

What do you want from the Lord?

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Let us consider together this question: "What do you want from the Lord?" It would be helpful if each one of us could ask ourselves this question: "What do you want from the Lord?"

The Canaanite woman

The passage, Matthew 15: 21-28, describes a situation of a woman who was in great need and she knew clearly what she wanted from the Lord as she came to Him for help.

Matthew 15:21-28

- 21 And Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.
- 22 And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."
- 23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to *Him* and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us."
- 24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
- 25 But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"
- 26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."
- 27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."
- 28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

The Lord Jesus was in the district of Tyre and Sidon. During that time, as He travelled about, He drew great crowds towards Him because of the authority, the life and meaning in what He said and did. By the power of His life He had saved and delivered many from suffering. Many came to Him as they heard Him preach and teach and heal. This Canaanite woman came from the region of Tyre and Sidon. She had heard about the Lord Jesus and she cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."

As we read this passage, it is quite clear to us that this woman had a very great sense of need. She knew her need, and in her great sense of desperation and need, she came to the Lord Jesus and refused to go away until her need was met. She knew very clearly that she had this need: her daughter was demon-possessed and she was deeply troubled. She wanted her to be healed and she came to the Lord Jesus for help.

Your greatest need and longing

Do we recognize our need? What is our need? What do we consider to be the greatest need of our lives? What is the greatest longing that you have that you want to bring before the Lord?

The kind of answer that you give, the kind of prayer that you pray, and the way that you approach the Lord, will be an indication of the kind of life that you have lived up to this point of time, and will be an indication of the desire of your heart and the state of your spiritual health.

All of us have many different kinds of need. It is a helpful thing to ask ourselves this question from time to time: "In my daily prayers, what do I pray for? What do I ask for from the Lord?" Reflect on the life that you have lived so far, and consider the lives of your friends and colleagues who are Christians. What are the things that you are seeking for in life? What are the things that are truly important to you that you would be eager to seek help from the Lord? When would you cry out to God in earnest need? What is it that matters most to you in seeking help from the Lord?

If your greatest longing is meaningful and good before God, and you seek His help daily, and you are prepared to live by what He shows you, you will find that your hunger will be satisfied and your thirst will be quenched. If you know how to find the answer to that longing, your daily life will be filled with meaning, purpose, and direction, no matter what your circumstances may be.

What are the times when you pray hard to God? An example would be during the time of examinations. When you feel desperate, when you know that you cannot make it, when things are so difficult, you pray hard and ask God to undertake in that situation to help you. Most of us have gone through examinations of one kind or another and during such times we do pray. For those who have entered into working life, we may pray when we find the workload unbearable: the pressure is so great and there is so much demand on us. There are different projects to complete, many instructions to carry out, deadlines

to be met and difficult superiors to respond to. When such pressures come upon us, we may feel helpless and we may cry out to the Lord, "Please help me, Lord!" At other times, in your relationships with people, either because you have offended someone or someone has offended you and you feel miserable, you may cry out to the Lord for help. But are these the most important prayers that you have ever prayed? Are these the most urgent prayers that you have prayed?

What other prayers would you consider to be really important? Those who are more serious in their Christian life may seek to help others and they may pray hard that the Lord will enable them to help specific people in specific situations. This is a noble and right desire, but is that the greatest desire of your heart in your prayer – to solve specific problems for others? There are many who, as they embark on service to God, they know there are many responsibilities they have to fulfil and they pray hard in these areas to fulfil these responsibilities. Whether it be in counselling someone or going somewhere else to do some form of Christian work, to witness, to serve, to contribute to the kingdom of God in one way or another, they may cry out to God in times of hardship, in times of pressure and difficulties. Are these the times of greatest desire of your heart, your longing and your prayer?

For this Canaanite woman, her request was a specific one. She asked that her daughter would be liberated from intense difficulties. It was a specific request in a specific situation. This is one of many kinds of prayers that we bring to God, and it is only right that we should bring all these before God. Whether it be our examinations, our work, Christian service, or other areas of life, we should bring them all before the Lord, but the important question is: "Are these the most earnest prayers that you have prayed?"

