

# The Shunammite Woman - Submissive Faith

by Joel Beeke

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*The sermon emphasizes the Shunammite woman's example of submissive faith in the face of affliction and the importance of trusting God's providence.*

**Duration:** 1:13:47

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:6, 2 Kings 4:23, 2 Kings 4:26, Matthew 6:33, Mark 2:4, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:7

**Topics:** "Submissive Faith", "Christian Contentment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of submissive faith in the face of affliction. He asks the audience to imagine the impact if every true Christian responded to affliction with submissive faith, suggesting that it could lead to revival and blessings in the churches. The preacher also discusses the concept of cleaving to the Lord even when it seems like He is against us, using the analogy of a faithful dog. He encourages the audience to examine their own lives and consider if they have ever felt ill-treated by God, and why some may struggle with their current crosses. The sermon concludes with the preacher highlighting the significance of submission in Christianity and the need for Christian contentment. The passage from 2 Kings 4:23-26 is referenced to support the message.

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## Transcript

Will you turn with me to the second book of Kings, chapter 4, and we'll commence reading at verse 18 to verse 37. And this is from the authorised version of the scriptures. 2 Kings 4 and verse 18.

And when the child was grown, it fell on a day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on his knees till noon, and then died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath. And she said, It shall be well. Then she saddled in ass, and said to her servant, Drive and go forward.

So she went and came unto the man of God, to Mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off.

And he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is the Shumanite. Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with thy child? And she answered, It is well. And when she came to the man of God, to the hill, she caught him by the feet.

But Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her. And the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

Then she said, Did I desire a son of my Lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me? Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thy hand, and go thy way. If thou meet any man, salute him not. And if any salute thee, answer him not again.

And lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose and followed her.

And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid his staff upon the face of the child, but there was neither voice nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, Say, the child is not awake. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and laid upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands. And he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro, and went up, and stretched himself upon him, and the child sneezed seven times. And the child opened his eyes, and he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shumanite. So he called her, and when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out. God knows, dear friends, that we are in desperate need as Christians for true submission to all the ways of God. There was perhaps, you heard, a woman in America, a Christian woman who was very rebellious under some ways of God with her on a certain occasion, and said to God, I would trade my cross for anyone else's.

That night she had a dream, and in her dream, everyone in her block put their crosses out on their front lawn. And in her dream, she went from cross to cross. She looked at the first cross, and said, Well, I think I'll pass on this one.

I'll go. I'll try another one. She went to the next.

She passed again. Finally, she came to a home where there's no cross on the front lawn at all. She went to the door, and she rang the bell, and a woman came to the door, and she said, My dear friend, may I trade my set of afflictions with yours? You can take my crosses.

And I will take yours. She said, Honey, you don't want mine. Mine are too big to get out the door.

And when this woman awoke, she realized that her rebellion was out of place, and that God's cross was just right for her, and that she had no business trying to change God's providential leadings with her, but she needed submissive faith to trust in the ways of God. Dear friend, if you're a Christian, I say to you without any hesitation, God has never made one mistake with you your whole lifetime. He's never given you one cross too many or one cross too few.

He's never given you a cross that didn't profit you. What you need is daily, genuine, submissive faith. Faith to amen God's ways.

Faith to receive what He, in His inscrutable wisdom, deems fitting to put upon you. You need faith to trust Him with every affliction. God makes no mistakes.

Look back just a moment in your life. Scan your life. Has the Lord ever done you ill? But why are some of us chafing under our present crosses? What need we have today in a world that abhors and hates submission? The very word submission is degraded, but it's a beautiful word in God's eyes.

Martin Luther said, letting God be God is half of all true religion. Bowing under God's ways lies at the heartbeat of true and vital Christianity. And at the heartbeat of the rare jewel, as Jeremiah Burroughs put it, of Christian contentment.

So this morning we want to take inventory. You know what inventory does. Inventory does three things, doesn't it? It helps a business look at its present stock, its present condition.

It helps a business look at its past to see how well they've done. And it helps a business look at the future to see if they continue on in the direction they are going, whether or not that direction will be profitable for them. So this morning I want you to come with me and I pray the Holy Spirit that He will enable us, every one of us, myself included, to take spiritual inventory of where we are and where we have come from and where we are going with regard to this cardinal issue of daily submissive faith.

