

# Content With Crumbs

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
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## Matthew 15:21-28

*Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." 23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." 24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." 27 And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.*

This is a remarkable story. Its remarkableness is the unusualness, the uncharacteristic way Jesus dealt with the Syrophenician woman. For a God, who is both faithful and unchangeable, He is full of surprises. Sometimes you do not know what to expect from the Lord. In the case of this heartsick mother, Jesus ignored her, refused her request, and called her a dog. Not your suggested soul-winning technique, to say the least.

In our culture today, people would say Jesus was practicing racism. In our politically correct society, this is the first target. Because He said it wasn't right to give God's blessings to Gentiles, He was excluding people by their nationality and ethnicity. The words of our text ring offensive and it is so unlike Jesus until we get to verse 28; then we see the more acceptable compassionate, unbiased, and inclusive Jesus.

In the culture of our Lord, His behavior was not abnormal but normal. The racial tensions were extreme between the Jews and Gentiles. Even the apostles encouraged Jesus to tell the woman to go away and leave them alone. But at this point Jesus defied culture and racial hatred. He granted the woman's prayer and even complimented her to boot. He said, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."

Why was her faith great? That's an important question and I want to spend some time on it. She pleaded for crumbs and not the whole loaf. Why should we compliment her faith, as our Lord did, when she was willing to settle for crumbs and not come up to the table and feast and enjoy all of God's fullness. Great faith, it seems, would not stop at crumbs on the floor but seek to sit at the table and feast. Because she was a Gentile woman, Jesus called her a little dog. Notice the

insult did not put her off but caused her to press in all the more. If she be a dog, and a little one at that, and if crumbs are all the little dog should expect, then surely she would not be deprived. Crumbs she would have and with crumbs, she would be content.

But what about we who are God's children and not little dogs, we who sit at His table? Should we not expect more than crumbs? Would it be right for our Heavenly Father, who is not evil, but "gives good gifts to them that ask Him" hand out crumbs to us and withhold the meat? Are we content to eat crumbs when we could have so much more?

## **I. An Analysis of the Syrophenician's Faith**

Why did our Lord say that the Gentile woman's faith was great? The answer is because she wouldn't turn Jesus loose until He blessed her. Like old Jacob when he wrestled with God at the river Jabok, she stubbornly refused to let God go until he got the blessing. Today we are the opposite, aren't we? We make our request known to God and almost as soon as we are finished praying we forget what we asked for. There is no perseverance in prayer.

Spurgeon said in a sermon on prayer:

Brethren, how many times we ask of God and have not because we do not wait long enough at the door? We knock a time or two at the gate of Mercy and as no friendly messenger opens the door, we go our ways. Too many prayers are like boys' runaway knocks—given and then the giver is away before the door can be opened. O for Divine Grace to stand foot to foot with the Angel of God—and never, never, never relax our hold—feeling that the cause we plead is one in which we must be successful, for souls depend on it, the Glory of God is connected with it, the state of our fellow men is in jeopardy!

It's like we don't expect God to answer our prayers. Do you honestly believe God will answer your prayers? I think if we did we would be like this dear woman who would not take no for an answer, and who took God's delays as indications that there was still hope.

That is a very important point—how do you interpret the delays to answered prayer? Do you see them as a "no" or an encouragement to keep praying? Or do you get disappointed at the first sign of delay and determine that a delay is the answer no? How do you deal with the delays of God answering prayer?

So many times we take delays as an answer "no," when that is not biblically correct. Do you not believe God is skilled and able in communication to say *no* to you in such a way that no means no? I think so. I don't think He has problems with language, not even English. I think His English is quite good. He knows how to talk to you. He knows how to make you to know what you're asking may be some fleshly desire and that He ought not to answer. But until you hear "no," please, be like the Syrophenician woman—press and hold onto God and do not turn loose until you do. Faith fights for a word from God.

This is amazing. Jesus told this woman that His heaven-sent mission was to be a Jewish Messiah, but He had not yet uttered those words when she, a Gentile, drew closer to Him. Look at verse 25, “Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’” She didn’t hear the word *no*, nor did she interpret His statement as a sign that He wasn’t merciful. She came and *worshiped*.

