

“Persistent Faith”
Mark 7:24-30
(Preached at Trinity, April 13, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered Chapter 7 we witnessed the Pharisees and Scribes coming to Jesus hoping to trap Him or discredit Him. They had noticed that the disciples of Jesus failed to go through the ceremonial cleansing prior to eating and they were taking issue with it.
2. Jesus used their attack to condemn their external religion. It isn’t the things that enter into the body that defiles us. Wickedness is an issue of the heart. A right relationship with God demands a new heart. Our relationship with Him is a matter of the heart.
3. After teaching these things Mark records that Jesus got up and traveled to the region of Tyre where He entered into a house.
 - A. This marks a transition in our Lord’s ministry. His Galilean ministry is ending and He retires to the district of Tyre and Sidon. This portion of our Lord’s ministry is called The Retirement Ministry. This will continue through **Chapter 10:52**. From there the text will cover the portion known as The Climax.
 - B. In this section called The Retirement Ministry Jesus is primarily in Gentile territory.
 - C. While Jesus will still be in the presence of crowds of people Jesus frequently seeks places of seclusion and the primary emphasis in this section will be teaching His disciples—see **Mark 8:1**
4. Upon arriving Jesus goes into a house for the purpose of seclusion.
Mark 7:24-25 – “And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: but he could not be hid. For a *certain* woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:”
5. The scene opens with a Canaanite woman approaching Him about her demon possessed daughter. Matthew records that she is constantly crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." The disciples are complaining for Jesus to send her away.
Matthew 15:23 – “But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to *Him* and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us."
 - A. At first Jesus ignores her in silence – but this doesn’t deter her.
Matthew 15:25 – “But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"
 - B. Then Jesus rebuffs her telling her that He was only sent to minister to the Jews – she still persists.
Matthew 15:24 – “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

- C. Then Jesus further discourages her by saying, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” Jesus is implying that she is a dog – yet, still she persists.
Mark 7:27 – “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”
- D. The Canaanite woman then turns the word of seeming reproach into a reason for optimism – Even the dogs receive the crumbs from the master’s table.
- E. Upon hearing this Jesus heeds her request and heals her daughter.
4. In many ways this narrative is difficult to understand.
- A. Why is Jesus, as it seems, speaking so harshly with this woman – even referring to her as a dog?
- B. Why is Jesus delaying to heed the request of one who comes humbly seeking His aid?
- C. In reality, Jesus’ dealings with this woman were by design – according to purpose.
5. This passage is yet another demonstration of the characteristics of genuine faith and how God works upon those who possess genuine faith.
6. This account is recorded by both Mark and Matthew. Both add their unique report of the scene. Remember, Mark was not an eye-witness but probably received the details from Peter. In order to get the full picture I want to look at the parallel accounts in both **Matthew 15** and **Mark 7**.
- I. First, let’s look once again at the Characteristics of Genuine Faith
- A. Genuine faith involves understanding or knowledge
1. She came to Jesus knowing that He alone could help her
 2. Listen to Matthew’s Gospel
Matthew 15:22 – “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”
 3. She referred to Him as Lord - κύριος
She referred to Him as “Thou Son of David” – the Messiah. She was confident that Jesus was the promised seed who would deliver His people. Although she was not a Jew, she was laying hold of the promise –
GREAT FAITH
- B. Genuine faith is a fervent faith
Mark 7:25 – “But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet.”
Mark 7:26 – “she kept asking Him”
1. In Matthew’s Gospel we read that she “cried out”
Matthew 15:22 – “a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and began to cry out” – It literally means “to scream”
 2. True faith is never lukewarm faith
 3. Genuine faith has a zeal for Christ, His Kingdom, and His people
- C. True faith has confidence in the promise of God
1. The promise of Christ was given first to the Jews and Jesus was offered first to them. But then He was offered to the Gentiles

Matthew 10:5-7 – “These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, “Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

John 1:11-13 – “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Acts 13:46 – “And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.”

After observing the great faith of the Gentile centurion Jesus declared:

Matthew 8:10-12 – “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. ¹¹ “And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; ¹² but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

2. We don’t know how much she knew but Jesus gave her a ray of hope:

Mark 7:27 – “Let the children be satisfied first”

3. Even in the face of being humbled she had an expectation of the promise of God and she would not be denied.

Mark 7:28 – “Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs.”

She wasn’t a Jew, but she knew there was grace for her

D. Genuine faith is a humble faith

Mark 7:28 – “Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs.”

1. She was not insulted at being called a dog. She simply replied, “Yes Lord”
2. She was satisfied with the crumbs that fell from the table
3. She was content to be at the feet of others – under the table
4. Genuine faith is not puffed up
5. This is one of the great difficulties of our humanity

E. Genuine faith is a persistent faith.

1. Comparing the Matthew and Mark accounts this dear lady is turned away three times, yet she presses on. She was not to be denied.
2. True faith will be satisfied with nothing short of Jesus. Jesus is pursued with the fullness of energy

II. Genuine faith is persistent faith, but God will continue to test this faith

A. He will continue to test our faith to prove it genuine

1. A false faith will often fall away during times of difficulty

Matthew 13:20-21 – “And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.”

2. A genuine faith only becomes stronger with affliction

1 Peter 1:6-7 – “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”

B. God’s delays are designed to strengthen and increase our faith

Matthew 15:22-23 – “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.” ²³ But He did not answer her a word.”

1. Abraham and Sara had to wait a long time before they finally received Isaac.

- a. Abraham is called the father of all who believe

Romans 4:11 – “and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them,”

- b. We are told that his faith was strengthened

Romans 4:20 – “yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,”

2. Abraham had to wait a long time before God stayed his hand from sacrificing Isaac

Hebrews 11:17-18 – “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; ¹⁸ *it was he* to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.”

3. Didn’t it seem that Jesus had arrived at the house of Jairus too late?

Mark 5:35-36 – “While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's *house certain* which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.”

4. Didn’t it seem that Jesus had delayed too long in the case of Lazarus?

John 11:6 – “When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.”

John 11:21 – “Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”

5. Sometimes it seems that our prayers have gone unheard. This was a woman of “great faith,” yet at the first Jesus answered her not a word that she might become even more earnest.
Remember, **James 5:16** – “. . . The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
Sometimes the delay of God makes us more fervent in our prayers.
- C. He will continue to humble us lest we become puffed up
2 Corinthians 12:7 – “And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself!”
 1. A mere religious person would have never stood for such a rebuke
People often become furious if you call into question their conversion.
 2. God will use His Providence to humble us
 3. God humbles us to make us satisfied with our Lord’s provision – even crumbs which fall from the Master’s table are of greater wealth than all the riches of this world.
1 Timothy 6:6-8 – “But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸ And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”

Conclusion:

1. Matthew records that Jesus praised this woman for her faith.
Matthew 15:28 – “O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.”
2. Saving faith is great faith, even when it is little faith. And such faith will not be turned away. It is persistent. It presses on. It prevails.
3. Does this describe your faith? If your faith is weak pray that God will increase it.
“Lord Jesus, help me in my unbelief.”
Mark 9:24 – “Immediately the boy's father cried out and *began* saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief.”
4. If this Gentile woman with limited knowledge sought Jesus Christ with her whole heart, how much more should each of you who have great knowledge?