

The Exemplary Faith of a Syrophenician Woman
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Text: Mark 7:24-30 (see also Matt. 15:21-28)

Gospel of Mark: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Syrophenician Woman's Faith

Central Idea of Message: Being a Jew or a Gentile does not matter to Jesus, what matters is coming to him with faith that he possesses the authority and power to do what we need.

Introduction: Abraham, a Mesopotamian from Ur of the Chaldees was called by God to become the father of a multitude who would become a spiritual blessing to all peoples! That was before there were Jews.

Jonah, an Israelite, was sent to evangelize the hated Assyrians!

Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, was a Canaanite who hid the twelve spies and later became the wife of Salmon, a Jew, and is in the lineage of Jesus.

Ruth, a Moabite widow, married a Jew named Boaz and is also in the lineage of Jesus.

Non-Jews were always in God's sights.

Here is Mark's account of the strong faith of a Syrophenician woman begging Jesus to heal her daughter.

I. The Request (vv. 24-26)

A. From Capernaum to Tyre (v. 24)

1. Jesus left Capernaum and headed northwest into Phoenicia [Gentile territory]
 - a) Which shows utter disregard for the scribes' and Pharisees' concept of defilement!
 - b) Jews normally had nothing to do with Gentiles
 - c) Jesus was about to make some heads spin!
 - d) Mark was writing mostly for non-Jewish readers, whom he wanted to know were also included in the scope of Jesus' ministry
2. Tyre
 - a) Phoenician port city about twenty miles from Sidon along the west coast of Palestine where it met the Mediterranean Sea (see map)
 - b) Modern-day Lebanon

3. He entered a house and wanted nobody to know he was there
 - a) Craving rest and privacy for him and his twelve disciples
 - b) Had walked two days in ascending and then descending terrain
 - c) Seeking a place of refuge from the hostilities of the scribes and Pharisees
 - d) Wanting time alone with the Twelve to teach them
 - e) Not there for public ministry
 - f) Yet, he could not escape notice, even in non-Jewish territories
- B. The desperate mother finds Jesus (v. 25)
 1. A certain woman heard that Jesus was in the city and learned his whereabouts
 2. Mark explains that the woman had a little daughter who was afflicted by an unclean spirit
 - a) How old was the girl?
 - b) At this point we don't know
 - c) She was demon-possessed
 - d) But how had this happened?
 - (1) Something mom was doing?
 - (2) Mother or daughter toying with practices associated with the occult [sorcery, witchcraft, etc.]?
 - (3) Mother or daughter involved in prostitution?
 - (4) Where was the father?
 - e) No symptoms or explanations are given
 3. Upon locating Jesus, the desperate mother immediately came to Jesus and fell at his feet, an obvious show of respect for him
- C. The desperate mother implores Jesus (v. 26)
 1. The woman was not a Jew but a Gentile [non-Jew]
 2. Specifically, Mark writes that she was a Greek of the Syrophenician race
 - a) Greek in religion and language
 - b) Syrian in regional government affiliation
 - c) Phoenician in race
 - (1) Phoenicians were of Canaanite descent (cf. Dummelow 678)
 - (2) So she was a Canaanite, like Rahab the harlot (cf. Matt. 15:22)
 3. She kept asking Jesus, that is over and over, to cast the demon out of her daughter

4. Note the interchangeable use of demon here for unclean spirit in v. 25

II. The Response (vv. 27-30)

- A. The reply of Jesus: "Let the children be satisfied *first*, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (v. 27)
 1. The children: here means Israelite or Jew in general and perhaps his twelve disciples in particular (cf. Grassmick 2:135)
 2. Satisfied first (see Matt.15:22-24)
 - a) The key word here is *first*!
 - b) He did not say *only*!
 - c) Jesus was saying that this initial phase of his ministry was targeted toward the Jewish people
 - d) Israel had been selected by God to be the first beneficiaries of the Messiah's rule
 - e) **Jews were the "chosen channel" (Wuest 1:152) through which God's plan to reach the world would flow**
 3. Not good
 - a) Inappropriate in terms of timing and chronological sequence
 - b) Gentiles came second, not first, in God's plan
 - c) **This incident would serve to teach the Twelve that the scope of Jesus' ministry would have no boundaries**
 4. The bread: the healing and teaching ministry of Jesus
 5. The little dogs
 - a) Puppies
 - b) In this context, non-Jews
 - c) Household companions fed after the children ate, not before [note that Jesus encourages taking care of the household dogs]
 6. Not a rude remark from Jesus
 - a) "Jesus' tone took all the poison out of the word" (Barclay 207)
 - b) Probably quoting a popular adage
 - c) Not calling her a "dog"
 - d) Beloved household pets
- B. The mother's answer: "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs" (v. 28)
 1. Calls Jesus "Lord"

- a) Respectful, like "sir"
- b) She probably knew nothing of his deity (cf. Wuest 1:153)
- 2. The little dogs wanted to eat too
 - a) Typical of kids dropping plenty of crumbs on the floor for the dogs to feast on!
 - b) She was imploring Jesus to throw her a bone
 - c) **The woman believed in Jesus' power to cast out the demon inhabiting her daughter, which was a small crumb thrown her way compared to the vastness of his power and teaching already given to the Jews**
 - d) She was saying, "May I have a crumb?"
- C. Faith activated the power of Jesus (v. 29)
 - 1. Jesus loved her response!
 - a) It showed wit
 - b) It showed grit
 - c) It showed humility
 - d) It showed faith
 - 2. Jesus told her to go her way, presumably back to her daughter, that the demon was gone (cf. Matt. 15:28)
 - 3. She had understood and accepted her place as second to a Jew in terms of chronological ministry
 - 4. Jesus performed an exorcism from afar without an audible command and had done so because the mother's answer to his initial balk at complying with her wish had more than adequately demonstrated her faith in him to cure her daughter
- D. What was waiting on the mother back at her home (v. 30)
 - 1. The young child [daughter] was lying on the bed
 - a) The word *παιδίον* indicates a child under the age of puberty
 - b) The Greek word actually suggests that she had been thrown on the bed: *βεβλημένον* from *βάλλω*
 - c) Likely a result of a convulsion as the demon angrily exited her body (cf. Mark 9:22; Vincent 1:204)
 - 2. The demon had been cast out and was gone for good
 - 3. Her little girl was cured!

Conclusion: Principles.

(1) If you want Christ to do something for you, respect, humility, persistence, and faith can go a long way.

(2) Acknowledging Jesus as *Lord* is the wisest thing we could ever do.

(3) Jesus granting the wish of a non-Jew indicates that the scope of his ministry was inclusive of all people and serves as an inauguration of his ministry expanding to Gentiles [non-Jews].

(4) Being a Jew or a Gentile does not matter to Jesus, what matters is coming to him with faith that he possesses the authority and power to do what we need and believing that there is a place for everyone, including you, in God's grace.

(5) Faith in action is sometimes a hard thing to find. It is something much easier to talk about having than to show that we have it. The Syrophenician woman had it - for real.

(6) "As Bengel beautifully remarks, Jesus "marvelled" only at two things - faith and *unbelief*" (see Luke 7:9; Bengel in Brown 2:76).

(7) Is Jesus marveling today at your faith - or at your unbelief?