So with God's help, I want to look with you at 2 Kings 4, verses 23, the second part, and all of verse 26. Verse 23, the second part, And she said, It shall be well. Verse 26, Run now, I pray thee, to meet her and say unto her, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with a child? And she answered, It is well.

Now yesterday you recall that we saw that one of the best ways to grasp various aspects of saving faith is to study the biblical portraits of faith. And we committed ourselves yesterday, you remember, to looking at four portraits these mornings that are not commonly looked at, that are not included, at least not explicitly in Hebrews 11. They are implicitly, of course, because the author to the Hebrews says that there are many others who live by faith.

Well, we're looking at some of those many others, aren't we, in these days. But we're picking out four of the many, many choices we could pick out from the Bible that particularly address aspects of faith that are sorely needed. Aspects in which we are sorely shortchanging ourselves today by ignoring them or rejecting them.

And so yesterday we saw that Bill Adam, as our covenant head, was responsible for plunging the entire human race into sin. Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15. And thus, as covenant head stands in opposition to the second Adam, Jesus Christ, God personally for Adam, as well as for Eve, overrode the seriousness of this serious sin they committed by granting them stupendous, amazing grace to personally believe the promises of God.

And we saw then that Adam and Eve are examples of simple, childlike faith and how sorely we need that today. For today we have thousands of promises. They responded to one.

And we often let thousands go by. One old Puritan, William Spurstow, has a wonderful book on the promises of God. The wells of salvation opened.

He said, God's promises by the thousands in Scripture are like a big bag of golden coins. And when you open the Bible, God takes that bag and He lays it at your feet and He unties the string and He throws the coins at your feet. He says, take what you will.

Well, Adam and Eve did that with the one golden coin they received. So yesterday we took inventory, didn't we, of how we use the promises of God and of the simplicity and childlike character of our own faith in trusting God. But this morning, we need to ask the question, how do we live out that simple, childlike faith day by day, particularly when it comes to times of trouble and affliction and sorrow and need? Now we all face those times, saved or unsaved.

Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. That's part of our inheritance as children of the first Adam. So I don't ask you this morning, are you afflicted? I don't ask you, have you been afflicted? We know the answer.

Everyone has their crosses. You have your own set. You have been afflicted.

Sometimes in your life, those inflictions have been more intense than other times, haven't they? Nor do I ask you, the real question is also not this. Where do these afflictions come from? You know where they come from. You know that they're traceable back to our fallen Adam, back to sin, ultimately.

You know too, if you're a Christian, that they're sent to you by a wise and fatherly God. That's not really the question. The question is, how are you responding to affliction? Are you running from them? Are you powering before them? Are you trying to get out of God's gymnasium in which He's training you under His afflicting rod? Or are you submitting by faith? To all God's dealings with you.

Do those around you, your spouse, your children, your parents, your friends, do they look at you and say, you can see the vitality of that person's, of your Christianity by the way you respond to affliction? You see, the world watches Christians very closely. And Christians are never so closely watched as when God in His inscrutable wisdom deems it fitting to put them in the furnace of His affliction. And if you're a Christian who is really walking with God, you know what it means to struggle under affliction with this critical question, Lord, how can I live as a Christian under affliction? How can I honor Thee in affliction? How can I respond to it rightly by being prepared for it before it comes and walking godly when it is resting upon me and after it is over, looking back gratefully upon it? If you're like me, you don't worry too much about the afflictions that will come, about God taking care of you in them.

But you are concerned about this question. How can I honor God in my afflictions? How can I not be like the world? How can I have a better conviction, a better philosophy, a better approach to affliction than simply saying I resist them or stoically saying I have to grin and bear it? How can I respond as a Christian to affliction? How can solely Dale Gloria be magnified in God's afflictions in my life? That's the question. Now, of course, we need the Holy Spirit for that.

You know that. I know that. But the Spirit is as willing to give Himself as Christ was willing to give Himself on the cross and as willing as the Father is to give the Son.

