Worthless Worship and a Woman with Great Faith

by Bayless Conley

Hey, everyone. Hi, out on the plaza. Hi to anybody who's watching anywhere. We're glad that you've joined us. We are in the Gospel of Mark. We're going chapter by chapter each weekend. Today, we're in chapter 7, and there is so much in the chapter. We just can't get to all of it. So, I'm going to deal with two portions of Mark 7. I just want to let you know ahead of time. When I finish with the first portion, we are going to slam on the brakes, turn the wheel hard, and kind of go in a different direction.

So, I really want to encourage you for that reason, but just in general, to be a note-taker. I think taking notes helps crystallize thoughts. It helps to promote action. Sometimes, you're dwelling on something, and if you haven't written anything down about it, by the time you finish with lunch today, it's sort of drifted out of memory. We can all tend to be that way. Things that we don't tend to, we tend to forget about them.

So, if something strikes you, if you write it down, you can go back to it and drill down on it a little deeper later on, and say, “God, are You trying to say something to me about this?” So, if you have your Bible, you can open to Mark 7. I'd like to pray and set our hearts to receive what the Lord has for us and to determine not just to be good listeners, but to be practitioners, to be doers of the Word.

> Heavenly Father, as Your people, we thank You for the privilege to gather together and worship. We thank You that we can leave our kids off in competent hands where they're being taught. We thank You for the bilingual service that's going on in building B right now. We pray that You’d anoint Pastor Ken as he brings the Word over there this morning. Lord, for us, we just settle our hearts down, and we choose to listen. We marshal all of our resources, spirit, soul, and body, and we just lean out and ask You to speak to us corporately as a body, but individually, Heavenly Father. Lord, I thank You that You see every person, You see every circumstance, and You have an answer for each one of us. We're listening for it, Heavenly Father. Thank You for Your presence here, and we pray that above everything, Jesus, Your Son, our Savior, would be glorified. Amen.

Mark 7:1 NKJV,

> [1] Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.

Now, Jesus is in Galilee at this time. So it's a 90-mile journey they have taken to see Jesus. Ninety miles, 4–5 days of traveling. It would have been one thing if they had come to listen to Him and to learn from Him, but they had come 90 miles to pick a fight with Him. They were looking for reasons to turn people against Him. Of course, they had clothed their actions with the garments of religious zeal, but their true motivations were pride, envy, and their desire to consolidate power. We read on in verses 2–5 NKJV,

> [2] Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. [3] For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. [4] When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. [5] Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"

Now it wasn't just the Pharisees, but in verse 3 it said the Pharisees and all the Jews don't eat unless they wash their hands in a special way. It affected everyone. It had been imposed upon the whole nation. But it had nothing to do with hygiene. That's not what they're talking about. It's not like talking about washing your hands before you sit down to supper. It was a ceremonial washing that they did, and they insisted upon.

Everyone had imbibed this. The entire nation went through this ceremonial washing before they ate, or if they came from the marketplace, because there were liable to be Gentiles in the marketplace, and Gentiles are unclean. So, they had to go through this ceremonial washing. But it was not Scripture. It was just a long-held tradition.

My friend, traditions can be good. They can be fine if they don't bind men's consciences or if they don't cancel, supersede, or claim to be equal to Scripture. But when man-made ideas claim divine authority or when they negate divine authority, there is a massive problem. We read on, beginning in verses 6–7 NKJV. Look at what Jesus said,

> [6] He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. [7] And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

Jesus said, "In vain they worship Me." One translation says, "Your worship is empty." Another says, "Your worship is worthless." The NLT translation says,

> [7] "'Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'"

Verses 8–13 NKJV,

> [8] "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." [9] He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. [10] For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' [11] But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—' (that is, a gift to God), [12] then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, [13] making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Now, Jesus just cites this one thing. He could have given a whole litany of things that they had done, where they had elevated their traditions to the level of Scripture, but He uses this one from the commandments. "Honor your father and mother," which, according to Christ, includes taking care of them in their old age. When you're able to do it, that is part of fulfilling that command from God. But the Pharisees had come up with a workaround for people who didn't

want to be burdened with that. They didn't want to have to take care of their parents and use their resources for that. They just wanted to use their resources on themselves. So here was the workaround. They would come to the priest and just say the magic word “Corban,” and then they would be relieved from their duty. “I dedicate all of my funds, all of my resources as a gift to God.”