The apostle Paul's longing

Consider the greatest longing that the apostle Paul expressed for his own life and development (which we can reasonably infer that he would have prayed earnestly for its realization), as recorded in Philippians chapter 3. It was a deep longing for which he was prepared to give up everything in order to attain it. This is a well-known passage and it is very helpful for us, from time to time, to look at it again and again, and to ask ourselves, "Do I have such a longing? Have I prayed in this direction? Do I continue to pray like that? Do I work it out in this way?" In Philippians 3: 10, the apostle Paul said:

Philippians: 3: 10

10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Right in the heart of the epistle to the Philippians, the apostle Paul expressed something very deep in his heart, the greatest longing that he had for himself in the development of his own life. His earnest longing and prayer, his deepest desire and request from the Lord, was that he would know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

In the earlier verses in chapter 3 the apostle Paul mentioned the many things that he had in the natural realm, what he referred to as the confidence in the flesh. Many people respected him for his upbringing and his religious learning and zeal, as he sought to keep the Law to the utmost that he could. He was regarded by many as a religious leader, an "upright man" in the Hebrew society. But the apostle Paul knew that all these things were of no value for they remained in the realm of the flesh: they were only the result of natural abilities and natural circumstances, without true life and meaning from God. In verses 7-10, he said:

Philippians 3: 7-10

- 7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.
- 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,
- 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,
- 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Have we prayed earnestly in this direction, that we will deeply know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death? If we want to meaningfully fulfil our various areas of responsibility, then this way of life must always be the central reference point from which all areas of our needs and responsibilities must be related. Without this reference point, all our needs and responsibilities become scattered and become unimportant, and will no longer help us towards the ultimate direction that the Lord desires.

If we do not constantly bear in mind this great longing that we ought to have in our hearts, then we will not look at life with the proper perspective. As a result, the whole way we centre our attention and give ourselves to work in any activity will no longer bring forth the meaning and the fruit that the Lord desires for us.

That I may know Him

When the apostle Paul said, “that I may know Him”, it was not only a reference to the time when he first repented of his sins and came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who forgave him and cleansed him of his sins. It was also an expression of his longing for an increasing knowledge of the Lord Jesus at a personal level: who the Lord Jesus was to him, daily, personally, in all circumstances. The process of knowing

Him would involve knowing His power, the power of His resurrection, the power of the Spirit of God, to enable him to live a life that would be glorifying to God. He wanted a life that would be of true service to God, one that would accomplish the purpose that God had for him. The more that the apostle Paul knew of the Lord and appreciated His character, the more he longed to be like the Lord Jesus, in the beauty of His character, including love for others and giving up himself for their good, their well-being. In the process of knowing the Lord, he longed to know more and more the power of the Holy Spirit in his life to enable him to be like the Lord Jesus in character and to serve Him in His power. It is in such a context that he would be able to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, entering more and more into the work of God, learning to suffer on behalf of others. As he increasingly gave up his life for the sake of others, he was being conformed to His death. "Not my will, but Yours be done" would increasingly become a constant expression of his life. As he did that, the process would grow in a deeper knowledge of the Lord and a greater experience of the power of His resurrection, and a deeper identification with the death of Christ.

Often, when we pray to God, we are preoccupied with things and with events: the things that we do, the things that we need to get, whether it be a house, a job or other earthly concern, as well as some form of enjoyment that we want to have. However, when we read the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, we find that the Lord's primary desire for us is clearly not in these areas. The Lord's desire is primarily in the realm of the heart: it must always start from within. When God sought for a king to replace King Saul, Samuel expressed God's choice of David, described as "a man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13: 14). The Lord Jesus emphasized the primary importance of the heart when He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5: 8). The Lord's concern is not how capable you are, how intelligent you

are, how quickly you can do a piece of work, or how impressive you are in the eyes of men. He is deeply concerned with whether you genuinely love Him in your heart and whether you love others with sincerity. His concern is primarily whether you are pursuing the path of righteousness and being daily transformed in holiness in your life. His primary concern is for moral and spiritual quality in your heart that is directly related to knowing Him deeply and personally, and if this is the greatest longing of your heart, what you really want from the Lord, you will find that life will always be meaningful as you learn daily from the Lord.

When God asked king Solomon what he wanted God to give him, Solomon asked for wisdom so that he could fulfil his responsibilities in ruling the country. That is a good request, to ask for wisdom, and we too need wisdom, but that is not sufficient. The greatest desire of our heart and the greatest request that we should make to God all the time should be in the direction that we will learn more and more to know Him personally and deeply and to become like Him in His moral and spiritual goodness. When we first come to know who the Lord is and what He has done for us and we respond to His grace positively, we begin the path of transformation to become like Him. However, in order to know the Lord personally and deeply, we must choose to identify deeply with Him in our heart and be deeply transformed to become like Him. In such a state, we will find that all other requests that we bring to God will be meaningful. In this way, no matter what may happen to us, we will continue to grow.

