



The Mercy of Jesus Pt1: The Blessings of Perseverance!

April 11, 2021

Text: Matthew 15:21-28

- In our Text today, we will explore the faith and perseverance of a Canaanite woman who sought the LORD's help for her daughter.
- Despite her background, gender (in this day, women were 2nd class citizens), and the angst of the disciples, she was determined to see her daughter healed.
- We will look at our LORD's responses and prayerfully learn from them, but at the outset let me say that in general, we quit too quickly!
- In Christian doctrine, there is a teaching called "The Perseverance of the Saints," wherein God saves His people and keeps them by His own power.

John 10:27-30 (KJV) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.

- Today however, we are looking at practical perseverance, or from the perspective of *patience, determination, endurance, persistence, steadfastness and tenacity.*
- "Persistence in any thing undertaken; continued pursuit or prosecution of any business or enterprise begun." —Webster 1828 Dictionary
- I believe, more than ever, that God's people must persist in holiness and godliness, and not so quickly "throw in the towel" when things get difficult.

Why is quitting so easy?

1. Because the difficulty is greater than the desire.
2. Because it often makes provision for the flesh.
3. Because it takes no effort; it is the path of least resistance.
4. Everybody else does it!

What Scripture says about Practical Perseverance

- *Psalms 27:13-14 (KJV) I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*
- *Isaiah 40:30-31 (KJV) Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*
- *1 Corinthians 15:51-58 (KJV) 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved*

brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

- **Galatians 6:9 (KJV)** And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
- **Ephesians 6:10-18 (KJV)** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. **11** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **12** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. **13** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. **14** Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; **15** And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **16** Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. **17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: **18** Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
- **Colossians 1:21-23 (KJV)** And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled **22** In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: **23** If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;
- **1 Timothy 4:13-16 (KJV)** Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. **14** Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. **15** Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. **16** Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.
- **Hebrews 10:35-39 (KJV)** Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. **36** For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. **37** For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. **38** Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. **39** But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.
- **James 1:2-4 (KJV)** My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; **3** Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. **4** But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.
- **James 1:12 (KJV)** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (remains steadfast under trial, ESV): for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
- **Revelation 3:11 (KJV, to Philadelphia)** Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
- **Revelation 2:9-10 (KJV, to Smyrna)** I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. **10** Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Amen!

Exposition of the Holy Text:

Matthew 15:21 (KJV) Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

- After silencing the Pharisees and Scribes, our LORD departed Gennesaret to the region of Phoenicia. Tyre and Sidon, about whom He pronounced woes (Matt 11), were nearby.

Matthew 15:22 (KJV) And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

- To truly mine the riches of this passage, it's important to understand the extraordinary nature of this exchange.

“It is important to realize that this woman was not a Jewess, but a Gentile. She was descended from the Canaanites, an immoral race which God had marked for extinction. Through Israel's disobedience, some had survived the invasion of Canaan under Joshua, and this woman was a descendant of the survivors. As a Gentile, she did not enjoy the privileges of God's chosen earthly people. She was an alien, having no hope. Positionally she had no claim on God or the Messiah.”¹

- In other words, she was an enemy! And yet she persisted despite her ethnicity and background! Courageous!
- She also had enough spiritual sense to 1) Know that her family was under spiritual attack, 2) Go to Jesus!
- I simply love her prayer: “Have mercy on me, or Lord, thou Son of David!” Why?
 1. Because it was humble. To ask for mercy is to know one doesn't deserve it. Mark tells us “she fell at His feet.” (Mark 7:25)
 2. Because she acknowledges Jesus' authority by calling him “Lord.” The title “Lord” is the honorific one most often associated with Jesus. It is the Greek word *kurios* which means “(supremacy); *supreme* in authority, that is, (as noun) *controller*.” (Strong's) The phrase “Lord Jesus” appears nearly 120 times in the New Testament!
 3. Because she used His messianic title as well: “Son of David.” It was a way of both acknowledging God's redemptive plan through Israel AND her need for such a Savior, despite her lineage.
- Concerning the demonic possession, various arguments abound in the modern Church as to the activity of unclean spirits today. We believe like Paul that we still wrestle with principalities and powers (Eph 6:12) and that unclean spirit activity did not end with the close of the cannon.

Matthew 15:23 (KJV) But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

- Our LORD's initial response is remarkable. He doesn't say a word. Imagine this! Is he looking at her? Looking away? Concerned? Nonchalant?

¹ William MacDonald, Bible Commentary, 1995.

- Have you ever felt like God was silent? What did you do?
- Well, the disciples weren't silent. They obviously knew that she was a Canaanite (Mark tells us she was also Greek, 7:26) and wanted to shoo her away.

Matthew 15:24 (KJV) But he answered and said, *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

- In other words, "I am not for you Gentile." This clearly must have sounded like a refusal!
- Remember, the mysteries of the Gospel has yet to be revealed: that Jesus would die for Jew and Gentile alike. (Acts 2; Ephesians 3)

Matthew 15:25 (KJV) Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

- She just received, essentially, a "No" from Jesus. She could not change her ethnicity after all.
- Yet... She. Did. Not. Quit. She persevered!
- She didn't move away; she moved closer! She didn't get angry; she worshipped! She didn't argue; she petitioned harder!

Matthew 15:26 (KJV) But he answered and said, *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.*

- Our LORD's second reply sounds at first...well...kinda brutal. Did He call her a dog?
- I believe Jesus wasn't being harsh; I believe He was testing her.