So the real question then is how does the Holy Spirit work this? How does He make me willing and how can I respond to these overtures and these leadings so that my life reflects the glory of God through the

Spirit by faith in affliction? Well, we want to look at three things in the Shunammite woman's life as we see her as a mentor in this aspect of submissive faith for us. First of all, looking at verse 23, I want to consider with you her submissive faith for the future. It shall be well.

Secondly, I want to look with you at her submissive faith in the present. Verse 26, it is well. And then thirdly, we want to take that faith and make some applications to our present situation.

So submissive faith, looking at the future, looking at the past, looking at the present. We go on our thoughts this morning, friends, to a little city named Shunamm, five miles north of Jezreel called Solam today, still existing today as a little village, 15 miles from Mount Carmel to this little village. Elisha had the custom of stopping from time to time on his way to Carmel to give theological lessons to his school of the prophets that resided on Carmel.

And when he went through Shunamm, he customarily stayed at the home of a great woman, the Bible says. A woman great in faith. And already in the opening verses, which were not read to you, we find things about this woman that we admire greatly.

For one thing, what happens is that Elisha is so grateful to this woman that he calls Gehazi and has Gehazi try to find out something that this woman might desire. So that he could give a return favor to her. And the woman responds, as you know, I dwell among my own people.

That's an amazing response. She's childless. You know what it was to have no children in Bible times.

It was a sign of God's finger of judgment against you. Every woman wanted, cherished the secret hope that in her loins might be the Messiah. And it was often considered to be one of God's greatest curses.

And yet when Gehazi asked her, this woman makes no mention of her childless condition. She says, I dwell among my own people. I'm content.

She had that rare jewel of godly contentment. And what a blessing that is. What a blessing it is to see a child of God living under crosses, fully content with the ways of God.

May I ask you already, because here our inventory begins already. Do you amen the ways of God in your life, even when they are against your flesh? Can you say, I am just content to dwell among the people of God? Well, then, of course, you know that Elisha does something amazing. He prophesies that one year from now, you, my dear woman, are going to have a son.

And it happens. Much to her astonishment, after all those years of childlessness, the lad grows up and is, of course, the joy of the mother and the father too, no doubt. A child of promise.

A child sent by God. A special child. And as a young man, or perhaps a 10 or 12 year old child or so, the mother sends the child out to work with dad in the field.

And one day the child has a sunstroke, most likely, and the child's head begins to hurt very badly. He says to his dad, my head, my head. Well, his dad, not realizing the seriousness of it, says to one of his workers, carry my son home to his mother.

And the child comes to the mother, and you heard read to you, sits on her knees until noon and dies. Dies. Her only son.

The son of promise. The son God had so wonderfully given. The son that symbolized everything to this woman about his covenant faithfulness.

That he was a God of impossibilities and a God of goodness and kindness. This only son died, given so miraculously, taken so early. You can imagine the questions.

Was this all in God's disfavor? Did God give us this child to torment us? What is God saying? You know, it's one of the greatest struggles in life to lose a child. I've seen people cry hard when they've lost a parent. But the hardest tears I've ever seen as a pastor have consistently been when parents had to go the unnatural way of bringing their own children.

Oh, what a trial. Lord, must it be so. Lord, how can this all work together for good? My only son.

Dead. But what does this woman do? Verse 21. She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door upon him and went out.

She did three things. All three things, friends, are acts of faith. First, she laid him on the bed of the man of God.

That's an astonishing thing, because, you know, in Israel, anything that came into contact with the dead was considered unclean. So here we have the first hint, don't we, that this woman believes that somehow the God of Elisha is going to raise this son again from the dead. Otherwise, why would she make that special chamber that she had particularly added onto her home for the prophet unclean? Certainly, there's nothing to indicate in this chapter anywhere that she does this out of rebellion and enmity against the prophet.

She lays him on the bed of the man of God because the God of Elisha, the God who wondrously gave her son, she believes is able to wondrously raise him from the dead. So here already we see her faith. She lays him on the bed of the man of God.

Secondly, she shuts the door on him. That's remarkable. In Bible times, you know, with a hot climate, when someone died, they had to make preparations immediately for his burial.

The burial often took place the same day. There was lots to do. Mourners had to be hired.

People had to be gathered. Word had to be sent. This woman shuts it all off.