Now, according to Robertson and his Word Pictures in the New Testament from the Greek, this is what he had to say. He said, “There was a payment to be made to the priest before this convenient workaround could be applied or taken advantage of.” So, my folks are up in age, they have needs, and I don't want to be burdened with that. So, I come to the priest, I pay him off, and then say the magic word “Corban.” He says, “What you have left is dedicated to God. You don't have to give it to Him. You just use it for yourself, and you're relieved from your responsibility to your parents.”

Again, Jesus could have cited a number of things, but this is one that would have hit directly at their hearts. Jesus shares in connection with this that anytime we take a man-made idea or tradition, and it supplants the Word of God, this is what happens. There are three stages. The first one is in verse 8. He said, “You lay aside the commandment of God, that you may hold the tradition of men.”

So, they set aside God's Word to make room for their tradition, and they put it on equal footing with the Word of God, saying, “It has equal authority with the Scriptures.” Then comes the inevitable second stage, and that's in verse 9. He said, “You reject the Scriptures. You reject the Word of God so that you can hold your tradition.”

So first, they move the Word of God aside. They give their tradition and their idea equal footing. Then it gets rejected outright. People generally did that because God's Word or His command ran cross grain to their tradition. It contradicted their policy, their present beliefs, or their preferences. Then, in stage 3 in verse 13, He said, “You make the Word of God of no effect.”

Literally, it is robbed of its power to change you and to change those who follow you. So, there's this process. We lift our idea, our tradition, our preference, whatever it is, to the level of Scripture. We make room for it, same authority, and then the Scriptures reject it. Then, finally, the Scripture has no more ability to change your life because of the posture you've taken toward it.

I was in Mexico many years ago when there was a crusade, an outdoor crusade, that got moved into a church building. There were some marvelous healings that took place, notable things. There was a woman they brought in who was literally at death's door. They had to carry her in because she couldn't walk. She looked like she was moments away from death. She was instantly healed. She stood up, and the pain was gone. She came back every night and testified. She actually, over the next four days, put on weight. Her countenance changed. It was amazing.

But when they brought her in, I took note of it, and I investigated. It was after the services started, and these four men came in, they looked around, and they brought her in furtively. They brought her in, sort of snuck her in a side door of the church. I remember thinking, “That is so weird.” Then I found out why. Because the church they had come from had elevated their tradition to the level of Scripture. They said that if men wore short-sleeved shirts, they were not of God. You had to wear a long-sleeved shirt, and you had to wear a tie, otherwise you were not of God.

Listen, it was hot. It was the middle of summer, and there was no air conditioning. So, the evangelist who's preaching has got a short-sleeved shirt on. So, the leaders from that church denounced the crusade and denounced the meetings. They said, the man's not of God, they're not of God, and they threatened to excommunicate anyone from their church who attended. So, these guys had snuck the woman in under threat of being kicked out of their church.

A church tradition had been elevated to the point of Scripture. And literally, Scripture had been rejected to the point that it was not effective. It was no longer by grace you are saved through faith and not by works. Because now, according to them, it's also by how you dress. I didn't find out, but I'm sure the women had to wear things that covered them from the neck down to their ankles, and they weren't allowed to cut their hair. Because usually all those things are tied up in the same bundle together. But they had elevated this tradition of how you dress to the level of Scripture. That was part of salvation, and you couldn't be part of God's family if you didn't dress in this particular way.

I was reading recently about a church planter in Nepal. This was some years ago, and some of the young believers came to him and said, “We have a serious question.” He said, “What?” They said, “Must the bride at a Christian wedding wear white?” He said, “Well, not necessarily. Why?” They said, “Well, the other Christian churches here tell us that at a Christian wedding, the bride must wear white, otherwise God will not recognize the union.”

He said, “Well, why does it even make a difference to you?” They said, “Well, in our country, white is the color of mourning. When a father dies, the son shaves his head, and he wears white for a year to show respect and mourning for the death of his father. It's become a real stumbling block for some of us that the bride has to wear white at the wedding because it represents mourning. More than that, it's really become a hindrance to our Muslim neighbors that we're trying to win to Christ. They've rejected Christianity outright because they said it's just a Western religion. That's all it is because of that. We're stuck. We don't know what to do.”