Continuous growth

The process of knowing God can be a continuous growth, an upward climb all the time. Some people think that it is unavoidable for the Christian life to go up and down: there are times when you are high, there are times when you are low, in the level and quality of your

spiritual life. What support is there from the Scriptures for such a view that our quality of life must always be in this form: up and down? In healthy development of the Christian life, it is actually possible for us to make progress every day. There is no necessity for us to come down and then go up again. The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8: 36, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." When we respond well to the Lord and depend on Him, we can continue to grow well and live well each day. In his own life, the apostle Paul testified in Philippians 4: 13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Nevertheless, it is true that ups and downs often happen in our lives. It is something undesirable, something not necessary, and should that happen, we should get up quickly and come back to the Lord.

If your prayer to God every day is, "Please help me to know You and become like You in your moral and spiritual goodness", can you think of any situation where you cannot grow in the knowledge of God? Is there any circumstance that you can be in when this is impossible, when you must fail and falter? I see no situation in which this must happen. If you fail your examinations, can you not grow in your knowledge of God? If you are sacked from your job, can you not grow in your knowledge of God? If you are imprisoned for your faith, can you not grow in your knowledge of God? If your loved one passes away, can you not grow in your knowledge of God? Is there any situation you can think of that can take away this increasing growth in the knowledge of God if you are willing to learn from Him? The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8: 28:

Romans 8: 28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

If we genuinely and deeply love God, we can be confident that whatever situation we may go through, we can continue to grow well in

a deepening knowledge of Him. We know that God is omnipotent and omnipresent. He is with us wherever we are. There is nowhere in the world that we can be that He is not there. There is no situation that we can be in that He cannot reach us or that we cannot reach Him, if our hearts are right in His sight. People may imprison us physically, but they can never imprison us spiritually if we walk well with God. No one can ever stop our spiritual growth and development if we do not allow it, if we do not give the grounds for it to be hindered. It is very important that we recognize this. Many Christians are often very disheartened because they do not sufficiently appreciate this principle in their daily lives. When they go through a very difficult time, they think that in such a situation they cannot grow in their knowledge of God. They regard the situation as undesirable and they want it to be removed. It is true that there are times when Satan places obstacles in our path that we should resist and therefore remove, but even in the very process of appropriate resistance and removal, there is growth in our knowledge of God. The obstacle in itself cannot stop us from growing in the knowledge of God.

When Christians are discouraged because of difficult times, they often long for such difficult times to go away, thinking that only when that happens, they would be able to “settle down and grow to know God.” This is a wrong concept. Very often, it is in the midst of all these difficulties that you will grow to know God more deeply.

In order to know God, He may often help us to know more about ourselves. We are often quite ignorant in our understanding of ourselves. We may think that we do know ourselves, but in reality we may not know ourselves accurately or deeply. There may be many sinful desires in our hearts, moral deficiencies in our lives, and wrong concepts in our understanding that we may not be so conscious of. We

may see such deficiencies quite easily in others. When someone shouts in anger, we recognize it as “bad temper”, a loss of self-control. When someone is inconsiderate towards us, we recognize that it is a failure, and yet we may do the same thing on many occasions and not be conscious of it. When someone points this out to us, we often feel hurt and find it difficult to acknowledge our failure. This is because we are often so preoccupied with ourselves and our own desires that we do not see ourselves as we really are. A healthy process of knowing God requires a revelation of our own lives. When God brings us through different kinds of circumstances, He wants to reveal our character in that situation, and help us see the weaknesses in our lives so that we can understand ourselves. It is when we understand ourselves that we recognize our need; as we know our need, we may then pray to God that He will help us.

For example, you may think that you have good self-control in your life, but that may be because you have been brought up in an environment where your parents have been kind and gentle towards you. They provide you with all the things you need, and you have been happy. In such a situation, you may think that you have good self-control since you are usually so pleasant towards people. One day, God puts you in a job where your colleagues scold you, for things where you have done wrong and at times for things where you are not at fault, and suddenly you find that there is great difficulty with self-control: you become angry and irritated. You do not want to stay there anymore; you “can’t take it”. Why is that so? It is because these weaknesses were not revealed to you all these years and you thought that you were developing well. As the Lord reveals these weaknesses to you, will you now cry out to God, “Lord, this is my need. Please help me”?

