

## Ordinary People

### The Syrophenician Woman – Woman of Faith

Explanation: An unidentified N.T. woman from the region of Tyre & Sidon. The Syrophenician Woman is described as **a Gentile, a woman**, and a **Greek-speaking native** of Phoenician coast.

- **In the Gospel of Matthew**, she is described as **a Canaanite woman**.
- **The woman is persistent** in her requests for Jesus to heal her daughter.
- She is **humble and respectful**, addressing **Jesus as “Lord”**.
- She is an example of someone **who accepts her outsider status** but **still seeks God’s goodness**.

***A woman of great faith who persisted in her request to have her demonically possessed daughter healed by Jesus.***

#### **Matthew 15:21-28 - The Faith of a Canaanite Woman**

<sup>21</sup> Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

<sup>24</sup> He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

<sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

<sup>26</sup> He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

<sup>27</sup> “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

***The Syrophenician woman is an example of an earnest, determined seeker.***

- She would **not** be discouraged...
- And the Lord held her up as **an example of great faith**.

## I. A WOMAN WHO WAS DESPERATE

*The setting for our lesson today* involves Jesus leaving, for the first time since His ministry began, His homeland of Israel. **The reason for His departure we may not know for certain.**

- Perhaps ***the difficulty of reaching His own people*** pushed Him beyond the boundaries of His own land.
- **Or possibly** His visit to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon was for the purpose of a much-needed rest and fellowship with His disciples.
- **Whatever the reason**, His fame preceded Him and news of His coming reached the ears of the **Syrophoenician woman**.
- She heard of the miracles and wonders this man performed.
- The impossible became possible by His words and the touch of His hands.

**Her faith came by hearing about His accomplishments.**

**Romans 10:17** - Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

**In desperation the Syrophoenician woman came seeking the Lord**

- ***Hoping to be the first*** to present her request and petition for help.
- **She knew in her heart** that if He could heal and help others, He also could help her family.

**The woman cried unto Jesus saying, Matt. 15:22 “*Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David*”.**

- Even though **she was a heathen**,
- She must have **sensed the Lord’s authority and power**.
- She **cried out in desperation** for mercy.
- She knew **He could** bring **deliverance** to her daughter.

**Following her cry for mercy,**

- The Syrophoenician woman **presented her petition to the Master**.
- She **did not** mince words.
- She **made her request** immediately.

**When we seek the Lord about a need, impressive or articulate language is not necessary. He knows our needs even before we ask.**

The Bible tells us to **Matthew 7:7 - *Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking*** "**Ask**, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; **knock**, and it will be opened to you.

- **What we must do is ask!**
- This exceptional woman came seeking the Lord -
- And in desperation cried out to Him for help.

## **II. A WOMAN WHO WAS DETERMINED**

**The Bible refers to the Syrophenician woman in two different ways:**

- Matthew called her "***a woman of Canaan,***" and
- Mark referred to her as "***a Greek.***"
- The word "***Greek***" often was used throughout the Bible when referring to Gentiles.
- She was a mixture of several different races.
- The Scriptures call her a Gentile because she was not Jewish.

**Jesus was probably weary from the pressures of His ministry. He usually responded immediately to such a cry for help.**

**The demoniac of Gadara cried unto Jesus and was delivered:**

**Mark 5:8 - For He said to him, "*Come out of the man, unclean spirit!*"**

***Jairus*, came to Jesus and "besought him greatly" concerning his daughter.**

***Jesus responded by raising her from the dead: Mark 5:41-42 -***

41 Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "***Little girl, I say to you, arise.***" 42 Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.

**When the Syrophenician woman made her request, Jesus remained silent.**

The Jews, loyal to their people, believed the Lord's lack of response was because the lady was a Gentile, for they despised all Gentiles.

**Matt. 15:23** Jesus did not answer a word. So, his disciples came to him and urged him, ***“Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”***

Yet, despite ***her background*** and knowing the Jews’ opinion of her people, ***she continued in her plea to Jesus.***

It would seem that ***the Lord just turned His back on*** the woman’s earnestness and suffering when He answered,

**Matt. 15:24** He answered, ***“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”***

- **The determined woman refused to take “No”** for an answer.
- **She knew Jesus could help her** and adamantly ***continued her pursuit*** of the Master.

**Matt.15:25** The woman came and knelt before him. ***“Lord, help me!”***

- ***She worshipped Him***, sobbing ***at His feet***, ***“Lord, help me.”***

***He then made a statement that would have made many turn away in despair and rejection:***

**Matt. 15:26** He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

***Possibly He countered her persistence with such a statement to make His mercy seem more apparent.***

- In other words, ***salvation was appointed for the Jews,***
- But because ***His own received Him not***, the ***Gentiles had a chance at salvation.***
- Our loving ***God never meant to portray the woman as a dog.***
- ***He knew the time had come to fulfill the purpose*** for His coming to earth.....

**Luke 19:10** - For the Son of Man came to ***seek and to save the lost.***”

**III. A WOMAN WHO DELIGHTED THE LORD** - The final repulse did not divert this remarkable woman from her mission.

- ***Such a statement from the Lord*** conceivably ***could have crushed her.***
- Instead, ***her humility*** came to the forefront when ***she acknowledged*** that ***she was unworthy*** of His help.

