

A Proper Response to the Hard Words of God

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Matthew

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So we saw, though, that his actions are astonishing, his words, at first glance, are quite perplexing and yet in this we see in her response to his difficult words, we see a picture of true saving faith that's not a shallow faith like many have. The Bible makes clear that there is a very common experience of a shallow faith that is not a saving faith. "That's why there will be many," Jesus said, "on that day who say who say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? Did we not cast out demons in Your name?'" And he will say, "Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness. I never knew you." That there is a possibility of a kind of faith that does not really express the heart in true saving reliance upon the finished work of Christ. It's a surface faith.

So in this passage, we saw an example of true saving faith and we saw there were some things about her, that she, I'll just review these points and just encourage you to listen if you didn't hear last week's message, but she accepted the reality of her great need and that's what saving faith does. She saw the massive need that she had for salvation. Secondly, she was confident of Christ's ability to save. She believes and we'll see as we read in a moment, that he is the son of David, he is the Lord, he is able to save. So she had confidence in his ability to save but she also was assured of his willingness to save even though he apparently in his words and his actions is pushing her away. When you really face with what the passage presents to us, that's what we see, Jesus, in a sense, pushing her back. She is convinced that though he seems to be saying no to her, in reality he's saying come, and this is what saving faith has, the absolute confidence in Jesus' willingness to save you particularly. Not just theoretically but you individually and particularly, that what Christ has done and the salvation that he has procured, he is willing to give to you.

Now I say that by way of introduction because I want us to deal with one of the implications that comes out of that last point, the willingness of Christ to save over against his apparent rejection of this Syrophenician woman. As we read in a moment, we're going to see that three different times he puts obstacles in her way. He first ignores her. Then he says that he was sent to other people besides her. And finally, he compares her to a dog. And in these words of Christ, this apparent rejection of Jesus, we see in reality the grace of God made manifest but it's in hard words. I mean, the message really is, what Jesus says to her is really, if you look at it honestly, is stunning. It's hard to

receive. It certainly was hard for her to receive his hard words, and really it's hard to watch as you read the text.

So the title of the message this morning is "A Proper Response to the Hard Words of God." A proper response to the hard words of God because this is what we have in this passage, we have a woman who exemplifies the appropriate and right response to the hard words of God. God speaks many hard words, many things that are hard to receive, hard to hear, and those who have true saving faith approach it the right way, they come to the hard words of God and respond properly as this woman does.

So let's look at the passage together and then we'll consider this subject, "A Proper Response to the Hard Words of God," and see it modeled for us in the life of this woman. Matthew 15:21,

21 Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 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." 23 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." 24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 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 to You this morning asking that You might open the eyes of our hearts, that You might minister by Your Holy Spirit to each person here that we might see and understand wonderful things in Your word, that we might have eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to love Christ and to trust in Him deeper and more fully. We pray in His name. Amen.

So a proper response to the hard words of God, and if you put yourself in the place of this woman, this was amazing, the response of Jesus to her. She is in great need. She comes asking for mercy and Jesus deals with her in a way that is quite unique. It's not his normal way of dealing and when we see that, we know that. I mean, we have a visceral reaction as we look at this that is basically informed on our other reading of the Scriptures and we look at Jesus deal with people who are suffering, he doesn't usually make it this hard for them. Why here? Why now? Well, when we do read our New Testaments, we do see there are some other occasions where he does say hard things to those who come to him, and what we conclude is our Shepherd, our Lord is a wise shepherd, he is a perfect physician, he knows what the need of each heart is and he knows this woman needs this

hard word, and he knows that many times you and I need hard words. It's not always the words of welcome and encouragement that you and I need. Isn't that true in life? You don't always need to have your back patted, do you? It's not healthy. There's a time for a stern word of reproof and correction. It's the very best thing that can happen to you at certain moments.