The Canaanite woman knew her need, and she came to the Lord for help. Would you in your situation cry out to the Lord, “Lord, please help me to overcome these weaknesses in my life, these self-centred, sinful desires and habits that I have”? Would you pray to God in this way? This is the kind of prayer that will touch the heart of God because such desires are in the right direction.

It is proper for us to pray that the Lord will strengthen us to do our work, but what is more important is the manner in which we do the work. Do we do the work with a grumbling and complaining spirit, and relate with others with inconsiderateness and self-centredness? Or will our lives manifest the fruit of the Spirit?

If the deepest desire in your heart is to know God, then you can thank God every day in the midst of all kinds of things that may happen to you. You can thank God even during the many painful moments that you have to go through, for in the midst of all these, you can grow in your knowledge of God, if you continue to come to Him and seek His help and depend on Him. This is a very important principle that we need to appreciate, absorb and live out each day. Otherwise, we may be constantly running away from the school, the curriculum, and the timetable that God may have planned for us. Healthy spiritual growth requires supervised learning and the Lord is the greatest teacher in the universe. He knows the timetable that is good for you. He knows the path that is helpful for your development and He brings into your life all kinds of circumstances and events to help you to grow but you may be seeking to run away all the time because you do not understand that this is an important learning process. There is so much the Lord wants to teach you so that as you know yourself, you will then be able to know God.

For example, when you see the ugliness in your life, how impatient, unkind, inconsiderate and proud you are, and you cry out to God, you may appreciate God more deeply: how good and how great God is, how patient, loving, powerful and wise He is. As you come to God in your need, you will see the answer to these needs in the being of God and in the way He answers you and helps you and you will grow to know Him more deeply. All this requires openness before God, an honesty to face life, to look at your life as it really is. As God speaks to you and shows you your life, it is like a mirror helping you to see yourself. Will you face it honestly and humbly? Having faced it, will you ask God to help you to do something about it or would you be like the person who looks at the mirror and walks away, and soon forgets what he is like (James 1: 21-25). As we look at ourselves in the mirror of God each day we will see ourselves. This mirror of God's moral law and God's assessment of us often functions in the midst of circumstances and events in our lives, as it reveals the quality of our lives. Will we then do something about it? If we come to God and ask Him to help us, teach us and transform us, we can make progress like the apostle Paul, knowing the Lord more and more. It is with this kind of attitude and desire that you will meaningfully know the power of His resurrection.

The power of His resurrection

There are many people who long for the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but do not really want to know Him in the purity of His holiness. This is a very dangerous desire. There are many who want to know the power of the Holy Spirit but without the real desire and longing to know the Lord Jesus as He really is. If you desire power, it is very easy for the powers of darkness to give you a kind of power that you want, but it is a power of evil and corruption, a power that will draw you away from God and not towards God. You will

experience power, but the wrong kind of power. It will be evil power, which may sometimes seem to be the power of God. This is very dangerous indeed.

It is only as we really long to know God in all His holiness, that we can properly experience “the power of His resurrection”. The Spirit of God has been given to disciples of the Lord Jesus in order that His life may increasingly become part of us. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to glorify Him and He would reveal the Lord Jesus to them (John 15: 26 and John 16: 13, 14). This is still true today. The Holy Spirit has not come to give us power without a specific direction. He empowers us for the purpose of doing the will of God. He helps us to know the Lord Jesus as He truly is, in all His holiness and glory. It is in this context that we may know Him more and more, when the Lord Jesus in His resurrection life becomes increasingly real to us personally. We need to beware when we seek for power. What kind of power is it? Is it the power of God in the context of a deepening knowledge of the Lord so that you can meaningfully serve Him? Or are you looking for power that makes you feel good and gives you a sense of spiritual authority over others?