To further probe the reality of her faith, Jesus told her that it was not good for Him to turn aside from feeding the Jewish children in order to give bread to Gentile dogs. If this sounds harsh to us, we should remember that, like the surgeon's scalpel, it was not intended to hurt but to heal. She *was* a Gentile. The Jews looked upon the Gentiles as scavenging dogs, prowling the streets for scraps of food. However, Jesus here used the word for little pet dogs. The question was, "Would she acknowledge her unworthiness to receive the least of His mercies?"²

- Now at this point, what would you have done? Be honest!

Matthew 15:27 (KJV) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

- Her response teaches us much about her meekness and faith, her belief in Jesus, and her desire to see her daughter healed.
 1. She STILL did not get angry!
 2. She admitted to being a dog!
 3. She would be content with scraps!
- All that mattered to her was that the LORD answered her petition!
- How might personal offense and pride be limiting you in prayer and worship? Can you admit to being a dog—that is—being totally unworthy of the LORD's time, attention, and blessing?

Matthew 15:28 (KJV) Then Jesus answered and said unto her, *O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

² William MacDonald, Bible Commentary, 1995.

- What great faith according to Jesus! Because of her perseverance, our LORD granted her petition!
- Again, what made the faith of this woman so remarkable?
 1. She had much against her in her original circumstances. In the eye of a Jew she belonged to the most hated of all the Gentile races. There was a frontier line of dislike to cross, far wider than any distance between Tyre and Palestine. Yet it did not keep her from finding her way to the great Teacher of the Jewish nation.
 2. She got little countenance from Christ's disciples. Annoyed at her importunity, and desiring to be freed from the trouble of her presence, they desired Christ to send her away. She could not but feel they would gladly be rid of her, in the way some cast an alms to a persistent beggar. Weaker faith would have felt the chill, and would have desisted. But it is not from them that she seeks an answer. She will take her dismissal from none but Christ Himself.
 3. The woman's faith reaches its greatest trial in the conduct of Christ. The disciples, cold as they are, seem merciful compared with their Master. As she cries, and pours her heart into her prayer, He moves away with silent neglect. That dreadful silence is harder to bear than the sorest word that can be spoken. Still she cried after Him, and at last He spoke. But His words, were they not even harder than His silence? For He did not speak to her, but only of her, and that in such a slighting manner as almost to quench all hope. Still she persists, and at length-as Christ all along intended she should-gains her heart's desire.³
- Whatever our LORD's motives for His initial denials, He was impressed by her tenacity and faith.
- I personally believe there were at least three things going on in the merciful heart of our LORD:
 1. To strengthen the woman's faith and demonstrate His great mercy.
 2. To teach the disciples something about the nature of His Kingdom. It would be open to Jew and Gentile alike, by faith in Him. It would also view women as joint-heirs with men.
 3. To teach us all a lesson about faith...about trust...about not letting go and giving up.
- Don't give up friends! Not on our LORD!
- Again from the Biblical Illustrator:

We must not let Jesus go. If He goes away, follow Him; if He seems to be stern, become more urgent; if He hides His face, cry the louder; if He will not listen, assail His heart. Every No of Jesus is an Aye in disguise. It is true we deserve none of the things we pray for; but He has enough and to spare for all; and after the children are filled, He can afford to cast the crumbs to the dogs. If we have but the crumbs from His rich table, we shall be satisfied. Even if we are the last in His kingdom, it is sufficient, so that we only have some share of His grace. If it is only one look of His eye; only one glance from Him. If we are not allowed to rest on His breast with John, we shall be satisfied if only with Thomas we are permitted to behold the print of the nails. And when we have become quite exhausted in wrestling with Him, and all our strength is broken; when, so to speak, the hollow of our thigh is out of joint; when we can only cling to Him and declare we will not let Him go except He bless us; even then we shall overcome...⁴

³ The Biblical Illustrator, 1978.

⁴ The Biblical Illustrator, 1978.

And from this for of faith and perseverance, our LORD receives glory!

Some Closing Encouragement:

The Blessings of Perseverance

1. When we persevere, we learn about God's mercy and providence.
2. When we persevere, our faith is strengthened.
3. When we persevere, our humility rises as we wait upon God.
4. When we persevere, we set a godly example for others.
5. When we persevere, the devil is defeated.
6. When we persevere, often, our LORD will reward us.
7. When we persevere, we give glory and honor to Christ.

Things in which to Persevere

1. Faith, Hope and Charity!
2. Your personal worship and the study of Scripture
3. Humility and dying to self
4. Your daily battle against sin
5. Your most important relationships
6. Discipling your children
7. Your requests in prayer, according to God's will
8. The Truth, despite circumstances and persecutions
9. Serving the LORD's Church
10. Your calling or vocation
11. Your stewardship and generosity
12. Your personal health and nutrition

The Canaanite woman persevered. Despite the initial rebuff from Jesus, she pressed on in humility and faith. Somehow, she knew that if the LORD consented, her daughter would be made well.

Review these things with your children and friends. Encourage them to press on in Jesus!

May you and your family persevere in the things of God. Sometimes, tests will come. Honor God by trusting and pursuing Him, regardless of what it looks like or how it feels. Jesus loved the Canaanite woman, and He loves you too.

Amen.