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A Sermon on the Doctrine of Election ~~on~~-from A Feminist Perspective

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### 3. A Sermon on the Doctrine of Election on Feminist Perspectives to the Evangelical Church in South Africa (Matthew 15: 21-28 and Mark 7: 24-30)

#### 4. General Introduction

The doctrine of Election proposes that they are few people who are chosen by God to inherit the Kingdom of God, and those who are not chosen are to be condemned to hell. On the feminist perspective, this doctrine is challenged by women, and is been reinterpreted in the feminist point of view, so that it should be a life giving for women as Rakoczy writes Feminist theology is also a critique of past and present theology and praxis, challenging presuppositions, beliefs, dogmas, and the whole of Christian life from the perspective of women's dignity" (2004: 4). Therefore in this sermon I will give the background of the texts selected on its feminist hermeneutical framework. I will also provide the summary of the context in which the sermon will be preached, and three key feminist perspectives on theological doctrine.

Comment [SN1]: ?

Comment [SN2]: spelling

Comment [SN3]: ?

Comment [SN4]: One sentence

### 5. The Doctrine of Election as an inclusive Doctrine through Faith? (Matthew 15: 21-28 and Mark 7: 24-30)

#### 2: 1. Introduction

In these two scriptures, there are three points we need to look at, these points are: Disciples hierarchical attitude, Jesus' doctrine of election and woman's faith. And the hermeneutic framework will be that of Table principle, whereby God reaches out to include all those whom society and religion exclude them. The method I am using is the literary method or a narrative method. "This focus on the text also contributes to the development of critical consciousness because it is the relationships within the text and not only the readers' interest shape the meaning of the text"(West 1993: 40). So the text's meaning is essential in this literary method apart from my own meaning I impose on the text.

Comment [SN5]: The table principle is not a hermeneutical framework!

## 2: 2. Historical background

In all accounts of Mark and Matthew's gospel, the main characters of the narrative are Jesus, who comes to this Gentile region, with segregating response to the woman and the Disciples who are patriarchal motivated on how they relate to women "And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us" (Matt 15: 23b). The Canaanite woman "She was a Gentile, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel; probably one of the posterity of those accursed nations that were devoted by that word, Cursed be Canaan." (Henry 2000: 22). So the relationships with Jews was not that good and not close for the Canaanite people were pagan and in her case this woman, she was a woman in front of Jews' men shouting for help. She was submissive, persuasive, and persistent so that Jesus could help heal her daughter.

Comment [SN6]: But you said you were using a literary or narrative method

Comment [SN7]: ? What version of the bible are you using?

Comment [SN8]:

Comment [SN9]: ??

## 2: 3. The Context of the audience

The audience I will be preaching this sermon are the ones who are opposing the women's ministry. They believe God did purposely that He or she created woman as just helpers. In addition all Jesus' disciples were men. In that sense women are not capable to be ordained ministers and their roles are to take care of the household. So in my sermon I will try to convince them that God the Holy Spirit does use anyone at any field and for any purpose for God's glory. Bearing in mind that feminist theology is not against the Bible, but against the patriarchy favouritism it proposes, that some are privileged and other are not, in this case women are the ones who are unprivileged the way the Bible is interpreted, as Letty and Clarkson writes "Feminists have not developed an extended critique or transformation of predestination, but they clearly want to question this hierarchical model of privilege that sets some persons outside of God's hospitality"(1996: 226).. In addition who decides that women are lesser than men to be able to participate and benefit all that the Kingdom of God comes with to all human beings? So my task is to share these insights from God's word as well as from some God's minister who have written something on this topic of Doctrine of Election.

Comment [SN10]: Interesting. You have He in capital letters but she in small? ☺

Comment [SN11]: ?

Comment [SN12]: Don't use first names in referencing

Comment [SN13]: Good quotation

Comment [SN14]: ???

### 2: 3. The “Elected ones”

“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”. Today we are gathered here, not because we are worthy before God, but because of His Grace and mercy in each one of us. For that reason I will directly start by raising the point that when Jesus came to this Gentile region, as we have read, whether he intended to rest or not, but the fact that his presence was recognized in the community, people used to come with all their sicknesses or diseases to him to be healed. And in this case we see this woman, a pagan woman, her nationality as a Canaanite woman coming begging Jesus to heal her daughter who was possessed by evil spirits. As according to Mark, “The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation” (7: 26a)

**Comment [SN15]:** Unclear what is meant here

The stranger thing Jesus did was that he kept quiet; he did not answer her cry for help. “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil” (Matt 15: 22). This is according to Matthew’s record, which is believed to be, the Gospel of Mark is his source, while Mark in his record does not reflect on this aspect as a kind of response Jesus showed. The question we can ask ourselves is that, is the same Jesus we know who always shows kindness to people in need? And more especially to those who are in need, women and marginalized people in the society. “It was a wonder that she did not fly off in a fret, and say, “Is this he that is so famed for clemency and tenderness? Have so many been heard and answered by him, as they talk, and must I be the first rejected suitor? Why so distant to me, if it be true that he hath stooped to so many?”(Henry 2000: 23).