The fellowship of His sufferings

True spiritual service involves the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. We know that the apostle Paul suffered much in his service for God. He suffered deeply because of his great love for others. He shared from his heart that in addition to the many physical hardships and sufferings that he went through, the care for all the churches weighed heavily on him (1 Corinthians 11: 28). He laboured in pain so that the Galatians would have Christ formed in them (Galatians 4: 19). He struggled to help the Corinthians to become spiritual men (1 Corinthians 3: 1-9; 2 Corinthians 12: 15) and he was deeply burdened in his longing

to see the Philippians walk in harmony (Philippians 2: 1-4). He prayed for them; he longed for their well-being and he worked and laboured. That involved the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ – in his longing for others to have spiritual life and quality, he was prepared to give his life for their welfare, to suffer, to labour, to toil, to go on and on so that others may draw near to God. It is important to recognize that in the process of his toil and suffering and agony, the apostle Paul was actually growing. His sufferings did not mean that he was going backwards spiritually. Instead, in the process of his sufferings, he was progressing all the time, deepening in his knowledge of God and in the power of the resurrection of Christ.

Being conformed to His death

As we enter more and more deeply into the fellowship of His sufferings we will appreciate more and more the meaning of being conformed to His death. Again and again we will say to the Lord, “Not my will but Yours be done”. Many things we may long to do, many places we may wish to go, but in the spirit of service and submission to the Lord, we may say, “No, the Lord wills it otherwise”, and we choose to move together with the Lord. It is no longer what we desire by ourselves but what the Lord desires and we are gladly identified with Him.

As we long for that kind of life daily, we will find that all the different events of our life will contribute towards our growth, our development, and our progress. But it does not mean that we should passively accept everything that comes our way. There are situations that we need to pray for the Lord to undertake specifically. There are events and obstacles that we need to resist specifically in our prayer, in our battle against the powers of darkness. However, we can be healthily confident that nothing can happen to our lives without the Lord

permitting it to happen and as we co-operate with the Lord, each situation will definitely do us good. If we walk with God, all these things will definitely do us good in our growth and development.

It is helpful for us to ponder over our lives regarding this issue, "Do I know my need?" What is your need? What do you really long for? It is proper for us to be conscious of our daily needs in different areas of our life, including our work and our family, but we should reflect on what it is that we need most in order to live a life of true meaning and value. The greatest need in our life is to know the Lord deeply. We must make efforts to grow in knowing Him, His power, His life and His death, in the realm of moral and spiritual development. This will enable us to contribute meaningfully towards the building up of His kingdom.

Recognition of who the Lord is

The second issue that I want to bring to your attention is the recognition of who the Lord is. Having recognized our need, it is very important for us to recognize who the Lord is. In Matthew chapter 15, this Canaanite woman came to the Lord Jesus for help. It is unlikely that she would have known much about the Lord Jesus Christ. She was not a Jew, and she would probably not have heard much, but she had heard something. She knew a little but that little that she knew was sufficient for her to come to the Lord with such intensity. This woman said, crying out to the Lord, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David." She had some recognition of who the Lord was. She knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was not an ordinary man; she knew that in some way the Lord Jesus was the Son of David. The Son of David is a Messianic title, the coming Messiah, the Christ whom God had promised in the Old Testament. She probably would not have known very much but she might be aware of some major aspects. The Son of David is a title of the Lord Jesus Christ

as the Promised One who would come to deliver the people. So this woman knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was not an ordinary man but someone sent from God; He was the Lord, the Son of David and He was the Lord who could help her in this particular situation.

The people generally knew that demon possession was a very difficult problem. It had to do with the powers of darkness at work in a very direct form, but she also knew that the Lord Jesus could overpower all the powers of darkness. She knew who the Lord Jesus was, and that was why she came to the Lord. She knew that there was hope in the Lord. As the Son of David, as the Messiah, as the Lord almighty, He was able to help her with her problem.

In spite of discouraging circumstances, this woman persevered, primarily because she knew that the Lord had the answer, and she would not let Him go until she found the answer. We could ask ourselves: "Do I have a similar kind of approach to the Lord? Do I recognize who the Lord is - the Son of David, the Lord almighty, God incarnate in the flesh, Son of Man and Son of God?" Do we recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed to us in the Scriptures: prophesied in the Old Testament and manifested in the New Testament? Do we realize that He is the one who can help us in all the needs of our hearts? Do we realize that He can solve whatever problem we truly need to solve? (We are not considering fleshly desires, but healthy moral and spiritual desires and needs.) The primary issue is: Do we see that the Lord is so great that no matter what the problem is, no matter what the opposition is, the Lord is great enough to help us with any and every problem if we are determined to follow Him? This applies to problems and difficulties that come directly from Satan and all the powers of evil, as well as from personal circumstances, internal turmoil, and struggles with the flesh. It is important for us to recognize this clearly because if

we do not, we may give up easily. If this Canaanite woman did not see the Lord Jesus as the Lord almighty, but merely regarded Him as an interesting man, she could easily have walked off when some discouragement arose. If she had thought that He could only do minor things, she could have decided that it was not worth persevering. It was because she recognized that He could help her that she persevered.

