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Sermon preached by Mr. F. I. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
Sunday morning, 22nd August 1965.

"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." Mathew 15:28.

We are all acquainted with this narrative. It contains every element of spiritual worship, and it is written for our instruction. We may not have the same trouble as this woman, who had a daughter grievously vexed with a devil. It must have been a very sore trouble to have such a daughter in her home. But as enabled, we would look at the work of faith in this woman's heart. Hers was a prayer of faith, although the prayer consisted of but three words: "Lord, help me." There was the object of her faith: "Lord" – Lord of lords, King of kings; Emmanuel, God and Man; the Man Christ Jesus. Him whom God made strong for Himself, of whom He said: "I have laid help upon One that is mighty." (Psalm 89:19) And you may depend upon it, He laid help upon One that is mighty, not for people who have no cares, have no needs, have no sins, have no burdens. If there are any here in that case, then this beautiful narrative will have no meaning to them. I wonder if there is a single person here that can say they have no need of God, they need not His help, there is nothing that they need from His fulness, nothing that they need Him to do for them. Now that is the state of a natural man.

But let us look at the case before us. For instance, the condition of the woman in her social position: she was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger, and upon that footing she was without God and without hope. She was in the same position as the woman at Samaria's well; she said unto the Lord: "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." And therefore, in that sense of the word, the woman had no right to come to the Lord Jesus, she was an outcast, she was a Samaritan, she was a Gentile dog. From that point of view it was impudence. O but faith is reverently impudent, reverently rude – as was Esther! If any should venture in unto the King uncalled, they did so at the peril of their lives; but Esther ventured in, and it was not according to the law, it was unlawful. O mighty faith!

Now here was the position of this woman: "Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying" – O this cry! It was living faith, it was the life of God in her soul. Nothing could suppress this cry, it was the cry of faith, and it was faith in this Person. She believed Him to be the Son of God, believed in His divinity, believed that He was omnipotent, believed that He was able to do for her what she needed, and the only One that could. She was shut up unto Him, she cried.

Very important these points are in worship. She had faith in Christ, and that faith, in her trouble, brought her to Christ. Now have we that much? Have you ever cried unto the Lord in your trouble, cried with the voice of faith? "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." And her cry was for mercy, "Saying, have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." She knew Him, and it was mercy she needed. Mercy would be an insult to an independent, proud man. Offer mercy to an independent man who needed nothing, strong in health, independent in circumstances; but O how sweet is mercy to those who have been given to realise that they have nothing in and of themselves, and that "the native treasure of their mind, is sin, and death, and hell!" We read these things, we sing them,

but are they in our experience? What would put us in a position to need mercy? We often repeat – and it bears repetition – that opposites meet in experience; and what does mercy meet? It meets misery, and mercy and grace go hand in hand. Therefore, the exhortation is: "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in (every) time of need." (Hebrews 4:16) In mercy, in grace, really is the whole of the Gospel. Those two blessings are representative of all the fulness that is in Christ Jesus. He came "full of grace and truth," and this woman believed it. But she had a case. If we have no case, then our religion is merely theory, notion, sentiment, imagination; and it is a good thing if we are exercised and search our own hearts to make those deductions. It is wholesome to make deductions and seek to be rid of everything that is spurious, unreal, artificial, and to seek for that little that a righteous man hath, which is better than the riches of many wicked.

Well, here was a woman possessed of the life of God in her soul, though she was a Gentile, an outcast, a stranger. Some of you may feel just like that. Upon social and legal ground she had no business to come to the Lord at all. Like the leper: a leper, according to the law, should put a covering upon his upper lip and warn everybody not to come near him. O but that leper who came to this blessed Man, knelt down and besought Him, saying, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (Mark 1:40)

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word." This is the greatest trial and test of faith, to pray to a silent God. Do you know what that is? These inward secrets are secrets unknown to a nominal professor. Do you know what it is to pray to a silent God? David did. "Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me." (Psalm 28:1) He realised that if God was permanently silent he would be among those that go down into the pit. And I will venture to say here what I have said before – and that is for the encouragement of those who are struggling with a heavy burden, a heavy case, to a silent God – be thankful when God is silent to you, if you are not silent to Him. This was the case of the woman. He answered her not a word, but He knew what he would do. His thoughts towards her were thoughts of peace and not of evil to give her an expected end; and she expected that end, there was hope in this prayer. Where there is faith there is hope, where there is hope there is faith; it proceeds from the life of God in the soul, it is an evidence of being born again, and a token of election; these are the fruits of the evidences of it.

