

Saved by Sovereign Grace - radio

The scripture for today's sermon is Matthew 15:21-28. Let's read it together.

“21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. 23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. 24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. 27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. 28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (Matt. 15:21-28).

I'm so thankful for this scripture! I am especially thankful for the last verse. The Lord Jesus gave this woman everything by which she came to Him. This scripture teaches the sovereignty of God in salvation. It teaches the opposition that God's sovereignty naturally raises in the hearts of desperate sinners. It teaches how God-given faith persists in coming to Christ. It teaches that the Lord Jesus admires His own work of faith in those He saves.

This scripture teaches the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The main point here is that the Lord Jesus Christ saves sinners by His sovereign grace, in spite of what we are, and in spite of what we have done,. It teaches that we are saved in the way of inward trouble and struggle that comes because of inward sin, the opposition of the devil, the light of all that God requires of me in His word, and in the face of His absolute sovereignty. Grace triumphs over all of these to save guilty, condemned and helpless sinners. Isn't this good news?!

Consider first that this woman's great need drove her to Christ. Now, this I know from the word of God and my own experience: I will only call when I am needy. I only depend on God's strength when I have none of my own. I only look to Christ when I have nowhere else to go. I only believe Him when I see that my sin is all my fault, and He is the Savior of great sinners.

But it is Christ who first came to Tyre and Sidon. The Lord comes to where sinners are. We only come to Christ because He first comes to us! Isaiah 65:1 says, "*I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name*" (Isa. 65:1)! If you are a believer, you know this to be your experience. The Lord Jesus Christ sought you when you were not seeking Him. I was seeking many things, even seeking religion. But they were all false. I did not know God. I did not know my lost, ruined, helpless condition. I especially did not know and did not trust God's salvation in Christ alone (Ps. 78:22). Just as those of Tyre and Sidon, every believer knows this. God says, "*Remember the pit from whence thou was digged*" (Isa. 51:1). He comes to me before I come to Him. He seeks me, and then I seek Him. I call upon Him because He calls me. I come to Him because He draws me and tells me to come. (John 6:37,44-45; Ps. 110:3)

She needed mercy. She sought mercy. And she cried to Jesus for mercy. We will never be saved until we come for mercy to Christ. Mercy is God taking pity on me when my sin deserves His wrath. I will only cry for mercy when my sin is all my fault and I see that He is the absolute sovereign, that I am in His hands to save or to leave to judgment, and that He saves all by Himself, with no help from me. I must look to Him in Christ, and find everything He demands of me, and the answer to God for all my sins. Only then will I cry for mercy.

She called Him Lord! She owned Him as her sovereign. Jesus told His disciples, "*You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for I am*" (John 13).

She called Him Son of David, the anointed King over God's people. We need a King to deliver us from the enemy of our own sin, the devil, from death, from this

world and from the curse of God's law. We need a King that provides all things for us. We need a King that rules over all of our enemies, especially our sin. We need a King that commands our salvation. Jesus Christ is that King. Only He can deliver me from my sin, provide everything for me, command my salvation and rule over me to cause me to believe and walk in His ways. I therefore call upon Him as the Lord Jesus Christ. By Him alone God saves His people from their sins (Acts 4:12). Her daughter was grievously vexed -- troubled, tormented -- by a devil. It was for her daughter that she came to Christ. Believing mothers and fathers have no greater concern than that the Lord save their children. The great enemy of her soul meant to destroy her daughter. She therefore comes to Him who alone can save from evil: evil within, evil without. "Deliver us from evil."

Jesus did not answer her, not even a word. This begins the experience of sinners coming to Christ with great needs, yet finding God's own sovereignty in salvation as an apparent barrier. Only sovereign grace saves. We are not saved unless we are saved by sovereign grace. When we hear of sovereign grace, especially when we have a great need for this saving grace, we become greatly concerned that we might be excluded and left out because our salvation depends entirely upon God's will to show mercy (Rom. 9:15-16) and Christ's saving work to take away the sins of His people and make them righteous before God (Matt. 1:21; John 17). And it concerns us that God the Holy Spirit must give us life from the dead, must birth us as God's children or we cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. He makes children to God as it pleases Him (John 3:8).