You'd almost want to tap her on the shoulder and say, shouldn't my woman, I know you're distressed, but do you realize what you're doing? If someone finds your son dead and you leave and you go see the prophet and you're 15 miles away at Mount Carmel, what kind of a mother are you? What are people going to say? You abandoned a dead child. No, she shuts the door upon him. She doesn't want anyone to find him.

She doesn't want the mockers to have their gainsane hour. She doesn't want the enemies of God and the false prophets to rejoice in the death of her son. She believes and she submits.

And then she went out. She went out by faith. She's tried to the point of extremity, and yet she's driven out of herself to Elisha, which, of course, symbolically means to the God of Elisha for help and for solution.

But then there's another trial. Elisha is 15 miles away. Women aren't supposed to take long journeys by themselves in Bible times.

But never mind. She sends a message to her husband. You see, faith is very inventive.

Faith is enormously inventive. Faith climbs over walls. Faith climbs on roofs.

Remember the four men that climbed on the roof and let the man sick of the pulse of the paralyzed man down at the feet of Jesus. So nothing stops faith. You see, faith drives on.

Faith must have communion with God. Faith must be in his presence. She says to her husband, send me one of the asses of one of the young men that I may ride to run to the man of God and come again.

Another obstacle. Her husband responds, well, but why? Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath. It shall be well.

She doesn't write a whole chapter of explanation. She doesn't go out and have a long dialogue with him and give him all the details of why she's going and justify herself. She says in Hebrew one word, Shalom.

Peace. Peace? With your only son dead at home? Shalom. Was she being hypocritical? Was she trying to hide something from her husband? Shalom.

It shall be well. It's future oriented. God will make it well.

I will trust him for the future. The God who's been faithful in the past will be faithful in the future. And no matter what he does or what he doesn't do, I trust him more than I trust myself.

That's the language of submissive faith. I believe in God more than I believe in me. That's the mark of great faith.

You see, when we become Christians, we can so easily say sometimes, oh, I believe in God and I trust God. But so often in practice, isn't it true, in our own lives we trust ourselves more than God? But this woman says, Shalom. It shall be well.

The God of Elisha will take care of me as I travel 15 miles to and fro. He'll take care of my son. He'll take care of everything, husband.

Don't worry. Our God lives. The God of Elijah lives.

She went out. And so she travels. She settles in Ash.

She says to her servant, drive and go forward. She uses the means, you see. Not thy riding for me except I did thee.

So she went and came unto the man of God to Carmel. Do you use the means and trust God as you use them that he will make everything well in your future? Think about what you worry about most right now. In the future, something that hasn't happened but may happen.

Can you say my expectation is in the Prince of Peace, in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our shalom. And my trust is in him.

It's not just in the thing. It's in a person. It's in an almighty person.

And so that shalom is a certain shalom. It shall be well. Not maybe.

Not 90 percent. God is faithful. Well, Elijah sees her a long way off.

He sends Gahazal. He says, run and meet the Shunammite and say unto her, is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? She answers. It is.

It is. Now, it's great faith to believe that God's going to raise her son from the dead and it shall be well. But I submit to you this morning that I believe it is greater faith to say it is.

This is the heart of submission in the midst of faith. It is well. I want to grapple with you for a few moments about this whole question of submission.

What really is submission? When we look back on our past, we have to ask the question, what does it mean to submit to God's ways with me, with you? Under the second thought, I want to suggest to you that true submission involves four things, four steps, if you will. I believe that they go deeper as we go along. The first thing about true submission is that true submission, and I'll show you first in these four steps what it is, and then I'll show you what it is not, because there's misconceptions about that as well.

The first step is that true submission acknowledges that all my afflictions are from the Lord. That's the first step. It is the Lord.

9-11-01, lots of TV interviews after 9-11, of course. John MacArthur was on an interview, TV station, maybe some of you got the transcripts, with four other ministers or rabbis or whoever they were. Larry King asked the question, was God's hand in this? Four of them basically said, no, God couldn't have anything to do with this.

My friend, I say to you this morning, if God has nothing to do with your affliction, you have no refuge in God in dealing with your afflictions. You've got no answer. You've got nothing more than the stoic.

