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"Saving Faith"
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You go to a doctor whose name you can't pronounce and whose degrees you've never verified. He gives you a prescription you can't read. You take it to a pharmacist you don't know. He gives you a chemical compound you don't understand. Then you go home and take the pill according to the instructions on the bottle. Talk about a trusting, sincere faith!

Open to Matthew 15. In Matthew, we have a woman faced with a problem she has no control over, and she comes to Jesus for a solution in great faith and trust. But in this section, we also have a record of Jesus acting in manner that usually doesn't describe Him. But more than that, when a person's hurting, we expect to see Him giving them comfort.

Verses 21-24, *"And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

We remind people who have a need to come to Jesus. He loves them with a never-ending love. In fact, Jesus said, *"Come to Me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* He also promised, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."* What we don't usually say to people who are hurting is that Jesus might not want to answer you because of who you are! You're not one of us. You believe something different.

The story seems to get even worse in verses 25-26, *"But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."*

Is Jesus calling this distraught mother a dog? Think about this mother coming to Jesus, hysterical, hopeless, pleading, and Jesus calls her a dog! Jesus is using this term to show the divide there was between two different groups of people. The Jews saw everyone else around them as worthless, just like a wandering dog! But He also said this to test her to see exactly what she believes!

Notice the end of the story. Verses 27-28, *"She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly."*

What is faith, anyway? How do we know when we've got it? And if we have it, is it like the faith of this woman? In the Bible, the word Faith equals Trust! Reliance or Confidence in someone or something, usually God. But that isn't the only way the word is used. There are actually three types of faith.

Knowing faith. It's faith's most basic level. Knowing faith is simply the mental agreement that something is true. When we say, *"I believe there is a God. I believe that Jesus is His Son. I believe Jesus suffered and died to save me. I believe the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians."* Those are all statements of knowing faith.

Knowing faith, isn't some blind leap into the darkness. Knowing faith is based on the testimony of an authority, our own experience, or our ability to consider all the evidence and work toward a reasonable conclusion.

This is what led Lee Strobel, a newspaper investigative reporter, to write *"The Case For Christ", "The Case For A Savior", "The Case For Christmas",* and others. You can't be saved without a knowing faith. There are certain statements about God and His work in Jesus Christ that you have to accept as true in order to be saved. Open to James 2. But simply acknowledging they're true isn't enough to save you. Knowing faith only makes you a potential Christian!

Showing Faith. Look at verses 14-18, *"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."*

Showing faith is the kind of faith that shows itself in how we live our lives for Jesus Christ. That's the difference between knowing faith and showing faith. It's one thing to say you believe certain facts to be true. It's another, to demonstrate what you believe with your behavior.

Many of us here today would sign a piece of paper that had a long list of statements about God, His Word, and His work in the world. But we aren't asked to sign a piece of paper. We're called to live a life! Does the way you live show your faith, or are you keeping it a secret?

If I were to write the sentence, *"God loves everyone regardless of the color of their skin, the slant of their eyes, their country of origin," would you sign it?* We believe that's true about God. But do we live it? We have a knowing faith, but do we have a showing faith when it comes to breaking down the sinful racial, and ethnic barriers that stand between others and us? That leads us to one last type.

Saving Faith. Something else is going on here. Jesus is drawing something out of this woman. She has a knowing faith. She believes that Jesus can heal her daughter. She has a showing faith. She's followed Him along the way and is asking Him to do what she knows He can.

But there is an even deeper faith in her. She has a saving faith. She's willing to say to Him, *"I can't save my daughter. Only You can. I'm putting aside all my pride, and all my past, that not only can You heal her, but You will. Just a crumb of Your power, Master. That's all it'll take."*

Those should be our words! No matter what you face, Jesus is there! He's there to take you from just knowing about Him to showing your faith by how you live, and then to believing He's come for you and saved you from your sin and yourself. He sees you as His special child. As you walk by faith, He provides exactly what you need forever!

Trust Him! Believe in Him! Live for Him!