

Introduction: We continue to reflect on Jesus' profound work of spiritual heart conviction – a type of deep, spiritual heart surgery by which He fully saves the Syro-Phoenician woman. There is a wholeness in Christ's work of saving sinners, granting them a full saving experience of repentance as well as an abundant joy when faith embraces Christ, freely offered in the Gospel.

Monday: read Matthew 15:21-28. Returning to Jesus' words of testing in Matthew 15:24-26, we find that these words offer great hope to the Syro-Phoenician woman, but in the best and most humbling way possible! I say this because our Lord does not actually deny this woman's request for healing mercy. Rather, He says that *after* the gifts and graces of salvation are offered to the children of Israel, then others can be fed. This comes out most clearly, for example, in Mark 7:27: "*First let the children eat all they want...*". Thus Jesus' words, far from discouraging this woman's faith, actually *stir up her faith* to hunger for the time when the grace of salvation will turn from the Jews to the Gentile world.

Meditate and Pray: Let us thank God for the undeserved salvation which shines from the birth of Christ into our Gentile world. Isn't that what Jesus promised in Matthew 8:11-12 when He answered the prayer of another Gentile, namely, the Roman Centurion?

"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom, (unbelieving Israel), will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Tues/Weds/Thurs: read Matthew 8:5-13 and Matthew 15:25-28. Jesus' words are indeed very trying, as He dares to call this woman a "dog", who can only eat the table scraps that fall off the table of the children of Israel. But we must respect God the Father's plan, whereby He chose Israel, "that stiff-necked and rebellious" people, to sit first at the table of salvation. Only when that nation proved utterly unwilling to believe was salvation offered to the "dogs" of the other nations, waiting around the table.

But "dogs"? Really? Well, Jesus uses the diminutive form for family pets. He is not disdainful of this woman, or using the term for "unclean dogs of the street", a term which the Jews used of those they considered unclean and beyond the pale of salvation. Rather, He is thinking of the family circle, and the blessings of a full table which come the way of *even the lowliest members of the family!*

Meditate: Are we willing to take the lowest place at the table of salvation? Are we willing to say with the Psalmist that we would rather be a, "doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the finery and luxury of the tents of the wicked" (Psalm 84:10)? Don't worry that there won't be enough of the gifts of salvation to reach you even at the lowest level of the wedding supper of the Lamb. This table is abundant! The crumbs that fall off are rich feasts of salvation compared to the trifling, lightweight fare which the world offers!

Or to put the point another way, as we seek to submit to the difficult nature of Jesus' words to this woman: Are we content to be take a rebuke from a godly man, or do we hanker after a profusion of compliments from insincere worldlings? Can we confess with the writer of Psalm 141:4-5 that the hard words of our Lord Jesus are better than the "delicacies of the wicked"? To apply the words of Psalm 141:5 sharply to ourselves:

"Let Jesus smite me – it is a kindness; let Him rebuke me – it is oil on my head"! I will not complain as the crumbs of grace fall down upon my head!

Fri/Sat/Sun: read 1 Peter 5:6-7. There is no doubt more to say about the amazing response of this Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:27-28. But for now let us simply bow before the sovereign words of our Lord Jesus. Let us ask Him to make us content to be “under the table”, and not to fuss against other believers who may have pre-eminence over us. Let us be content in the lowest place, and confident of our Lord’s mercy to us even in the most difficult situations.

Closing Prayer: *Lord, please enable us to humble ourselves under the stinging trials you send us. Save us from a desire for the praise of men! May this prayer from Ed Welch, based on 1 Peter 5:6-7, help us when situations seem to go against us, as they must have appeared to do to this woman in Matthew 15:*

“Humble yourself before the Lord. This shouldn’t be too difficult. After all, he is God and King, Lord of all. He is the Creator. You belong to him. The creature is the possession of the Creator. Humble yourself before your King. And here is one way to express this new-found posture of humility: cast your cares on him. Did you catch that? When you come humbly before the King he reveals his unlimited love. Who would have thought? He actually wants you to cast your burden on him. You were never intended to carry those burdens alone. He is the mighty God who never leaves. You can trust him. And this casting is no mere act of your will. It comes as you know that he is God and you are not. Oh, and you can be sure that he will lift you up from your kneeling position and give you more than you ever expected.” (Ed Welch)