Are there times in our lives when we say, "It is hopeless, it is of no use. No matter how hard I try, no matter what I do, I cannot overcome it." It is true that there are aspects of life where, no matter what you do, no matter how you strive, you cannot overcome, but do you think that the Lord can enable you to overcome, with your co-operation and trust? Do you believe that? Is that just intellectual knowledge, where you recognize that the Lord is almighty, omnipresent and omniscient, without practical relevance in your own life? Or is this real in your daily life? He is omnipotent and He can help you but it is also important to know that the Lord will help you according to His way, and not according to your way. Will you insist that the Lord should help you in a particular way or will you submit to Him and His way?

It may take time, and it may mean much struggle to resolve the problem, but the answer is there. It may need much perseverance (this woman had to persevere in her quest for the answer) – are you prepared to go on? Do you have such a recognition of the Lord that however difficult it is, you will come to Him again and again and again? We should reflect on this constantly and apply it in our lives because without such recognition of the Lord, it is very easy for the evil one to draw us away, and we may then give up in the midst of our struggles.

We may have come to appreciate many major aspects of what the Lord desires as we build the kingdom of God, and if you are serious in doing your part, you can be sure that it will not be an easy path. You

will meet with discouragements, you will likely stumble and fall many a time, and there will be much pain and sorrow and tears, but is that the end? Do you give up and say, "It is no use", or will you say, "There is an answer, there will be an answer because the Lord is the Lord." God has declared, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God..." (Isaiah 45: 5). The Lord Jesus referred to Himself as: "He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens" (Revelation 3: 7). Do you believe that He is such a Lord? All the powers of darkness will not be able to stand against the church, if the church is properly founded on the rock of the Lord Jesus Christ, faithfully abides in Him, and moves forward according to His orders, in healthy dependence on His Spirit. Nothing can stand in our way if we move in this way.

So the second issue that is important for us to take good note of is how much we recognize His greatness and His power in our daily life. When we meet with obstacles and difficulties that seem insurmountable, do we resort to and depend upon human reasoning and human ingenuity to overcome, or do we keep coming back to the Lord and say, "Lord, I trust You. Please teach me and I will walk with You."

In the Old Testament, we find that king David was a man of war, a very capable and powerful man, and he was so powerful and capable because he depended on the Lord. It was the Lord who taught him how to bend a bow of bronze and likely also to sling a stone with expert accuracy; it was the Lord who enabled him to kill a bear and a lion to protect the sheep (2 Samuel 22: 35, 1 Samuel 17: 34-37). David did not do it by himself. We may at times think, "In these physical areas, we must do it by ourselves, by our own ability. We should ask God only in 'spiritual areas' such as understanding the Scriptures and learning to pray." That is a common false concept that many people have. We pray to God during worship service and prayer meeting, but when we work

on our mathematics problems and when we cook a meal, we do so on our own. This is not the Scriptural teaching. We are called upon to walk with God at all times, to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5: 17) and “whether then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1Corinthians 10: 31). We are to do all things together with God, seeking Him, depending on Him, and trusting Him. How can we “do all to the glory of God” if we do not depend on Him? Our daily responsibilities are to be carried out in fellowship with the Lord. “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (Colossians 3: 23). Whatever area of life it is, it must be consecrated to the Lord. There must not be any area of your life that you live out by yourself. Obviously, it does not mean that you must specifically pray over every single thing consciously and verbally, but there must be the attitude and spirit of prayer in relation to all the things that you do. This will help you not to be presumptuous and not to live in a spirit of independence from God, but to look to Him at all times and walk in fellowship with Him.

Appreciating the crumbs from Him

The third issue that I wish to consider with you from this passage is: the kind of appreciation that we have with regard to whatever little that we may receive from the Lord. Let us take note of verses 23-28:

Matthew 15: 23-28

- 23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to *Him* and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us."
- 24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
- 25 But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"
- 26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."
- 27 But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."
- 28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

This woman said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." This was an expression of appreciation and gratitude for whatever little that the Lord was willing to give her. She would be thankful even for the little crumbs that fell from the table. It was because of this kind of attitude, this kind of faith, that the Lord Jesus said, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish" (verse 28). A parallel passage includes these words from the Lord Jesus: "Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter" (Mark 7: 29).

