

"LORD, HELP ME!" – MATT. 15:25.

– MARK 7:24-30. – *JULY 15.* –

AFTER OUR LORD'S discourse on the bread from heaven (we know not how long after) he and his disciples went westward to the border of Phoenicia. There, entering into a house with the evident design of secluding himself from general notice, and possibly to gain quiet and rest, the Lord was quickly discovered by a Syro-Phoenician mother, whose daughter was possessed of a demon, and who availed herself of this opportunity to importune the Lord for her daughter's deliverance. The fame of Jesus and his miracles, in the healing of the sick, etc., had evidently extended throughout that region, yet it must also have been known that Jesus was a Jew, and that his miracles and favors were confined to his own race.

We can readily see that there were numerous obstacles to the woman's faith, and the strength of faith which surmounted them compels admiration.

(1) She was a foreigner, a heathen, for whom God had manifested no favors, "without God and having no hope in the world." (Eph. 2:12.) Hence, coming to Jesus she not only had to overcome the prejudices of her own heathen ideas and instruction from infancy, but had also to overcome everything akin to pride and the fear of being despised and rejected as one unworthy of the favor she sought.

(2) As a poor and uneducated woman she would naturally have great diffidence in approaching a learned man, especially one so notable as this great Prophet of Israel, of whom no doubt she had heard much.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, her love for her daughter, and her confidence in Jesus, were so great that she sought him out; and after the manner of that time and place, in a loud voice and probably with

weeping, "cried" to the Lord for compassion and assistance, in her trouble, saying, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." She met with a rebuff at the very start, for according to Matthew's account (15:23) our Lord ignored her entirely, not answering her a word. To many this would have been sufficient to have discouraged faith, and sent them away weeping; but not so with this woman: she kept up her cries and importunities. She was confident that the Lord had the power to assist her, and had not yet refused to do so, and hence her faith continued to cling.

The disciples seem to have been annoyed with her cries, which probably kept up for some time, and Jesus and the disciples had evidently left the house in which they were lodging and proceeded on their journey, the woman still following and crying out for assistance. The disciples came and besought him, saying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Our Lord's answer to the disciples would seem to indicate that the meaning of the apostles' words was that he should grant her request and send her away; and his answer shows why he delayed so doing. The blessings he had to give were for God's covenanted people, the typical seed of Abraham, and this woman was not of that nation to which God had granted much favor every way; she was of a heathen nation, with whom God had not entered into any covenant relationship whatever, and for whom as yet he had done nothing. Our Lord explained this to the disciples, and in the hearing of the woman, not merely for their benefit and hers, but also, we may presume, for our admonition.

Altho our Lord would seem to have been resisting **[R2653 : page 191]** the woman and unwilling to grant her favor, we consider it not unreasonable to suppose that he thoroughly understood the case from the beginning, and that he adopted the method he did to draw out her faith, preparatory to the giving of the blessing desired.

And herein we have a lesson respecting persistency in entreating the Lord for relief from the power of the devil, however exercised, whether in our friends or in ourselves. As the woman knew that the case was a hopeless one as respected relief from any other quarter, so we know to hope for relief from the Adversary only through the Lord's interposition. Like this woman, therefore, our faith should be equal to the emergency, and should persistently hold on to the Lord for the blessing which, with a greater knowledge than she, we may be sure he will be pleased to grant in his own due time and way. "Shall not the Lord avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, tho he bear long with them?" (Luke 18:7.) If in our case the Lord shall not see best to grant a prompt response to our prayer, "Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One" (Matt. 6:13), we may be sure that it is not from lack of interest in our welfare, for has he not manifested his interest by redeeming us, and by calling us to joint-heirship in the heavenly Kingdom? If then the response shall not come in the way or at the time we had inclined to hope, let faith still hold her anchorage in the divine goodness and power, and in the exceeding great and precious promises, and let us remember that according to these the time, at very farthest, will not be long, until the Millennial Kingdom, when the great Adversary shall be bound, and deliverance full and complete from his power shall be granted, not only to ourselves and those immediately dependent, but also to all of the "groaning creation" now under his baneful influence.

The hearing of the reason why she had been ignored, so far from discouraging the poor woman, seemingly convinced her the more that Jesus had the power to help her, and, quite probably in front of him, she prostrated herself at his feet, after the custom of the East, so expressive of humility, dependence and entreaty, accompanying this with the plea, "Lord, help me!" (Matt. 15:23-25.) When finally our Lord addressed the poor woman prostrate at his feet, importuning his assistance, his words were again a rebuff, calculated to dishearten one of little faith, but correspondingly to strengthen a great faith. His answer to her was not one of disdain and contempt, nor of indifference

to her woe; for indeed we well know that our dear Lord had no such feelings toward any. It implied interest and sympathy, but explained to her a reason why she was not a proper subject, namely, that as the children of a household would be provided for first, before the dogs, so it was proper that the Lord's covenant people, the Jews, should be ministered unto, healed, taught and blessed, first, – before these blessings should in any manner or degree be extended to the Gentiles, who in comparison were as the dogs of the household. And, by the way, we should notice here that altho dogs amongst the Jews were spoken of frequently with great disrespect, as for instance, in Rev. 22:15, "Without are dogs," etc., referring to the wild dogs which roamed the country and were pests, yet the Jews were in the habit of having house dogs which were esteemed and petted by the family, and the word that is here used by our Lord, and also by the woman, signifies these house dogs or little dogs, pet dogs, and not the objectionable kind.

The woman triumphed over the obstacle of the Lord's argument, and with wonderful keenness and humility she acknowledged that she was not one of the children who had a right to the Father's blessing, but was merely one of the dogs under the table, desiring a stray crumb of divine favor. Then our Lord, appreciating such great faith and earnestness, said, "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter," and that the woman's faith was of the proper kind was demonstrated by the fact that she believed the Lord's word, ceased her importunings, and went to her home, to find the matter even as Jesus had said.

How different is our case in many respects from that of this poor woman! So far from resisting us the Lord has graciously called us to a knowledge of himself and of his gracious plan, and we who were once aliens and strangers and foreigners have not only been redeemed with the precious blood, but upon making a covenant with the Lord have been adopted into his family, have been privileged to surround his table, and he has set before us as "meat in due season," in great abundance, all the exceeding great and precious promises of his Word.

We need not to importune for these; they are ours for the taking. We simply need by faith to accept them and to use them. And if the poor woman of this narrative could exercise such faith in the Lord, and could get so great a blessing, it evidences to our [R2654 : page 191] minds what is abundantly stated elsewhere in Scripture, that nothing that we have or could offer to the Lord would be more acceptable in his sight than faith – faith in him, in his power, in his love and in his promises. Whoever will not exercise faith in these things cannot grow in knowledge of the Lord, cannot make development, cannot be overcomers, gaining the desired victory, for, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," and "Without faith it is impossible to please God." – 1 John 5:4; Heb. 11:6.

There is little that any of us possess that we could reasonably hope would be acceptable to God outside those mercies which he has bestowed upon us through Christ – faith, trust in God, is one of those heart-qualities which we can bring to the Lord, that he will not despise; honesty of heart is another; humility, realizing our utter dependence upon him, and confessing it, is another. These various sentiments were expressed by the woman in the narrative, by her actions and by her words, and as these brought to her divine favor, even before it was due to come to the Gentiles, much more should our humility, faith and candor prevail and make us endeavor to do that which is pleasing to God, who has already accepted us in the Beloved, and with whom he is well-pleased in proportion to the measure of our accepting through the Lord all the exceeding riches of his grace, which he has promised to them that love, reverence, trust and obey him.
