

March 7, 2004 by Steve Brandon



Characteristics of Great Faith

Matthew 15:21-28

Great faith ...

1. Seizes the opportunity (verse 21)
2. Overcomes the difficulties (verse 22)
3. Asks for mercy (verse 22)
4. Requires little knowledge (verse 22)
5. Ignores any silence (verse 23)
6. Pleads with passion (verse 23)
7. Comes without promises (verse 24)
8. Begs for help (verse 25)
9. Refuses discouraging answers (verse 26)
10. Understands being unworthy (verse 27)
11. Delights in crumbs (verse 27)
12. Receives the answer (verse 28)

In our text this morning, Matthew tells the story of a Canaanite woman who comes to Jesus and pleads with Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter. It is an amazing story because of the contrast that it presents. We have seen the Pharisees and Scribes resist Jesus every step of the way despite the fact that they had witnessed great evidence of the majesty of Christ. They heard His teaching and resisted it. They saw His life and confronted Jesus on trivial matters of their tradition. They witnessed His miracles and ascribed His power to the working of Satan. These things they did because they wanted to kill Jesus. At one point, they "counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Matt. 12:14). We have seen the disciples, who have lived with Jesus for more than two years, demonstrate their lack of faith in Him. They heard His teaching and didn't quite understand (Matt. 15:16). They witnessed His miracles and still doubted (Mat. 8:26; 14:31). These things they did because of their little faith. But, this woman we will read about today is different than the disciples and the Pharisees. She hasn't seen much of the ministry of Jesus. She knows only a little about Him. Being a foreigner who is apart from the commonwealth of Israel, she has no claim to the Old Testament promises. She even receives some discouraging reactions to her prayers. But, she doesn't give up. She continues to plead with Jesus on behalf of her daughter. And Jesus says to her, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish" (Matt. 15:28).

If anyone had an opportunity to have great faith, you might think that it would have been the Pharisees. These people had known the Scriptures since their childhood days. These people attended religious services every week. These people had their entire lives revolving around religion. Yet, the Pharisees had *no faith*. If anyone had an opportunity to have great faith, you might think that it would have been the disciples of Jesus. They lived with Jesus. They walked with Jesus. They heard Jesus teach all around the clock. They witnessed His miracles. Yet, the disciples had *little faith* (Mat. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). Jesus said that this woman had *great faith*.

This woman's faith has much to teach us this morning of faith. I believe that this is Matthew's point. He wants us to look at the faith of this obscure, foreign woman whose name we do not even know. She comes to Jesus with no rights, privileges or guarantees, but with a heart of faith. I have entitled my sermon this morning, "Characteristics of Great Faith." Normally, my sermons have three or four points. Sometimes they only have two points. This morning, my message has twelve points. In my study this week, I found twelve characteristics of great faith in our text. Let's start this morning by reading the Scripture to set the whole story in our minds.

Matthew 15:21-28

And Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to Him and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us." But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

Great faith ...

1. Seizes the opportunity (verse 21)

Verse 21 says, that "Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon." Jesus has just left Galilee where He had been doing His miracles. It was in Galilee that His most recent confrontation with the Pharisees took place. Tyre and Sidon were north of Galilee. These cities were along the Mediterranean coast in what we now call Lebanon. Tyre was about 30 miles from Galilee. Sidon was another 20 miles north of Tyre. Since, they could travel about 20 miles per day back then, it took them a day or two to arrive there along the coast.

This is the only time that we know of where Jesus visits this particular vicinity. His ministry primarily was in Galilee with a few trips to Jerusalem. This woman seizes the one opportunity that she will ever have to see Jesus. She makes the effort to go and see Him.

How different that is than many of us who have grown up hearing of Jesus. We have attended so many church services, we can't even begin to number all of them. We have heard countless sermons extolling the marvelous wonders of Christ. But yet, when it comes down to it, we miss so many opportunities to step out in faith.