The man was very wise. He said, “Well, let's go to the Scriptures and let's see if Jesus taught that a bride has to wear white at the wedding, or let's see if the apostles taught it, or if it was practiced by those in the New Testament.” So, they searched the Scriptures for several days, did a thorough study, and came to the conclusion. They said, “No, this was not taught by Jesus. It's not taught in the New Testament.” He says, “Then it is a tradition of men, which can be fine, but it is not on the level of Scripture. You cannot elevate it to the level of Scripture. So, the bride does not have to wear white.”

They said, “But if she doesn't wear white at the wedding, there's going to be trouble. Some of our brothers in the other churches are going to be very angry.” And he asked them the question, he said, “Which is more important, to not anger some legalistic brothers or to reach your Muslim neighbors for Christ? You’d better pray about it.” They took three days and prayed about it, earnestly prayed. They came back and said, “We feel that it's more important for us to reach our Muslim neighbors for Christ, and we're willing to put up with our brothers being upset with us.” The man was very wise in the way that he dealt with it, but so many times traditions and ideas can climb to that kind of level, where they create all sorts of problems.

The great reformer, Martin Luther, was a priest in the Church of Rome. But he took the opportunity and actually railed against some of the practices and the traditions that had been lifted to the level of Scripture. Lifted to a level of claiming to have divine authority. That no one goes directly to heaven when they die, even if they've trusted in Christ. They have to go to a

place called purgatory, which is nowhere in the Bible, because sins, even though they've been confessed and forgiven, there's still consequences. So, they have to go to purgatory and be purged. Go through this purging process, and then and only then can they go to heaven.

In order to get them out of purgatory earlier, you can do penance, you can go to a holy site, or you can pray a certain prayer many times. Or, in Luther's day, they were selling indulgences. That became one of the main points that he said, “I cannot accept this,” meaning that you can pay money to the church and get a soul out of purgatory early. They don't have to stay there so long, depending on how much you give. Then they can go to heaven quicker if you give money, and Luther just cried out against that and said, “No, that is tradition. It is not Scripture. You're teaching as a doctrine of God, a command of God, something that is man-made.” He was seminal in the great reformation that took place and changed the whole world. But that was one of the key sticking points and one of the key reasons for it.

By elevating traditions like that, again, it makes the Word of God of no effect. That salvation is by grace through faith. It's a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. It's by grace through faith plus nothing. There's nothing we can do. Christ did it all. He paid the complete price. Period. So, it was making the Scripture, again, ultimately of no effect. But lest we think that this just applies to other people in other places, let me put it this way. This applies to any religious, cultural, governmental, or personal idea, tradition, policy, belief, personal preference, or political position that is held equal to or somehow circumvents the truth of Scripture.

Once that happens with anything, the process takes place. We set aside the command of God to make room for our preference, our political position, our personal idea of what we feel must be right. In the second stage, Scripture gets ultimately rejected outright. Then, finally, it has no more power to change us or those who go along with us. What we ultimately end up with is empty, worthless worship and a heart that is far from God.

I talked to a friend of mine. We're both new Christians. He's telling me he's hooked up with his girl and they're sleeping together regularly. I said, “You probably shouldn't be doing that. It's not God's way.” He actually brought it up to me because his conscience was bothered. He said, “Well, Bayless, I talked to her. She says she's a Christian, and we talked about it. She said, ‘This is the way I express love. If I'm attracted to someone, I have sex with them, and God is love. So, I'm expressing love, and God is pleased with this. How could God not be pleased? I'm actually expressing my love. How can God not be pleased with it?’”

He looked at me, and he said, “It made sense to me.” I said, “Well, you ought to do a little Bible study about what the New Testament has to say about sex and marriage.” He said, “I will.” To his credit, he did. He got into the Word, searched it out, came back, and said, “I'm going to go talk to her. It's clear that God created sex, and it's good. God wants us to enjoy it, but within the context of marriage between one man and one woman. That's God's way. That's what God has laid out.”

So, he went and talked to her. Oh, she was upset. She said, “Well, I don't believe that. I think, I feel, how could I follow a God who's so narrow? This is the way I express love. I'm not going to do that. That's ridiculous.” And she walked off from the relationship, I guess, if you want to call it that.