One of the elders, James Rouse, was telling me about, reminding me about that Michael Jordan, those of you, most everybody still knows Michael Jordan I hope, young people, you still know him? Okay. The greatest basketball player of all time, arguably, probably though if you took a survey, he is number 1 on most people's lists or more than many others. Michael Jordan, do you know this? He was cut from his high school basketball team. In one sense, you say, "That coach was really dumb." No. In reality, Jordan took from that harsh reproof the correction that he needed and he became, he worked harder and harder at basketball until he became an unbelievable basketball player.

But it's not always good words and encouragement, and the Lord knows that we need, as sinners, we need so much more the correction and the hard word of God than we can imagine. We think we just need God to say, "Welcome home," and we kind of feel like that's what we deserve. We have this ungodly mindset of who God is, that he welcomes sinners as they are without any change, without any need for repentance, without any need for really understanding their great need, he just says, "Come on." But that's not the way the gospel is set forth in the Scriptures.

For the Lord to save people, he first gives his law. In fact, this is made clear and I encourage you to go and look at this, read Galatians 3 later today and you'll see that the law was sent as a taskmaster to lead us to Christ, that is, it was to be harsh and hard and to prepare us to receive Christ. That's what the law does, it beats down. Now it's all good, there's nothing wrong with the law, the law is perfect and righteous and holy, Paul makes that point in Romans 7, there's nothing wrong with it but it produces death in us. Why? Because we are so wretched and sinful and rebellious. But we need that harsh word, that hard word to confront our pride, to bring us low so that God then might lift us up, because God resists the proud but he gives grace to the humble.

So there are hard words in the Scripture beyond just the law that shows us our sin, and I think there are many places where we come to passages and to realities and to doctrines that challenge us, that at first glance we find unappealing, and in many cases, offensive. What do you do when you find...I mean, you've got to be careful to understand exactly what God's word is saying, you have to be clear that you're understanding it, you're not receiving some twisted view of it or misinterpretation of it, but there are many doctrines in the Scriptures that when rightly understood will be very difficult and hard to receive and this woman receives one here because what Jesus essentially does in this passage, in this evangelistic opportunity, is he preaches to her the doctrine of election.

He says to her, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I was not sent to you." That is, "I was sent to those who were chosen by My Father. I was not sent to you." That's what he's saying. In fact, in the Greek it's a little...I'm reading the New American

Standard. When he says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," it actually says, "I was not sent to any except the lost sheep of the house of Israel," in the original. It doesn't, that's kind of a hard way to say that in English and so it's softened up to say, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was, "I was not sent to any except the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He's saying, "I was sent to Israel, I was not sent to you."

Now think about that if you hear that. Put yourself in her place. "I was sent to those My Father chose and you are not one of the chosen." Now admittedly this is the doctrine of national election in the Old Testament, the idea that God chose Israel to be his people. You find this in Deuteronomy 4:37, Deuteronomy 7:6 and 7, that God chose Israel. In fact, in Deuteronomy 7, read that, he actually says that the basis of his election of Israel was not to do with anything in them themselves. He says this, verse 6 of Deuteronomy 7, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God," now this is given to the people of Israel after they've left Egypt on their way to Canaan. They've been delivered by God and the exodus has happened, they've gone through the Red Sea, they've spent 40 years in the wilderness and now they're about to go into Canaan and here Moses is reminding them of God's sovereign election. He says in verse 6 of Deuteronomy 7, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." He didn't do it because of anything in you, is what he's saying. He did it because of his own purpose of his heart and his promise.

This is carried on through the Old Testament, we see this, the fact of Israel being God's chosen people. The words "elect, chosen" are clearly taught in the Bible. You can't deny the doctrine of election without denying Scripture. Now please understand what I'm going to say: the doctrine of election, the fact that God chooses who is saved is clearly taught in Scripture, the question is on what basis does he make that choice? That's a secondary question but the fact that he chooses is clearly laid out in the Bible.

Let me just show you. Turn to Matthew 24, the last week of Jesus' life when he's preaching in Jerusalem, he says, he's speaking about the end times, the times that will come, I think here he's talking about what's going to happen in 70 AD but also possibly at the very end of time. I take it that way, a double fulfillment of this. But anyway, verse 22, he's speaking about the perilous times that will come when God's wrath is poured out on the world and he says in verse 22, "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." Reading on down to verse 24, "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." The same word is used in verse 31, "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect."