Can you worship God when He’s not acting the way you want? When He’s performing in a manner that leaves you still hurting, can you still worship Him? We boast we believe in a sovereign God, but let Him act sovereignly from and contrary to our wants, wishes, and requests and we lose faith. I’m convinced that most of us are not much different from our brothers and sisters who do not believe that God is so sovereign, that He’s even sovereign over our choices. What do I mean by “sovereign”? The word means God possesses all power, all authority, therefore He is in control of everything, including your choices. This is what I believe the Bible teaches. It doesn’t mean He strips me of the ability to choose, He just lets me know what perimeters of freedom I have and what I don’t. And He can even turn my heart like water, as the king’s heart, to the direction of which He desires. I believe all things are governed by a sovereign God. But when times get difficult is our theology only in our head and not in our heart? Or are we more like those who don’t want God when it interferes with man’s ability to act freely. We don’t really want a sovereign God, who will do all things according to the good pleasure of His will, do we? A true sovereign means we have to bend to His will and purposes instead of God bending to ours. We want a God that is powerful enough to bring to pass our good pleasures, not a sovereign God that acts independently of us.

Herein, is why many of our prayers are not answered—we are praying according to our will as if our will trumped God’s will. We pray as the Apostle James said, “amiss.” “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). We’re not praying according to the will of God; we delight in our will more than God’s.

The foundation of faith is that God is good. The implication of that is that everything He does is good. That is not to say all that He allows that is evil is good, but being omnipotent, He has the power to take that which is evil for our good. It is what I call the Joseph effect. When Joseph revealed himself to his devious and malevolent brothers, who sold him to slave traders, he said, “you sold me here, but God sent me.” Joseph explained, “you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20). You know, what you and I think is tragedy is God working to avert the real tragedy.

And so again I ask you, do you really believe God knows what is best for you and can you trust a sovereign God whose plans are often contrary to the flesh?

I don’t believe this woman’s request was “amiss.” Otherwise, Jesus would not have granted what she asked for. Her prayers were not amiss. Her request was within the perimeters of God’s providential will. But His seeming reluctance might have led her to think she was asking something that was contrary to the Lord’s will. I mean, when He delays to answer your prayers aren’t you tempted to think, “Well, maybe I’m asking God for something I shouldn’t be asking for?” I believe

that's what many of us immediately think. And if you don't know what I'm talking about with God delaying an answer to prayer it means you haven't prayed for much or you haven't been saved very long. I've been waiting seven years for one promise and 22 and a half years for the other. In all of those years He has never told me no or that I'm missing it or chasing a rabbit I'll never find. Faith keeps me praying and believing. It doesn't mean my faith hasn't grown weak, it doesn't mean there aren't times when I waver in faith, but God has braced me up. His delays in answer to prayer are never to be interpreted as a no. She persisted. She pressed Him all the more.

Jesus gave her an argument that seemed airtight logically and theologically. He said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Matthew 15:26). Now I believe all God's children should be theologians. That ought not to scare you because the word *theologian* simply means, a person who studies God. It should be said of every Christian that they are a student of their God. Therefore, we must be theologians who have learned much about God, but, if not careful, theology will also hinder you in knowing the Lord.

If you study the Bible, read theology books, and listen to deep Bible teaching for the ultimate reason that it tickles your pride to know more than the average church-goer, then I tell you, you don't know God very well. Some people let their learning take them away from experiencing the Lord Jesus rather than draw them closer. This dear woman, what did she know about theology? Being a Canaanite, not a Jew, she knew some of the Old Testament stories of God and His miraculous intervention on behalf of the people of Israel. No doubt she had heard some of the testimonies of Jesus' healing the sick and casting out demons. All of her theology said, "My daughter is demon possessed and that will eventually kill her; all I know is this Jesus of Nazareth acts like God and if I can get Him to her, He can help her." That's all she knew, and she drew near and worshiped Him and refused to be put off. She calls Him "Lord," "Son of David," all theological terms.