But it can happen with so many things. It can be true of the way we express our sexuality. It could be true of the sanctity of life in the womb. Or even something as fundamental as the fact that the Scripture clearly teaches there's a heaven to gain and a hell to shun, and they're

eternal. There's one way to God, and that is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I'm the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

But people will say, “Well, I can't believe that a loving God would ever send someone to hell, so I don't accept that.” Okay, I've just lifted my idea. I've set aside Scripture. And then ultimately, what happens is Scripture gets rejected, and then it loses its power to change us. “See, I just believe that everybody eventually is going to be part of God's family. Whether they reject Jesus or not, it doesn't matter because God is a God of love.”

Friend, He's also a God of justice, and He's very clear in the Scriptures about these things. So, we don't want to end up with worthless worship. We can't lift our ideas, our preferences, our traditions to a level of having divine authority. What I want to do right now, I want to hit the brakes, turn the wheel, and we're going to move on to another section of Mark 7. Are you ready? Verses 24–30 NKJV,

> 24 From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. 25 For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. 26 The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” 28 And she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.” 29 Then He said to her, “For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.” 30 And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

Now I want to take a moment and read the same story, it's actually quite short, from Matthew's Gospel. Matthew actually mentioned some things that Mark doesn't mention, and Mark mentioned some things that Matthew doesn't mention, and they're significant. See if you can pick the things out that Matthew mentions that Mark omitted. Matthew 15:21–28 NKJV,

> 21 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.

Now she's in a desperate situation. One where human beings could bring comfort but not cure, where they can diagnose but not bring deliverance. And today, there are people here who are in similar circumstances, in dire straits. It may be with a loved one, as in this story. It may have to do with your financial situation or with your physical situation. If there's no divine intervention, you are sunk.

The question that we want to explore is, what did this woman do to get her answer? Some right away would say, “It wasn't anything she did. It was just clearly a sovereign act of God.” Well, I would disagree with that, and I think the Scriptures disagree as well.

We read in Mark's Gospel that Jesus was trying to remain hidden, and He didn't want anyone to know where He was. That included the woman. But she found out where He was. She did some investigative work. Like the woman with the issue of blood—Jesus wasn't expecting that to happen. He turned around and said, “Who touched Me? I felt power go out of Me. Who did it? Who did it?” This woman initiated things just like the woman with the issue of blood had done.

So, I want to look briefly, very briefly, at six things that she did that we should deeply consider. Number one, she heard about Jesus. That's Mark 7:25. Faith came into her heart when she heard. Romans 10:14 NKJV asked the question,

> [14] . . . how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?

Verse 17 of that same chapter in Romans says,

> [17] So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Another translation says, “Faith is awakened by hearing.” Yet another translation says, “Faith comes alive by hearing the Word of God.” What we hear does matter. What you hear does matter. And no doubt she heard about a compassionate, miracle-working, healing individual, and she deduced from that He was indeed the Jewish Messiah. She called Him Lord and called Him Son of David. Listen to this verse. It's Galatians 3:5 ERV. It asks a question, actually a couple of questions. It says,

> [5] Does God give you the Spirit because you follow the law? Does God work miracles among you because you follow the law? No, God gives you his Spirit and works miracles among you because you heard the message about Jesus and believed it.

We need to hear. It was back in 1990. A brother from church came to me and said, “Pastor, can you please come pray for my wife? She's dying. Basically, her whole immune system is broken down. There's not just one thing wrong with her, there are multiple things that are wrong, and the doctors have not given her that long to live.” While he was talking to me, I had this very distinct impression that she was not ready to be prayed for.

I didn't know her, and I barely knew him. I said, “Come with me.” We had a bookshop at that time. I took him in the bookshop, I got a book on healing, and I gave it to him. I said, “Listen, I just feel in my spirit that your wife's not ready to be prayed for yet. Take this home. Give it to her. Have her read it, or you read it to her, then you call me, and I'll come.” He said, “Okay.”

Anyway, we exchanged phone numbers, and I just got busy with life. I think it was probably a couple of months later that I remembered, and he never called me. I went, “Ah. I offended him. I know I've offended him.” So, I called him up. I said, “I'm sorry if I offended you. I honestly felt like the Holy Spirit was speaking to me, and that's why I didn't come. That's why I got you the book.” He said, “No, Pastor, you don't understand. My wife started reading the book, she got her Bible out and read the Scriptures next to the book, and she got healed. The reason we didn't call is my wife is completely, totally, 100% healed.”