Now he's using the word "elect" to describe true believers so why doesn't he say, "true believers, Christians, disciples?" He uses the word "elect" to emphasize God's choosing of his people. It's a word that's used in both testaments with great regularity. In fact, just to show you a couple of places, it's the way God describes Christians. You are chosen by God. Titus 1:1 in the greeting that Paul gives to Titus, he says, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God." He's writing for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth. Turn over a few pages to 1 Peter 1:1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ." Same word is used in chapter 2, verse 9, "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood."

So clearly God teaches this doctrine of election, that he chooses some to be saved. And on what basis does he choose them? I'm not going to work this all the way out today. It takes a long time to work through this doctrine. Let me just tell you that when I was in seminary, it took me 3 ½ years to be convinced as I now am of the Reformed position that God's election is unconditional. I went to a seminary that taught that. I didn't believe it. I wanted to be sure it was in the Bible. My wife and I have often looked back on that time, she became Reformed much quicker than I did. She was much faster to recognize that this is what the Bible says. I remember arguing with her, saying, "Honey, you can't accept it that fast just because it sounds good." I was, you know, accusing her of all kinds of wrong motives but she was right and, you know, 2 ½ years later I came around and agreed with her as I studied Scripture but it took me 3 ½ years so I'm not asking you to be convinced of unconditional election today and that's not the purpose of this message, to convince you of unconditional election, but what I hope to show you is that you will encounter things in the word of God that you find distasteful initially, that you may find offensive initially, and the way that you respond to them will, in some ways, be a way God sifts those who truly belong to him.

Now I'm not saying that everyone who rejects the doctrine of unconditional election is not saved. I'm not saying that at all. There are many wonderful godly people who don't accept that doctrine of unconditional election, many Christians today, throughout history, but what I'm saying is it's the way that you approach hard doctrines that shows the condition of your heart. Is it your desire to submit to God even if you don't like what he says? That's the condition we must all meet because then the issue is does the Bible really teach that, and that's where the debate gets complicated; that's why it took me 3 ½ years to work through because I was trying to see does the Bible really teach this? And so if it took me 3 ½ years, I'm not expecting you to change your position in 30 minutes or an hour, of course, but what I would encourage you to do is what this woman does, when God's words are perplexing and puzzling, how do you respond to that? Do you assume that you know better than God or that you know better than Scripture? Do you put upon your own wisdom such value that you immediately dismiss things as possibilities? That's dangerous.

That's a pride that God will resist and we're going to see that this woman doesn't do that. I mean, she is told essentially, "Listen, I came to the lost sheep of Israel. You're not of the lost sheep of Israel," the implication therefore, "I didn't come for you." Now remember, last week we talked about this, though, she's sitting there thinking, yes, you're saying that and I'm not disputing the fact of election but she says in her mind, she's saying, "Why are You, though You said You came for the lost sheep of Israel, why have You come into the region of Tyre and Sidon where I live? I believe You did so because You're willing to save even me."

And I think why he does this is to humble her even more and to humble us as we look at this because the doctrine of election has the power to humble you. What it essentially says is that for God to save you and me, even though Jesus has done everything necessary to save every sinner by coming into the world and living a perfect life, this is the gospel, Jesus came into the world, took humanity to himself, God becomes man and he lives a truly fully human life, does not draw on his power as God, he lives as man, truly remains God, fully God, yes, but he lives as man. He's tempted in every way yet without sin. He always does the will of God perfectly for 33 years. A perfect record of righteousness. And then he offers himself as a sacrifice as a spotless lamb, and on the cross the sins of everyone who would ever believe are imputed to Christ, credited to his account, and on the cross he's treated as if he had lived yours and my filthy wicked life, and God pours out his wrath on his Son. That's why the sky got dark at 12 noon, because God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. And Jesus cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Hanging in the darkness alone, bearing our sins. Then he dies and in the offering of his life, in the pouring out of his blood, he pays in full. Right before he dies, he says, "It is finished! Paid in full! The sin debt has been paid!"

