



“Faith That Overcomes”

Matthew 15:21–28

The Authority of the King

Barriers to Faith

1. Barrier of Gender

In that culture, it was unusual for a woman to approach a group of men like this (cf. John 4:27), and she didn’t know if she would be received or rejected.

A prayer in the Talmud that rabbis used to recite daily: “Thank you God that I was not born a slave, a Gentile, or a woman.”

2. Barrier of Race

Verse 21 – “Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.”

Land of Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon). Tyre was 35 miles north of Galilee on the Mediterranean coast.

- This is the only record of Jesus leaving the geographical borders of Israel!

The woman was a Canaanite (v. 22) – a descendant of Israel’s ancient enemy. But she didn’t let race or ethnicity stop her from coming to Jesus.

Was this a random encounter or a divine appointment? I believe it was a deliberate and strategic mission to a Gentile nation that foreshadowed the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20).

3. Barrier of Religion

As a Canaanite, the woman would have been raised in a pagan, polytheistic religion. One of the deities she probably worshiped was Baal: the god of rain, thunder, lightning and war. By seeking out Jesus for help, she risked being ostracized by her family and friends. How did she know so much about Jesus?

Verse 22 – “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David...”

4. Barrier of Suffering

Verse 22 – “My daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”

5. Barrier of Silence

Verse 23 – “But He did not answer her a word.”

Augustine: “The Word spoke not a word.” This is very out of character for Jesus. When we are waiting, God is working, and we have to be patient. His blessings aren’t instantaneous.

6. Barrier of Indifference

Verse 23 – “And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, ‘Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.’”

7. Barrier of Discouragement

Verse 24 – “But He answered and said, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”

- The principle throughout the New Testament: salvation came first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles (cf. Romans 1:16).

Verse 25 – “But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’”

- This woman is one of the greatest—if not the greatest—examples of persistent faith in the Bible.

8. Barrier of Pride

Verse 26 – “And He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’”

Jesus is not being cruel. Two clues:

- He makes a theological point (cf. v. 25).
- He uses a Greek word for “dogs” that refers to pets, little house dogs, not wild dogs.

Verses 27–28 – “But she said, ‘Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters’ 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.”

- She recognized she was not a child (in the family of Israel). She was humble and didn’t take offense.
- This was a test of her faith, and she passed!

Application: What do you need help with today? What barriers are you facing? Do you have the kind of faith that will overcome?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think the encounter Jesus had with this Canaanite woman was a random event or a divine appointment? What’s so unique about this story in the Gospels?
2. Do you think this woman had saving faith in Jesus? Why or why not?
3. What do you make of the controversial statement in verse 26? Do you think Jesus was testing the woman’s faith?
4. What is the biggest obstacle to your faith that you are facing right now? What can you do to overcome it?
5. What main lesson or application are you going to take away from the message this week?