

Dont Accept an Unsaved State

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[0 : 0 0] we're going to turn back now to the passage that we read together in Matthew's gospel and chapter 15 and i want us to read again at verse 22 so it's Matthew's gospel chapter 15 and at verse 22 behold a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying have mercy on me oh lord son of David for my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon but he did not answer her a word the gospel message is a very simple message and it can be summed up really in a sentence whatever you hear from the pulpit week by week and however long it takes some of us to say it it can all be condensed down into one sentence because the gospel message can be put quite simply as this believe in the name of the lord jesus christ and you shall be saved and that above anything else is what any preacher of the gospel wants to communicate to whatever congregation he is preaching to believe in the name of the lord jesus christ and you will be saved and no doubt every week your ministers here will plead with you to make that step of commitment whereby you entrust whereby you believe in jesus christ for yourselves they urge you to make that commitment where you would yield to the claim of christ upon your lives upon your hearts and perhaps they like i often do would suggest that maybe some of you are resisting that claim fighting against that very simple message and command to believe in the name of jesus christ perhaps it's been suggested to you often that there are times that that gospel message comes too close to you and when it comes so close that you can take fright and you step back from it because perhaps you're scared of being converted you're scared that you will actually cross that line from being an unbeliever to being a believer from being somebody who is not a christian to somebody who is a christian and you're scared of all the consequences and all that that will involve and the stand you're going to have to make and because of that you step back from the claim or perhaps even it suggested for some of you that what you're scared of is not about being converted but scared of not being converted that when the gospel comes so close and you want to almost reach out and take hold of the promises of the scripture you're scared to do it in case you find that you're the person who is turned away that you're the person who will not receive the thing that you are looking for it all seems to get very confusing but i think that sometimes there are major difficulties that keep us back from going to christ and here when we look at this story of the syrophenician woman this canaanite woman we see that she was a woman who had genuine difficulties in her life that could have kept her back from going to christ and receiving the very thing that she needed and so what i want us to do today is to look at this woman and we're going to see what to do

and what to expect when life is tough heaven is silent and the church disappoints that's going to be the three things that we're looking at what to do when life is tough when heaven is silent and when the church disappoints first of all then when life is tough this woman's home life was very demanding within her four walls she faced difficulties that perhaps most of us can only imagine we're told that she had a daughter and her daughter and her daughter had quite a severe problem her daughter we're told was demon possessed now i'm not going to pretend to understand actually what that means but we do know that from other parts of scripture that such possession could have quite catastrophic consequences in people's lives if you remember about the man who again took his boy to see jesus who was possessed of a demon and remember the way it affected him it spoke of how he took seizures and sometimes that demon would throw him into the fire into the water whatever it seemed to have this horrible destructive effect on him likewise when we read of the guy known as legion and legion was possessed of numerous devils were told and remember how it almost drove him insane he went about the tombs and he was he was a danger to himself and to the public and no matter how hard people tried to help him it just couldn't be done and he was wandering about in those regions in the region of the caves as if he was a complete madman with his finger firmly upon the self-destruct button so we begin to look at demon possessed and we see

