

## **A Mother's Mega Faith**

### **Matthew 15:21-28**

#### **Pastor John Miller**

I want you to follow with me. I'm going to read the whole story beginning in verse 21. I want you to follow with me in your Bibles. Matthew says that "Jesus went thence, and departed up to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold..."—or look—"...a woman of Canaan..."—no name; just a woman of Canaan—"...came out of the same coasts, and she cried unto Him..."—that is, Jesus—"...saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.' And so Jesus answered her not a word. And His disciples came and begged Him, saying, 'Lord, would you send her away, for she cries after us.' But He answered and said, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' But He answered and said, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and to cast it to the little puppies.' And she said, 'True, Lord. Yet the little puppies eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' Then..."—verse 28—"...Jesus answered and said unto her, 'O woman, great..."—or mega—"...is your faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' And her daughter was made whole that very hour."

Here we have the story of a mother who had great faith. Now, there's no doubt in my mind that she was everything a mother should be; she was affectionate and loving and, verse 22, when she came to Jesus and referred to her daughter, literally in the Greek, she said, "my darling little girl." Now I have three girls and what a blessing they are. Girls are awesome. I love boys; they're great, but little girls are a blessing, and I have some granddaughters I'm just having a blast with. But she had a daughter. I don't know exactly what age she was, but she referred to her very endearingly, "my darling little girl."

And then she also was a mother who was caring and concerned, because her little daughter was demon possessed or at least influenced by a demon. And there was some trouble in her life, and so she came on her behalf. So she cared and she was concerned.

And then thirdly, she was patient and persevering. She would not give up. And it's not the entire focus of the message I want to give, but every time she stepped toward Jesus, Jesus took two steps back. And every time she asked Jesus to do something, He was pulling back. And as you read this story, you think, "Why, Jesus, wouldn't You answer her? Why, Jesus, would you say, 'It's not right to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs'? Why would you call this woman 'a dog' or a 'little puppy'? Why wouldn't you give her immediately what she wanted and what she asked for?" She's a parent in pain. And yet Jesus seems to step away from her rather than meeting her needs. And then ultimately, He said, "Great is your faith. Be it unto you according to your word." And He commends this woman for her great faith. And as I said, the word "great" there in the Greek is "mega." We get our word "big" from it. It means "big" or "mega" faith.

So I believe the most important quality in a mother seen in this woman is your faith. And I want to encourage you moms today. Be women of faith. "Trust in the Lord..." the Bible says "...with

all of your heart. Don't go on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge God, and He will direct your paths." Be women of faith. Be women of God. In Proverbs 31:30 it says, "Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." Jesus didn't commend this woman for her hairdo. Jesus didn't say, "O woman, great is your hair. Who does your hair?" He didn't say, "O woman, great is your wardrobe. You dress impeccably." He didn't say, "O woman, great is your interior decorating. Your home is immaculate. Your home is beautiful." He didn't say, "O great are your fingernails. They're awesome. Who does your nails?" He said, "O woman, great is your ..."—what?—"...faith."

You see, the most important part of a mother is the part that only God can see. And that's the heart. The Bible says, "It's the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, which in the sight of God, is of great price." A woman that fears the Lord—she shall be praised. And the proverb goes on to say "her husband will praise her in the gates, and her children will rise up and call her blessed."

You know, I've conducted a lot of funerals in the years I've been a pastor. And very rarely do you hear people get up and talk about her hair was awesome, she was always dressed so nice, her home was beautiful. The thing that they talk about is that she loved the Lord. She was a woman of faith. Her prayers, her godliness, her influence—those were the things that God commends in this woman and, I think, a mother should want in her own life.

Now as we look at this story today, there are three things I want to point out. First of all, the obstacles of her faith; secondly, the character of her faith; and thirdly, the rewards of this mother's faith.

First of all, let's look together and consider the obstacles of her faith. What made this woman's faith mega? What made this woman's faith great? And the first answer to that is it had to overcome great obstacles. What were those obstacles? Well, first of all, she was a Gentile. She was a Gentile, and she was living in a wicked, pagan, dark place. Go with me back to verse 21. "Jesus went thence and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." Now I don't know how familiar you are with the geography around the Holy Land, but in Israel, the west coast borders the Mediterranean Sea. It kind of reminds me of California in a way; kind of like the same climate we have in Southern California. And if you go up the coast from Israel to what is modern-day Lebanon—along that coast of modern-day Lebanon is, in the Bible, what is Tyre and Sidon. And in this area was non-Jewish. It was Gentile. It was kind of, by the Jews, considered an unclean, uncouth, unorthodox area. And it was very, very steeped in darkness and paganism.