I actually spoke with her last Thursday just to tell her, “I'm going to tell your story.” She said, “Go ahead.” She got filled with the Holy Spirit around the same time, but 36 years later, she's still healed. But she took time to hear.

Some of you, I think, get prayed for too quickly. We just want to pray for people and then maybe share a Scripture after we pray for them. But that's not the scriptural way. Everywhere Jesus went, you look in the Scriptures, in every synagogue, in every village, Jesus taught, He preached, and then He healed.

The people had to hear first. In fact, the Scripture says, “They came to hear and to be healed of their diseases.” Jesus always brought the Word first, and of course, there were exceptions to that, but we need to follow the rule and not the exception.

Listen, you ought to take Jesus' hand and walk through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and say, “Lord, show me, reveal Yourself to me.” Read it prayerfully, read it slowly, and then take His hand and walk through the book of Acts, all the while keeping in mind that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. See if your faith doesn't soar.

This woman heard. Number two, she came. Now, that wasn't easy. There were obstacles. First of all, there was whatever distance she came from, and then she had to locate Him. The Scriptures said that Jesus was trying to remain hidden and didn't want anyone to know where He was. She had to put some work in to find out where He was and locate Him. Then, she is a woman coming to a group of Jewish men, and on top of that, she is a Gentile, but she still came. Faith is awakened by hearing, but it is released through action.

She could have said, once she heard about this miracle worker, “If only He would come by my house, I know my daughter would be healed.” Too many people are doing that, saying, “If the Lord wills, I know it will happen.” Not necessarily. You need to get up and get going. Put some legs to your faith. James 2:17 says, “Faith without corresponding actions is dead.”

Let me give you something to chew on before we move on. You read through the Gospels, and you'll find this is absolutely true. Without exception, Jesus healed all who came to Him who were in need of healing. Without exception. But He did not heal all who He came to. All who were in need of healing who came to Him, He healed them. But all who were in need of healing who He came to, He did not heal all of them. But all who came to Him, He did, and this woman came.

Then the third thing, she made a specific request. She said, “Cast the demon out of my daughter.” She didn't just come, “Lord, I need a blessing.” She didn't come with an unspoken prayer request. Jesus said to the blind man who was crying out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” Everyone in the crowd knew what he wanted. Jesus knew what he wanted and needed. But Jesus stopped and said, “What do you want Me to do?” It's obvious. Why would You ask such a question? Jesus wanted the man to be specific. Faith is specific.

If you don't think being specific is important, let's say you and your wife are so excited you're going to purchase your first home. Maybe it's a condo or a small house. So, you make an appointment with a bank manager. You come in, and say, “I have an unspoken request.” See how far you get. Or you go to your physician. You go to your doctor. “Doctor, I need surgery.” “Okay. And?” “Well, I just need surgery.” “Why?” “Well, I have pain.”

“Okay. What kind of pain do you have?” “What does it matter? I just need surgery. I have pain.” “Well, where's the pain? Is it in your head? Is it in your knees? Is it in your feet? Is it in your

stomach? On a scale of 1–10 how bad is it? Where and how often does it come? Do you have it constantly? How long have you had it? When did it start? What kind of a diet are you on? Are you on any sort of medications right now?" If you're not specific, he or she cannot help you.

I was with an older general in the faith one day. I was a much younger man, and we were sitting at lunch. I said, "What's the best advice you can give me as a young minister?" I'll never forget. He kind of smiled, looked at me, and said, "Son, you're going to have to be a little more specific than that." I just think God is saying, "Daughter, son, don't be afraid to be specific. Make a specific request."

Then number four, this woman was tenacious. We've already mentioned several obstacles she had to overcome to get to Jesus, but there were more. She's crying out, but it said, "He answered her not a word." Some people pray, and heaven is silent, so they quit. But not her. She followed after them and kept crying out. Not only did Jesus not answer a word, but the disciples are urging Jesus to get rid of her. There was nothing encouraging in that atmosphere for this woman. Nothing there to encourage her.