Perhaps you have had opportunities to speak up on behalf of Christ, but have missed your opportunity. Perhaps you have had opportunities to give to those who need it, but have missed your opportunity. Perhaps you have had opportunities to encourage other believers who really need your encouragement, but have missed your opportunity. This woman has great lessons to teach us. She had one opportunity to see Jesus and she took advantage of the opportunity. Don't think that it was easy for her to do this. It was difficult for her to do so. We read in verse 22, "And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region."

Great faith ...

2. Overcomes the difficulties (verse 22)

This woman faced several difficulties in coming to see Jesus. First of all, she was from region of Tyre and Sidon. What do we know of Tyre and Sidon? They were wicked and godless cities. Jesus even compares them to Sodom, which was destroyed by fire and brimstone for their open and blatant sin (Matt. 11:21-24). **She comes from a godless society.**

Second, she is identified as a Canaanite. The Canaanites were despised by the Jews. The only reason that she was alive was because of the disobedience of the Jews. When Joshua and the entire nation of Israel came into the land of Canaan, they were to totally wipe them out, but they failed to do so. [\[1\]](#) Their continued presence was a constant reminder to Israel of their disobedience. **She comes to the Jewish Messiah from a despised society.**

Thirdly, she is a woman. Women in the society of Jesus' day were deemed as second-class citizens. The prayer of the Pharisee used to be, "God, I thank You that I am not a woman." It was difficult for a woman to come to Jesus. Yet, she overcomes this difficulty. **She comes to Jesus from a prejudiced society.**

Great faith overcomes the difficulties. In fact, this is the great characteristic of faith. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). It is difficult to believe in the invisible. The fact that we don't see God now, but only hope for Him is a barrier that faith will remove. Great faith will overcome the barriers, whether they are sinful, social, financial, or personal. The heart that sees God will get beyond the temporary, worldly matters of life and will find its way to Jesus, regardless of the cost. It will get beyond a godless, despised, prejudiced society. It will get beyond a bad, godless home or upbringing. It will get beyond the sinful things that have harmed you in the past. Great faith will overcome the difficulties.

Great faith, ...

3. Asks for mercy (verse 22)

Notice the first request that this woman makes. She says, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." (Matt. 15:22)

There is no sense here that she is at all demanding anything of Jesus. She knows that Jesus owes her nothing. She simply appeals to the difficult situation that her daughter is in. Her daughter is demon-possessed. Her particular demon-possession is described as cruel. We don't know exactly what that implies, but certainly we know this daughter is in a terrible state of existence. Perhaps she was exceedingly violent as were the demon-possessed men of Gadara (Matt. 8:28). Perhaps she was blind and dumb, as were many of the demon-possessed people who were brought to Jesus by the multitudes (Matt. 12:22). Perhaps she inflicted harm on herself by falling often into fire and water, as the demon-possessed boy did (Matt. 17:15). Certainly, this daughter has caused heartache for this woman who cares for her child.

She begs for mercy. Though she knows that she doesn't deserve it, she asks for help for her daughter. As fallen creatures before God, this is the only way that we can ever approach Him: by His mercy. If we were to approach God based upon merit, we would all be in hell instantly. It is only sovereign mercy that gives you another breath. It is only sovereign mercy that withholds the eternal punishment that you now deserve. It is only by pleading for mercy at the foot of the cross of Christ that you will escape your deserved damnation.

This woman asked for mercy. By doing so, she acknowledged that she and her daughter were getting what they deserve, because of their rebellion against the Lord. But, she appeals to the character of Jesus to be kind and tenderhearted to her plight. And she tells us what she knows of Jesus in verse 22. She calls him, "O Lord, Son of David." which leads us to our next point.

Great faith, ...