The woman then went to Jesus' disciples and cried after them. When we want Christ to save us and we don't know that He has, we may go to men, even those who are His ministers. The disciples had seen Jesus ignore her. And she was a bother to them. So they asked Jesus to send her away. They prayed to Christ against her. We will never receive from men the mercy and attention we need and must have from Christ alone.

In response to the disciples and in the hearing of this woman Jesus said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." God the Father gave His elect

people to Christ for Christ to redeem them and bring them to glory. He made His Son the Surety. As Jacob entrusted Benjamin to Judah to stand before Joseph and save Benjamin from prison in Egypt and bring him again to Jacob, so God the Father gave His adopted sons to Christ, entrusting Him to stand before God's justice and answer every accusation, even substituting Himself for them under the judgment of God that He might save us from the prison of our sin and the wrath of God and the deception of the devil, to bring us at last to glory as His beloved sons. God made Christ the Surety of His people. This is what that means. God gave and entrusted them to Him. God looked to Him to answer all for them: to pay every debt their sins deserved, and to fulfill every requirement for obedience. The "lost sheep of the house of Israel" are those, throughout time and history that were given to Christ in eternity. Christ saves them only. He was sent for them only. When we hear this, we may think that our salvation is less secure, less possible, because it does not in any way depend upon us, but it depends entirely upon God's purpose, God's eternal will, Christ's redeeming work and the sovereign operations of the Spirit of God who gives life and faith as it pleases Him. We may hear the truth of this from God's own word even while we have an immediate and desperate need to be saved. What should we do? The one thing this woman did not do was give up. Her need was great. Christ's mercy is great. His power is able to save sinners to the uttermost. There is none other willing and there is none other able to save but Him. So she came to Him in whom alone lie all of her hope. Like Abraham, against hope, she believed in hope, because the Lord, the King, God Himself stood before her in human flesh, the one Mediator between God and men, and she needed salvation for her daughter.

Having heard Jesus say that He was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel, and knowing that she was not of Israel, but was of a well-known idolatrous people, what did she do? She did not say, "I have not been an idolater like those in my city." She did not say, "I am a believer, I know the right doctrine, therefore have mercy on me." She did not say, "I am a loving mother, and have come for my daughter, therefore consider my love." She said none of these things! What she did we must do. Every sinner who knows what they are, that sin is all their fault, and

who knows that Christ is the absolute sovereign God who alone can save at His will and by His power, come and worship Him.

She came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" She worshipped Him. She prayed a perfect prayer. Yet, what did Jesus say? What did she hear? What did she experience in coming in this way to Christ? Note well, that she truly did worship Him. And she truly did ask for Him to help her. And she truly did ask for mercy for her daughter.

He answered her and said, "*It is not meet (right) to give the children's bread to dogs.*" He said two things by this. First, the bread of mercy is only for the children of God. Second, He called her a dog. At this point, even before this, I would have given up. I would have sunk in the despair of God's sovereignty being the cause of God leaving me in my sin, turning from me, not saving me. But this scripture is given for the very purpose of showing those who are undeserving and naturally not part of God's people, and who hear of God's sovereign saving grace in Christ, to come to Him as this woman did.

Now she answers our Lord. She says, "Truth Lord, yet the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table." She agreed with Christ. All that you say is true. You are sovereign. I am not part of that nation and people whom God favors. I am not among the children. I am a dog. She agreed with Christ. This is confession. Confessing what I am is agreeing with God. Confessing my sin is agreeing with God that I am a sinner. It is agreeing with God that He saves at His will, by His work, by His power alone, for Christ's sake alone, out of His grace alone. But what we don't realize as we face the terror of our sins, and are frightened by the prospect of God's sovereignty, is that the way in which God saves is in the way of faith.