**Comment [SN16]:** ?

**Comment [SN17]:** What version of the bible are you using?!

**Comment [SN18]:** Are you sure of this reference? The language in the quote is ancient.

Jesus was not rude but testing her faith, but still he knew she had faith in him as Henry writes “Christ treated her thus, to try her; he knows what is in the heart, knew the strength of her faith, and how well able she was, by his grace, to break through such

discouragements; he therefore met her with them, that the trial of her faith might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory” (2000:22). So as much as we pray and cry to the Lord, this does not mean that he does not hear us, but he will definitely respond if we continue to trust and call up on the name of Jesus.

But before Jesus’ response to the cry of this Canaanite woman, the disciples were there to tell Jesus to send her away because for them she was disturbing them and Jesus too. “She cries after us, and is troublesome to us, and shames us.” Continued importunity may be uneasy to men, even to good men; but Christ loves to be cried after” (Henry 2000: 25). The interesting point here is that this woman was pushing her request no matter what men say or people say, because all she wanted was that her daughter to be healed and Jesus was the only one who was able to do that. This does reflect in our lives that when we are in need of God’s help, you find there are a lot of obstacles on the way, but through this woman’s experience, we need to be persistence in our prayers. Gender issue is the case here, that these men (disciples) with their patriarchal tendencies see that she is not worth of even coming in their midst. Therefore that is why today women are quite right to critique and challenge this attitude, first the woman was not coming to them, but she coming to Jesus, God the healer, in whom she had her total hope and trust. Thus men should watch out that they are not stumbling blocks to women to get their right gifts from God, because as John writes that all who had received him, he gave them the right to be children of God, and so the right to be healed of her daughter was her right, even though she was a woman. So all men will be different from the disciples only if they will reject and discourage this hierarchical attitude among themselves and towards women in church as well as in society as a whole. As Hargreavens writes that “certainly Jesus had no racial prejudice; He mixed with Gentile (e.g. Luke 7: 1-10; John 4: 46-54). Therefore not only that Jesus accepted women but even Gentile women from all walks of life. So this was and is today that as Jesus’ disciples we are obliged to accept all people regardless gender, racial, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

**Comment [SN19]:** Christ loves to be cried after?! What kind of theology is that? Henry is NOT an academic source clearly

**Comment [SN20]:** Will your audience understand this?

**Comment [SN21]:** Reference

**Comment [SN22]:** Reference?

## 2: 4. Jesus' Doctrine of Election

Then Jesus came to her rescue in style, one may argue that he used these words to show where salvation needed to start first, to those who are elected and then second to reach others around the world as he said to the Samaritan woman "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews"(John 4: 22). So in this case he answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15: 24). This meant his mission was for Jews, people who were elected by God to be his or her people. "Not that all the Jews were saved, nor that it was not possible but that many of the Gentiles and Samaritans might be saved, for in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him"(Henry 2000: 22). Letty and Clarkson emphasize that "In Christ God has created and chosen all humankind and taken the part of those who are elected and those who were supposedly rejected" (1996: 226). So this doctrine of election was used to show this reality that some were elected as a nation and now at our contemporary time, it is by faith and it was a serious point or argument to discourage this woman from asking Jesus' help. Because she was a Gentile, a pagan and again a woman, so it was enough not to be accepted. But Tasker also argues that this statement was for the disciples' advantage as well, because they were partners of the mission of Jesus Christ to the Jews as well as later to the Gentile, they needed to be corrected as far as their attitudes were concerned about Gentiles, that were not accepted to become God's people "He seems to be indirectly reproving them for their lack of sympathy with the need of the Gentile world" (1969: 154). Disciples were also challenged that anyone with faith in Jesus is acceptable before God. The issue here is that the woman had strong faith in Jesus regardless the doctrine of election's concerns, which should be a challenge to us that doctrines do not bring salvation or hinder salvation from God all the privileges. So one must not lose faith because the doctrine formulated does not approve what he or she is facing physically or spiritually, this woman managed to go beyond this particular teaching.