So this woman had a number of strikes against her. Number one, she was a Gentile, and in the mind of the Jews, they were despised. Number two, she lived in a bad place. I grew up and pastored in San Bernardino for 39 years. I've met people before. They say, "Where're you from?" I go, "San Bernardino." They go, "Sorry." It's a dark place. It's a very dark place. We do live down here now. We're no longer there. We're pastoring down here. But, I mean, you talk about a dark, dark, dark city. Very dark. So she was a Gentile, she lived in a pagan place and

she had a daughter that was possessed by a demon.

Now maybe you're a mom this morning, and you feel like an outcast, or you feel like because your husband isn't a Christian, maybe you're raising the children on your own. And maybe you're a Christian, but you have a heathen husband. Don't give up. The Bible says that you're not to forsake your husband or leave your husband. That he is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving husband has that influence upon him. So be a blessing to him, pray for him. And it's not what you say to him. You can't preach him into the kingdom of God. It's how you live. So live a life of godliness, and influence your husband by your prayers. You say, "Well, I'm a single mother. I don't even have a husband." And it's very difficult today raising children in this dark culture. I understand that. But I believe the Lord becomes your husband. He's not only your maker, but He becomes your husband. And you have to look to Him for strength, and look to Him for wisdom and look to Him for encouragement to raise those children. It's certainly not God designed that you raise children on your own, but sometimes that happens. Divorce or death or other circumstances come into play where you find yourself a single mom or single parent. We need to look to the Lord.

Now here's a woman, a mother, living in a very pagan place, but she had great faith. Faith is not a matter of place or of race but of grace. Let me repeat that. Faith is not a matter of place or of race but of grace. God's grace went out to this woman. And the brightest lights often shine in the darkest places. Faith is often found where it is least expected. When Jesus went up to this pagan area of Tyre and Sidon, probably the last thing He expected was to find a woman of faith there. So in spite of your difficult circumstances, you can have a faith that is commended by God.

And then secondly, she had a child that was suffering. That will always take its toll on a mother—a suffering child. In verse 22, the New Living Translation reads, "My daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely." You know, when you're a parent and your kids suffer, guess what? You suffer with them. When our kids were little, if they got sick, I freaked out. My wife would have to send me away. Because I was like, I can't stand seeing my kids suffer. I couldn't stand seeing them in pain. I wanted to take it on myself. And how hard it is as a parent or as a mother to see your child suffering. So she had the fact that she was a Gentile, she lived in a strange, wicked, dark place and she had a daughter who was tormented by a demon. But someone said, "Adversity is the diamond dust that heaven uses to polish its jewels with." I like that.

I didn't pay a lot of attention to it, but I saw in the news this week—maybe you saw it—they recently found one of the largest diamonds ever found. The thing was about the size of a softball. Did you see that on the news? This huge diamond! Can you imagine putting that on a ring!? Talk about a rock. That thing was insane. You'd have to build kind of a stand with wheels on it to go places, you know? Put your hand on it. The thing was so huge! But this woman's faith is like a diamond. One thing about a diamond—as you turn a diamond, it changes colors. As the light reflects off of it, it turns; it changes color. So Jesus is doing, in His silence, in His statement, "I'm only here for the lost sheet of Israel," "It's not right to take the

children's bread and cast it to the dogs"—He's backing up and backing up. It's like taking a diamond and turning it and turning it and turning it so its beauty and its radiance can shine forth. He wants everyone to see this woman's great faith. And our faith is developed in adversity. If we never had a problem, we'd be spiritual pigmies. We need to grow in adversity, and God strengthens our faith.

So her child was suffering. She was a parent in pain. Maybe you have a child that is suffering. Maybe you have a problem child. Maybe you have teenagers, and you think they're demon possessed. No; it's called "teenage years." It's when they're teenagers, and they think mom and dad don't know anything. When they're little, they think you know everything, then you don't know nothing, and then you get old and they realize you knew everything. I heard one parent say, "Before I had children, I had four theories about raising children, and now I have four children and no theories." It's a hard thing to do; it's a challenge. And you're always a parent. Once those children come into the world, you'll always be a parent, even when they get married and they have their own children and they are adults.

But the point I want to make is her pain and her problems and her suffering child—guess where it drove her? To the feet of Jesus. It drove her to the feet of Jesus. I thank God for the bitter things; they've been a friend to grace. They've driven me from the path of ease to storm the secret place. And the problems she had brought her to the feet of Jesus.