So he took our sins away and then he gives us his perfect righteousness and you receive that by faith, but what I want you to see is that when you read the Bible carefully, one of the things that you see is that God, even though he's done everything necessary to save people, the Bible presents us, sin is so bad that not only has it made us so sinful that we need that incredible offering to happen in our place, that God himself must come as a man and die, what an amazing appalling statement about our sin. But it's even beyond that, that even though that has happened, you and I still will not believe. No man seeks God, not one, Romans 3:10-18. There's none who understands. No one seeks God. No one will believe unless we first, Jesus said unless you're born again you cannot see the kingdom of God. Our hearts are so desperately wicked that even though Christ is offered to us, we will not receive him, therefore God has to choose us and give us a heart that is new that we can then express in faith and repentance.

So that's essentially, it's a humbling doctrine and Jesus is certainly humbling this woman, but I want you to look at what she does. There are three things that she does that I think we should do when we come to hard doctrines and there are all kinds of hard doctrines. I mean, the reality of hell being a place of eternal torment. You think about that, that is a doctrine that is impossible to fully grapple with as a human being. Eternal suffering. How do you respond to that? I mean, some people can just pretend, "I'm not even going to think about it and I'm not going to worry about it." Kind of have a Pollyanna kind of

Christianity. Others can think about it so much that they dwell on it and they begin to question God's goodness. The right balance is to face it but to trust in God. With your questions, you go to God and you trust him with what you don't know and you don't understand, you trust him on the basis of what you do know and you do understand because we have more than enough that we know that testifies to his goodness to accept anything that's in the dark or unclear.

This is what this woman does, so the first thing, there are three things that she does and that we need to do when we come to difficult doctrines, and I've seen this in my own life. I mean, when you wrestle with doctrines that are difficult, you stay with the Lord through it, you come to see there's a beauty and a glory that comes out on the other side to those who stay. And the first thing that she does is she steadfastly continues in seeking the Lord, and so I would say, for us, steadfastly continue in the word. How do you deal with difficult doctrines? Well, you steadfastly continue in the word. You don't leave. You don't just forget about it. I mean, you may, at times, have to say, "I've thought all I can, Lord," but even then, "I've got to stop now." In my attitude of prayer, I'm going to go back and wait on this and come back to this later.

But she continues in the word. When she, the Canaanite woman, encounters Jesus, first of all, in three different ways he pushes her away, in a sense. First, he does not answer her a word, verse 23. She comes, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David." In fact, the emphasis is on her continual crying out. We mentioned last week that the tenses in the Greek when it says, "began to cry out," it means she was crying out, she was in an ongoing way, it's a continual action in past time. She was crying out and then the word "saying" is in a tense that means she was saying continually over and over, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David."

So she's continuing at the beginning and he doesn't answer her a word but that doesn't stop her. Even though he ignores her, she doesn't let his action or his disconcerting, troubling response stop her. She continues and she keeps on continuing and we know that because the disciples, then, come to the Lord on her behalf and they implore him, that is, they go up to him and they're asking him and the same thing, saying, "Send her away because she keeps on shouting at us. Lord, this is embarrassing. This woman is making a scene. We've got to do something. I thought she would quit but she's not taking no for an answer. You've got to do something." She's continuing to seek him.

So his second apparent rejection is he answers them, not her, but in her hearing, he answers them and says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In a sense, he preaches the doctrine of election. God chooses whom he will save and she's not of the chosen, he seems to be saying. But she doesn't stop there. She comes and began to bow down to him and the idea is continually bowing down before him and saying, "Lord, help me."