I ask you to consider for a few moments, does our theology help us draw near and worship Jesus or does it get in our way? If what you know about God doesn't create more hunger for Him, then it's just information stored in your brain and not affecting your heart. If it's not affecting your heart, you're going to have to ask yourself a question. Do you really know what you say you know? We don't know what we know. We've got it up here but there's no reality to it. There's no power, no influence in our lives. I warn us not to let what we know, make us think that knowing is the same as experiencing. It isn't. You can know the Gospel but that doesn't mean you know the power of the Gospel. You can know much about Jesus but that doesn't mean you know Jesus. What little this woman knew made her push into Jesus so that she would experience Him. Does your theology do this? If not, something is wrong. If your theology does not motivate you to press into Jesus and experience Him more, something is wrong with your heart.

Oak Grove, God, has blessed us with our knowledge of the Bible. He has given us much in this regard. Why then are we content to eat crumbs when it comes to experiencing God? We eat crumbs off the floor rather than sit at the table and get the full course. This is the need of our hour right now. The need is not our small groups to grow or even our church to grow numerically. It's that our hearts grow in their hunger for Jesus. That's why I believe this woman's faith

is great. Her faith caused her to persevere in prayer, it was theologically driven, and it did not interpret the delays of God as the answer no.

## II. Settling For Crumbs Rather than the Whole Meal

I know this is an unusual way to approach this text, but this is the way God unfolded it to me and I simply share with you what He gives to me.

I grew up in a church that may not have had all its doctrine correct, but one thing it had going for it—it believed God was a God to be experienced. For years, I asked the Lord why He let me grow up in a Pentecostal church instead of a Baptist church. I believe the answer is this, so I could learn that God was to be known by experience, and equally important, that not every experience is God.

Our Syrophenician sister knew that she had to press into Jesus to get her crumbs. In other words, she had to force her way into the Lord to experience His gracious power. Her response to Jesus is absolutely amazing. When He said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs,” He insulted her. To call someone a dog is pretty low but to call her a little dog is cold blooded. If you’re going to call me a dog at least call me a German Shepherd or a big dog, not a little pipsqueak kind of dog. Brother Conrad Murrell, an old prophet of the Lord and dear friend, said of this passage, “Jesus called her a dog, and she started barking!” She hears His answer and when you look at her face and demeanor are in agreement. She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the masters’ table.” She wasn’t offended, she agreed with Him! She took it as an opportunity, *He’s given me an open door, I can now press Him more.*

She would do whatever it took to get her blessing. Are you willing to do whatever the Lord wants to get your blessing? Are you willing to do whatever it takes? Are you willing to approach Him with a passion that says, “I will not let you go until you intervene?” Or are you willing to feed off the few crumbs that fall off of God’s table?

At that time of this miracle, the New Covenant was not in effect. This is why Jesus said at first, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). It’s not that He wasn’t sent to save the world both Jew and Gentile, but His first responsibility was to the covenant people of Israel. He was first a Jewish Messiah before He was a Gentile Messiah.

It’s not that Jesus hadn’t performed miracles for Gentiles. There was the Samaritan woman and her village, and next was the Roman Centurion, and then was the Gadarene demoniac, and finally there was the Samaritan leper. He said none of the things to these Gentiles that He said to the pleading mother. Why? Most commentators and preachers tell us that Jesus did all of these outrageous things to develop the woman’s faith. Perhaps, but I don’t think He was as interested in this woman’s faith as He was predominately interested in the disciple’s faith. Surely, He knew the caliber of this woman’s faith early on in the dialogue. No, it was the apostles’ faith that He was

most interested in, so He used the woman as an object lesson about faith and prayer. He used this Gentile to teach Jewish apostles something about what great faith looks like. They were in the school of faith and this was a great lesson.

They had heard the great sermons of Jesus and had spent much time being mentored by the Master. They saw every miracle He performed and yet often Jesus said their faith was little. She had none of their privileges and knew only a fraction of what they knew. Yet, she had great faith. Jesus knew what He was doing; He was purposefully throwing obstacles for her faith to hurdle to show the disciples how they were to trust and act.

