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**"THE DOGS EAT OF THE CRUMBS WHICH FALL FROM
THE CHILDREN'S TABLE."**

– APRIL 3. – MATT. 15:21-31. –

"Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."
– Matt. 15:25.

SIDON and Tyre lay between Galilee and the Mediterranean sea, and the border line of these two countries, where they touched the land of Israel, are in this lesson called the "coasts." Our Lord did not go into the countries of Tyre and Sidon, for those were Gentile countries, and he had already instructed his disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles. His journey, mentioned in this lesson, was still in Israel, in Galilee, but over toward the border of Tyre and Sidon. The woman who is the central figure came from the Gentile side of the border: she no doubt had heard of Israel's hope in a coming Messiah, who would be of the house of David, and whose Kingdom it was predicted should be a universal Kingdom. And she had undoubtedly heard also of Jesus and his wonderful works, and of his claim that he was Israel's Messiah. Hearing of his close approach to her neighborhood, she came to him on behalf of her daughter [R2280 : page 96] who was possessed of a demon, obsessed.* In harmony with her knowledge she cried to Jesus for help, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed of a devil."

*See – [What Say the Scriptures about Spiritism?](#)

Our Lord's course in making no answer for a time was perhaps intended to test the woman's faith as well as to manifest it to others, then and since. Perhaps also his delay was in order to consider well the path of duty, the work which the Father had given him to do. What a lesson is here for us: if our Master went into the wilderness and into

the mountain to pray and to meditate, and if here he paused to consider the Father's will, how much more need have we to do so; – we, whose judgments have so often proved to be unsound, and who know that to begin with we are sadly fallen and imperfect. Our dear Master's caution should be a reproof and a lesson to us; for how apt the majority are to speak and act without one moment's thought respecting the will of our Father in heaven.

Our Lord was perhaps weighing the subject, fully recognizing the fact that his powers were to be specially used with Israel and Israel only, as he himself had testified. He seems to have been considering whether or not he might reasonably and properly reward the faith of the supplicant. While he delayed to answer, his disciples seemingly took up the woman's cause, whether from sympathy or from vexation because she was interrupting their opportunity for study and communion with the Lord, we cannot judge; but their suggestion evidently was that the Lord grant her request and "send her away" in peace. As tho still weighing the question and as tho desirous that the disciples should discern the logic of his course and the propriety of his decision, he answered the disciples, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." – Verse 24.

Quite probably the poor woman heard our Lord's disclaimer of any mission to the Gentiles; but so great was her love for her daughter, and so great her faith in the Lord's power, that she persisted, and falling before the Master, she worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me." Her daughter's cause was her cause. Our Lord's response, that it would not be proper to take the food away from the children of God to give it to dogs, she understood fully. She recognized Israel as the children of the Kingdom that God had promised to their father Abraham and his seed; and she well knew that all Gentiles were reckoned as "dogs." But our Lord's language seemed nevertheless to give her some hope, for it would appear that he used a word **[R2281 : page 96]** for dogs which signifies not ferocious dogs but house-dogs – dogs which were friends and companions of the children. And so

the poor woman, taking advantage of this thought, pressed her prayer for help, saying that the friendly dogs do get some of the children's bread, sometimes, cast to them from the table: and she desired that some crumb of favor might be granted to her. Our Lord was greatly touched by her faith which, while persistent, was not intrusive nor assertive; and as a result her prayer was granted. Her daughter was healed.

Here, too, we have a valuable lesson respecting what course is pleasing to our Lord when we approach him; for our Lord *approved* the woman's course. Let us note that she was not brazen and assertive. She did not attempt to be wiser or more just than God, and to criticize his partiality toward the elect seed of Abraham. So far from demanding that her wishes be granted instanter she did not even express a wish. She merely told the Lord the nature of her trouble, and said, "Lord have mercy on me." "Lord help me." She left it entirely to the Lord's wisdom *how* the help and mercy should be bestowed.

Alas! how many Christians of years of experience have less idea of how to approach the Lord acceptably than had this poor heathen woman. But it is not too late to learn better. Let us remember this example of what was pleasing and acceptable eighteen centuries ago; for we deal with the same Lord who changes not. Sometimes our Lord may be pleased to grant physical relief and at other times he may do as he did to Paul – give us the *more grace* to bear the physical ills, saying "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Turning his course inward again toward the Sea of Galilee, our Lord rested in the mountain and healed the multitudes, lame, blind, etc., all "afflicted of the devil." For we are to remember that all afflictions are either directly or indirectly of Satan: by his temptations he first induced our first parents to sin, and thus brought upon them the penalty of sin, death, – with all its train of attendant evil, pain,

sickness, sorrow; difficulty, mental, physical and moral. And subsequently, all the way down, by additional temptations to sin, through the pride of life, the lust of the eye, etc., Satan has continued to ensnare and to injure the fallen race. And thus all sickness and blemish, of every kind, may be either directly or indirectly charged to him. Our Lord in healing the people was doing so much in offset to the work of Satan; but all that was done in the few years of his earthly ministry, was only a type, a figure, a foreshadowing of the great coming work of blessing the world with restitution – which will include not only physical, but mental and moral recuperation and release from Satan's power. "For this purpose Christ was manifested that he might destroy death and him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil." – Heb. 2:14; Acts 3:19-21.

It is claimed by some that miracles are impossibilities and the reason that they give is that they are contrary to the laws of nature. But this is shallow reasoning. Every person of observation knows that mankind has the skill and ability to overcome the laws of nature to some extent, and that he frequently does so to his own comfort and advantage. For instance, gravity is one of the known laws of nature, yet, every time we walk upstairs and are lifted upward in an elevator, we are overcoming and going contrary to the laws of nature. According to this same law of nature water gravitates downward, yet by overcoming this law of nature with pumps, etc., mankind has one of his greatest conveniences in the waterworks systems of the civilized world. If then the laws of nature can be controlled to some extent by man for his own convenience, how much more able is God to control the operation of his own laws, so that all things shall work together for good to them that love him; – and for the carrying out of any and all of the divine purposes, in this age and in the ages to come.
