



# THE FOREST HILL NEWS

Volume 45

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## Forest Hill

### Church of Christ

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#### Elders:

Danny Braddock Jr.  
Anthony D. Callahan  
Warren Davenport  
Gregory D. Mangrum  
Harold D. Mangrum  
Keith B. McAlister  
Eddie F. Ray III

#### Ministers:

Barry M. Grider,  
Pulpit Evangelist  
Matthew Jones,  
Personal Evangelist  
Garrett Olney, Youth  
Hatton Allen, Youth

#### Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.  
Morning Worship.... 10:30 A.M.  
Afternoon Worship.... 1:30 P.M.

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study ..... 7:00 P.M.

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## Jesus, The Syrophoenician Woman, and Little Dogs

Kyle Butt, M.Div.

Any honest student of the Bible must admit certain biblical episodes seem to be problematic when encountered for the first time. Upon further investigation, however, the apparent difficulties in the text vanish and the meanings become increasingly clear. One episode in the life of Jesus that historically has been misunderstood by some Bible believers and misrepresented by the skeptic is Jesus' encounter with the Syrophoenician woman. Mark records the episode as follows:

For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him [Jesus—KB], and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed (7:25-30; see also Matthew 15:21-28).

Based on a cursory reading of the text, one may be startled that Jesus referred to this Gentile woman as a "little dog."

Jesus' statement in this context certainly has not escaped the notice of the skeptical community. The prolific infidel Steve Wells documented hundreds of cases of alleged intolerance in the biblical text. Jesus' encounter with the Syrophoenician woman is number 421 on his list. Of the episode, Wells wrote: "Jesus initially refuses to cast out a devil from a Syrophoenician woman's daughter, calling the woman a 'dog'. After much pleading, he finally agrees to cast out the devil" (2006).

Even many religious writers and speakers view Jesus' statements to the woman as unkind, intolerant, racially slurred, and offensive. Dean Breidenthal, in a sermon posted under the auspices of the Princeton University Office of Religious Life, said concerning Jesus' comment: "I suspect we would not be so bothered by Jesus' **unkind** words to the Syrophoenician woman if they were not directed against the Gentile community. Those of us who are Gentile Christians have less trouble with Jesus' invectives when they are directed against the Jewish leadership of his day" (2003, emp. added). Please do not miss the implication of Breidenthal's

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comment. If the statement made by Jesus actually could be construed as unkind, then Jesus would be guilty of violating one of the primary characteristics of love, since love “suffers long and is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4), which would cast doubt on His deity. Is it true that Jesus exhibited an unkind attitude in His treatment of the Syrophoenician woman?

### **TO THE JEWS FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEKS**

In order for one to understand Jesus’ statement, he or she must recognize the primary purpose of the comment. Jesus was passing through the land of the Gentiles (Greeks) and was approached by a woman who was not a Jew. While Jesus’ message would eventually reach the Gentile world, it is evident from the Scriptures that the Jewish nation would be the initial recipient of that message. In his account of Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophoenician woman, Matthew recorded that Jesus said: “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24). When Jesus sent the twelve apostles on the “limited commission,” He told them: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5-6).

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He informed the apostles: “[A]nd you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The sequence of places where the apostles would witness manifests the order in which the Gospel would be preached (i.e., the Jews first and then the Gentiles). In addition, the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the church at Rome, stated: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (1:16). Jesus’ statement to the Syrophoenician woman indicated that the Jewish nation was Jesus’ primary target for evangelism during His earthly ministry.

### **HOW FAR CAN AN ANIMAL ILLUSTRATION BE TAKEN?**

To our 21st-century ears, the idea that Jesus would refer to the Gentiles as “little dogs” has the potential to sound belittling and unkind. When we consider how we often use animal terms in illustrative or idiomatic ways, however, Jesus’ comments are much more benign. For instance, suppose a particular lawyer exhibits unyielding tenacity. We might say he is a “bulldog” when he deals with the evidence. Or we might say that a person is “as cute as a puppy” or has

“puppy dog eyes.” If someone has a lucky day, we might say something like “every dog has its day.” Or if an adult refuses to learn to use new technology, we might say that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” In addition, one might say that a person “works like a dog,” is the “top dog” at the office, or is “dog tired.” Obviously, to call someone “top dog” would convey no derogatory connotation.