4. Requires little knowledge (verse 22)

We don't know how much this woman actually knew of Jesus. My guess is that she didn't know very much. Tyre and Sidon were dark places with very little gospel light. Back in Matthew 11, Jesus was reproaching the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, where he had done most of His miracles. He was reproaching them because they didn't believe. In verse 21, Jesus said, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. 11:21). The implication of the curse upon Chorazin and Bethsaida is that Tyre and Sidon hadn't seen much of the power of Jesus. Jesus is saying that that as wicked as Tyre and Sidon are, had they seen what Chorazin and Bethsaida saw, then repentance and revival would sweep across them. But Tyre and Sidon had never seen these miracles. And so, the judgment upon Tyre and Sidon will not be nearly as great as upon Chorazin and Bethsaida. Jesus says, "Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the

day of judgment than for you" (Matt. 11:22). It's more tolerable because they had little exposure to the truth.

You can put two and two together and realize that this woman from Tyre and Sidon certainly didn't know much about Jesus. She knows that He is the "Lord" (verse 22) which is a title of sovereignty. She knows that He is the "Son of David" (verse 22) which is a title of Messiah. Perhaps this is the only thing that she knew of Jesus. But, what she does know is sufficient for her to believe. And so, I ask you, "How much knowledge do you have of Jesus?" Some of you are pretty new to the truth of the Bible, and it thrills my heart to speak with you and see you grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Others of you are very knowledgeable of Christ. You have studied the Bible for a long time. You know of the greatness of His sufficient sacrifice. Recently, I wrote an article in our newsletter *Food for the Flock* about the word "propitiation." It is a challenging article. I wrote it because I want your mind to think deeply of the cross of Christ and the wonders of what took place in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago. Some of you will struggle with understanding this article. That's fine. I want to stretch you. Others will find it smooth sailing, because you have been exposed to much truth before.

Regardless of whether you know much or know little, does your faith live up to your knowledge? If not, pray for God for faith to act upon what you know. Whether you would consider your knowledge of Christ to be little or large, I believe that you know more of Jesus than this Canaanite woman. Though she had little knowledge, she had great faith.

Great faith, ...

5. Ignores any silence (verse 23)

In verse 23, we find out that Jesus "did not answer her a word" (Matt. 15:23). Jesus basically ignores this woman. It's like she's not even there. I don't believe that Jesus had a hearing problem. I believe that Jesus was willfully ignoring her. Perhaps you have played games with people where you pretend that they are not there. We have done this from time to time with our children. It is quite humorous. This is essentially what Jesus did.

Biblical scholars have tried to answer the question of why Christ would do this very "un-Christlike thing." Why would He be so impolite? Some say that Jesus wanted to test the woman's faith (e.g. MacArthur). Some say the Jesus wanted to stir up her zeal (e.g. Calvin). Some say that Jesus wanted to draw attention to how He was going to actually answer the prayer of a Gentile (e.g. Boice). Any of these explanations are quite reasonable. But, we don't know why Jesus didn't answer this woman, because He never tells us why. However, *we do know* that it didn't discourage this woman from seeking mercy, which is the point of the story: she demonstrates great faith. When heaven was quiet, she continued her pleas.

The application for us is quite simple. Perhaps there are things in your life for which you are praying. Perhaps you have prayed for them, but God has been silent. Don't be discouraged. Rather, keep asking. Great faith will continue to ask when heaven is silent. It may well be that God is testing your faith. It may well be that God is using a delay in answering your prayer to stir up your zeal. It may well be that God wants to draw attention to the amazing way in which He will choose to answer your prayer.

This woman ignored the silence of Jesus and continued to make her requests. Verse 23 describes how relentless this woman was, "And His disciples came to Him and kept asking Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is shouting out after us'" (Matt. 15:23). This reveals another characteristic of great faith.

Great faith, ...

6. Pleads with passion (verse 23)

She wouldn't go away. She wouldn't stop asking. She kept on pleading. Those of you with children might know a bit of what this is like. There are times when my children will say, "Dad? ... Dad? ... Dad? ... Dad?" And the pleading doesn't stop until he or she gets an answer. Yesterday, we met for *Contenders for the Faith* at the Plowman's home. Since the meeting is only for boys and their fathers, the girls were sent downstairs. They watched the movie *Finding Nemo*. In that movie, there are some seagulls together in a big group. Whenever there is something for them to eat, each of them begin saying, "mine, mine, mine" with a seagull-type squawk. It was several months ago, we went as a family to see this movie. We found these seagulls to be so humorous that when our children begin asking for something again and again, we say, "Dad? ... Dad? ... Dad? ... Dad?" in a such a way as to sound like these seagulls. This is a bit like what this woman was doing. But, rather than simply remain as monotone, like the seagulls, she was increasing the volume of her requests. We are told that she was "shouting out after" the disciples. With ever-increasing volume she said, ...

Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!
Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!!!
Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!!!!
Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!!!!

Eventually, she reached a point where the disciples were quite annoyed with her. I'm not sure of how nicely they treated her. It seems as if they came to Jesus and requested that He dismiss her.

What stirred her on so much? I believe that it was the passion of her heart. Her daughter had very real problems. None of the doctors could help her. None of the experts could help her. None of the religious leaders could help her. So, she turned to One who she knew could help her. She was desperate. She wanted help. She pursued help passionately.

Great faith will be passionate. It may not be passionate in terms of volume like it was here. But, it will be passionate in terms of pursuit. There may be issues of faith in your life that you have backed away from. Perhaps your faith has not been enough to arouse your zeal to continue to press on. This woman didn't back down. And the disciples were getting annoyed with her. They told Jesus to "send her away." From the

answer that Jesus gave, they were probably requesting that He heal her daughter and send her on her way, so that she would no longer be a bother to them.

Great faith, ...

7. Comes without promises (verse 24)

Jesus "answered and said, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (Matt. 15:24). In other words, Jesus said, "No. I'm not going to grant her request. I wasn't sent to the Canaanites. I was sent to Israel. She doesn't qualify." What an answer! Jesus had been healing all who came to Him (see Matt. 9:35; 12:15; 14:35). And this woman, who happened to be a Canaanite, was turned down on the basis of her nationality. She was turned down because she wasn't Jewish. It is difficult for us to comprehend why Jesus responds this way.

Today, we are so ingrained with the notion of equality that we think that everybody has a right to healthcare. But, God's healthcare system included only those of Israel. Ephesians 2:12 gives us a great understanding of what was taking place. Before the Messiah came, Gentiles (like you and me), were separate from Messiah. We had no promises of the Messiah coming to us. We were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel. We weren't part of God's chosen nation. We were strangers to the covenants of promise. God made the covenants with Israel, not with any of the surrounding nations. We had no hope. God had blessed Israel, but had made no promises or guarantees to the other nations. We were without God in the world. Israel had God. The Gentiles were far off. Such was the situation of this woman. She was separate from Messiah. She was excluded from the commonwealth of Israel. She was a stranger to the covenants of promise. She had no hope. She was without God in the world. But, even without promises, she came to Jesus.

Times have changed, praise the Lord. Jesus has come and brought salvation to every nation. There will be a day when Christ is praised, "Worthy are You to take the book, and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). The promises to Israel have been expanded to include the Gentiles. As Paul said, "In Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Last Sunday we sang a hymn, "Standing on the Promises."

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God, I shall prevail.
Standing, standing, standing on the promises of God, my Savior;
Standing, standing, I'm standing on the promises of God.

The promise is that Christ will fully redeem those who trust in Him. But realize that this woman couldn't sing this song. She had no promises. She was an excluded Canaanite. In her day, the promises of salvation didn't extend to her. But she still came to Jesus in faith.

What about you? You have promises. Do you come to Jesus based upon the marvelous promises that have been given to you? Listen to a few of the promises that believers in Christ possess:

"Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you." (Matt. 7:7)

"Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:13-14)

"If you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name." (John 16:23)

"And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to his will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

These are the types of promises that come to the believer in Christ. You have promises. Do you ask? Great faith will ask, even if there are no promises. Even little faith ought to ask when there are great promises.

Great faith, ...