And then the third time he appears to be saying no to her, he answered, when he finally answers her and he says to her, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." The Jews saw the nations around them as dogs, though this word is actually a

more, not the common word that the Jews would refer to the Gentiles as dogs. There was a word that referred to the Gentiles as dogs like stray dogs, mutts, you know, kind of a word that just contempt, not like a dog like, you know, if you're a dog person, you like the word dog. This is a word like, no, you don't want this kind of animal around. It's, you know, just the rabid, ugly, mangy, disgusting animal. That's what the word normally they speak of. This isn't the word Jesus used, he uses a word for the little house dogs that people would have, but still he does use that same idea, but she doesn't let that stop her. She continues even though he says that. She could have walked away at this point. This is a hard word from the Lord but she doesn't walk away. She continues. She says, "Yes, Lord," and she continues to ask him for blessing. She doesn't leave. She continues.

John 8:31-32 Jesus said, "If you continue in My word." Think about it, "If you continue in My word, then truly are you My disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." If you continue in the word. Continuing, you continue to seek but there's also the sense especially in John's gospel in context, of continuing under the hard words of Jesus because the word does come, it's living and active like a two-edged sword. It pierces. It hurts. In fact, turn to John 6. This is another example of the hard words of Jesus. John 6, Jesus is, after he's fed the 5,000, he then tells the people when they still want more bread the next day, that he is the bread of life. This is one of the "I Am" sayings, "I am the bread of life," verse 35. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.'" He repeats the same thing in verse 48, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 'I am the living bread,' Jesus said, 'that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh. Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?'" It's a hard word of Jesus, in fact, he's going to make it even harder as he goes forward. Verse 53, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves." That is a, on the surface, a very offensive image. You must eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood or you will not have life. He continues, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink." Verse 59 says, "These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum." Verse 60, "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?'" Do you see that? Who can listen to this? This is hard.

So when Jesus says in John 8:31, "If you continue in My word, then truly are you My disciples." Who will continue in his word? Listen, he meant that to be offensive and he's not teaching transubstantiation, the Catholic heresy. The Lord's Supper does not literally become the body and blood of Christ. He's speaking in figurative language but in powerful figurative language that is intended to offend. He's, in a sense, saying it's a lot harder to save sinners like me and you than we think it is. For you and me to be saved, we have to, as it were, eat his flesh and drink his blood. His blood and flesh have to be torn apart to save you and me. We are so wretchedly sinful and so far from God something offensive has to happen and the imagery of eating his flesh and drinking his blood is a

way to show you about the incredible offensiveness of the cross, that God, as I said earlier, would pour out his wrath on his own precious Son, that he would allow evil to vent all of its anger, all of its fury unrestrained on his precious Son, that he would do that, that you and I are so sinful that that had to happen. If there was just one of us, that's what would have had to happen. That's why he uses that imagery.

So it's continuing under it, though, that shows you don't run away when you're offended, just continue. In fact, that brings us to the second point. She doesn't just steadfastly continue in the word, she humbly submits to the word. Secondly, she humbly submits to the word. The woman says, "Yes, Lord." When he says it's not fitting to take the food and give it from the children and give it to the dogs, she says, "Yes, Lord. I agree." She humbly submits. She humbles herself and submits. She's realizing that, "For You to save me, I have no claim on salvation," and that's the reality. You see, listen, you and I come into the world thinking God owes us. He owes us salvation. He owes us a chance to be saved. That's the wiring of sin. We think that we deserve it and what God is doing in his word is showing us, no, we don't. We deserve his wrath, that's all we deserve. We don't deserve any opportunity. We deserve to go to hell because we have been sinful from our mother's womb and we have rejected God at every opportunity; even though when we act like we love God, in reality we are just using religion to try to manipulate God to do what we want to do and you can see it when people like that are encountered with the sovereignty of God and the requirements of God that they don't find to their liking, they quickly reject it.

But this woman humbly submits to the word. She says, "Yes, Lord. Even though I don't understand why You're doing exactly what You're doing here, I'm not getting all of this, I'm not understanding, but I trust You and I submit to You. I'm willing to place my understanding under You." That's exactly what happens back in John 6 for a moment, we were there a second ago, we saw what Jesus said to the crowd, "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood," and we saw in verse 60 of John 6, there were many of his disciples when they heard this were saying, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" I mean, I imagine they're saying that to themselves over here, "What is going on with this? This is crazy. How can we stay under this stuff?" And then Jesus answers them, "Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble? What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.'" There's divine election again, by the way. Verse 66, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." They not only said, "This is hard, who can understand it, who can handle this?" They walked away. They didn't continue.