it was something destructive and ugly and horrible and tormenting and this is what the testimony of the woman is about her daughter she speaks about her being severely oppressed or if you've got maybe another version in front of you it speaks about her suffering terribly because of this demon possession so you can imagine that for this woman within her own home within her own four walls she endured a very tough experience physically it would have been very demanding you can almost picture what it involved for her probably constant care and supervision of her daughter probably having to protect her a lot of the time from harming herself or from others you can imagine this woman being up at all sorts of times in the middle of the night perhaps being severely deprived of sleep you can imagine the physical exhaustion that she would feel day by day because of all that she had to do looking after her wee girl likewise you can imagine how emotionally exhausting it was for her if any of you have ever had a sick child you'll know exactly what it's like it is something where the very helplessness you feel makes you exhausted the emotional involvement is something that is completely draining and your heart goes out to this woman in her circumstances because you have maybe a wee taste of just the very thing that she would have been going through day by day she would be looking at the child she loved her heart would be breaking she would be wishing she could do anything to take away that the experiences of her child and she couldn't and she would feel that frustration and emotion every day of her life there was also another side to that where in in this day it was probably even more judgmental than our own day and people would probably socially exclude this woman and her family because of what her girl was going through most people wouldn't want to know them and they would find it a very lonely existence they would feel that the darkness and the isolation of this experience on a daily basis but there's something else too that this woman had to contend with what she contended with was not only physically demanding and emotionally exhausting but also spiritually challenging now i'm not sure what this woman believed in whether she believed in god or gods but whatever she believed in this would have been spiritually challenging to her she would be asking herself if there is a god how could he allow such a thing to be happening in the life of my wee girl if there is such a god how is it that he is allowing such a horrible thing to take place in my life and in my home and perhaps even if she is not questioning the goodness of a god in general terms maybe she is questioning the goodness of god to her personally maybe she's a woman who's riddled with a sense of guilt feeling that maybe her child has been judged because of her sins or her life do you remember when there was that question posed to jesus when the disciples saw the man that was born blind who has sinned was it this man or his parents that he was born blind you see that was their mentality that either the person themselves had sinned or maybe the parents or grandparents had sinned and therefore god has sent this thing almost like a judgment upon them and you can picture this woman perhaps being tormented with this thought that maybe her child was suffering in this way because of some sin that she had committed in her life and there would be the spiritual challenge going on within her now because of these things she could have easily have argued that it was not possible for her to come to christ she could have said look the physical demands i am meeting every day the constant care i have to give every day means i am too busy to come to christ the exhaustion i feel i am drained and i am too tired to come to christ or perhaps when she looked at that spiritual level she might be saying look i am too bitter or even i am too bad to come to christ and yet when you look at this woman what do you see you find that these very tough circumstances are not the things that keep her from christ but are the very things that take her to christ she comes to christ with all the busyness and the tiredness and the bitterness and the badness that she is feeling inside and she comes to him crying out lord son of david have mercy upon me now i'm sure there are probably none of us that are facing the identical circumstances that this woman faced but perhaps the circumstances in our lives have the same net effect there may be things that are going on in your life or in my life that are very physically demanding again it might be that you are having to care for a loved one it might be that you're having to contend with some kind of illness or sickness yourself it might be that there are some heavy demands within your own home or in your own workplace or in your community or in the church whatever and it may be that you are feeling that every moment of your time is being taken by the duties you have to fulfill it may be that you're exhausted that you're emotionally physically drained it might be that because of the things that are going on in your life you're feeling just inside and outside just so so tired and it might be that there are things in your life that really pose serious problems for you spiritually theologically some of you might even be looking around at the world in which we live and you're seeing the iraq and the afghanistan you're hearing the horrible things that are in the papers

about the the awful things that are happening to young and old in our society you're seeing the tragedies and the horrendous events that take place across the world and perhaps in your head you are saying even if you feel you can't let it out of your mouth if there is a god and he is good how do all these things take place why doesn't he stop them why doesn't he prevent them if there really is such a good god or maybe if you're not thinking of it in that general way maybe at a personal level you begin to look at yourself and your life and you're seeing the difficulties and the obstacles and the circumstances and you're thinking well even if god is good and he loves all these people around me he seems to have a problem with me because otherwise why would these things be happening why would they be taking place in my life and perhaps you even begin to think that you're under the judgment of god that that illness that that problem that that difficulty that you cannot overcome is because the hand of god is against you because of something you have done or said or whatever in the past but if we're to follow the example of this woman we should be saying nothing is going to make me stand back from christ no matter how busy i am no matter how exhausted i am no matter what spiritual questions and doubts i have i will go to jesus indeed all these things become not excuses to stand back but actually reasons to go to christ and to get on your knees and to pray to him saying lord son of david be merciful to me your tiredness your problems your exhaustion your doubt your spiritual questions and theological challenges they are all reasons to go to christ and not to step back from him there is that lovely psalm is it not psalm 61 where it says what time my heart is overwhelmed then lead me to the rock that is higher than i when you're feeling swamped that's the time to go to him the christ who said come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and i will give you rest that's what you do when life is tough but what about when heaven is silent can you not just feel the pain of verse 23 it comes right after the woman's prayer lord be merciful to me and we're told then that he said not a word he said not a word look at the chain of events the straw woman comes to jesus prays her prayer look at the prayer it is a good prayer you cannot fault the prayer in that prayer there is reverence she's addressing him as lord in that prayer there is dependence she's not coming that she deserves an answer she is looking for mercy in that prayer there is faith a belief that jesus can do something in that prayer there is earnestness it is something that comes straight from the heart you can feel the emotion of the prayer you cannot fault the prayer and what is it met with absolute silence he said not a word in fact it was worse than that she looks at jesus and although he is not saying a word to her he is speaking to others the disciples are around him and he turns and he talks to the disciples and he is saying to them i was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of israel he is talking to others and you can feel that that would be even more frustrating for her and how does she respond with more prayer lord help me and then we're told jesus answers and he answered finally she gets an answer to her prayer but what answer is it no that's what he says he says it is not right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs this poor woman you can imagine how she felt being ignored first of all and then finally when an answer comes is not the answer she wanted and was pleading for it was the answer no maybe some of you in here today have said i would love to be a christian i would love to believe in the name of the lord jesus christ and be saved perhaps you'll say i've even prayed to become a christian i've actually i remember being handed various wee tracts and things like that they would give the gospel message and at the back of them it would have what was called the sinner's prayer the prayer to pray where you confess to your sins and ask jesus into your life and into your heart and maybe you said i've prayed the prayer but there was nothing that happened perhaps you're even saying i look around and i see jesus if you like speaking to others working in the lives of others but there is nothing happening to me and even when i plead again and again and again i seem to be met with silence well this woman faced that very problem but she also faced the ultimate brick wall the brick wall that seemed to be unsurpassable something you couldn't climb over you couldn't break through what was it it was the doctrine of election that's what jesus presented to her the doctrine of election he he starts speaking about the house of israel and a what is termed rather in what we would almost consider a derogatory way he talks about the dogs now you have to understand the terminology that's being used here the jews were considered to be the children of israel the jews were considered if you like to be the sons and the daughters of god the gentiles were considered to be heathens they were outsiders and often the jews would refer to them as dogs so what jesus says to him well look i have come you know for the lost sheep of the house of israel and he's saying you you're a mother you understand this you think of it would you take the food from your table that was intended for your children and feed it to the dogs you yourself know that that is not right and i have come for the house of israel for the children of god and not for the gentiles that's

