one who brings the kingdom of God. You are the one that Israel has been waiting for. You bring the kingdom of God. You break the reign of sin. You break the reign of Satan. My daughter is under the reign of Satan. I am under the reign of Satan and of sin, but you are the one who can deliver me.”

Even that first title, it’s a wonderful creed that she expresses. But he did not answer her a word. Apparently resisting her, but not really. He’s doing a contrary. He’s pushing her so that her faith becomes stronger in the push-back. He’s actually doing this. He’s drawing her. He’s loving her. He’s leading her as an infinitely wise shepherd. I know what you need. He’s drawing her in.

Look at her faith. She bows down. After she hears him, remember the disciples come to him. He has not talked to her. She is over there yelling. He has not talked to her. Some distance, she is yelling, and the disciples come and say, “Look Lord, you got to do something.” And they begin, and it’s the imperfect tense in verse 23 when they say, when it says, “They implored him.” They went on imploring him. It’s like you can hear a cacophony of all these guys, “Lord, you got to do something. You got to do something. This is getting embarrassing.” And the same thing, the present tense, “saying.” It’s a continuous thing. It’s like she is out there imploring. She’s out there saying. They’re now imploring. They’re now saying, “Lord, do something! Do something! Do something!” And he answers again with a no. Second time, “No, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” It’s true that he was sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And the primary focus of his earthly ministry was to come to Israel and was to appoint his twelve apostles in Israel to then send out to the world. He’s going to do that in Matthew 28:18-20 when he says, “Go make disciples of all nations.” Right now, his primary focus is Israel, and he’s reminding them and her, knowing she is listening, but she doesn’t take no for an answer.

And she comes and bows down before him. Another expression of her acknowledgment of his ability. This is the universal expression of worship. She has said, “Lord” three times. She has said, “Son of David,” you are the Christ. And now she falls at his feet in worship. She knows he is able. She knows her great need, and she has real confidence in his ability. That’s why she hasn’t taken no for an answer. I know you’re able.

The third point we’re going to touch on briefly, and we’re going to have to pick this up more next week, but I don’t want to end without getting to this point for a moment. The third point, you don’t need just, firstly, an acute sense of your great need, secondly, real confidence in Jesus’s ability to save, thirdly, you have to have firm assurance of Jesus’s willingness to save. Saving faith has that in it. Firm assurance of Jesus’s willingness to

save. He is not only able, he is willing, and it personalizes that. And listen, God's Word calls you, no matter who you are, what your circumstances, God's Word calls you to believe he will save you. You personally, particularly, he will save you. He is willing.

And if you don't believe, when you go to hell, it will be because you would not believe. This doesn't negate the sovereign election of God. No, it doesn't. I'm going to talk about that next week. It doesn't negate the fact that his atonement is particular. Particular redemption, it doesn't negate that. But when you read the Bible carefully, God invites everyone to be saved. And when they don't, the indignation, or the explanation is not that God didn't choose them. That's the secret counsel of God. That's not for you and me to worry about.

Have you been brought into the secret counsel of God? Do you wonder if you're elect or not? Did God bring you into his secret counsel in his chamber to talk with you about that? No, he did not. He never will! The secret things belong to the Lord. The things revealed belong to us. Deuteronomy 29:29. And the things revealed are this. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. And if you are condemned, John 3:16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Whosoever believes. And then verse 18 he says the reason that they are not saved, the reason that they are judged, is because they would not believe, not because God did not choose them. They would not believe.

This woman knows that he is willing. He is not just able. He is willing to save her. Now think about that in light of what he has been doing to her. Did not answer her a word. I mean that's amazing. Would you have done like she did? We have false humility. Something I have dealt with a lot in my life. You think you're being humble, but you're really being proud. Well, I don't think he needs to bother with me. He's the Savior. He's my only hope! I am such a wretch I must have him! I must have your attention Lord!

Doesn't answer her a word. She keeps on imploring, keeps on crying out. The disciples join her in the call, "Lord, please do something! Please do something about this woman." Still doesn't answer her. Talks to them and says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." That's the second no. I am not sent to her. She presses past that second obstacle. He has put up obstacle one. Then didn't answer. Obstacle two. "I am sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." She jumps over that obstacle, and then she falls down at his feet and says, "Lord, help me!" Surely that's enough. He says, "It is not fitting to take the bread from the children and give it to the dogs." Obstacle number three.