Maybe your kids are in schools that are dark and pagan schools. Maybe they're involved in things that are dishonoring to God. And you bring them to Jesus through prayer. Never stop praying. The Bible says, "The effectual, fervent prayers of a righteous man..."—and I would paraphrase that—"The effectual, fervent prayers of a mother avails much." I believe I am who I am and doing what I do and God is using me today, because I had a praying grandmother and I had a praying mother and I have a praying wife. I believe that with all my heart. I believe God is using me because I have these women in my life that pray for me. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for my mother's prayers. And my mother attended our church before she died quite a few years ago, and she was in our church and she prayed for me. Every day I knew I had my mother's prayers. Moms, don't stop praying. Whatever the problems are with your children—that little son that you're thinking, "Oh, Lord"—he might be the next pastor of Revival Christian Fellowship. He might be the next Billy Graham; amen? Mothers, you're making those young lives; you're shaping them, you're molding them, you're influencing them. And the greatest impact you can have on your children is on your knees.

There's a devotional writer by the name of J.R. Miller—no relationship—but I love his books. He said, "I once suddenly opened the door of my mother's room, and I saw her on her knees beside her chair. And I heard her speak my name in prayer. I quickly and quietly withdrew with a feeling of awe and reverence in my heart. Soon I went away from home to school then college and life's sterner duties. But I never forgot that one glimpse of my mother at prayer, nor the word, that I heard my name, which I heard her utter. Well that I know that what I'd seen that day was but a glimpse of what was going on every day in that secret closet of prayer. And the consciousness strengthened me a thousand times in duty and danger and the struggles. And

when death came at last and sealed those lips, the sorest sense of loss that I felt was the knowledge that no more would my mother be praying for me.” One of the greatest gifts you can give to your children is prayer. So her adversity drove her to prayer

But there’s another obstacle her faith had to overcome, which made it great. And that’s the seeming silence and the indifference of Jesus. I want you to notice in verse 23, “Jesus answered her not a word.” Isn’t that weird? Have you ever prayed and it seems like God doesn’t answer? Have you ever prayed and it seems like the heavens are brass? And you’re like, “God! Uuh, do you see what’s going on, God? I need your help! God, You see what my kids are up to lately?” And you’re crying out to God, and He doesn’t seem to be responding or answering your petitions. Now she came first of all as a Gentile, but she petitioned Jesus as the Son of David. In verse 22, she said, “Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.” Now she had no right to come to Jesus as a Jew; she was a Gentile. But she used this Messianic title. It wasn’t until she came in utter helplessness and she just cried out, “Lord, help me” that finally Jesus responded to her need. But she came to Jesus, and she cried out to Him. He steps back, but, I believe, not to destroy her faith but to develop it. His silence encouraged her continual seeking. I believe that’s what God often does. When we pray, He doesn’t answer immediately. He wants us to persevere. He wants us to trust Him. He wants us to wait on Him.

Not only was there the silence of the Lord, but notice in verse 23 there was the harsh treatment of the disciples. He answered and said “not a word.” And then His disciples, verse 23, said, “Lord, send her away for she is crying after us.” Now that’s a polite King James Translation for “She’s bugging us!” And what do I think? “Jesus, where’d you find these guys!” Now whether they meant “Give her what she wants and send her on her way” or whether they meant “Just get rid of her,” I don’t know. Either way, they wanted her to be gone. “Lord, she’s pestering us. Lord, she’s bothering us.” You know what God wants when we pray? Persistence. If you ask God for something, and He doesn’t answer the way you want immediately, do you give up? You just go, “Well, God said ‘No.’ Ain’t gonna happen. Just forget it.”

Jesus told a parable about an unjust judge. It’s what’s called The Parable in Contrast. It’s in Luke 18. A whole chapter on prayer. And He said there was this judge, who didn’t fear God, didn’t fear man, and this woman came to him and said, “Avenge me of my adversary.” And he ignored her, and she kept bugging him and bugging him and pestering him and pestering him, and the judge finally said, “I am going to give this woman her petition unless...”—literally in the Greek, it says—“...she’s going to give me a back eye. This woman’s going to punch me in the eye. I’m going to give her what she needs. She’s bugging me!”