8. Begs for help (verse 25)

In verse 25 we read that "she came and bowed down before Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!'" (Matt. 15:25). Some translations say that she "worshipped" Jesus. The idea in the word is that she was on her face, pleading and begging for the help of Jesus. Mark records that she "fell at His feet" (Mark 7:25). I believe that she understood how she was coming to Jesus without promises. She dropped the appeal to Jesus as "Son of David," which was a Jewish, messianic title. She simply came as a beggar. This is how great faith acts.

Great faith will get down on the ground in utter humility and utter dependence. This is how Jesus prayed, "In the days of his flesh, he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:7). Have you known this? Have you ever begged God with all of your being not just your words. Have you ever been on your face crying out to Him for "help!" Great faith will express itself in words and in body position before the Lord.

Great faith, ...

9. Refuses discouraging answers (verse 26)

Once again, Jesus gives a yet another discouraging answer. At first He was silent. Then, He said that He was sent only to Israel. Now, He says, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." (Matt. 15:26).

In figurative terms, he compares this woman a dog. Imagine a household with children and with little pet dogs running around. Mom is in the kitchen cooking up a nice meal with home-made bread. It comes time to eat. And the food is served up to the dogs, rather than to the children. I know that dogs are cute. I know that dogs are loved. But, you serve the nice bread to the children. And you serve plain old Alpo to the dogs. Jesus answer was like saying "If I heal you, it would be like giving the good bread to the dogs." Notice that this doesn't stop her.

Charles Spurgeon pointed out that you can't close the mouth of faith. The deaf ear of Christ won't close the mouth of faith. The rude conduct of the disciples won't close the mouth of faith. The exclusive mission of the Messiah won't close the mouth of faith. And the insult of unworthiness won't close the mouth of faith. [\[2\]](#)

When you are discouraged, do you still keep praying? Are you like the widow that that comes to the judge, bothers him and bothers him until He helps her? If God were to look at your prayers, would He say, "I don't think that he really wants what he is praying for. Look at how cold and lifeless his prayers are. Look at how quickly he gives up." J. C. Ryle wrote, "Cold prayers are a sacrifice without fire." [\[3\]](#)

Great faith refuses discouraging answers. In verse 27, we see how this woman responds, "Yes Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matt.15:27).

Great faith, ...

10. Understands being unworthy (verse 27)

This observation comes from the first two words of this woman's response. She says, "Yes, Lord." Here, she acknowledges her unworthy position as a Canaanite. She admits that it is very true. She doesn't even try to argue against it. She said, "Yes, Lord, I am unworthy. Yes, Lord, I am a Canaanite. Yes, Lord, I don't deserve any of your blessings. Yes, Lord, I am apart from the commonwealth of Israel. Yes, Lord, I am a stranger to the covenants of promise. Yes, Lord, I have no ground of hope. Yes, Lord, I understand that I am an unworthy. I'm not coming because you owe me anything. I am a beggar. Would you please help me by healing my daughter?"

We are unworthy as well. There is nothing in us that deserves coming into God's presence. Yet, in Christ, all is changed. Though we are unworthy, Christ is worthy. We can come to God in the name of Jesus Christ. Indeed, we are told to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). We can come boldly because of Christ, who is worthy.

Do you realize the worthiness of Christ? Do you realize your own unworthiness? This woman sure did. Let's look more carefully at her request in verse 27, "Yes, Lord [I am unworthy. I am a dog]; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." (Matt. 15:27).

Great faith, ...

11. Delights in crumbs (verse 27)

Some of you have pet dogs in your home and you have seen this curious thing take place. You are sitting around the table eating dinner, and the dog is waiting under the table for anything to fall from the table. Dog's aren't stupid. They know that human food tastes a lot better than the Alpo that they have been receiving. Amazingly, they also know which child is the youngest (where the scraps will fall most often). But, I have never seen a dog complain that it is only getting the crumbs. They will take anything that they will get. They will be happy with it.