Do we have this kind of faith in the Lord? Do we really appreciate every little thing that the Lord gives to us? The crumbs that fall from the table: do we appreciate that, or do we complain even when we have "a feast"? In the physical realm, we may complain, "This is not sufficiently salty, that one is not hot, and this one does not have enough tomato sauce." Even when we have so much to eat, we still complain that it is not good enough. In the spiritual realm, it is also true. We may not adequately appreciate God's grace to us in each situation of our lives and continue to complain and grumble in our difficulties. In contrast, this woman would gladly receive, with thankfulness, even "the crumbs falling from the table", and her expressions indicated the right spirit in her heart towards the Lord.

Why did the Canaanite woman respond in that way? Her response is related to the first two issues that we have considered. She had a very intense recognition of her need and she was determined to have it fulfilled. She recognized the greatness and goodness of the Lord and because of this, she regarded every little thing that the Lord would give to be valuable. Every small thing that the Lord may give to us is very good and this woman appreciated this deeply. Sadly, most of us do not appreciate this. We complain and we grumble over little problems that may come our way. The Lord has provided so much to

teach us and to help us, but we may say, “Why must it be like this? Why must it be me? Why is it so hard? Why is it so long? Why is it so cold? Why must it be so hot? Why is it people do not understand me? Why must I bear with so much? Why must I be the one to suffer?” We do not meaningfully appreciate how much the Lord is giving us daily.

For example, many of us have copies of the Bible but we do not read the Scriptures with diligence and eagerness. We may be dissatisfied with the copies that we have or regard them as common possessions. Think of the many Christians in oppressed situations where Bibles are not readily available to them. Some of them may have access to only half a page and they treasure every small portion that they have. These are like crumbs falling from the table and they pick up these crumbs with gratitude and earnestly and diligently read what they have and seek to obey the Lord on the basis of what they come to understand. Many who have the whole Bible available may read casually, or at times not at all, without sufficient regard for the treasure that the Lord has given us.

This kind of lack of appreciation is an important reason for poor spiritual development and superficial faith. We do not grow well because we do not appreciate whatever the Lord may give to us. If we appreciate every little thing that the Lord gives to us, we will continue to grow. As we grow, the Lord will give us more and more. Do we have this kind of appreciation? This heart of gratitude to God is very important every day of our lives. This is the kind of faith that the Lord appreciates: a grateful recognition of what is good that is provided for us, given to us, or done for us. With such an attitude of gratitude, we should also concentrate on those areas that are of greater importance in the heart of the Lord and relate that with all other areas in our life.

Summary

The first important issue is the recognition of our need: what our need is and how deeply we need it. Are we preoccupied with the circumstances of our lives or are we preoccupied with our need to know God deeply and in the process of knowing God seeking honestly to know ourselves, with the preparedness to change for the better? It does involve our recognition of our various other needs in relation to our responsibilities and involvements. However, we often recognize our greatest need only in times of difficulty. Are we conscious that we have a need all the time? Are we aware that when things are going very smoothly, that may be a time when we have the greatest need, because we can easily become complacent and careless in our lives, without intensity in our pursuit of God and His ways? We need to beware when life is easy because we may be lulled into thinking, "I do not need to pray since I do not have a need." That is the time when we need to pray very earnestly, that the Lord will help us not to become spiritually cold or lukewarm, but that we will always hunger and thirst after righteousness and seek to know Him more personally.

The second important issue is to learn to recognize who the Lord is, how great and good He is, and that He is fully able to help us whatever our difficulty may be. We need to nurture a living faith in Him in all situations of life.

Finally would we appreciate whatever He gives to us? In the midst of suffering, problems and difficulties, would we continue to appreciate Him and whatever He wants us to go through? Although not all sufferings and difficulties are directly intended by the Lord, do we properly appreciate and value what He is seeking to help us develop in our hearts in such times? Do we thank Him in all situations? In so doing, we will more readily grow to know Him, and the power of His

resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, and hence develop a life of deep oneness with Him, with quality and beauty that is enduring and of eternal and ultimate value.