God gives faith. Faith is the gift of God. And the faith that Christ gave this woman is His gift to her. But faith is not known until it is tried. He tried her faith in order that He might glorify Himself in His person and sovereign salvation, but also that we might see the greatness of His work of faith in the heart of sinners.

When God finished creating the heavens and the earth, in Genesis 1:31 it says that He looked upon all that He made and saw that it was "very good." This is what is happening here. Christ has given this woman to know who He is: Lord, Christ, God who deserves my worship. He had given her to know that He alone could deliver from evil: evil within, evil without. And He had given her to know that the way in which He delivers is by coming to Him, in faith. But He tries her faith. The very truth of His sovereign rule and how He saves becomes an apparent barrier and obstacle. I know I am a sinner, a great sinner. I know that I sin because of what I am. I know that my own nature of sin is the root problem. And I know it is all my fault. I see that Christ came to save sinners and is able to save sinners. Yet I know that He saves only those God chose before the foundation of the world and gave to Him to die for and bring to glory. Now, my experience of this great need and the truth of who Christ is and His accomplished redemption stands before me. How can I enter here? What am I to do? This woman did the right thing. She came. She cried. She worshipped. She asked for help. She agreed with all that He said about Himself and her. She was a dog. He is the Lord. He saves whom He will.

But she did not stop. When she was weak, she looked to Him still. When all hope within and hope without was lost, she looked to Him still. When my sin and this world and the threatening peals of God's judgment and the devil himself stand up against my soul, what does God-given faith teach us to do? Look to Christ, come to Christ, believe Him!

So she said, "*Truth Lord, yet the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.*" I need a crumb of mercy. Let fall one crumb of your saving mercy and it will be enough. I am a dog, but I am your dog!

When we see the wisdom this woman speaks, we are amazed. Yet this is the faith Christ gave her: the faith to see Him as all, and come to Him for all, when she had nothing and it seemed that even God's own word and requirements stood as a barrier between her and His mercy! Remember Jacob? A man came at night and wrestled with him. That man was the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is God and

man. Christ touched Jacob where he was strong: his thigh. When Jacob's thigh was out of joint, he held on with a death grip to Christ and said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me!" You are my only hope! I need you to bless me! Without your blessing, I have nothing. When he was weak, then he depended on Christ alone. When this woman was held up by Christ as a dog, then she took her place as a dog, begging for a crumb of His saving mercy!

Our Lord did what He did when He created this world. He looked at her faith and said, "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt! And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

Christ gave her that mercy that she came to Him for. He granted to her all that she wanted. When in the depths of our guilt and helplessness, in the face of all that would oppose our souls, even in light of what God requires from us in His word: repentance, faith, love, what is the one thing we must do we do? We must seek all in Christ! God says in Hebrews 11:6 that the one who "comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Come to Christ for everything. And keep coming. Faith doesn't come once. Faith comes continually. Faith is not a decision. Faith is not accepting Jesus. Faith is looking to Christ and coming to Christ for all. Faith is finding all in Christ.

When this woman came in this way, even though the revelation to her of God's sovereign salvation seemed to preclude her, her God-given faith caused her to come still. She looked and kept looking.

God's sovereignty doesn't keep us from being saved. Our sin condemns us. It is our sin that separates us from God. If we are lost, it will be all our fault. Do you believe that? Do you believe that if you suffer the eternal wrath of God for your sin, that it will be your fault? "The wages of sin is death." Death is the payback for our sin. The only thing that will keep you or me out of heaven is our will. We will oppose our own salvation unless God grants us this mercy of faith that enables us to see Christ and turns us in our heart to love Him. The only thing that will keep me out of heaven is my own will. But the only thing that will bring me to heaven

and keep me out of hell is the will of God! My will alone keeps me out of heaven: “You will not come to me that you might have life!” But only God’s will keeps me out of hell. “All that the Father gives me, shall come to me.” But our experience in this salvation is to learn over and over that we are nothing but sinners. Our nature and our thoughts and our words and our deeds are full of sin. Yet, God comes to us in the Gospel of Christ, and gives us this saving faith to look only to Him, and find our all in Him. And we hear this blessed promise, “*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out!*”