When you come to God as an unworthy sinner, you will be content with even the littlest of blessings, because you know that you don't deserve any of them. Great faith is content with a little. But, do you have any idea of the type of blessings that you receive in Christ Jesus? God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Every spiritual blessing? Is there a blessing to be given? It has been given. Is there forgiveness to be granted? It has been granted. Is there redemption to be purchased? Is has been purchased. Is there love to be extended? It has been extended. Is there adoption to take place? It has been taken place. Is there spiritual power to be given? It has been given. Is there righteousness to be imputed? It has been imputed. Is there holiness to be achieved? It has been achieved. Is there wisdom to be made known? It has been made known. Is there something to inherit? You already have the pledge.

Great faith is satisfied with little blessing. But we, who believe in Christ, have been blessed abundantly -- far beyond what you even know. Paul sensed this when he prayed for those in Ephesus to know "the hope of His calling, ... the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ... and the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:18-19). If we have been blessed with such great blessing, what type of faith ought we to have?

Great faith, ...

12. Receives the answer (verse 28)

This comes in verse 28, "Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed at once" (Matt. 15:28).

Oh, these were sweet words to her ears! She had pursued Jesus relentlessly. She hadn't given up. And Jesus granted her request. Mark tells us that her daughter was sick at home. When Jesus granted this request, the daughter was instantly healed. The demon that had indwelt her was gone. The problems that she had encountered, were removed. No more fits. No more seizures. No more personality changes. Immediately she was her old self before the demon tormented her. Why? Because of the great faith of this woman.

If you would return and review each of these 12 characteristics of great faith, you will find testimony to her faith. In other words, her faith was demonstrated in her actions. Faith is always demonstrated. In Hebrews 11, we learn that by faith, Abel offered a better sacrifice. By faith

Noah prepared an ark. By faith Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith Moses chose ill-treatment with the people of God. By faith Moses left Egypt. By faith Rahab welcomed the spies. By faith they conquered kingdoms. By faith they shut the mouths of lions. By faith they quenched the power of fire. By faith, the Canaanite woman pleaded with Jesus for her daughter.

What things in your life demonstrate your faith in Christ? Are there things in your life that you can point to that gives testimony to your faith? Or, is your faith in words only? Is your faith in your mind only? James tells us that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). If you can look at your life and see no demonstration of your faith in your actions. It very well could be that your faith is dead.

As I bring my message to a close this morning, it has to hit you that this woman was a Gentile, far away from the promises of Israel, but she believed. And those close by, like the Pharisees, who should have known, didn't believe. What a contrast. *This ought to come as a great warning to you.* Don't think that because you attend Rock Valley Bible Church, that you have it made. Don't think that your knowledge of the Bible is your ticket to heaven. The Pharisees knew the Bible, and had hearts of stone. This woman knew but a little, and had a heart that was on fire with faith. *This might come as great hope to you.* Perhaps you might be somewhat new to this whole Bible thing. Perhaps you might be intimidated with what others know about the Bible. But, listen, the blessings come when you believe what you know. Perhaps all that you know is that you are a sinner and that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is all you need. Know that your faith can be great. Believe what you know.

Some of us heard this week of a pastor on the east coast, whose son was 17 years old. This young man had a father who was a pastor. His grandfather was a pastor. His home was loving. His parents cared greatly for him. He was home-schooled. He was protected from the evil influence of the world. He was massively involved at church. He'd been on several mission trips and had even spoke of being a missionary himself. He showed great promise with life. Everything that we know of his life was positive. But this past week, his life ended. He committed suicide. I have no idea what happened. I don't even know the family. But I know that this boy was close to the promises of God, having every opportunity. And I also know something was dreadfully wrong. Be warned! Closeness to the promises of God isn't a guarantee. We see this woman far from the promises of God being received by faith. We see the Pharisees close to the promises but dead in their sins for their lack of faith.

Parents, children, people of Rock Valley Bible Church: may Jesus look upon us and say, "Your faith is great!"

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 7, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] For further reading, see Judges 1 which lists all of the territories that Israel failed to conquer.

[2] See Charles Spurgeon's sermon, *The Little Dogs*, August 6, 1876, #1309.

[3] J. C. Ryle, "A Call to Prayer."