really what she's being told here and you can imagine that she'll be thinking this is a complete brick wall she's been told she's the wrong type she's got the wrong background she doesn't have the right pedigree in some ways what she's probably hearing is that she's meant to accept the fact that it is not god's will to help her i would suggest that perhaps there's some maybe many of you in here that hide behind such teaching i have prayed and nothing has happened therefore maybe it's not god's will to save me maybe it is the case i am not of the elect and that becomes the brick wall that you have built up in front of yourself as being the reason why today you are not a christian the reason why today you have not given your heart and your life to the lord jesus christ but look at this woman how does she respond she says to jesus well do you know even the dogs get to eat the [20 : 23] crumbs that fall from the master's table she's saying i may be everything you say i may be the wrong type i may have the wrong background i may not have the right pedigree i may have all these faults and failings and all these things but she's saying to him i still need your help i still need your help and she is going to persevere because she knows that she cannot do without the help of jesus you know this story reminds me often of the the passage in in luke where jesus is teaching about prayer in luke chapter 11 and after he has taught the lord's prayer itself he he goes on to say this which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and who goes to him at midnight says to him friend lend me three loaves for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and i have nothing to set before him and will answer from within do not bother me the door is now shut that my children are with me in bed i cannot give up and give you anything i tell you though he will not give up and give them anything because he is a friend yet because of his well he's got impudence but should really be persistence he will rise and give him whatever he needs and i tell you ask it will be given you seek you will find knock and it will be open to you for everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and the one who knocks it will be open that's what's taking place here the woman is being persistent in the place of prayer and as we'll see at the end it is rewarded with the answer that she craved and the healing that she required that's what we do when heaven is silent we persevere we persist in the place of prayer because there is something very important at stake and that is your own never dying soul and lastly in a few minutes we have left what do we do when the church disappoints we all have our ideas as to what the church should be like an ideal picture in our heads and we probably think that a church should be welcoming inclusive of all its arms should be open wide to welcome all sorts and types into the church a church should be caring it should reflect something of the heart of the savior that shows compassion and love to all men and women and children the church should be helpful seeking again after the example of christ to serve all those around it in whatever way it can even if it is involving great sacrifice the church should be encouraging keen to draw others in and encouraging others to come into the fold of the body of jesus christ that is what we think the church should be like but even in christ day what was the experience that people had of the church you think of the parents that took their little children in arms to see the head of the church to see jesus christ what did the church do stood in their way tried to stop them until they were rebuked by christ saying let the children come to me don't stop them for of such is the kingdom of heaven you think of the man that we spoke about earlier the one that had that son with the severe problems and remember jesus is up on the mount of transfiguration and there is this man with his son and he's taking his son to the church and he's wanting the church to help him he's wanting the church to do something and he finds the church is completely ineffectual the church doesn't know what to do and even when it tries to do something nothing really happens until jesus comes down the mountain and does something for him and says you have little faith you why why couldn't you have done this because it only happens through prayer and fasting and so on