For Jesus’ statement to be construed as unkind or wrong in some way, a person would be forced to prove that the illustration or idiom He used to refer to the Gentiles as “little dogs” must be taken in a derogatory fashion. Such cannot be proved. In fact, the term Jesus used for “little dogs” could easily be taken in an illustrative way without any type of unkind insinuation. In his commentary on Mark, renowned commentator R.C.H. Lenski translated the Greek term used by Jesus (*kunaria*) as “little pet dogs.” Lenski further noted concerning Jesus’ statement: “In the Orient dogs have no owners but run wild and serve as scavengers for all garbage and offal.... It is an entirely different conception when Jesus speaks of ‘little pet dogs’ in referring to the Gentiles. These have owners who keep them even in the house and feed them by throwing them bits from the table” (1961, p. 304). Lenski goes on to write concerning Jesus’ statement: “All that Jesus does is to ask the disciples and the woman to accept the divine plan that Jesus must work out his mission among the Jews.... Any share of Gentile individuals in any of these blessings can only be incidental during Jesus’ ministry in Israel” (pp. 304-305). In regard to the non-derogatory nature of Jesus’ comment to the Gentile woman, Allen Black wrote: “The form of his statement is proverbial. And the basis of the proverb is not an antipathy for Gentiles, but the necessary Jewish focus of Jesus’ earthly ministry” (1995, p. 137).

So before people “dog” Jesus for the way He used an animal illustration, they might need to reconsider that “their bark is much worse than their bite” when it comes to insinuating that Jesus was wrong. It seems that they are simply “barking up the wrong tree” by attempting to call Jesus’ character into question. They need to “call off the dogs” on this one and “let sleeping dogs lie.”

### **REFERENCES**

- Black, Allen (1995), *The Book of Mark* (Joplin, MO: College Press).
- Breidenthal, Dean (2003), “The Children’s Bread,” [On-line], URL: [http://web.princeton.edu/sites/chapel/Sermon%20Files/2003\\_sermons/090703.htm](http://web.princeton.edu/sites/chapel/Sermon%20Files/2003_sermons/090703.htm).
- Lenski, R.C.H. (1961), *The Interpretation of Mark’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg).
- Wells, Steve (2006), *Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*, [On-line], URL: <http://www.Skepticsannotatedbible.com..>

**PRESIDE:** Cedric Huff  
**ASSIST:** Cole Bennett  
 Daniel Manning  
 Jonathan Rickles

Chris Weight  
 Ian Huff  
 Edison Ray  
 Sam Rickles

**A.M. OPENING:** Jason White  
**A.M. CLOSING:** Phil Houston  
**P.M. OPENING:** Dan Dawson  
**P.M. CLOSING:** Nick Aubrey

If you are unable to lead prayer or serve at the Lord's table, please contact Cedric Huff or Paul Connell.

### RECORD, WEEK of May 20, 2018

BIBLE STUDY:	225
A.M. WORSHIP:	320
P.M. WORSHIP:	200
CONTRIBUTON:	\$15,503.00

### OUR SICK

**ILL AT HOME** Cecil Sowell

**J.D. Crowe**, will have outpatient surgery Thursday.

**Jack Fogleman**, great-grandson of Sue Glass, recovering from surgery to remove tumor, LeBonheur Children's Hospital.

**Kabita Gootam**, mother of Ronnie Gootam, will have spinal surgery May 31.

**Carol Stover**, sister of Helen Sharp, recovering from back

### HOMEBOUND

Bessie Berry	Anita Hopper
Virginia Ditto	Albert & Ruth House
Hazel Eskew	Clarine Justice
Tommy & Nell Herndon	Jerry & Betty Robbins
Doris Jean Cole	Velton & Dorothy Trimm

surgery, Baptist Collierville.

**OUR SYMPATHY IS EXTENDED TO** Cindy Dawson and family in the passing of her father, Gerry Sims. Visitation will be Wednesday from 5-7 p.m. Funeral service will be Thursday at 2 p.m. Both will be at Family Funeral Care.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Evan Manning and Mallory McAlister who were wed Saturday, May 19 in Holly Springs, MS.

Taylor Tribble who has now moved to Statesville, NC where she will be wed to Jonah Wood Saturday, June 2.