Then Jesus made this application. Listen carefully; hear what the unjust judge says. “Shall not God avenge His elect, which cry unto Him day and night, though He bear long with them?” The answer is “Yes.” If an unjust judge helps a widow who’s pestering Him, how much more readily will your Father, Who loves you, in heaven, give you what you need if you ask, if you seek, if you knock. Jesus said, “Ask, seek and knock.” Did you notice that those grow in intensity? You’re asking, then you’re seeking, then you’re knocking on the door. You ever gone to

somebody's house, you know they're in there, you knock on the door and they don't answer? So you go around the back, and you knock on the back door. Then they still don't answer, so you look in the window; right? "I see you! Hey, what's up?" They're hiding under the bed. "I see you under the bed! Hey, come on. Let me in." You're persistent. You're asking, you're seeking, you're knocking. God will answer your request. Don't give up. The Bible says, "Be not weary in well doing. In due season we shall reap if we faint not."

I love what Samuel Rutherford said. He said, "It's faith's work to claim and challenge loving kindness out of all the rough strokes of God." Now I don't know why sometimes God doesn't answer me when I pray immediately, but I do know that God loves me. Never doubt in the dark what God has spoken in the light. "Where's God! Why hasn't He healed my marriage? Why hasn't He healed my kids? Why hasn't He done a work in their life? Why hasn't God answered my prayer?" I don't know, but I know this. God loves you. And remember this. God loves your children more than you do. And you can trust Him. You can commit your kids to the Lord. The Bible says, "Roll thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you." Maybe your children are your burden. You need to roll them on the Lord and let Him sustain you.

So her faith was great because it overcame obstacles. But secondly, I want to point out that her faith was great because of its nature and character. Whenever we talk about faith, we need to talk about what true faith is. What is its nature and character? Now if Jesus says, "Woman, great is your faith," I want to know what kind of faith this woman had. Let me mention it to you. Number one, she had as the object of her faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing more important for you as a mom, as a person, as a dad, as a husband than to put your faith in Jesus Christ. So the object of her faith was the key. It wasn't the intensity of her faith that was big. It was the object of her faith. She first of all called Him "Lord," then "Son of David," verse 22. Then again she comes back and says, "Lord, help me." She knew who He was. Moms, know God; trust in God. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "Faith rests on God, it receives from God, it responds to God, it relies on God, it realizes God, it rejoices in God and it reproduces the life of God in their character." That's what God wants to do in your life. Faith in Jesus Christ.

The second quality of her faith was that it was humble and it was persistent. In verse 25, she prays and she says, "Lord, help me." Underline that, moms. That is your prayer. That's your Mother's Day prayer. "Lord, help me." Right? A lot of work being a parent. A lot of work being a mom. And I think daily that prayer should be on our lips. "Lord, give me wisdom. Lord, give me strength. Lord, give me understanding. Lord, give me patience. Lord, help me." What a heartfelt prayer. What a humble prayer. And then every time Jesus stepped back, she persistently kept pursuing Him. She was humble. She prayed, verse 22, "Have mercy on me. Lord, I'm not asking to be part of the family. I'm asking only for the crumbs that fall from the table." In verse 25, she "worshipped Him." In verse 25, she said, "Help me." And then in Mark 7:25, it says that she actually fell down at His feet.

So the object of her faith was Jesus, and it was humble and persistent, and thirdly, it was a faith that took Jesus at His word. Now there's a point in this story where Jesus says, "It's not right to take the children's bread..."—or food—"...and to give it to the dogs." My King James

Translation has the word “dogs.” Now, again you think, “Well, number one, Jesus, You don’t answer the woman. Number two, You’re calling her a ‘dog.’ What’s up here, Lord?” In the Greek, there’s two different words that could be translated “dog” in the New Testament. One word for “dog” would mean “scavenger dog; wild dog; mangy, mean dog” that would run around and bite people and dig in the trash and pester people. The other word, the one that Jesus used —Jesus didn’t use that word. The other word would be a domesticated, pet dog. And some translations render this “little puppies.” So He’s talking about your little puppy or your little poodle that you comb and brush and that you put in the highchair and feed, you know. Some people take better care of their dogs than they do their children. I remember seeing a guy driving down the street, and the dog was riding shotgun and his wife was riding in the back seat. I’m thinking, “That marriage has gone to the dogs.” “I got my dog. I got my dog and my wife’s in the back. Praise God.” Sad. I know we love our dogs and we love our animals, but it’s not right to take the children’s food and cast it to the dogs. Well, Jesus was using the word “little puppies.” And how does she respond immediately? She goes, “Yes, Lord. But even the little puppies get the crumbs.” She says, “Yeah, I know I’m a puppy. I know I’m a dog. I’m a Gentile. I’m a pagan. I don’t deserve the blessings. But I just ask that I could get some crumbs here.” She knew that the crumbs from the Master’s table were sufficient to meet her every need. She agreed with the Lord, verse 27. “True Lord, I am a dog.” And she accepted her seemingly humble position. She prayed for mercy. She accepted the grace of God.