Jesus felt that rejection and look what it says in verse 67, "Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?'" And here's the time Peter got it right. "Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.'"

"Where else would we go? I'm willing to trust You with what I don't understand knowing what I do know of You." That's the heart that God blesses. You and I, how ridiculous is it for us to think we can understand these things and it should all make sense to us? How illogical is that insistence on logical understanding on our parts? That the infinite God would be able to be measured by finite man? It doesn't mean God's illogical, it means that we aren't logical. He's perfectly logical, the problem is with us.

So that's why we should be ready to humbly submit to the Lord. "Lord, I don't understand this," and this is the place, when I'm teaching our membership class, I always try to do this, I think I do this on one of the videos, we have a lot of videos you watch as a part of membership class, and I believe I talk about this in that. You guys who went through the class recently, if I didn't do this, remind me because I need to make sure we do this. But I share a little bit about how hard it was for me to come to accept the doctrine of unconditional election and I say, "Listen, you don't have to believe that to be a member of our church, you just have to believe what you have to believe to get into heaven to be a member of our church, you've got to believe the gospel." But I said, "I will insist on one thing just as a shepherding concern for your soul. I'm not going to try to hurry you along. We don't talk about these things all the time. We don't, you know, wear labels. We don't check your ID, have you accepted all these doctrines right now? No, we don't do that." We just preach the word and the word has a way of just continuing to bring these things out for us, right? But I will insist on this because I care for your soul, you must, if you follow Jesus Christ, be willing to submit to his word once you clearly agree what he's saying, and this is where there are many complex doctrines and there are various passages that we have to bring together and it takes time to work through them, so we're all in process, we're always reforming, we're always learning, but if you're not willing to submit to what God clearly says in his word, you are in a dangerous position.

So we must humbly submit to the Lord, humbly submit to his word. That's what this woman does, that's what you and I are called to do. Thirdly, she doesn't just continue steadfastly in the word and humbly submit to the word, she actively trusts in the Lord. She actively trusts in the Lord with what she doesn't understand. She trusts in him himself. When she says to him, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," she is saying to him, "I believe that You would not have come," because, remember, he came into the region of Tyre and Sidon. He left the place where all of the Jews are and he came out to where the Gentiles are and she's like, "Why did You come out here? I believe You came out here to save some of us therefore I am clinging to You. I'm trusting in You. I'm not going to stop trusting in You." She trusts actively in his character.

So even in the face of the doctrine of election which says, and people can get messed up on this when they learn about it, they wonder, "Am I elect? I don't know if I'm elect or not. It's up to God. I'm not going to worry about it. I'm just going to go on and live my life and if I'm elect, He'll save me, and if I'm not, it's His fault." That's completely unbiblical and ungodly. The doctrine of election is something in the secret counsel of God we are simply to do what he tells us in his word, which is actively trust that he will save us if we seek him. The Bible makes that clear that God does not wish any to perish

but for all men to come to repentance, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4. God desires all men to come to repentance to be saved. Ezekiel 33:18, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked may live, turn from his sins and live."

So the message of God is be saved, and the fact that you're encountering what God may be saying about his electing purposes is counterintuitive. What you naturally would conclude from that is exactly 180 degrees wrong. When God preaches this to you, he's not pushing you away, he's calling you in. He's saying, "I'm able to save you." You say, "I don't have enough faith." "I'm able to give it to you." "I don't have a repentant heart." "I'm able to give it to you. Trust in Me. Rest in Me." And the beauty of this, you see this over and over and over again in Scripture, that God seems to be saying on the one hand, "I have rejected them," and on the other hand he's inviting them even in that to be saved because he has to humble pride.