**PLACING MEMBERSHIP:** Kirk and Lauren Teachout. They have a son, Parker.

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR BOX!**

### HEARTS AND HANDS

**TEAM "B" (WARREN DAVENPORT)** will receive assignment cards May 27.

**TEAM "C" (DANNY BRADDOCK) and TEAM "D" (RANDY ELLIOTT)** will receive assignment cards June 3.

**TEAM "E" (JIM WOODY)** will meet Saturday, June 9 at 12:30 p.m. at the home of Harold and Carol Mangrum for a cookout. See Edwyna for what to bring. RSVP to (901)484-1569, (901)484-1568, or email Edwyna at edwinner@comcast.net.

### EVENTS

**LADIES AND MEN'S COMBINED CLASSES** Tuesdays at 10:00.

**ANNUAL STANTON SINGING** Friday, May 25, 7-9 p.m. Stanton Church of Christ, hosted by Barry and Cason Grider.

**KIRBY PINES** Retirement Community worship service each fourth Sunday 8:00-8:45 a.m., conducted by Forest Hill. Our next service will be Sunday, May 27.

**2018 VBS JUNE 4-6.** Theme: Deep Divin' (Exploring Our Relationship With God).

**YOUTH MISSION TRIP** June 10-16, Chattanooga, TN.

**2018 SUMMER SERIES** Wednesdays, June 20-August 8. Theme: Add to Your Faith...(A Study of the Christian Graces). Various speakers.

Dear ladies,

Thank you for your hugs, smiles, love and constant encouragement. I appreciate the gift card and will think of you each time I get to "treat" myself to a tasty cup of coffee!

A special thanks to sister Hayes for the beautiful fresh flowers that decorated our luncheon last week.

Your desire to be in class and study God's word is so uplifting. I love each one of you!

Thank you again for all you mean to me! Celicia

*Last week's solution:*

*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. John 10:16*

### CORNERSTONE

**Scryptogram:** Each letter in the passage is replaced with another.

Solve the code and discover the verse(s). Solution on last page.

PY JY BYG, FI JKEJ UEF, JYREF YX JZYXXYG GI GDSS PY DBJY UWLK E LDJF, EBR LYBJDBWI JKIXI E FIEX, EBR QWF EBR UISS, EBR PIJ PEDB

GKIXIEU FI CBYG BYJ GKEJ UKESS QI YB JKI ZYXXYG. OYX GKEJ DU FYWX SDOP? DJ DU IHIB E HEMYX, JKEJ EMMIEXIJK OYX E SDJJSI JDZI, EBR JKIB HEBDUKIJK EGEF. OYX JKEJ FI YWPKJ JY UEF, DO JKI SYXR GDSS, GI UKESS SDHI, EBR RY JKDU, YX JKEJ.

P=G Solution next week. H=V

## Thoughtfulness

On Sunday morning, May 13, I received the news that a beloved preacher friend, Harold Jones, had passed away suddenly at age 82. Just a year earlier, his beloved wife, BJ, departed this life suddenly also. Brother Jones was the minister of the University Church in Tuscaloosa where I worshipped while enrolled at the University of Alabama during the mid 1980's. This couple "adopted" me as one of their own during that time and often had me in their home to enjoy a wonderful meal. While I have not been able to be as close to them as I would have preferred since that time, I still occasionally would hear from Harold through Facebook and he would always encourage my preaching ministry. In fact, just a few weeks before he passed he sent a message to me while I was engaged in a gospel meeting in Murfreesboro, saying he wished he could be present to hear me preach but wished me well. The best word I perhaps could use to describe brother Harold Jones is thoughtfulness. I have been so encouraged throughout my life by thoughtful people. After I posted on Facebook about brother Harold's passing, I recall a response from sister Marie Sanders, whose husband formerly served as an elder at University. Likewise, a memory came back to me concerning sister Sanders. I recall waiting in the lobby of the University church one Lord's day for someone who would be taking me home as a guest for a meal. Sister Sanders, not sure whether I had a place to go, came over and gently touched my arm and asked me if anyone had invited me to lunch. That is thoughtfulness. That is kindness. I told her through Facebook I had never forgotten that gesture.

Our Lord Jesus was always thoughtful. Through the lives of others we, also, can see the thoughtfulness of Christ. I want to be more like Him. William Arthur Ward was right when he said, "Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you."

Barry

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