The apostles were the children; they were the heirs of the covenants; they were of the house of Israel, and they were supposed to get off the floor and press around the table and live in the fullness of God. But their faith wouldn't get them up off the floor. They were children playing the part of the pet instead of bearing the image of the Father. Jesus takes someone who had no place at the table but gives her exactly what she wanted. It was a lesson for those men. It was for their benefit.

The Syrophenician woman forced her way to God's dining room table and said she would not be denied. Have you forced your way to the table? You don't have to come by force! It's the Father's table; your His children. When's the last time you told your children to get away from the table at dinner time? "Step back, don't come any nearer." No, you welcome them. To this day, my day still feels empty when my sons aren't there, which is quite often these days. Shelby hardly ever and Joseph scarcely. They have their own lives but something is just not complete about my heart as a father when they're not all there. I want all of them there. This dear woman would not be denied.

I remember singing an old hymn when a child,

*I would not be denied,  
I would not be denied,  
Till Jesus came and made me whole,  
I would not be denied.*

Jesus said, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). In other words, they will take what is theirs, they will not take no for an answer. They will press hard, even in a violent way, they will take what God is offering to them. They will allow no hindrance to stand in their way. If a woman who had no doctrinal right to gain the blessing of the Jew could through violent faith force her way in, then surely the royal children of God should not be content with crumbs. But, oh, so sadly are we content to get God's leftovers.

How many of God's people are content to have their sins washed away and never desire the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Too many I suppose. And it's not that saving grace is a crumb but the

problem is that many are not willing to go beyond this blessed event to experience more of the grace that saves. Too many of us are content with feeling a good emotion, a spine-tingling shiver, or just a few moments of lightheartedness on a Sunday morning and not willing to press into the Holy Place where God dwells. We are all too happy to pay God our tips on Sunday morning so long as He gives us our crumbs—keep our children good and out of trouble, keep us well and safe, and give us an easy death. That's all we're interested in. Crumbs, I tell you! That's not all God intends for you. He intends so much more!

We are too content to have a good service and hear a good sermon than to stay before the Lord in prayer and intercession pleading for a miracle, the saving of a soul, the revival of the church, or the advancement of the Kingdom.

What's wrong with us, church, that we are content with the spiritual status quo? An average spirituality that doesn't impress God or frighten the devil? You know what average is, don't you? It is the best of the worst and worst of the best. It's mere crumbs compared to what we could have.

God has made us a promise. He has promised to spread before us and in front of our enemies a banquet table. But how many of you would say you feast rather than famish on the stale crumbs of an old experience with Jesus? When is the last time your heart was melted in joy and love over the love of God for you? Can you remember the last time? Are you satisfied to walk through your day, through the course of every hour, without the conscious sense of His presence? It's bewildering to me that we can be so satisfied with a few milestones with Jesus rather than see them as stepping stones to more of Him. We talk about when we were saved, when God answered one prayer then and then 30 years ago He did this, but I want to know where is He today?! What's He doing in your life right now? What's He doing in your heart and affection, what's He doing right now? Are you satisfied with the crumbs? We live most of our time in the shadow lands of dingy grays and drab browns, reminiscing of a better time when we could live in the vibrant sunshine of His presence.

Oh, dear friend, I wish it were not true, but I fear some of you will take from God the lower hanging fruit, the fruit that takes no effort to pick rather than go for the more luscious fruit requiring more effort.

You say, "Well, it seems the crumb that this woman got was awesome. Sure doesn't look like a crumb to me. Her daughter was healed." That's because you are too willing to accept lesser crumbs. Most of your crumbs don't come close to that, do they? You don't even have a crumb like that to point to, do you? Yes, it would seem amazingly large to you.

When was the last time God came through for you? When can you recall a time when if God didn't answer your prayer, you were sunk? Again we are all too happy to settle for mediocrity. But I remember what Jesus said about a particular church of mediocrity. He said it was neither hot nor cold, and He would spew it out of His mouth. Theirs was the church of the almost alive. Not quite alive to be considered among the living and not quite dead to bury.