He is saying, "Look, you're from Tyre and Sidon. I came only to the lost sheep of Israel. I can't take what was for the Jews and give to you." And she says, "Yes, I acknowledge the Jews have a higher place than us, and we're dogs in comparison, but even dogs get to eat from the food that falls from the master's table." You know what she is really saying? Do you know why she had this faith? She says, "You're saying to me that you won't save me. You're apparently saying to me you won't save me, because I am from Tyre and Sidon, but why are you here?" Where is Jesus? Where is he? Verse 21, "Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon." And then a Sidonian comes

to him and says, "Save!" And he says, "I am only sent to the people of Israel." She said, "You may say that, but here you are, and I know you. I can see it in your eyes. I can see it in your heart. I know that you are good, and you will save. I know that you want to save." And listen, that's the heart of God.

God is so generous and liberal. He wants to save. He's not willing for any to perish but for all men to come to repentance. He wants that. Now, I know, notwithstanding the purposes of God in election. Please don't hear me acting like I don't believe those things. The Bible teaches those things. Absolutely, I do. But I want us to believe all that the Scripture says. And what it says is God's heart still aches when people reject him. And if his heart aches, ours ought to. We ought to care about the unbelievers in our life that will not believe. We ought to shed tears over them and pray. Now, listen. You can't make it happen. God has to make it happen. That's right. Yes. That's right. But we need to represent a Savior that is like the man we see right here that went to Tyre. What he did is he actually, he is withdrawing from the Jews who are arguing about all this tradition in Matthew 15, and he says, he doesn't tell the disciples, but he is like, "I've got to go find a sheep. One of my lost sheep over in the region of Tyre and Sidon."

In John 10:16 when Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep." He says in chapter 10 verse 16, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them to myself." She is one of those sheep. And she knows it. She's like, "I know that you are here, because you have come to save people like me." And she argues God's character against his apparent resistance. This is what I am talking about. God acts by contraries. He does things that seem like the opposite, but he's doing it to draw out your true faith. Do you believe my promise?

We'll talk about this more next week, because there are so many wonderful examples of this in the Old Testament. Just think about what he does to Abraham in the offering of Isaac. God said, "Through Isaac your descendants will be named. I am going to make the salvation of the world come through Isaac." And then he says to Abraham, "Go and sacrifice him." And Abraham obeys the Lord, believes the Lord, but he believes the promise of God against what God has even told him, and the author of Hebrews tells us when he raised the knife, remember the Lord didn't let him do it. He stopped him. But the author of Hebrews tells us when he raised the knife he was convinced that God would raise Isaac from the dead. Do you know why he was convinced of that? Not because he named it and claimed it. But because God had said, "Through Isaac your seed will be named." You cannot violate your Word. You cannot violate your character. This is what you see over and over in Scripture.

The saints arguing the character of God back to God. Moses when God says, "Get out of the way Moses. I am going to destroy those people." They deserve to be destroyed. Every one of those foolish Jews. Look at what they had seen, and here they are rebelling. What did Moses do? He argued God's character back to God.

Now, of course, the Lord's not vindictive and bouncing around like it appears to be. He is revealing to us the reality of what they did deserve. They did deserve to be destroyed. But

he never intended to do that. Why do I know that? Because he had Moses there to be just like Jesus who stands in the way of God's wrath and argues to the Father and says, "Lord, I know when you look at his life, you look at her life, or his life, they've got no business coming into our throne room, but, Lord, we have made a promise that if they believe in me that they receive all the benefits that I have procured. And everything that they deserve has been paid, and everything that I deserve is now on their account. And Lord, that is the reality." And that is the way God works.

Saving faith has firm assurance of Jesus's willingness to save you. He is willing to save you. Believe it. Now, listen. Believe it and know that he is going to have to work in you a supernatural work spiritually. Yes, he is going to have to grant you faith. Faith is a grace. But believe it until you receive it, because his Word is true, and he is a great Savior. He delights to save people like you and me.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the glory of your salvation. That you would save sinners like us. Thank you for doing what is necessary to try our faith, to test it, to prove its genuineness, like you did for this lady. Father, we pray for those, everyone in this room, that we would all embrace your view of us and not argue with you. We would accept the worst. We pray that you would give us unshakable confidence in Jesus' ability to save, that he is a mighty Savior, able to save to the uttermost the one whose hope is in him. Nothing is impossible. We pray that you would give us firm assurance of his willingness to save and never let us doubt the truth of your Word. Lord, work in the hearts of your people. Work in the hearts of those who need to become your people even now. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.