

Matthew 15:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

Analysis

But he answered her not a word (οὐδὲ οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῇ λόγον, ho de ouk apekrithē autē logon)—Christ's silence toward the Canaanite woman's plea seems harsh, even cruel. Yet this wasn't rejection but testing, drawing out faith through resistance. The phrase 'not a word' emphasizes complete silence—no acknowledgment, no comfort, no immediate help.

Jesus's silence served multiple purposes: it tested the woman's persistence, revealed her genuine faith, instructed the disciples about grace transcending ethnic boundaries, and demonstrated that apparent divine silence doesn't equal divine indifference. Sometimes God's greatest blessings follow his most profound silences, refining desperation into unshakeable faith.

Historical Context

This Canaanite woman was a Gentile from the region of Tyre and Sidon (v. 21), ancient Phoenician cities with a history of paganism and opposition to Israel. The disciples' response—'Send her away; for she crieth after us'—reveals their Jewish prejudice. Jesus's ministry was primarily to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (v. 24) during his earthly ministry, with the full inclusion of Gentiles coming after Pentecost. Yet even during this 'Jewish phase,' Jesus showed that faith transcends ethnicity.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when God seems silent to your urgent prayers, and how can you persevere in faith like this Canaanite woman?
2. What does Christ's initial silence teach about the relationship between testing, persistence, and deepening faith?
3. Why would Jesus use this method of apparent rejection to ultimately reveal the greatness of Gentile faith to his Jewish disciples?

Interlinear Text

ο δὲ οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτήν, λόγον· καὶ προσελθόντες
G3588 **But** **not** **he answered** **her** **a word** **And** **came**
G1161 G3756 G611 G846 G3056 G2532 G4334

οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτήν, ἡρώτων αὐτήν, λέγοντες, Ἀπόλυσον
G3588 **disciples** **her** **and besought** **her** **saying** **Send**
G3101 G846 G2065 G846 G3004 G630

αὐτήν, ὅτι κράζει ὅπισθεν ἡμῶν
her for she crieth after us
G846 G3754 G2896 G3693 G2257

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 14:15 (Parallel theme): And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

