

Matthew 15:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

Analysis

It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs (οὐκ ἔστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ βαλεῖν τοῖς κυνάριοις, *ouk estin kalon labein ton arton tōn teknōn kai balein tois kynariois*)—Jesus used the diminutive *kynariois* (little dogs, house dogs), not the harsh term for wild scavengers. 'Children's bread' referred to blessings promised to Israel. This statement tested the woman's faith to its breaking point.

Christ's words, though seemingly harsh, actually invited a response of faith. He was testing her theology: Would she dispute Israel's privilege, or humbly acknowledge it while appealing to grace? The 'dogs' metaphor reflected common Jewish-Gentile distinctions but used the softer term for household pets. Jesus was creating an opportunity for her to demonstrate extraordinary faith that even Israel lacked.

Historical Context

First-century Jews commonly referred to Gentiles as 'dogs' to distinguish God's covenant people from pagans. However, Jesus softened this by using 'little dogs' (puppies, household pets) rather than street scavengers. In affluent homes, children ate at the table while household pets waited beneath for falling morsels. Jesus used this domestic scene to frame the salvation-historical order: blessings to Israel first, then to Gentiles through Israel's Messiah.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How did Jesus's 'harsh' words actually create the opportunity for the woman to demonstrate greater faith than anyone in Israel had shown?
2. What does the woman's refusal to be offended by Jesus's 'dog' reference teach about humility in approaching God's grace?
3. How does understanding the 'children first, then household pets' imagery help you appreciate God's redemptive timeline without seeing it as favoritism?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	ἀποκριθεὶς	εἶπεν	Οὐκ	ἔστιν	καλὸν	λαβεῖν	τὸν
G3588	But	he answered	and said	not	It is	meet	to take	G3588
	G1161	G611	G2036	G3756	G2076	G2570	G2983	
ἄρτον	τῶν	τέκνων	καὶ	βαλεῖν	τοῖς	κυναρίοις		
bread	G3588	the children's	and	to cast	G3588	it to dogs		
G740		G5043	G2532	G906		G2952		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 7:6 (Parallel theme): Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Ephesians 2:12 (Parallel theme): That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Philippians 3:2 (Parallel theme): Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Revelation 22:15 (Parallel theme): For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Romans 9:4 (Parallel theme): Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Galatians 2:15 (Parallel theme): We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,