You see this, a couple of great examples of it I want to share. The story of Rahab the harlot. You read about this in Joshua 2. God is leading the people into the Promised Land. He has pronounced in Deuteronomy 23 that the people, here's another one of the hard teachings of God, why does God tell them to kill the people in Canaan? That is another hard teaching of God. I'm not going to go into it right now except to say that God's right and he's just in what he's doing, and if you'll talk to me offline, I'll be happy to talk through that with you. But how are you going to deal with that? Don't run away. There's lots of people and you can see websites all over the place talk about this kind of stuff, where fools are handling holy and precious doctrine and twisting it to their own destruction. But in that passage, it is a reality. God says the people of the land you're not to intermarry with them, you are to kill them, my judgment is falling upon them, you're my instruments of judgment. He had waited 400 years for them from Abraham's promise to this time to allow them to repent and they haven't and now he's wiping them out.

So the decree has gone forth, as it were. They are under the ban. They are doomed. But you find in Joshua 2 the people, Joshua sends two spies in and they run into a harlot, a prostitute. Think about that, a harlot named Rahab, and somehow the conversation, they're not going around saying, they're not wearing labels saying, "We're spies. We've come in to spy out the land." No, but they find out she knows who they are somehow and she says to them, "We know that the Lord is with you. We know that your Lord is the true God and the terror of the Lord is on all of our people, and we know he's given this land to you." It's amazing.

This woman who's supposed to be non-elect and she says, and she hides them, remember? She hides them. The king of Jericho comes and says, "Listen, I heard some men came into you. We've learned they're spies. What happened? Where are they?" And she says, "Oh, they left. I didn't know where they were from but they left." But she's hidden them up on the roof and she tells them, "I think if you hurry, you can catch them. They just left." So they go out and they search for them and she takes those spies and she says, "Listen, please, when you come into the land, remember me." She's saying, "Have mercy on me, God. I know Yahweh, You are the true God. I know," just like that woman, the Syrophenician woman, "I'm under the oppression of evil. I'm a wicked person. I

need salvation." And she says, "Please, remember me and my father and my mother and my family." And they tell her, "Everyone who is in your house and you put this scarlet thread," isn't that beautiful, "scarlet thread you hang out the window and everyone in your house will be saved."

And God saved everyone in her house because God is a God who saves. But she wasn't elect? You don't know who's elect and who's not, even when God says with a national election. He was always saving people outside of Israel. Exodus, I think it's chapter 12, verse 36 or so, he says, "A mixed multitude went out from Egypt." The people went out along with a mixed multitude, that is, there were many Egyptians that were leaving Egypt with the Jews. Why? Because the Lord said what he was doing in raising up Moses to go to Pharaoh and hardening Pharaoh's heart was he did this, "So that Egypt may know that I am the Lord." That Egypt may know and there were Egyptians who were saved because they came to know that he is the Lord.

Then you have the story of Ruth. I mentioned this briefly last week. The same thing with Ruth. She was a Moabite. Deuteronomy 23 says that Moabites and Ammonites shall not enter the assembly of God, a descendant of a Moabite or an Ammonite shall not enter the assembly of God to the tenth generation because what they did was so wicked to the people of Israel. God remembered that and he's not going to forget it. He says, "No, you can't come. Ammonite, Moabite, get away." And here you see Ruth, a Moabitess. Naomi leaves with her husband and her two sons, they go to Moab because there's famine in the land and Bethlehem, the house of bread, has no bread. They go to Moab to live. It's a stupid thing to do. They shouldn't have done it but they go there, in the providence of God they meet two young women. They get married. One of them comes back with Naomi, her name's Ruth, and she says, "Your people will be my people, your God will be my God." She did exactly what Rahab did. What both of them did was identify with the people of God and place themselves, cast themselves on the mercy of God. "We don't want to be with our people anymore, we want to be with You. We want to be with the Lord."

