

## DISCUSSION GUIDE: Matthew 15:21-28

October 22, 2017

We've been basking in the truth that God has *unilaterally* redeemed us, His children. As a response to that unilateral saving, Paul has been showing us that we ought to fight sin. This balance between striving to be holy and admitting that all our good deeds come from God is a difficult one to maintain. Jesus, sympathizing with our weaknesses (Heb 4:15) provides for us an example of tenacious faith. The Canaanite woman is an example of balanced faith.

1. This is one of the few passages in which Jesus *seems* to ignore someone asking Him for help. Read Luke 11:5-13. God is sovereign, and His will is not alterable. BUT, these passages teach us to pray *continually* and *persistently* and even *expectantly*.

- Have you ever become complacent in your walk with God because you understand that everything is within His control?
- Theologians often want to describe exactly how God works and use the Bible to say what He would and wouldn't do. This desire comes from good intentions, but often times we can forget God's magnitude and our feebleness. God is in control, He does things without us asking or us even knowing what we need, but sometimes we "have not because we ask not" (James 4:2). There is a tension there. Do you feel that tension?

2. Good theology can open the door to poor practice. In understanding that God is in control, we can become lazy. On the other hand, realizing that God answers *our* prayers can make us prideful and tempted to "tell" God what to do.

- Notice this beautiful woman's plea: "have mercy on me". Notice how she admits that Jesus is master *and that she is a dog*. This isn't hyperbole. We are but dust and ashes, mere dogs, in the sight of a Holy God. How does this example help you pray?

3. As God became flesh in Jesus, power was the result. This woman was a Canaanite. Canaanites were the ancient enemies of Israel. The books of Joshua and Judges describe the bloody battles between the Canaanites and the Israelites. Obviously, there was some animosity between the two groups. Now, as God walked the earth in human flesh as a Jew, even Canaanites called Him Lord and *begged* for healing!

- God is our loving Father and He cares for us more than you do your children. What could you ask for that you do not? How can you pray with more earnestness and tenacity?
- Isaiah 45:23 and Revelation 14:11 express the truth that "every knee shall bow" to our God. This passage in Matthew is not only a partial fulfillment of prophecy but a reminder of God's future victory. How can we *fight* with God and take part in His victory over all the nations? Try to answer that question in light of God's sovereignty, our responsibility, and our need to be humble.