What is sovereign grace? Sovereign grace is God being God in salvation. What does “sovereign grace” mean? Perhaps the shortest explanation is found in Jonah 2:9, “**Salvation is of the LORD!**” Listen to what God says about His sovereignty in salvation: “*For the children, being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto [Rebecca], ‘The elder shall serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated’*” (Rom. 9:11-13). What is your response to this scripture? Do we try to explain it away? Does it make us mad? Do we accuse God of being unfair? Do we make God to be a villain and ourselves victims? All of these reactions and more come from our natural sinful self. But faith says and does what this woman said and did. This woman came face to face with the Sovereign Lord God. Did she say, “*Well, if God is sovereign, he will save me no matter what I do, so I will go my way and if I go to hell, it will ultimately be God’s fault.*” Did she take part of God’s word as true, that He is sovereign, but use that word to accuse and hate God? Now.

Sovereign grace means God saves whom He will and saves how He will and saves when He will. Sovereign grace means salvation, from first to last, is “of the Lord!” Sovereign grace means God does everything in salvation, and we are the objects of His saving grace. In sovereign grace, God wills, not man (John 1:13). In sovereign grace, God decides, not man (John 15:16). In sovereign grace, God chooses, not man (Eph. 1:4). In sovereign grace, Christ died for, and actually saved His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21; Heb. 1:3). In sovereign grace, the Spirit of God calls dead sinners from death to life (Eph. 2:2-4). In sovereign grace, God gives faith to

His elect: to those for whom Christ died. We have no inherent faith; faith is not natural to sinful men, it is the fruit of the Spirit of God! In sovereign grace, God keeps and preserves us in faith; we do not keep and preserve ourselves. In sovereign grace, God conforms us to Christ's image, and presents us to Himself, without fault, to His and our exceeding great joy (Jude 1:24-25). Salvation is by sovereign grace! There is no salvation that is not sovereign grace. When God saves a sinner, it is in spite of all that we have done, in spite of all that we are, and on the ground of the obedience and blood of Jesus Christ alone, and by the almighty power of the Spirit of God through the preaching of the Gospel of His grace (Rom. 1:16; John 6:63; Rom. 10:17).

The sovereignty of God does not keep me from salvation. It is the sovereignty of God alone that saves! I would not and could not choose Christ. But God chose His people before time began. He gave them to Christ to save. And our Lord Jesus Christ died for them. Jesus Christ is God and man. God took the offense of our sin that separated us from Him. He took it in His own person, the person of His Son, and bore it in His own real human body and soul. This is God's sovereign grace! He does all. Not only does my salvation depend only on His will and choice, and not only is my salvation only because Christ actually make atonement for all my sins, and perfected me forever by His offering to God, but He must bring the news of this sovereign saving grace to me and persuade me of my guilty, ruined, lost and helpless condition, and convince me that He has done all to save His people, that He has actually purged their sins by Himself. And He must give to me, cause me, to look to Him alone.

In looking to Christ, I find all that I must have to be delivered from evil. I find that all I need has already been given me before the world began in Him. And all that He did in living and dying is all my salvation. I therefore come to Him, call upon Him, and trust Him only. And when all inside of me, and all that is outside of me would tells me there is no hope for me, I look again and see that He has answered God with Himself for all that God requires of sinners, and I take His words to my bosom that "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," and I see in this woman that He gives mercy to those who thus come, and so I look to Him, believe

Him, and rely on Him alone for everything in my salvation. Even, and especially, this saving faith that so enables me to see that my Savior is sovereign and can save this perverse sinner in spite of all that I am, because from first to last, He saves by His will, by His work, by His call, by His preserving and perfecting grace. And this alone gives all glory to God.

*Loved with everlasting love
Led by grace this live to know!
Gracious Spirit from above
Thou hast taught me it is so!
O this full and perfect peace!
O this transport all divine!
In a love that cannot cease,
I am His and He is mine!*