And Boaz is a man who she meets in the field. She goes to glean at the time of the barley harvest and she goes to glean in Boaz's field. An older guy. We know he's older because he was really surprised that she wanted to marry him when she makes that proposal of marriage to him in the Jewish way, which you read in the book, a beautiful love story, the book of Ruth, four chapters. But when he first meets her, he says this. He notices that she's a foreigner. He notices that she's out there. He's the man who owns the property. He's talking to his managers and he says, "Who is this woman over here?" They say, "It's Ruth the Moabitess." And over and over again in the book, "She's a Moabitess. She's a Moabitess. She's from Moab. She's from Moab. She's from Moab." It's like the author is saying, "Don't miss that she's from Moab." He says after she falls on her face before him and says, you know, he says, "Listen, you glean here every day. I'll make sure nobody bothers you." She falls on her face and can't believe that God has shown her such kindness. Then he says to her, when she says, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me since I'm a foreigner? I'm not of the chosen people. Why do you take notice of me?" She's asking Boaz. Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done

for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the Lord reward your work and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." What a beautiful image.

God is a God who lets anyone who is willing come to seek refuge under his wings. If you don't believe that, you're making God a liar. Don't use the doctrine of election to try to make God a liar. He says, "Whosoever will may come." That's election, notwithstanding election is a reality, yes, and he has to give you a new heart, yes, but you must believe and cry out to him to even help you believe and believe that he will. And he will.

That story is so amazing and do you know what's really so cool is turn to Matthew, come back to 15, turn to chapter 1. It's so interesting, Matthew is the gospel written most specifically to the Jewish people of all the four gospels, and Matthew is illustrating in his great examples of faith are with Gentiles, the Syrophoenician woman, the Roman centurion. They're the ones Jesus comments on their faith. Look what he says in the first few verses of Matthew's gospel. He gives the genealogy of Jesus. He's proving that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. He says, "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Now in genealogy, Jewish genealogy, all that matters is the man. The woman is irrelevant to the Jewish mind at this time. Who the woman, who the mother is, is irrelevant. Look what Matthew does, verse 2, "Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab." Do you get that? Salmon married a woman named Rahab and had a son named Boaz. Boaz was the son of that prostitute from Jericho and that prostitute from Jericho is in the line of the Lord Jesus Christ along with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabitess. They're both in the line of Christ.

Our God is not a God who when he seems to be pushing away, he's actually saying, "Humble yourself and come. Know that you're unwilling but come." He always says, "Come." The last words in the Bible, "Come." Our God is a God of infinite mercy and so when you trust actively in the Lord, you cast yourself upon him, he will not turn you away. So when you come to difficult words, hard words, hard seasons in your life when you don't understand why God is doing what he's doing, trust him. Trust with what you do know for what you don't know. You don't understand why he's doing this, well, trust him with what you do know. I love how Romans 8:32, my favorite verse says, "If God did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not together with Him freely give us all things?" In the context of suffering he's saying, "When you're perplexed by your suffering," that's the context of Romans 8, you don't understand why, "remember this, if God didn't spare His Son but He delivered Him up, how can you doubt that He's going to give you anything but good things for all of eternity including right now?" It's only good things that he gives. It seems like a bad thing, put it in context of the

cross. The hard words of God must be interpreted in light of the clearer things and particularly the cross.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You for the reality of salvation through faith. We bring nothing. We have nothing to commend ourselves to You. Lord, in and of ourselves, as Your word says, our righteousness is filthy rags. The very best things that we do, Lord, are filthy in Your sight, compared against Your holy law, we are black with sin, and yet we come joyfully knowing that You have made a way to save, that Jesus Christ is a great Savior, that He knows exactly what we need and, Lord, we pray that You would help us to have humble hearts, we pray for those who have not humbled themselves and called upon the name of the Lord in truth to be saved, that today would be the day of salvation. Your word says today is the day of salvation. It doesn't say that we're to try to get our act in order, we try to clean things up ourselves. No, come to You today. Help them, Lord, do that, to cry out to Christ, to believe in His promise, that He saves those who trust in Him. And Father, for those who belong to You here, we pray that You would help us to be people who do continue in Your word, who submit to Your word, and who cast ourselves on Christ continually and, Lord, as we do so, we thank You that You're going to make us more joyful and more faithful. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.