"But He answered her not a word." But His heart was full of love. I believe it is right to say that Joseph is an inspired type of the Lord Jesus as he dealt with his brethren. When the Lord Jesus did speak to the woman He spoke roughly to her. Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren: "Ye are spies: ye are not true men." He knew them, but they did not know him. O how his heart burned with love as he spoke roughly to them! (Genesis ch.42) "But He answered her not a word." And His disciples came and besought Him, they joined with the Lord. No doubt they observed His silence, and they began to be suspicious of this woman. And this is a very great trial, if the Lord is silent to you, and His people become suspicious of you. Ah, this is a path, a very trying path, when suspicion enters in! The Lord was silent, "And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away." O what blessed faith she had! I wonder she did not go away. Why, my friends, a good many professing people would be offended, and would have gone away long before this. Some of them you can hardly look at without they are offended. But there was love, and hope, and faith, in this woman.

Love all defects supplies,
Makes great obstructions small.

(Gadsby's 792)

"His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away." A minister may do this, unconscious of your case, but the Lord may use him for the trial of your faith. When you come burdened to a service, with your eyes up unto the Lord, it may be that the very ministry seems to have rebuked you and sent you away. O what a trial of faith this is! "His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us" – insinuating some base motive – Lord, it is not Thee that she has come for, that she has come to cry after. O what a dark case this poor dear woman in trouble was in! Job was in a similar case. His three godly friends misunderstood him, misrepresented him. And there was the Lord. Jeremiah said: "Why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land...as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?" (Jeremiah 14:8-9) And that is the attitude the Lord takes for the trial of faith. Here was this crying woman, broken-hearted, troubled woman, and there was the Lord, His heart full of love, full of mercy, trying her faith. O what beauty He saw in that faith!

"Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." So that was a rebuke to His disciples. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matthew 9:13) "Come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) This is the point where this dear woman was encouraged. It would not have encouraged a Pharisee. "He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep." O she had faith in this blessed Saviour! The Holy Ghost revealed Him to her; and you may depend upon it, in that silence and the exercise of her faith, the Lord was secretly teaching her, manifesting Himself to her – as He did to the publican. As he went up into the temple, all he had to say was: "God be merciful to me a sinner." But when you come to consider the work of grace that was completed in that publican's experience before he went home, there must have been some very blessed revelation to his soul of his Redeemer, of his Mediator, of his Saviour, of his Substitute – some application of the atonement of the Lord Jesus. O what a lot the Lord by His Spirit could accomplish in one service! "He went down to his house justified rather than the other." (Luke 18:13-14)

"But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, THEN..." There is much in that word "then" – that was the moment – "lost sheep." She felt it; that is why she asked for mercy, and to feel that this blessed One had come to such a lost soul as she was. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me." But He still tries her faith: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." There is nothing but living faith could support a soul under these conditions. Have we any ground to believe that we possess a measure of like precious faith? O my friends, practical religion is the most important part of it! The root is vital, there would be no fruit without the root; but O, if there is a root and branches and no fruit, it shows that the root is not spiritual and living! "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." It is very sad to see professing people so easily offended. See how He tried John the Baptist. To my mind, this is one of the most mysterious dealings in the New Testament. God had given such a testimony concerning John: "There is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." And yet, for doing what was right, the Lord permitted him to be cast into prison, and there tried his faith to the end. But he was not silent to the Lord: "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" He

saw his prison walls, and doubtless he anticipated his execution, and what could he say? Had he made a mistake, when he declared to the people: "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." But Jesus sent the disciples back; He sends messages to prisoners, and His prisoners send messages to Him: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard...and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." (Luke 7:19-28) O may we remember it, may we examine ourselves, how easily we are offended, and –

How oft we grumble and repine
With blessings in our hands.

(Gadsby's 507)

I have thought much lately of the sin of murmuring. The people murmured in the wilderness, and many of their carcasses fell. It is a sin, and to be surrounded with the comforts and blessings and mercies of God and to grumble and repine, it is rebellion against Him and dishonours Him.

But here is a poor troubled woman. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord." She knew she was a Gentile, she knew she had no legal social right. But O, says the Lord, by Paul to the Colossians: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew...Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." (ch.3:11) And the woman believed it. She disregarded her position, and yet acquiesced in it: "Truth, Lord." O I do not know what some religious people would do if they were called dogs! That seems to be upon my mind a little: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." O how sickening it is to see professing people offended for nothing! "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" – to a dog like you! Have you ever been brought, I mean honestly, to feel yourself nothing but a dog before the Lord? Worse than a dog, for a dog has got no sin. To feel yourself to be what you are before Him, and to acknowledge it? It is as though this woman would say: "Truth, Lord, you cannot call me anything worse than I feel myself to be" This is worship. The woman is worshipping Him. There is love, hope, faith in this, and the Lord loves this woman all the time that He is trying her faith. And He loves some of you whom He tries. The trial of faith is precious. A false faith is never tried, "But the Lord trieth the righteous." (Psalm 11:5)

"Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Lord, grant me the privilege of a dog! O have you ever felt if you could but have a corner in a Chapel, the back seat in the back corner, and if you could have but a crumb of mercy! Lord, give me the privilege of a dog. I am not worthy to come to your table, but O, may I get under it – and "eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." And you will notice this too, that it does not say, eat of the crumbs which fall from **the master's** table, but **their masters'** table, their master, the one to whom they belong. The dog knows which table to go to. Do you?

"Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me." Well, this is the centre of this narrative, and of this word: "Lord, help me." Three things: one, the glorious Lord in whom all fulness of every kind dwells. There is nothing outside of Christ but death, destruction and despair – that is all there is outside of Him. Everything of life, of salvation, of blessedness, of holiness, of righteousness, is in Him; and she believed it. This is what held her. This is why she did not go away. She had the spirit of Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (John 6:68) It is a good point if we are

brought there, although the circumstances may be exceedingly trying, and we may test our own case by the Word of God. May the Lord make us honest with ourselves. Can we say that with respect to our souls, with respect to our lives, in respect of the prospect of eternity, are we compelled to say, "Lord, to whom can I go? There is none else, and therefore, He reigns supreme in your heart. So there are the three things: the woman, this poor, needy, troubled sinner; this glorious Lord; and her prayer. Her prayer was one word of help, and it was to the mighty One, infinite in His wisdom, a divine Sovereign. His sovereignty orders everything in the universe, all is subject to Him, and she believed it.

"Lord." O how this blessed Lord increases as He manifests Himself in all His suitability and sufficiency, to a destitute, troubled, sinner! Lord. To be brought before Him by the Spirit, whatever your case. She had a case. Help! You need help – at least, the helpless do. It is a mercy to be helpless, but very painful. We are helpless in every sense of the word; and if we really knew it, we are helpless as creatures as well as sinners. And if we are given to live a life of faith upon the Son of God, we shall realise that it is in Him naturally that we live and move and have our being.

"Lord, help me." She saw that help can come alone from Him. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Psalm 146:5) Help was her cry. She saw Him to be the Creator of the ends of the earth, and of all that is in the earth, who is not weary; there is no searching of His understanding. Help. The particular case with which she needed help was her daughter, and she needed help at that moment to enable her to continue in prayer to a silent God. You will need help in that sense. Help to pray when God is silent, help to pray when you receive a rebuff from the throne of grace, help when people become suspicious of you, and say, Send her away, there is nothing in her. Even Eli was suspicious of Hannah, when he saw that her mouth moved: "Put away thy wine from thee." (1 Samuel 1:14) She needed help to continue to pray under Eli's reproof. And you will need help to continue under the suspicion of people. There were those who were delivered from the noise of the archers at the places of drawing of water. (Judges 5:11) Ah, Satan comes sometimes with the Lord's people, and is at their right hand to resist them; archers that fire their arrows even at the place of drawing of waters come into the sanctuary. O may we be preserved from joining those archers, by being suspicious of people and judging! "Judge not, that ye be not judged." (Matthew 7:1) Send arrows of enmity, false judgement, and backbiting. Help. You will need help under these conditions. You may need help in your soul against the indwelling sins of your nature and your besetting sins. "I cry unto thee daily." (Psalm 86:3) How David needed help, and prayed for help through the 51st Psalm! O what help we need against depraved and fallen nature and our besetting sins!

"Lord." She saw everything in Him, every kind of help in Him. Help was laid upon Him, and He bore it. Help for sinners, by having sin laid upon His sacred Head. Help for debtors, for He paid the mighty debt; He was the Surety. Help was laid upon Him for debtors. Help, for those that feel to be lepers, incurable. O a remedy, a cure, is in the good Physician! Help, with some that are in the horrible pit and miry clay. Jeremiah groaned, he breathed, he cried out of the low dungeon, all to this blessed One: Help! "Lord, help me." We shall need help every day of our lives, if we are being led forth through the wilderness by the right way. That immortal Psalm 107 – you look at it. It was just this, from beginning to end – it was this: "Lord, help me." Look at the places they were brought into.

But we shall need help to die. It needs much help to die; when our mortal powers fail; when our poor bodies are reduced, and we are brought near to the swelling of Jordan. Lord, help me to die. And what would help a poor sinner then? Nothing but the Lord's presence. O how dear Miss Steele concentrates the whole in that beautiful hymn 1010:

Father, whate'er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at Thy throne of grace,
Let this petition rise:

Give me a calm, a thankful heart,
From every murmur free;
The blessings of Thy grace impart,
And make me live to Thee.

But this is it:

Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine,
My life and death attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey's end. (Gadsby's 1010)

O the blessed experience inside of this narrative! May we search our hearts, even by this, and see if we have any real ground and right to believe that we are in the footsteps of the flock.

Amen.

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