- She did not want a whole loaf of bread; **she would be satisfied with** whatever “**crumbs**” **He could offer** her in the way of help.

In our day, “**crumbs**” usually are not sufficient. **We want the “whole loaf.”**

- If we **cannot have** the “**whole loaf**,” just throw the crumbs away.

However, **the faith of the Syrophenician woman** was such that **she recognized that even the tiniest fraction of the Messiah’s power would be sufficient to meet her daughter’s needs.**

She was **not at all put off** that perhaps **she would not be given** the total of what He represented to His “**chosen**” people.

A plain, simple, humble woman **presented her petition** over and over again, and **in so Doing she moved the Maker of the universe to act on her behalf.**

Jesus declared that from the days of O.T. times **if someone was of a humble and contrite heart, they would not be cast out.**

It seems that **God Himself on this occasion saw the contrite and selfless attitude** of this woman as **an opportunity for mercy and truth to meet.**

- **Although the Lord** addressed the woman in a cool, authoritative manner, **she reciprocated with humility.**
- **He felt the faith and the hope of** this **humble, persistent** woman **who dared to press forward** with her appeal.
- **He then demonstrated again** that **He was the loving Savior of all mankind.**

The Syrophenician woman had great faith because she believed in Him although she was a Gentile.

- The appropriateness and humility of her answer **captivated the Savior** of the world.
- This woman continued **to show faith despite what appeared to be a closed door.**

She heard the Master gently answer, Matt. 15:28 “Woman, you have great faith!

*What an awesome compliment for the Lord to bestow on this lowly woman! She was only a Gentile.*

The Syrophenician woman had great faith because she would not be discouraged.

- When she first approached Jesus, He did not even acknowledge her with an answer.
- Still, she refused to be discouraged.
- She had a need.
- *Jesus then told her He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*
- She did not balk at that statement but continued to earnestly entreat the Master.

*Despite His rebuff, she worshipped Him and again asked His help.*

*The final statement would have driven many from the presence of Christ, but not this lady.*

She responded with humility, willing to accept whatever He could give her, even if only the “crumbs.”

Jesus met her request with silence, rejection, and rebuke.

- She turned each statement into a positive reaction.
- Her persistent faith brought her to a place –
- *Where God moved beyond the constraints of the old covenant.*

Obstacles continued to meet the Syrophenician’s request for mercy.

- *She knew* from hearing about Jesus that He could meet her need.
- She had to *overcome the intimidation* of approaching a group of people who considered her as someone worth nothing more than the slang term “dog.”
- It must have been difficult for her, but *she had made up her mind* that she would not waver from her mission.
- No matter what, she would not give up without His blessing.

- ***She persevered*** in her quest *just as Jacob of old wrestled with the angel* on that lonely mountainside (Genesis 32:24-29).

God only requires that we have **a small portion of faith**: Luke 17:6 - He replied, ***“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed,*** you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ **and it will obey you.**

- **The relentless pursuit** of the Syrophenician woman **far exceeded the Lord’s requirement of us.**

***The approval of the Master was evident when He spoke these wonderful words:*** Matt. 15:28 - ***“Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.”*** And **her daughter was healed** at that moment.

The Master succumbed to the supplication of the Syrophenician woman and **rewarded the faith found in her humility.**

- It was as if He said, ***“Okay, you win.***
- In spite of the silence, rebuff, and criticism, **you persisted and believed I would help you.**
- So, now **I will reward the faith** you displayed.”
- The limits Jesus set forth were **intended for a purpose.**

***Determination and resolve became apparent that day for all present.*** ***Perhaps Jesus wanted everyone*** in the crowd to **see one simple Syrophenician lady present to the world** the kind of faith that the Messiah would consider “great.”

***The woman disappeared down the dusty road, confident it would be as the Lord had told her.***

- **Who could tell** what joy must have filled her heart.
- She had ***stepped into the arena of faith.***
- She must have **understood that the Master had given her an opportunity to witness to the world** of the nature of great faith.

**CLOSE:** The Syrophenician woman **carried no genealogical credentials** that would have ***made her immediately included in the ministry and miracles of Jesus Christ,*** but it **did not** deter her.

***This desperate, faith-filled Syrophenician woman implored the Master for mercy. She reached through the veil of generational boundaries and found a handhold on the coming “new covenant.”***

***Perhaps the greatest desire of the Lord that day was that everyone present could see what He knew already to be—the humility, sincerity, and total absorption of faith of this woman.***

***He knew what she was, why she had come, and that she would not be turned away.***

***His comments were not to insult, but to offer to every person in history a pattern by which they could approach God.***

***His Word assures us that He will not turn away those who are humble and contrite:***

***John 6:37 - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.***

***Bowing that day, imploring and recognizing Jesus as her total source of help, the woman cried out without bitterness or any resentfulness concerning His words.***

***She left a testimony of strength for anyone who might follow.***