When Jesus finally does speak to her, He discourages her further. "I'm not sent to you. Helping you at this time is not part of My mission. The children of Israel have to be filled first. That is My primary mission right now. You are not part of it." But she didn't quit. She said, "Lord, help me. Do it anyway."

Jesus goes on and says, "It's not good to take the children's bread."—Then He calls her a dog, "And throw it to the little dogs." You talk about obstacles. You talk about discouragement. This is the Son of God telling her, "My mission is not to you right now, and this is not good." But she kept coming. She said, "Well, Lord, even the little dogs get a crumb from under the table." He says, "Woman, great is your faith. Be it to you, even as you desire. Your daughter, she's free."

It just amazes me. It reminds me of the story we're told in the Gospels of the four men who brought their paralyzed friend on a bed. Jesus is in a house, but there's no room. There are Pharisees and doctors of the law from Judea, Galilee, and Jerusalem. There's a donkey taking every parking space up outside. Nobody can get in. There's a crowd around the front door and the window.

It says they could not find a way to get him in. They tried. First, the front door doesn't work. They go around to the back door. They're carrying this guy. They can't get in the back door. Let's see if there's a side door on the house. No side door. Back to the front door. "Guys, this is serious. Please let us through. We've got to get him to Jesus." They say, "I'm not giving up my spot. You should have gotten here early. You need to think these things through."

They just turn their backs on them. So, what do they do? They go up on the roof. They tore the tiles off a stranger's roof and let him down into the midst before Jesus. And Jesus, seeing their faith—don't you love it? They were tenacious. Real faith is tenacious. It doesn't give up. They could have said, "If this was God's will, the door would have been opened. We would have gotten a seat right up front. It wouldn't be so hard." No, we wouldn't find the story about this Syro-Phoenician woman or about the four men that brought their friend, if faith did not at times have to be extremely tenacious.

Then number five, she worshiped. She fell down before Him, and she worshiped. It probably seemed like her whole world was falling apart, and her only remedy was telling her that His

mission is not to her, but it's to the Jews at this time. Friend, when you don't understand, you need to worship.

When it seems like the heavens are made of brass and they're padlocked shut, you need to lift your hands, walk the floor, and worship God out loud. When it seems like darkness and heaviness are settled down on you like some death shroud, you need to lift your hands, and you need to worship. And you need to worship, and you need to worship some more.

In fact, I got a word for some of you here. You need to listen carefully to me. There are some of you in dire circumstances, and the only way to get out is you have to worship your way out. It's the only way you're getting out. It's the only door out. It's the door of worship. And there are some of you where you desperately need to be in a certain place, and you know you're supposed to be there. You're called to be, you just know it. The only way to get in is to worship your way in. She worshiped Him when it seemed like nothing was working for her. Sixth and finally, she took the Lord at His word. In Mark 7:29 NKJV, Jesus said,

> 29 ". . . go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter."

Once she had a word from Him, that settled it for her, and she left with no physical evidence whatsoever. She left on the evidence of His word alone. Basically, "Lord, You said it. That's enough. I don't need anything else." And she went her way. When she came, she found the demon had gone out of her daughter. Her daughter was lying on the bed.

Many years ago, in fact, 1980, it may have been the end of '79, I'm living in Oklahoma, and two friends came to visit me. One is a pastor of a small church that I knew, and a guy from the church. They stayed with me for a couple of days. I don't remember what we did, but the second day we'd hung out all day, and we decided to go to a late-night movie that night. A little while before we left, the phone rings. Of course, in those days, it was only landlines. It was a guy. I recognized his voice and recognized him. I'd met him. He was an elder from this pastor's church. I said, "Pastor, it's so-and-so, one of your elders."

So, he gets the phone, and we're standing on the other side of the room. We can tell it's a very serious conversation. Whatever's going on, it's serious. He hangs up the phone. He said, "They've taken my wife to the hospital. She suddenly became paralyzed from the waist down. The doctor said she either has MS or a brain tumor. She's in the hospital, and she's sleeping right now. Boys, we need to pray." So, we said, "Yeah." I can tell you where we were standing in my apartment. We took hands and began to pray.

We took a Scripture, Matthew 18:19–20. It says, "If any two of you on earth agree concerning anything you ask, it'll be done for you by My Father, who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name. I'm there in your midst." That was our verse. So, we prayed. I remember I prayed fervently, and I can still tell you almost word for word what that pastor prayed. It was a simple and short prayer.

