

Crumbs of Grace

Matthew 15:21-28

Introduction

In most Bibles, this story is labeled, “The Faith of a Canaanite Woman.” There’s nothing wrong with that. The Canaanite woman is the central figure in the story, next to Jesus. And in her faith, she gets Jesus’ attention, pesters Him to help her, and finally convinces Him with humility and humor to heal her child. She does all this by **faith** and Jesus rewards her and compliments her on her **faith**. Compare that with the story about Peter walking on the water last week: *“Oh you of little faith” (Matthew 14:31)*. But you know me; I like to turn these stories over in my mind and look at them from other directions. I want to look at what it is she’s asking for. She’s asking in faith, but what does she want?

What the Woman Wants

I know, you’re thinking I’ve gone a little loopy. It’s obvious what she wants. She says so right in **verse 22**: *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”* And in **verse 25**, *“Lord, help me.”* She wants Jesus to heal her daughter by casting out a demon. So, what do I mean by asking, “What does she want?” Look at how she addresses Jesus, *“Lord, Son of David.”* That’s a Messianic reference. *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit (Isaiah 11:1)*. The “stump” of Jesse is his son, David. All the kings in David’s line were called his sons. But Isaiah is talking here specifically about the Messiah. So, “Son of David” came to be known as a Messianic title. She’s heard about the miracles Jesus has performed and what everyone is saying about Him. Even though she isn’t a Jew, she recognizes Him as the Chosen One, sent from God. He has the power of God. Any time we ask something of God, we’re asking for grace.

Grace—God’s Gift to Us

What is grace? We sing about it; we talk about it, but do we understand it? Any time God does anything for us, that is an act of grace. It’s an act of grace because He’s not obliged to do anything for us. He does these things simply because He wants to. Or, as it says in the **Small Catechism**: *All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.* For Jesus to cast out the demon would be an act of grace. But when we think of His grace, we find a deeper meaning. There’s an old acronym that helps us understand it a little: it says that grace is “**God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.**” Salvation is the riches of God received at Christ’s expense as our sins are forgiven for His sake.

Attaining Grace

If grace is what God does for us and He does it freely, this means it’s a **gift**. How do we get this gift of grace? We **ask**. That’s what the woman in the story did. She asked for help and she got it. When we ask, we must ask in faith. The woman’s faith was shown in her **persistence**. If she didn’t have the faith that Jesus could and would help her, she would have gone away after He had told her that He was sent to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*. If she hadn’t already left when He ignored her. We persist only in faith.

Only Through Faith

So, Paul says in **Ephesians 2:8**, *For by grace you have been saved through faith*. We're saved by grace, it's a gift of God, freely given, because He wants to, given for the sake of Christ. We receive the gift of grace through faith. That's why Paul tells the Philippian jailer, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved"* (**Acts 16:31**). Faith is the only means by which we can receive God's grace. The **Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration** says in **Article III, The Righteousness of Faith Before God**, *It [faith] alone, and nothing else, is the means and instrument with and through which God's grace and Christ's merit in the Gospel promise are received, apprehended, accepted, and appropriated.*

We Cannot Merit Grace

There's **nothing** we can do to merit grace. We can't **earn** it. We don't **deserve** it. We could never be "good enough" to **merit** it. Notice that Jesus makes it clear the woman does not deserve His grace. He has come to the *lost sheep of Israel* and she is only a *dog*, literally, a "puppy." All we can do is accept grace through faith, just like the woman.

The Product of Grace

While, as we said, every gift of God is a gift of grace, the greatest gift He has given us is **salvation** through the forgiveness of sins. Because of sin, we are dead before God. There's nothing we can do about it. We need His grace to remove the stain of **original** sin. We also need His grace to forgive our **actual** sins, the ones we commit. Through His grace we receive the promise of salvation. And He turns us to Christ. Once more, the **Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration**, under **Article II, Free Will**, says: *It [Conversion] happens by the Holy Spirit's power through the Word when it is preached and heard, out of pure grace, without any cooperation of his [the convert's] own.*

The Power of Grace

How powerful is God's grace? The woman knew. She said the **crumbs** from the Master's table would be plenty. We don't need an outpouring of grace. I know a pastor who has a glass of water with one drop of wine in it for a parishioner who is addicted to alcohol. It's not enough to trigger a relapse, but "one drop of Christ's blood" is more than enough for our sins. That's how powerful His grace is. That's why we are satisfied with the **CRUMBS OF GRACE**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
