

跨越屏障的救恩，带来跨越屏障的信心——马可福音 7:24-30

Barrier-breaking Salvation Brings Barrier-breaking Faith—Mark 7:24-30

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 7:24-30; Ephesians 2:11-19; James 1:5-8
- Teaching text: Mark 7:24-30
- **24** Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre[k]. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know *of it*; [l]yet He could not escape notice. **25** But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. **26** Now the woman was a [m]Gentile, of the Syrophoenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. **27** And He was saying to her, “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not [n]good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” **28** But she answered and *said to Him, “Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children’s crumbs.” **29** And He said to her, “Because of this [o]answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter.” **30** And going back to her home, she found the child [p]lying on the bed, the demon having left.
- What kinds of barriers exist between people? Language barrier, culture barrier, generation gap, religious barrier... The greatest barrier in all human history was the barrier between Jews and Gentiles in Bible times. The Jews thought Yahweh was their God only, and if you truly love God, you must separate yourself completely from the Gentiles. In fact, this was merely their sinful pride, and they didn’t really know the God they tried to worship.
- The Gospel of Christ is to break down this kind of pride, and fundamentally to break down any barrier among men, so that everyone in Christ may be fully united. (Colossians 3:11)
- In terms of salvation, there really is no barrier among men. Everyone has the same starting point and the same God to give an account to. Everyone has the same need.
- the “dirtiest” place as defined by the Pharisees. He’s taking the 12 disciples with him, because they also need to renew their understanding of salvation.
- Outline:
 - Title: Barrier-breaking Salvation Brings Barrier-breaking Faith
 - 1.The Preparation of Faith (vv. 24-26a)
 - 2.The Testing of Faith (vv. 26b-28)
 - 3.The Affirmation of Faith (vv. 29-30)

The Preparation of Faith (vv. 24-26a)

- “the region of Tyre”: A Gentile place tens of miles north to Galilee. This is Jesus’ third retreat from Galilee. He would retreat again in chapter 8, and in chapter 10 he’d begin his journey to Jerusalem for the Cross.
- “There was too much excitement among the people, too much bitterness among the Pharisees, too much suspicion on the part of Herod and too much dullness on the part of the disciples for Jesus to remain in Galilee.” – one scholar.

- “He wanted no one to know about it; and yet He could not escape notice.” Jesus didn’t want anyone to know because the purpose of the trip was to train His disciples and not to do public ministry on a large scale. But He couldn’t escape notice, because his reputation had gone before him to this very place. (cf. v.3:8; Luke 6:17).

【Insight】 This shows that God had been preparing this woman for salvation! The faith she expressed in the following verses didn’t happen in a vacuum, but it’d been well prepared by God already.

- “after hearing about Him...” : She had only heard of Jesus, implying she’d never seen Jesus, but only heard of him from neighbors.
- Romans 10:14: “... How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”
- “fell at His feet.” An expression of humility. She didn’t feel worthy to stand before the Lord. Of course this is just outward appearance, the heart is more important. The following conversation revealed how humble her heart was.
- Greek: The New Testament often uses the term 'Greek' to refer to all Gentiles. The most significant characteristic of Greek culture is its rampant idol worship. The Greeks worship many gods as we know from Greek mythology. Such is the cultural background of this woman.
- “Syrophenician descent”: Offspring of the Canaanites (See Matthew 15:22), the very people God cursed in the Old Testament (See Deuteronomy 7:1-6) who should’ve been eliminated by the Israelites at that time. The Canaanites were the most despised people to the Jews. They didn’t think they should even exist in this world, let alone this Canaanite person was a woman.
- This woman disregarded all the barriers and ran toward Jesus, falling before him. Matthew 15:22 records her words, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David!' When Jews call Jesus the Son of David, it is already a strong expression of faith. It's almost unimaginable that these words could come out of the mouth of a Canaanite woman.
- She broke all the barriers—race, culture, religion—to confess Jesus as the Son of David, the royal heir of Israel, the Savior promised by the God of the very people who have been their enemies for ages! Her own culture is filled with idols, but she sought none of them for help. She knew they couldn’t save her. Only the Son of David can save her. Where does this faith come from? Only God can give it.
- “little daughter had an unclean spirit”: When God prepares people's hearts, on one hand He lets people hear about Jesus, and on the other He shows them their own need. The most fundamental need is salvation from sin, but here, this woman has a more specific need. Her plea includes a humble confession of sin as in the phrase “Have mercy on me.” This isn’t the moment of salvation for her soul. The fact she has such faith implies her soul has already been saved. What we are seeing here is the expression of what saving faith looks like!