He said, "Father, I know You love me, and I ask You to take care of my wife. In Jesus' Name. Amen." That was it. I was kind of surprised. We let go of our hands. Then I said, "Okay, what now?" I thought he was going to say, "We're going to war, boys. We're going to pace the floor. We're going to pray in the Spirit. We're going to pray in tongues. We're going to worship God. We're going to pray. We are not going to sleep tonight. We're going to pace, and we're going to pray."

He goes, “What time did that movie start?” I said, “What?” He said, “Well, we still have time to get to the movie.” I said, “You just got news that your wife has MS or a brain tumor.” I never forget it. He looked at me and said, “Bayless, there's no way to get to her right now. We're in Oklahoma. There are no flights out of this little Podunk town this time of night. If I could go there to give her comfort or whatever, I'd do that. But there's nothing I can do. We prayed. God heard our prayer. Let's go to the movie.” “Okay.”

So, I didn't enjoy the movie at all. My brain is just going everywhere. Sitting there, I'm not watching the screen. I’m thinking, “What in the heck?” Then it's like I had an epiphany sitting there in the theater. I said, “This man actually believes that God heard our prayer. He's like someone from the Bible. That if God heard us and answered, and God's going to take care of his wife, there's nothing else we needed to do.” It changed me. It just changed me. And this woman, she's been pressing in; she won't be stopped. And then finally, when she gets His word, that's it. “That's all I need.” And she goes her way, believing what He said.

Friend, we need to take Him at His word. We don't need any physical evidence. Just take Him at His word. I want to close by just saying this. Jesus referred to His power to heal and to deliver as the children's bread. Healing is the children's bread. If you're saved, you are one of His children. Healing is the children's bread. It's not the children's dessert that they may get or they may not, depending on if they ate a good meal. No, healing is the children's bread. It's a staple. It's part of the daily diet. Jesus said pray like this, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Healing belongs to you, my friend. The Scripture ties forgiveness and healing together. Psalm 103:1 NKJV,

> [1] Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Psalm 103:3 NKJV,

> [3] Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.

In Isaiah 53:5 NKJV, surely,

> [5] He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

It ties it all together in one package. Healing is the children's bread. We're going to pray for healing here today, but I want to say this. There's some, you know you need to hear more first, and that's okay. Listen, studying the Scriptures is never a waste of time. And to do it prayerfully and not in a hurry, and to just dwell and let the Lord speak to your heart, to where it's settled, and you can intelligently cooperate for your healing. For some of you, that's what you need to do. Others, you're ready to be prayed for, and we're going to pray.

Then I'd like to give an invitation as well, because here's His Word, “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” You may have come with a friend, with a family member, by yourself, or with an enemy here today. There's a God in heaven who knows your name and loves you, and He will not turn you away if you come to Him. So, let's lift our hearts to God and just pray first of all. Then I want to give a short invitation.

> Father, we come, we thank You for the finished work of Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We thank You that, as Your sons and as Your daughters, healing is our bread. It's something that we can experience daily. It's part

> of our diet with You. I just pray right now that Your virtue would flow throughout this room into every body that has a physical need. Touch people from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet.
>
> Out on the plaza, to those who are watching wherever they might be right now, Lord, touch them by Your power. We thank You for it. Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your finished work on Calvary. We thank You for the stripes on Your back. We thank You for what Your Word declares.
>
> First Peter 2:24, "You bore our sins in Your own body on the tree that we, having died to sins, might live on to righteousness by whose stripes we were healed." Lord, we thank You for it, and we just receive it in simple, humble faith with humility and thankfulness.
>
> We come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find help in this moment of need. Thank You, by Your Spirit and even Your angels who are ministering in this house, bringing healing and effecting the cure to those who are here. Amen.

Now I'm just going to take maybe five more minutes. I shared somewhat along these lines a few weeks ago, but there are people who say, "Well, why did Jesus have to die? God is God. Why didn't God just say, 'I forgive you all, just don't do it again.'? Why all this business with Jesus dying?" Jesus had to die because God is not only a God of love, He's also a God of justice.

