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A Plea for Divine Aid

SERMON preached at Union Chapel, Bethersden, on Sunday, 22nd February 1959
by the Pastor, Mr. H. Dawson

Matthew 15. 25.

Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me".

This is a word that stands in connection with the dealings of the sinners' Friend with a poor sinner that had the great mercy to get in touch with Him, and get some lasting good for her soul, and to obtain an indubitable evidence that she was a sinner born again in a gracious, outstanding answer to prayer. Such an answer to prayer is a wonderful evidence that a sinner is being taught of God, and participating in the favour that God bears to His dear people:-

"That Christ is God I can avouch,
And for His people cares,
For I have prayed to Him as such,
And He has heard my prayers".

The Psalmist says:

"Blessed be God, for He hath heard my prayer, nor turned away His mercy from me"; and there is a declaration: "I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of supplication"; and where that spirit of grace is known - where that supplication rises up in a poor sinner's breast, such an one belongs to the house of David, great David's greater Son; such an one is beyond all questioning an inhabitant of Jerusalem. When Saul of Tarsus was born again God confirmed the truth of it to that good Ananias by adducing one evidence: "Behold he prayeth". Is that the truth concerning you, "Behold he prayeth"? Ananias could hardly credit that such an one as Saul of Tarsus was a sinner born again, and there is that about us, although many of us have looked on and have also read about the wonders God has wrought in sinners being called by grace, yet there still rises up at times a limitation of the God of all Grace as to what He may be pleased to do in calling this sinner or that. It is to be deprecated, it is what you must seek grace never to fall a prey to. Do not grieve the Spirit of God by limiting Him as to what He may do in calling sinners by grace. Ananias thought to argue that matter out with God: "Lord, but I have heard by many of this man, and he came to Damascus with letters to do all the mischief he could against Thee and Thine". "Go thy way, Ananias, I have called Saul of Tarsus by grace, he is a chosen vessel unto me, I give you this evidence, which you cannot dispute, 'Behold, he prayeth'." It is a great mercy to be taught to pray, and I might ask you, as before God, with Whom you have to do, if you know what that mercy is, what that privilege is.

I want to look at the words before us, as the Lord shall help me, from two or three viewpoints. This woman of Canaan was wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and she had that mercy I have hinted at, to be taught to pray, and she had a case to lay before Jesus Christ as the sinners' Friend. It

might be helpful in approaching the subject to look a little at the setting of it: "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 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'". "Have mercy on me, O Lord" in this matter, hear my prayer "Thou Son of David." "Then Jesus went thence" I do not think for one moment that Jesus Christ on earth as verily Man ever took one step, this way or that, without there was an aim to do poor sinners good and to fulfil that work which He came down upon the earth to do. "Jesus must needs go through Samaria" because there it was ordained there should be a meeting place between a woman of Samaria and Jesus as the sinners' Friend. What is to be observed is that as "Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts". When Jesus Christ goes to this place or that there will always be poor sinners coming where He is to get that good which He alone can communicate as the sinners' Friend. I have often admired that wonderful commission given to the seventy that you read in the Gospels, when Jesus sent them forth two by two, it is said that Jesus sent them forth into "all places whither He himself would come". I might turn aside and say that whenever God sends a man to preach His glorious Gospel, whoever he is and wherever he is if God sends that man with His own authority to go and preach the Gospel here and there, it is where Jesus Christ Himself will be coming to do poor sinners good through that man's labours. Remember that; you ought to say "thank you" more than you have ever done yet, that you are found under the Gospel and that God still sends men to preach it, and makes it to be "The power of God unto salvation" in poor sinners' souls. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." So, as Jesus went thence and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the dear Saviour knew what He was about to do, and that this woman of Canaan would be coming where He was. How well taught this woman of Canaan was; do not read it down too cursorily, "A woman of Canaan" - not an Israelite - not one brought up in the midst of the things of God to know the doctrine of it; no, "a woman of Canaan", one who would be an enemy to God and godliness, being the character that she was as a woman of Canaan, yet she was wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and she approaches Jesus: "Have mercy on me, O Lord". Here is the evidence of being wrought upon by the Spirit of God, for no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by divine teaching: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, and he that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him". The great majority of the people round about Jesus Christ looked upon Him as a man: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"; but this woman of Canaan was taught of God to acknowledge Him to be Lord - "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou son of David". "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'." You could not begin to reckon up how many times some of you have used this little petition, how apposite it is, how suitable to our souls' feelings at times, how it helps us to appear before God, and send up a petition: "Lord, help me". It might be well first of all to say just a little about what this woman of Canaan was helped to do; "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'". Worship!