We are content with the crumbs of living in God's grace but not under His smile. We're not talking about professing Christians who are not true believers, I'm talking about you. I'm talking about me. What's wrong with us that it's so easy to slide into this place of complacency? What is it about us that it's so easy to begin to take for granted all the things God has done and instead of seeking Him for more. We relax and thank Him for the past with no passion for the future? What is it like to be saved by grace but not conscious of His presence with you daily, a living reality that God is in your heart and that He abides with you and you in Him? Friends, that's what God intends you to have with Him, that's why He saved you.

You see, sin's greatest problem is not all of the evil affects, not even hell itself, it's that sin separates us from fellowship and relationship with God. This is the good news of the Gospel—that you can be restored to God and know Him! But, I wonder, do you know Him? Because if you know Him you want to know Him better.

We are content with the crumbs of being saved ourselves, but others around us perishing. We're not bothered that people are dying and going to hell, unless they're a close loved one. Then we relax and say, "Well, if it's God's will they be saved they'll be saved, just trust the Lord." That's not great faith.

We are satisfied with crumbs of the rituals of Christianity and not its rigors. We're fine with making a profession of faith, getting baptized, coming to church on Sunday morning (most of the time), maybe occasionally a Wednesday night prayer meeting. We're happy to go through those rituals and forms of Christianity but we're not willing to press into the prayer closet and intercede and seek the Lord for Himself.

These are perilous times and Christians aren't aware of their peril. Everyone is talking about politics and the deplorable state of the presidential race, but, listen to me, there's something that's even more deplorable and it's our hearts. I love that statement of sanctification, "I'm not what I use to be, but I'm not what I'm going to be." Yes, and that is true of every one of us, but some of us have settled into a comfortable position of, "I'm not what I use to be, and I'm not what I'm going to be, and I don't care too much about either one." We have sunken to an apathy that keeps us from forcing our way to the table and getting what is ours.

How many of our number is quite happy to be spoon fed by the more dedicated? So long as your teacher, your group leader, keeps feeding you some good stuff and giving you something to hang onto until the next meeting you're quite content. Beloved, we are overrun with some Christians who still need the bottle rather than a juicy cut of steak. They're the kind of believer who complains that the diet coming from the pulpit may be too much for their frail digestive systems. And it's not just that they cannot take strong meat; it's that they are too content with a particular brand of formula. Forget about meat, you dare change their formula and they'll cry to the high heavens.



If this miracle performed by Jesus in Matthew 15 is a crumb, then give me the whole loaf! If sitting at the table is better than living in the squalor on the floor, then let us press our way to the table and no longer be content with the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. If God has something better for you, and He has, then with new determination be relentless and pursue the full cuisine of the Lord. Get out from under the table and act like a child of a king, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Draw near and worship Him.

For those of you who are yet to be saved, I've just explained how you can be saved. Go to Him and say, "Lord, I will not leave you until you save me." It is to have a heart like this dear woman that said, "I must have this from Jesus, I will not be denied." If you are to be saved today, come, come right now. Will you not hesitate? Will you run to Him and worship Him and say, "Lord, You are the only one who can save. You are my only hope. I have only a destiny of hell and separation from you and apart from You and Your mercy I shall perish. Come, Lord."

Will you grab hold of God and say, "I will not turn You loose until You give me my blessing? Save me, Lord. I will take no other answer. I will not be denied. Savior, wash me and I shall be white as snow." Come. All of us, let's come to the Lord, draw near to Him and worship Him. Let us ask God to revive our hearts that have become satisfied with the little crumbs. Let us change, in this regard, that we are no longer seen as pets nibbling at crumbs but we are kids, the rightful heirs blessed with every spiritual blessing and seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus and we mean to have it. I mean to have it. "To settle for less is to deny Your faithfulness. Oh God, keep me from this sin. I've sinned so many times, but please, Lord, keep me from this sin. Keep me from this sin and give the whole loaf." Amen.