Some people say, "Well, if God is a God of love, why didn't He just say, 'I wash you clean.'?" Well, think of it like this if you would. If God overlooked the need for there to be a penalty for sin, He would no longer be just. He is a God of love, but He's also a God of justice. If you take away any part of His nature, He's no longer God. Every person in their heart knows this is true.

Let's say you and I were walking along a road, and I kick a rock out of the way. You're not going to think anything of it. You probably kick some rocks out of the way, too. It's just a stupid rock. But we go a little farther, and there's a grasshopper sitting on this boulder. I take my boot, and I smash it. You think, "What the heck? What, you don't like grasshoppers? You got an issue with grasshoppers?" I say, "No." "Okay, there's something wrong with you. It was just a bug. Okay."

So, we keep going. We go a little farther. There's a lizard there. I take a rock, and I smash the lizard. "What's up with you today? What the heck? Still, okay, but don't kill any more lizards." We go a little farther, a little puppy dog runs up, and I kick the thing like a football through the goal posts. I've broken a few of that little puppy's ribs, and you're thinking, "I'm calling animal services. It's cruelty to animals. There needs to be some consequence for that. You can't just do that."

We go a little farther on the road. There's a person, your mother, your sister, or your daughter. I violate her. I take a rock, and I hit her. She'll never be normal again. I've damaged her soul. I've damaged her physically. So, I have to stand before a judge, and I'm there in front of the judge. You're looking at your poor sister who's now wheelchair bound, who's scarred emotionally and mentally for the rest of her life. I'm sitting there smiling, and the judge says, "Okay, Bayless, you're forgiven. Just go your way. Don't do it again."

Every one of you would be going, "No, you're an unjust judge. There needs to be a consequence for this." You see, the higher up you go, the more consequence there needs to be. From a rock, to a bug, to a lizard, to an animal, to a person, but we haven't just sinned against a

person. We've sinned against God. He's infinitely beyond a human being. There's no way that He would just say, "Well, you're forgiven." He would not be just. Because of His justice, He could not overlook our sin, but because He's also love, He would not overlook us. And He sent His Son to be our substitute, to die in our place, and to take the consequences for our sin. So that His righteous, just nature could be satisfied.

Jesus hung on that cross absolutely pure and absolutely innocent. God laid my sin upon Him. And the penalty for everything I've done wrong and thought wrong in my whole life, and not just me, the sin of all the world, your sin and all of its consequences, the wrath and the fury of God against the sin of mankind poured out on His spotless Son who willingly hung there in our place. It is more than the heart can take in.

After three days and three nights, when the claims of God's eternal justice were satisfied by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was raised from the dead. Substitution. He took our place. He took our sin. And when we put our trust in the risen Savior, here's what the Scripture says. "God takes the righteousness of Jesus, and He placed it on us." Just like He placed our sin on Christ. He places His righteousness on us, and we are changed.

Do we deserve it? No. Could we earn it? Never. It's unimaginable, but He did it. Friend, without putting your trust in Jesus, there's no way to be reconciled to a holy, just God. No amount of good works can do it. No amount of personal sacrifice. No amount of religious ritual can do it. The Bible says, "If you believe in your heart God raised Jesus from the dead, confessing Him with your mouth as Lord, you will be saved."

I just want to ask you to pray with me right now. I can give you the words to a simple prayer, which will mean absolutely nothing if you just say them. But if you tie a sincere heart around the words and mean them, putting your trust in Jesus, everything will change for you. Everything will change. You become His son, you become His daughter. Healing becomes your bread.

If it helps you to close your eyes, you can do it right now. If you're a prodigal son or prodigal daughter who's away from God, it's time to come home, prodigal. The Father's waiting. Time to come home, prodigal son. Time to come home, prodigal daughter. God's not mad, but you already know what's happening to your heart as you linger outside of the boundaries of His love and His will for your life. Would you pray this out loud after me? Just say,

> Oh God, I humble myself before You. And I want to say thank You. Thank You for not forgetting me. Thank You for allowing Your Son to die in my place as my substitute. Jesus, I believe that because of what You did for me, my debt is paid in full and I'm free. I put my trust in You as Lord and Savior. Jesus, I give You my life. All I am and all I have, from this moment forward, I put it in Your hands. Wherever You lead me, I will go. It's in Your name I pray. Amen.

Thank You, Lord Jesus. Wonderful.

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