Worship, when it is in accordance with that Scripture "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth" is beautiful in its simplicity; nothing could be more simple than this: a poor sinner in need before the sinners' Friend, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth is speaking". "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!"; do you think on your worship as you are found in the attitude of it? Is there any concern going on deep down in your soul that you might worship God aright? Are you sometimes troubled lest your worship should be just "Bodily exercise which profiteth little"? Good it is to be found in the attitude of worship, but what is most of all to be desired is to be in the atmosphere of it. Oh to feel: "This is none other than the house of God, it is even the gate of heaven"; "Lord, it is good for us to be here", when you feel at home as you are found before God in the attitude of worship, then you worship God aright. I might look at that just a little: "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me! ". What is worship? Remember this, it is not to do with the body. Worship is an act of the soul, and I said a word about the attitude of worship. Could you tell what is the attitude of worship? There is no bodily attitude of worship, because the Word of God tells us that people taught of God to pray - some have stood before God, and Paul says: "We knelt down on the shore, and prayed"; others you will find fell prone before God: "Then I fell at His feet as dead"; it is not a bodily attitude, it is what is known and felt inside, I say worship is the act of the soul. This woman of Canaan was found at the feet of Christ as the sinners' Friend, in a beautiful simplicity: "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me! ". Worship is an act of the soul, remember that; it does not depend on any outside show whatever. There are such things as bowings and genuflections and turning this way and that in the order of worship that some people profess to follow, but the Word of God tells us the kingdom of God is not outside show: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation"; it is not what the eye can light upon or discern. You all look to be attentive worshippers, but God only knows the truth of the matter, as to whether you really are; I am not fitting any caps on, I'm only bringing you down to a bedrock truth, because I want to have a good conscience when I come down to die, that I have not shunned to shew to you what is "The whole counsel of God"; and I say worship, true worship, is an act of the soul. It must be "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth must speak", and in worship there must be faith, such as this woman of Canaan was the subject of, she owned Jesus Christ to be Lord. In worship there must be adoration, there must be a concern to give unto God the "Glory that is due unto His Holy Name". I much like the approach of good Cornelius to what worship is: "We are all here present before God to hear the things commanded thee of God". Do you always realise when you are in the attitude of worship that you are before God? The woman of Canaan in the text realised that truth: "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me! ". Then in all worship there must be an aim; it is not just to go through the routine of a service whatever the order of service may be; no! worship must have an aim, and it will be this:

"Jesus we come to meet with Thee,
Our Lord and King,
To sit at Thy dear feet and here
Thy praises sing,
Compassion have on us, we pray
And empty send us not away".

Worship worth the name

will have an aim:

"I seek and hope to find,
A portion for my soul".

Yes, and in worship that God is the Author of, there will be knowledge; you will have a knowledge wrought within you as to what you want God to do on your behalf because you will be made aware of your need, and you will be just like this woman of Canaan: "Have mercy on me, O Lord"; and if you have got a knowledge that God has wrought within you as to what a sinner you are, then arising out of that knowledge will be this: "God be merciful to me, a sinner". Much might be said along that line of thought, and I add this: worship to be that which is in accordance with the standard laid down in the Word of God, must always emanate from a spiritual mind, "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace". "Then came she and worshipped Him", and Jesus Christ is the Object of worship, God is approachable; remember that. I have told you that truth hundreds of times, and yet it is not vain repetition for if you should be lost after all you have heard about God being approachable, and you never take advantage of it, prize the privilege of it, the onus of you going down into eternal misery will be on your head.

"Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'." Let us look a little at this woman's case as it is unfolded in the context. This woman of Canaan had got a case, not only to do with her own soul, but she had got a burden in her home life. She had a daughter grievously vexed with a devil, and being the mother that she was, a godly mother, it clutched at her heart strings within that her daughter should be as she was, and she knew:

"None but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good",

so she is found coming out of the coasts of Canaan if she might get in touch with Jesus as the sinners' Friend: "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 may seem at the first reading of it strange that the sinners' Friend, so kind, and tender, and delighting in mercy, should behave like this, but there was an underlying purpose to make manifest the faith that was deep down in the woman of Canaan's heart: "But He answered her not a word". This record is left in the Word of God to encourage poor sinners taught of God nowadays who may have long tried to pray about this matter or that, but as yet they have

got no word, no specific answer, still "groping for the wall like the blind, and walking at noonday as in the night", not yet seeing light in heaven's own light on the dealings of God, the why and the wherefore; a very painful experience it is, but many people taught of God know something about it. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them". Oh the painful experience it is, when you feel: "Lo, I cry out and shout, but He shutteth out my prayer"; and remember what Asaph felt: "Is His mercy clean gone for ever, will He be favourable no more?" To be on the stretch to get something from God, and then to experience, like the woman of Canaan; "But He answered her not a word", and her case seems to be aggravated for we read: "and His disciples came and besought Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she crieth after us'". There is one thing to be remembered about the disciples, I only thought of it as I pondered the subject, it had not come to my mind before; - when the disciples were sent to preach while Jesus Christ was on earth going about on earth doing good, they only had a limited commission: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel". This woman of Canaan was a Gentile, and they had not been able to deal with her case, but it must be admitted that it seems they were not regarding the poor woman of Canaan according to the spirit of the Gospel that they were sent to preach: "Send her away, for she crieth after us"; or was it like this: "Send her away, Lord, the poor woman has got this case, it is altogether beyond us, our commission does not include us dealing with the Gentiles, Thou Knowest, but Thou, Lord canst do something for her, do send her away with her case attended to". I should like to think the disciples did think about it like that, but I am very much afraid it was otherwise. "But He answered and said, 'I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'." Now these rebuffs as they seem to be were only to make manifest what the spirit of God had done in this woman of Canaan, and if God should give you a living faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will live and labour in the midst of whatever may oppose it from earth or hell.

"True faith is the gift of God,
Deep in the heart it lies,
It lives and labours under load,
And though damped, it never dies.

Though this woman of Canaan had these setbacks and rebuffs, "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'", "I know I do not belong to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Lord, help me". "But He answered and said 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs'." The Gentiles were regarded by the Jewish nation as just dogs, but you must not think that the Lord Jesus was using that wording because of that, only the woman knew the meaning of it. "Poor woman, you know that the Jews as a nation simply regard you, being a Gentile, as a dog, how can you expect Me to do something for you and give you help." "And she said 'Truth, Lord, yet the dogs' (which means the puppies, little dogs) 'eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table'". Faith wrought in this woman of Canaan's breast rose up against all that opposed it. "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 even from that very hour." That is just the setting of the subject, the background of it; but I want to look a little more closely at this petition: "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'". What a mercy it is to contemplate that there is this help to be had. God has made a provision for it: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty, one chosen out of the people"; and when a sinner is born again, then there comes into his life a need, and he never loses it. He may not be always conscious of it to be needy, and be exercised about it, but he always has that need from the time he is born again, and it is a need of God, a need of divine aid, a need of help from on high. Can you remember, any of you, when you began to be in want, and that want was a want of God? When you felt:

"Lord Jesus, make thyself to me,
A living, bright reality".

It is a wonderful mercy when reality comes into a sinner's life, and he knows that he is a real sinner, and he has a real need wrought in his soul, a need of God in all that He is revealed to be as the sinner's Friend:-

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

Ere a sinner can join this woman in the text and worship God aright, and say "Lord, help me" you must be brought to realise how helpless you are: "He brought down their heart with labour, and they fell down, and there was none to help". There must be help needed; what could man do with the case of this woman of Canaan: "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" - no earthly service could afford any help whatsoever, bring any relief, or give healing. The help of man was vain, and the longer I live the more I see how the dealings of God with us, if we are His people all aim to bring us to realise: "Then are they brought to their wits' end, (all their wisdom is swallowed up) then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses". "Lord, help me", and it has got this as a background:

"When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh abide with me".

