

A Mother's Faith **by Dr. Lee Roberson**

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.—Matthew 15:28.

The whole world honors faith. We pay homage to the man who lives by faith, moves forward by faith, attempts great things by faith.

The Word of God places strong emphasis on faith. Salvation is by faith in Christ: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. . .

Not only are we saved by faith, but we are exhorted to walk by faith and not by sight.

Victorious living is accomplished by faith: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Jesus said great blessings belong to those who have faith: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

In our prayer life we must have faith: ". . .let him ask in faith, nothing wavering

Yes, faith is the indispensable element in our relationship to God. The writer of Hebrews declares: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (11:6).

The story of a mother's faith is before us in our Scripture reading. Here is a divine record of the accomplishment of faith. The story is given in three parts.

I. A MOTHER'S TROUBLE

The trouble of a child is a mother's trouble. This woman of Syrophenicia had a daughter "vexed with a devil," a trouble of the worst sort.

Though the child had a terrible sickness, the mother loved her daughter still. Afflictions do not dissolve affections. Rather, often affection grows when there is trouble.

In trouble the mother turned to Jesus. It is a blessed thirst that draws us to such a fountain. Our need, like the prodigal's, is often the means of bringing us to the Father's house. This mother turned to Jesus. It is always wise to turn to the Saviour in the hour of trouble.

The heart cry of this mother is given in verse 25, "Lord, help me." In her need she prayed to the point. She experienced no difficulty in expressing her need and heart's desire.

Dr. Joseph Parker once said, "The sense of need abbreviates our prayers and teaches us true eloquence. When the heart is in the grip of a deadly agony, it knows how to pray." Here is a good lesson for us. We need to be pointed and definite in our prayers, for we are a needy people.

Notice, also, that this mother's prayer was one of intercession. Though she said, "Have mercy on me. . ." and "Lord, help me," she was praying for another, and Jesus understood. She associated herself with her daughter's need so closely that she cried for herself; and if the daughter were healed, the blessing would be hers.

So it was that Moses prayed. If you read his prayers without understanding the story, you would think that he was praying only for himself. But in truth, he was asking nothing for himself but everything for Israel.

The Apostle Paul prayed in such a manner. He so closely identified

himself with the interests of the Jewish people that he was able to say, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Mothers' prayers are often heard because they pray as true intercessors, identifying themselves with their children.

And so we see a mother in serious trouble—her child was sick. It was wise for this mother to turn to Jesus.

II. A MOTHER'S TESTING

This mother had a great faith, but she faced great testing. She made her cry to Jesus, but the answer did not come at once. There were many things to test her faith.

1. *The Lord's silence.* She cried unto Him saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

The record says "he answered her not a word." His silence was not unconcern. He was testing her faith, as was sometimes our Lord's method. Remember how He put clay on the blind man's eyes and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. Jesus could have healed with a word, but He believed in giving a test to the faith.

The Lord sometimes delays His answers to our prayers in order to test, then to establish our faith.

It was so with Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus died. Jesus delayed, and they wondered at His absence and silence. But finally He appeared and brought a great blessing.

2. *Discourtesy of the disciples.* "And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us."

Between the silence of Jesus and the surliness of His followers, her faith was severely tested.

The conduct of many of the Lord's disciples is more likely to drive away than to attract. Most of us are sad representatives of the gracious Saviour.

The disciples did not understand the Lord's silence, and they thought that He did not care. Though they had been with Him for three years, they still did not know much about Jesus.

3. *The Lord's apparent refusal was a testing of this mother's faith.* Jesus answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She did not belong to the house of Israel; therefore, as a heathen Gentile she had no claim on Him as the Son of David. Jesus answered her in the same manner as she had addressed Him. It seemed that His words formed a positive refusal.

4. *His rebuke.* As she continued to cry unto Him, He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." This seemed a very sharp thing to say, but this mother understood and accepted the place in which Jesus put her.

His refusal and rebuke were even better than His silence. As He talked with her, she knew she was in touch with Him; and there was a possibility of receiving a positive answer. Though her faith was tested, she did not give up. This brings us to our third part of the story.

III. A MOTHER'S TRIUMPH

Faith gives the victory. Nothing stopped this mother. She had faith in Christ and persistence to keep knocking at the door. She was not stopped by the silence of Christ, the discourtesy of the disciples, the refusal of the Lord or His rebuke.

When Christ said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs," she snared Him with His own words: "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters table."

Martin Luther said, "This woman learned to wring a *Yea* from God's *Nay*; or rather to hear the *Yea* which many times works under His seeming *Nay*."

She said, "That's the truth, but as Lord, Thou canst give me also what I need." She took her place as a dog. She stated her need and pled her cause.

This woman possessed two wonderful characteristics: humility and faith. She was willing to take a humble place, and her faith was unwavering. "A broken and a contrite heart" He

will not despise, and faith is the victory that overcometh the world. In the end she received more than she asked for. She was commended by the Lord for her faith: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. . . ." Her story of faith is written down for the whole world to read. Jesus did not commend her for her arguments, her patience nor her love, but for her faith.

Finally, she was rewarded by the healing of her daughter:

"And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Her prayer was answered, her faith rewarded.

We need more mothers who will bring Him their troubles and needs, then there would be more sons and daughters saved.

Here is real encouragement for mothers who have prayed long and earnestly for their children. Though the years have gone by, be not dismayed—silence is not unconcern. Jesus kept this mother waiting, but His grant was above her expectations. Faith was the key that unlocked the store of blessing which she needed.

Mother, continue to pray for that son and daughter who are still walking in the ways of sin. Be not weary in well doing, for in due season you will reap if you faint not.

Perhaps in this service there are some who had, or have now, praying mothers. Then make this the time when God will answer her prayers by your coming to the Lord.

A mother worthy of the name is anxious for one great thing—the salvation of her children. Deep concern should be in the heart of every mother until her children have come to Christ.

I think ofttimes as the night draws nigh

Of an old house on the hill

Where the children played at will;

And when the night at last came down, Hushing the merry din;

Mother would look around and ask,

"Are all the children in?"

'Tis many and many a year since then,

And the old house on the hill

No longer echoes to childish feet,

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And the yard is still, so still.

But I see it all as the shadows creep,

And though many the years have been,

Since then, I can hear my mother ask,

"Are all the children in?"

I wonder if when the shadows fall

On the last short earthly day;

When we say goodbye to the world outside,

All tired with our childish play;

When we step out into that other land

Where mother so long has been;

Will we hear her ask, just as of old,

"Are all the children in?"

Faith to Fly: It is said that John Wesley and Charles Wesley were in a prayer service together. Charles Wesley said, "I feel so happy that if the Lord should tell me to fly, and I had wings, I would fly!" John Wesley replied, "If the Lord should tell me to fly, I would fly whether I had wings or not!"

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."