well here we have this woman and she also is having a bad experience of the church she is finding the church is not interested in her she is finding that the church is clueless as how to deal with her and she's finding that the church looks on her as simply as an inconvenience a pest and the church when it goes to pray is praying to jesus saying lord tell this woman to go away because she's just annoying us because she keeps crying out after us she was invading the coziness of their moment she was invading the security and the the niceness of the environment that they were enjoying and they wanted this woman just to disappear because she was bringing problems they didn't want to face she was bringing challenges they didn't want to meet and to them she was a complete pest and she's there saying lord tell her to go away now this woman could have looked at the church and said well if this is what they're like i'm off but it's almost as if she doesn't see the church because

her eyes are firmly fixed upon christ and she wants to go to that christ knowing that he and he alone is the one that can help now i'm sure most of us have had very good experiences of church we have had great encouragement and care and help and all these things from church but there is inevitably some who will find that their experience of church has not been pleasant or their experience of christians have not been good where they have felt an inconvenience or a pest and maybe you are one of these people and maybe there's been things that have gone on in the church that have sickened you and that have made you want to just walk away from it what are we meant to do we're meant to realize that the church is not christ and we are to look at christ in all his beauty in all his loveliness and perfection with all his love and compassion and grace and we're to see that he is the one and he alone that has the solution to our problem because the church cannot save your soul but christ can the church did not die on the cross for you but christ did the church cannot in any way remove your sins but christ can and that is why your focus has to be on christ why did this woman keep going with all the obstacles with the toughness of our life with the apparent silence of heaven with the apparent problems that the church posed and the disappointment she faced why did she keep going well because she loved her daughter and she wanted her daughter to be saved and she knew that christ alone could do it that's why she kept going why should you keep going in pursuit of your soul salvation why should you keep going overcoming all these obstacles and hurdles because you should love your soul you should see the preciousness of your soul and you should never ever ever ever accept an unsaved soul within you you should realize that there is nothing more important in this whole universe than for you to have peace with god and you should realize too that the only way you can know that is through jesus christ our lord and savior and you should not let anyone you should not let anyone about you you should not let yourself and you should not let the evil one put anything in your way that you will not break down or overcome because it is way too important you have one never dying soul that will spend eternity in heaven or in hell and you have this time to ensure that you come to know christ as your savior and that you know peace with god through him so that you have that security and that promise of an eternal heaven and that you know that you have escaped the experience of an eternal hell it is too important and too urgent just to sit back and to accept an unsaved state and that is why i would plead with you with all my heart and soul today every one of you i would plead with you in the name of my christ that today you would believe believe in the name of the lord jesus christ and be saved it means simply to trust to trust and all of you just now are trusting something you are trusting if you i know it may sound a bit silly but you are trusting the very seat you are sitting on think of it the moment you sat down in that seat you were trusting that seat to hold you up and if you didn't think it would you would never have sat in it in the first place in the same way you're being asked to trust jesus christ by if you like throwing yourself into his arms trusting that he will hold you and catch you and carry you through life and death and into eternity trust him as your lord and your savior and then you will know that eternal peace within your heart and soul let's pray our god and our father we ask that you would give to us the grace that would enable us to simply trust to believe in our lord jesus christ so that we would know the salvation of our souls we pray that our faith would be genuine and childlike that we oh god would simply believe not just in your ability to save but in your willingness to save indeed oh god we ask that you would help us to make it more personal to realize your ability to save our souls your willingness to save our souls lord we pray that whatever obstacles perhaps are in our way whether they be man-made or genuine that lord that we would not be willing to yield to any of them that we would see the great need of our souls and that we would feel the urgency of the situation so that we would continually cry out to you saying lord be merciful to me the sinner we pray oh god that you would help us that we would give you no rest until we truly know in our own hearts peace with you through jesus christ and lord we ask that even before we leave this building today that all of us would be going singing your praises and rejoicing in you as our great redeemer and savior hear us then our father for we ask all these things in the name of our christ amen