"Lord, help me." Do you remember when you first of all tried to pray, how helpless you felt then. You had never felt like that before, in all your life, however long you had lived, you had never felt like that, you felt helpless, you felt your need of God, and this petition suited you "Lord, help me". Help was needed, help was sought, and help was obtained. That is a glorious confession of faith given by the apostle Paul: "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day". "Having obtained help." Sometimes you try to pray "Lord, help me" and the help is not forthcoming at first; sometimes the sinners' Friend deals with poor sinners in their helplessness as He did with

this woman of Canaan "But He answered her not a word"; and a very painful experience it is to be helpless, and to continue helpless, until you almost become hopeless, but not quite, and you come to this conclusion: "Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him". "Though I am cast out of thy sight, I will look again toward thy holy temple." "Lord, help me." Think of these three aspects of it; When you first felt your need of help, divine aid; When you first sought it, and, yes, When you first obtained it, and you have been obtaining it from that day to this. You can say: "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day". "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'; and although God may allow you to become so helpless that you may even come to that plight that you read about in the shipwreck chapter in the Acts of the Apostles: "All hope of being saved was taken away"; yet, what do you read: "It came to pass, some on boards, some on broken pieces of the ship, and some by swimming, they all got safe to land". Yes. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'." This help will always be timely help. God works, as it were, to a timetable, He will never be too early with His help, or too late. It will come in accordance with His eternal purposes, and it will be a beautiful fit in. The covenant is "ordered in all things", and it is ordered in the help that poor sinners need that they shall obtain it, and not be left in an undone state to sink into despair. The help will be timely, I say, and remember it is called present help: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble". You may be in trouble, you may not have a daughter vexed with a devil, you may have got something in your own life, or in your home life to do with you or yours, which makes you more than ever aware that you need divine aid to meet it, and you know that it must be as God appears on your behalf that crooked things can be made straight, rough places plain, and mountains levelled, and the Hand of God be seen upon you and yours for good. Present help, and it will be unfailing help:-

"He who hath helped me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through".

Much might be said along that line of thought. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'." Think in your every day life how this petition fits in with your souls' exercised, whatever you do, if you attend to it aright: "Lord, help me" to do it, wherever you go, if you go with a good conscience, you must say "Lord, help me" where I am going, to have Thee for my guide, and guard. "Lord, help me" in the world as I go out in it:-

"Save me from this bewitching world,
Which has to death ten thousand hurled".

"Lord, help me" under my home roof, dwell under it too as the Son of Peace, be the Head of the house. "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not". You need this, too: "Lord, help me" in all to do with the Church that I belong to. Help me to remember my name is on the church-roll, help me to remember how it came there, help me never to forget the happiness I had when

it was recorded first of all.

"Lord, hast Thou made me know Thy ways,
Conduct me in Thy fear,
And grant me such supplies of grace,
That I may persevere."

"Lord, help me" in my profession,
to wear well. "Lord, help me" to carry my cross, and to remember it is not
only my cross but Thy cross which thou hast chosen for me. You do need
cross-bearing grace. "Lord, help me" to carry my cross, carry it for Jesus'
sake, as well as my own. Not only so, "Lord, help me" to know what is thy
will, and then do it. In this record of this woman of Canaan the dear
Saviour said: "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou
wilt"; and that is one more aspect of what is worship, when it is true
worship, the will of God is in it; remember that. If you like to look it
up in the records in the Gospels you will see how often the will of God is
referred to: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean"; and many
other instances might be adduced; and there will be this: "Lord, help me"
to do thy will willingly. There is a word I have looked at: "Be ye there-
fore reconciled to God", Oh you will have to plead "Lord, help me" to be
reconciled unto Thee, in what Thy will is for me to be, and to do. When He
appoints you suffering, remember that. When the great "I" in you is more
than ever crucified, "Lord, help me" to receive Thy dealings aright. "Lead
me in Thy truth, and teach me" and, Lord, help me to trust in Thee whate'er
betide:-

"Then, then to have recourse to God,
And pour a prayer in time of need,
And feel the balm of Jesus' Blood,
This is to find a Friend, indeed".

"Then came she and
worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'", and there will be this aspect of
this petition that will rise up in your soul's exercises: "Lord, help me"
concerning the future. "Lord, help me" to live a day at a time:-

"For tomorrow and its needs I would not pray,
Guide me, help me, dearest Lord, just for today".

"Lord, help me" not to fall a prey and be over-anxious about the morrow;
"Lord, help me" to leave the future with Thee to arrange:-

"He knows, and He loves, and He cares,
And nothing this truth can dim,
He gives the very best to those,
Who leave the choice to Him".

"Then came she and
worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me'." The Lord teach us to pray like it.

Amen.

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