Now there’s a third and last point. Not only did her faith overcome obstacles, not only her faith was great because it was in Jesus and it was humble and persistent, but thirdly and lastly, verse 28, her faith was rewarded. Finally, in verse 28, Jesus answers and says to this poor, desperate, broken, crying mother. “O woman, mega is your faith. Be it unto thee as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” Another way of saying immediately her daughter was healed. Now notice that Jesus commends her faith. “Great is your faith.”

And then, secondly, he gives her a *carte blanche*, a blank check. Now I realize a lot of people don’t use checks. My wife still writes checks, and people look at her like, “What cave did you just crawl out of?” But you know sometimes it’s dangerous to give somebody a check, sign it and leave the amount blank. I’ve had people hand me checks before. “You sure you want to do this? It’s not filled in. The amount’s not filled in.” “Oh, just write in there whatever you need.” “Well, praise God! Thank you Jesus!” And when I know there’s money in the bank to back up that check, it’s like, “Okay. I’m writing a blank check with God.” Jesus gave her a *carte blanche*, a blank check. “Whatever it is you need.” “Okay. Well, I need a new house. I need a new wardrobe. I need this. I need that,” you know. We start laying it all out. Was it safe for Jesus to give her a blank check? The answer is “Yes.” You know why? Because she was a woman of faith. She was a woman who only thought about her daughter. You know what she filled out in that check? She didn’t fill out her needs. She didn’t fill out her wants. She wrote her daughter’s name in that check. She said, “All I want is my daughter to be healed.” She asked wisely. She asked for “my child.” She asked humbly; “All I want is crumbs.” She asked persistently.

Someone said that “When we pray, thou art coming to a King. Large petitions with thee bring.

For His grace and power is such, that none could ever ask too much.” When you’re coming to God, realize His resources are vast. So He gives her this blank check, she fills it out—“I just want my daughter to be healed”—and then Jesus answers her prayer. In verse 28 “immediately her daughter was healed, that same hour.” What an awesome thing that is. The power and influence of a mother’s prayers. The power and influence of a mother’s great faith.

But in the picture of this mother, we also see a picture of how we come as sinners before God. We come with a sense of need. She came with a sense of need. She came with a sense of unworthiness. We come with a sense of unworthiness. And she came in faith. The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” So she came borne out of a need. She came with a sense of unworthiness, and she came in faith.

Now I don’t want to end this message this morning without letting you know that great faith starts with receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your Savior. You may be a marvelous mother, but if you don’t have faith in Jesus Christ, it’s passing, it’s fleeting. Beauty is vain. Favor [charm?] is deceitful. But a woman who fears the Lord, “she shall be praised.” The most important quality to me in my wife and my mother and my grandmother, these women that were such a great impact on my life, is they were women of God. They were women who knew God. They were women who walked with God. They were women of faith. They were women of prayer. And when we come, it starts with salvation. And like this woman, we have to come with a sense of unworthiness. You know, there’s no one here today who’s worthy to go to heaven? The Bible says, “We’ve all sinned.” “We’ve all fallen short of the glory of God.” The Bible says, “There’s no one righteous; no not one.” Nobody gets to heaven by being good. You don’t get to heaven because of your religion. You don’t get to heaven because of your race. You don’t get to heaven because of your righteous deeds or good works. You get to heaven because you take the hand of Jesus Christ, Who said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Me.”

And I’m speaking to you mothers first today. Do you know Jesus as your Savior? Have you been born again? Do you have a personal relationship with Christ? Have you had your sins forgiven? Do you know that you are a child of God? If not, why not? Come to Jesus Christ today. That’s where it starts, in faith. And say, “Father, I’m sorry for my sins. Jesus, I believe You died on the cross and that You bore my sins. You rose from the dead. And I ask You to forgive me and come into my heart and be my Savior.” The Bible says, “Old things will pass away. All things become new.” And you become a child of God. It’s not a religion; it’s a relationship. And God loves you, and He wants to have a relationship with you. Right now; right here. And you can make this Mother’s Day the best Mother’s Day you’ve ever had.

You say, “Well, I’m not a mother.” Okay, you guys. Do you know God? Have your sins been forgiven? Have you trusted in Jesus Christ? The Bible says we’re saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We must come, like this woman, humbly. We must come in faith. And we must receive what Jesus did for us on that cross in order to be saved. And if you haven’t made that commitment to Jesus Christ, I want to give you an opportunity to make it right now before we dismiss.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.