

Explore the Bible: October 1

Includes • Mark 7:24-37

By Rick Henson



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One woman begged for healing for her daughter who had an unclean spirit. The woman was a Greek, meaning she had embraced the Hellenistic language, culture, and education though her heritage was Syrophenician.

The Book of Matthew version adds she was a Canaanite. The Greeks were the sophisticated elite of the day and considered themselves to be wise and all others as Barbarians.

Tyre and Sidon were located in modern day Lebanon where the people usually worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth, their Father and Mother gods. From the few descriptions of the woman, we can imagine what she had tried before calling on Jesus.

If she utilized her Greek teachings, she would employ reason to understand why her daughter was demon possessed, though human logic fails to explain evil. The Stoics would have told her to endure the situation while the Epicureans might encourage her to embrace it and find the good in it.

The unnamed woman may have previously called on Baal or Ashtoreth to cast out the demon, though they would have been as impotent as Dagon at the temple at Ashdod, as told in 1 Samuel 5:1-5.

Psalm 115:5-7 also reads, *They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk (NKJ)*. Her pleas were met with silence.

Surely people where she lived spoke of the miracle man in Israel, for Jesus by this time was known far and wide. I wonder how long she considered whether to leave her people's religion since the daughter's condition did not improve.

She loved her daughter and decided to ask Jesus to free her from the evil. When she found and approached Him, Jesus would not talk to her. In fact, according to Matthew's account His disciples encouraged Him to send her away.

Imagine going to a church and the deacons telling the pastor not to speak to you. Yet she persisted. The verbs in the original language denote continued action. She KEPT on asking and CONTINUALLY begging, even screaming at them.

Finally Jesus answered her, I imagine without looking at her. Jesus told her that He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel (not a flattering description of the proud Jews). The woman bowed low before Him, persisting and begging Him.

She called Him the Son of David and Lord, so she had learned about the Hebrew prophecies of the Messiah.

Jesus answered, *Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs (Mark 7:27 NKJ)*. Jesus did not insult the woman since the word for dogs here refers to a family pet and not a derisive term usually applied to Gentiles. He simply used an illustration of a family eating in order to test the woman.

When Jesus said to her in verse 27, *Let the children be filled first (NKJ)*, He was presenting the pattern for the Gospel continued in Romans 1:16, which reads, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (NKJ)*.

The distraught Gentile woman replied, *Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs (Mark 7:28 NKJ)*. By replying, *Yes, Lord*, she demonstrated humility before Jesus and called Him Lord, which is a sign of her submission to Him.

The Scripture tells us in verse 25 the woman worshiped Jesus, demonstrating humility and faith. She believed Jesus could speak deliverance, even from a distance for she had left her daughter at home.

Jesus recognized this and spoke of her faith in His reply: *O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire (NKJ)*. The Matthew account adds that Jesus said, *Great is your faith (Matthew 15:28 NKJ)*.

Jesus delivered her daughter from the ravages of a demon, the texts saying that she returned home to find her daughter no longer possessed by a demon. Jesus' power to heal from a distance was shown also in John 4:43f and Matthew 8:15f, revealing His astonishing ability to see over distances and perform miracles. O, what a Savior!

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