The Testing of Faith (vv. 26b-28)

- “Asked Him’: The original grammar expresses a continuous action, that she kept asking Jesus. Why? Because Jesus didn’t answer her (Matthew 15:23). Why? Did Jesus also think there were too many barriers between them so that he was unwilling to break these barriers to help her? If you are the kind of person who likes to guess motive based on appearance, you will certainly misunderstand Jesus's silence here.”

【Explanation】 Jesus was testing her so we can see what true saving faith looks like! Jesus knew her faith could pass the test, so He tested her to show His disciples how the God-given faith expresses itself!

【Supplement】 There were a total of three tests. First, **the Lord’s silence**. Man of little faith would’ve gone away. Second, other people’s rejection. The disciples were annoyed at her persistence and said, “Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us!” (Matthew 15:23). Third, the ultimate test was Lord’s apparent rejection (v27).

【Insight from the second test】 Have you ever sought the Lord for some practical need, only to be objected by some zealous coworkers in the church? How did you react? Sometimes, men's rejection is a harder test than the Lord's silence.

- “Let the children be satisfied first”: Not that there’s a difference in their essential nature, but the difference lies in the order of salvation from a historical perspective. In a grand view, salvation does have an order. Even the Abrahamic covenant has the order where God would first “make you into a great nation” and then “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3). The Jewish people does have a unique role in salvation history (Romans 3:2, 9:4).
- “For it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.’ This is no real rejection but merely apparent rejection. The purpose is to reveal her faith through this test. The 'dog' in the original text is not the vicious kind that wanders in the street but rather the domestic pet kind. Nevertheless, it is still a very harsh word! Dogs are animals, inferior to man. They have no soul. To the disciples, this word was definitely not an affectionate term but a lowly state. Heavily influenced by the Pharisees, all they could hear from Jesus was the racial barrier that could never be crossed.
- “But she answered ...”: If she had any spiritual pride, how do you think she would respond to Jesus’ word? If she had any so-called racial dignity or self-esteem, how would she respond? What an insult! How dare you!

【Key point】 When you realize how unworthy you are, you don't care what other people call you!

【Truth】 **We are worse than dogs!** Dogs are not made in God’s image and do not have a soul that can communicate with God. Therefore, they cannot intentionally disobey God’s will with their words or deeds. We, on the other hand, are made in God’s image. God has given us a living soul, but we often use that soul to purposefully offend Him. If today Jesus were to call you something worse than dogs, would you accept it? I do believe that is my true condition according to the Bible.

- “even the dogs under the table...’ She now calls herself a dog! This is not only extreme humility but also very witty. She was not offended at all. She believes Jesus' mercy is so great that even the most unworthy person can receive it. In fact, only those who know that they are the lowest and most unworthy can receive God's mercy.

【Insight】 What does saving faith look like in this woman? First, a humble faith. Second, a practical faith. Third, a praying faith. Fourth, a persevering faith. Fifth, a focused faith. Sixth, a faith that crosses all barriers.

【Application】 A person with true saving faith will always find ways to hold on to Jesus. He who wants to read the Bible will make time for it; he who wants to go to church will find ways to go, no matter how many obstacles lie in their path.

The Affirmation of Faith (vv. 29-30)

- “Because of this answer” Jesus attributes the success of casting out demons to her faith! Although it is not a universal promise that God will give us whatever we ask as long as we have faith, yet sometimes, the reason God doesn’t give is due to our lack of faith (James 4:2). The prayer of true faith is not an arrogant claim that God must do this or that. It is not saying, 'In the name of Jesus, my sickness will be healed!' Instead, it should be, 'Even the dog under the table may eat some crumbs, for you are a merciful God.'"
- “The demon having left.” Greater than the woman's faith is Jesus' divine authority. With just one word from a distance, the daughter is instantaneously healed.

【Caution】 : As much as the woman's faith is worth following, do not put your faith in your faith! The key is not the strength of your faith but its object. When you put your faith in the strength of your own faith, whatever you experience is not Jesus’ power but merely your own flesh. However, when you put your faith in Jesus firmly that however many obstacles you face cannot stop you from seeking Him fervently, you will experience God's power in the time and manner determined by God. People with true faith will indeed experience God's power, though it may come in various ways.