

If I threw a couple of small pieces of bread out there into the grass, how long before the birds or squirrels would find it? I don't want to try because I figure it wouldn't be long at all. Then we'd have all sorts of animals at our picnic too. Go down to Myriad Gardens and their pond. Start throwing crumbs of bread into the water and watch as all the animals come swarming, fish and birds. Sit in the backyard at my in-laws house where they have a bird feeder. The birds know it and regularly are there. But so are the squirrels. If my in-laws didn't have a plastic cone piece on the pole the squirrels would climb up and eat all the seeds before the birds got any.

Jesus is on the move today. It's too heated for him to stay in Jerusalem among the Jews. The Jewish religious leaders are starting to make some noise against him. The people are flocking to him wherever he goes because of the miracles. It's all too much attention. He's still one year away from when he willingly gives himself up and dies. It's too soon. So he gets away, withdraws to an area that will be quieter, give him more time with his disciples. There, behold, a Canaanite woman finds him. The gospel records how she is willing to be like the birds...

**Willing to take the crumbs
Only with God given faith
Knowing there's enough for all**

Even people sitting on the deck at my in-laws house doesn't deter the squirrels from approaching the feeder. Sure, they're ready to run if we get close, but mostly they're concentrating on the seeds. Not the seeds on the ground that the birds knocked out. They want the good stuff which they'll do anything to get. I told you about the plastic cone. That's only partially successful. The squirrels have some pretty good acrobatic moves to get the seeds in the feeder. This Canaanite woman didn't want what her life was giving. Her daughter was suffering with demon possession. Somehow, someway, she heard about a man who had come into the region. She heard he was no ordinary man. He did miracles. She was determined to do anything she could to see him.

She chose the direct approach. **"A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** The combination of titles was more than just being polite. She had some knowledge of Jesus. She also had some knowledge of the hope the Israelites had, though she wasn't an Israelite. Whatever she understood of Israel's hope, whatever she knew of the promised Savior of the Jews, she clearly believed Jesus was that Savior. Knowledge forced her to be persistent, dedicated to asking only Jesus for help. She believed he alone could actually help.

Why though? Did you hear what Jesus said? **"Jesus did not answer a word."** Ouch! You can almost hear the disciples. Jesus, don't you hear? **"Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."** Jesus, at least say something. She was making a scene just as Jesus wanted to exist peacefully away from the scene. She was causing a commotion and it was annoying. It would be easier if she was just sent away. But this woman didn't just understand things about Jesus. The Holy Spirit brought this woman to faith. Only faith from the Holy Spirit could cut through what Jesus was saying, or not saying. Only faith from the Holy Spirit knew not only facts about Jesus but also promises from God about Jesus. Those promises affected her. She wanted them, she wanted them for her daughter, and she wanted to apply them personally to her situation. All this she could only have with God given faith.

Feeling left out is terrible. It would be like picking just one person to make sit over by the swings while we all sat here. Terrible. Sometimes reading the Bible we can feel miles away from what we're reading. We know the promises of God yet because of another round of daily sins we have trouble assuring ourselves those promises apply to us. We leave ourselves in doubt. Sometimes we even convince ourselves the doubt is better. God wants us on edge. He kept this woman guessing. Maybe we're getting the same. We might even misapply this story and think she overcame on her own. She overcame Jesus' tests by her own strength and resolve. We have to do the same. We must overcome every test with our own strength and resolve.

Is it just facts about Jesus that you know? Stories about a wonderful teacher named Jesus who was able to do awesome things? I'm sure that's not it. You believe what you've read and heard from the Bible. You know facts about Jesus, sure. Yet through those very words the Holy Spirit added to your understanding and brought you to faith. It was the Holy Spirit who used the stories you read about Jesus and the facts you heard and worked faith in your heart. Only with this God given faith do you know the promises of God regarding Jesus as the Savior. As believers you want to lay hold of those promises even greater. You want to apply those promises to your life.

If you intend on feeding the birds somewhere and you arrive with only a few pieces in the bag, you'll never have enough. Birds will keep coming and they'll keep eating until you're out. Then they'll stay just in case there's more. They'll eat everything you've got down to the last crumbs. They come simply in response to food. They eat not knowing or caring how much you have. So different is when your parents call you to the dinner table. You come because you trust there'll be food. You trust they've made enough for everyone. This woman expressed her faith, the same faith you have. She knew there was enough of what Jesus was sharing, God's grace, for all.

Jesus made his mission completely clear. **"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."** Someone listening might have concluded the woman was crazy to keep asking. Jesus wasn't going to help her. He had apparently come only for Jews. True enough, God's plan of salvation called for the Messiah to go to the Jews, spend time among them, call them to repentance, and work among them to save some. Jesus couldn't go against that plan. Still, the woman didn't stop. **"The woman came and knelt before him. Lord, help me!"** See this woman knew what the Bible said. The Jews would reject the Messiah in large part. The Jews would bypass God's Savior in favor of their own laws and way to heaven. She knew this Messiah wouldn't be satisfied only saving Jews. He'd be a Savior for all people. If that was true, then he'd be her Savior and someone who could help her daughter.

The key is in the crumbs. **"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."** Ouch again! Now Jesus sounds hurtful calling her a dog. Instead of offended she's encouraged. It's the opening her God given faith waited for. The key is the crumbs. **"Yes, Lord. In fact even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."** She agreed it wouldn't be right for the dogs to eat what was intended for the children. It wouldn't be right for non-Jews to get what was intended for Jews first. God's plan was still God's plan. Jews hear the good news of forgiveness in Christ first. But without taking anything away from the Jews, this non-Jew could receive the crumbs that simply fell off the table. Crumbs were all she needed. Crumbs were still the gospel. Crumbs were still the grace of God. Crumbs still saved, forgave, united to God.

You are all dogs. You might have resented Jesus for saying that, maybe even become offended. No way anyone is going to call you a dog. You figure you deserve better than that. You deserve a prime spot, to be first even. Crumbs are for others, not you. You never settle for being second to anyone. Jesus is wrong. Are you thinking any of those thoughts? I am. And why? Because even though we say all the right things, act humble when we're supposed to, we still want to be first in line when the food is served in a couple of minutes. We want the best portions of that food too, not the crumbs that fall off the table. In fact it shows we're sinful. As offensive as that might sound the Bible convinces us it's true no matter how hard it is to accept.

Jesus tested this woman exactly how she needed. God allows testing to shape your faith exactly how you need. Testing is never so you can be the hero and handle it yourself. Suffering is so you retreat back to the safety of God and his love. Get into his Word so you can get into his power and grace. Be comforted in knowing and believing that Jesus is your Savior. He's the Son of David who had a plan and stuck to it. Jews first, then the non-Jews. The whole world watched him ascend the cross and pay for all its sins. Jews, non-Jews, all people have a Savior. Jesus is your Savior. God's grace is wonderful and powerful that even the crumbs are enough. Any contact with God's grace is what you need to be saved.

The squirrels are never far from the feeder. They only scatter for a moment, knowing where the good stuff is. Don't be far away from God and his grace. Don't wander away thinking you'll find something better. God's grace is offered because it's the one thing you need. God brings you to faith and faith is persistent. It knows God's promises and it wants them. Faith takes Jesus at his Word. Faith is resolute being strengthened by God for anything. Faith is always focused on God's grace in Christ, even willing to take crumbs.