Despite of what Jesus told her that he had nothing to do with Gentiles; the woman took courage to kneel and worship him and still ask Jesus to help her. And if like the first response was not enough to shake her faith, Jesus responded with a mockery that she was a dog and Jews were children who are supposed to be getting help from him, "It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs"(Matt 15: 26). But surprising enough she

**Comment [SN23]:** It seems that you are agreeing with Henry that it is the Jews who are chosen> if the Jews are the ones who are chosen, then it can be that the men too are the ones who are chosen right? How does this tie in with the vision of feminist theology.

**Comment [SN24]:** You cannot use first names in referencing! At Honours level you should know this.

**Comment [SN25]:** Completely unclear

**Comment [SN26]:** ??

**Comment [SN27]:** Where was the worship?

took advantage of that mockery to get what she wanted, by first accepting that she was dog as Jews preferred, but she challenged Jesus that even dogs do get the crumbs under the table of their masters. Therefore instead of this woman feeling that she is insulted by the words Jesus spoke to her, she did not care as long as her daughter was going to be healed, and so one may argue that even Jesus did not expect her to be discouraged. "That Jesus was using a well-known proverb as a sort of joke. He was not insulting her. In passages such as 2: 15-17 we see that Jesus treated outsiders with courtesy" (Hargreavens 1995: 134). So even in this case one may argue that Jesus was not intending to despise this woman, but to get her excellent and strong faith in him. Therefore this is good news to all Gentiles and more especially to this woman who proved that through faith in Jesus, the election has no boundary, this also means women today are not supposed to be discriminated from any opportunity and privileges found in God's Kingdom, here on Earth and in Heavens as well.

"Feminists question the hierarchical model of election and replaces the concept of "chosenness" with the concept of "distinctness" thus, honouring the unique gifts each part of creation has to offer the whole community of God" (Letty and Clarkson 1996: 18). So it all about diversity which matters before God and in the Church, no one is better than the other.

**Comment [SN28]:** This is a good quote but you need to check that it is accurately transcribed. There is little excuse for not copying a quote accurately

## 2: 5. Canaanite Woman's Faith

It is so encouraging to find that a gentile, a woman and a pagan has an access to God's gifts through faith in Jesus Christ. She received her daughter's healing by faith in Jesus, as Jesus himself declared that . This shows that some people did misuse the doctrine of election, while this doctrine had at that time and even now has nothing to do with gender discrimination whatsoever in church and in the society at large. If this doctrine of election could be used as patriarchy system operates, then Gentiles were going to miss heaven, because they are not the elected ones, and so not to mention the gentile women. As Guthrie writes "But election is merely the method of God's initiative in salvation. Particularism is a stage towards a wider universalism in God's plan...The stage of the wider universalism has not yet been reached, but it is foreshadowed in Christ's treatment of the woman" (1970: 867). Thus, faith of that woman has revealed that God has no favouritism to

**Comment [SN29]:** Dated source

any human being, whether Jew or Gentile, woman or man, in our context white or black, coloured or Indian, young or old, and so even in the ministry that women are to be treated equally as men, to be leaders, ordained ministers and so on and so forth. Because Jesus Christ the Son of God has portrayed that example on how all human being are to be treated equally are all important before God Almighty.

#### 4. Conclusion

We have seen that the issue of the doctrine of election has nothing to do with gender, racial, and even sexual orientation. Jesus was using the mockery language to activate the woman's faith, so it was not one of the patriarchy attitudes of oppression over women. And also we have seen that woman's faith helped to challenge and critique the domain theology of the doctrine of election which was practiced by Jews at their context and even at our context today. Feminist theology has emerged due to such task of challenging the way scriptures are read and interpreted favouring patriarchy systems. Jesus has shown an example that all people are acceptable if they have faith in God through Jesus Christ.

**Comment [SN30]:** Not sure what is meant here. What does the doctrine of election have to do with then?

#### 5. Bibliography

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**Comment [SN31]:** ?

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**Comment [SN32]:** Spelling!

Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. URL

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc5.html>

**Comment [SN33]:** Matthew Henry's commentary is ancient and is NOT an academic source but a popular Christian source.

Letty, Russell and Clarkson, Shannon (eds), 1996. *The Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*.

**Comment [SN34]:** First name?

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Tasker, R.V.G 1969. *Matthew An Introduction and Commentary*. London: The Tyndale Press.

**Comment [SN35]:** Very dated sources!

Emmanuel, while you have made some important points in this essay, it is a very poorly written essay with very few ACADEMIC references. Furthermore the essay contained very poor referencing. The biggest problem was that the paper is frequently unintelligible. There are many errors of spelling, punctuation, vocabulary use and grammar. 50%