The very best thing you can do then is grin and bear it and hope that somehow you may get back under the control of God, who seems to have no control over you and over your happenings. If God's hand isn't in your affliction directing your afflictions, you have an impotent God. You have a God who can't save you.

You have a God who can't deliver you. There's no comfort in that at all. So the very first thing you should say when affliction comes in your life, you should say, it is the Lord.

Lord, what art thou saying to me? That's the first step of submission. Submission bows toward the Lord. It's not like those 400 with their lanterns and torches trying to capture Jesus in Gethsemane.

He comes out and says, I am He, and they fall backward. Against Jesus. But when we submit, you see, the direction of our life is toward the Lord.

We turn to Him. We want His will. We want His guidance.

We say right away, it is the Lord. Obviously, this woman realized it. Otherwise, she wouldn't have gone straight to the prophet.

She knew it was the Lord. The same God who gave is the God who has taken away. It is the Lord.

Second step of true submission is to justify the Lord in all that He does. It's one thing you say to say it is the Lord. It's another thing to say it is right.

I deserve it. I deserve worse. To justify God in all His doings is an important part of true submission, of true faith.

What did Aaron say when God took away his sons? Nothing. He held his peace. But in that holding of his peace, there's the language, isn't there? It's not just a stoic hardness, but the language of submission.

It is righteous. When Eli's sons were taken from him, Eli said, it is the Lord. Let Him do what seemeth Him good.

It's right. When David was taken from his throne by his own son, he said, behold, here am I. Let Him do to me what seemeth good unto Him. And when Job lost all ten children at once, imagine that.

All ten. He didn't say, Lord, couldn't you just have kept me one? He said, the Lord has given. The Lord has taken away.

God is right. We always deserve worse. One time in my ministry, I was being very falsely accused of some horrible things, and there wasn't a speck of truth in them that was spread throughout the churches.

It was dreadful. And I was bitter. And I didn't take it to the Lord as I should.

But finally, it broke me. And I went into my study, and I just cried to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

I began to see who I was, and how much wrong I had done in my life, and how I deserved much worse. I went over to a shelf. I picked out a book, and I opened it up.

And the man said in the book, after I read a page or two, he said, perhaps some of you are going through very difficult times because you're falsely accused, and people are saying lies about you, and none of it is true. I was just astonished. How can it be? Oh, the man said, thank the Lord, because you deserve a lot worse than the rumors are.

And beside it, the person who's spreading the rumors about you knew who you truly are inside. Well, they'd have a lot more to talk about than they're talking about now. See, we're a lot worse than we ever get.

God is always better to you and to me than we are to Him. He's always better than we deserve. I remember when I was 12 years old, something rather miserable happened in our family, and I was complaining and groaning and grunting like a 12-year-old can to my mother.

And she just kept saying, well, it could be worse. It could be worse. She'd been saying that for years.

It could be worse. Everything could be worse. Finally, I got very upset with her, and I said, you know, you can say that about anything.

It could be worse. She said, that's right, son, because we deserve hell. And anything above death and hell is the mercy of God.

It could always be worse. You see, when I see who I am and what I deserve, I have no reason to complain, ever. I have a theological student who, oh, he's in his upper 20s.

He's been praying for a lovely wife for years. He's read all the marriage books on the market. He's prepared for it.

He feels the Lord is guiding him. And finally, he feels the Lord is leading him to court a particular young lady. He comes to me, asks her opinion, goes to the father.

It's okay with the father. Everything's in order. All his ducks are in a row.

He comes and talks to me about two, three times. His heart is set on this girl. I pray with him.

He prays with me about it. And she agrees to court him. He's on cloud nine.

She's a wonderful girl. She's a God-fearing girl. Wonderful spirit about her.

She's a gem. He's so happy. Last three weeks, one day, someone comes to me and says, did you hear about so-and-so? I said, no, what? It's all off.

Oh, I said, naming our seminary student. He must be heartbroken. You better talk to him.

So next time he came in, I said, come to my study a moment, my friend. Shut the door. I said, it's tough, isn't it? Oh, he said, the Lord showed me as a lost sinner that a child of the king ought never to complain.

I'm well, pastor, because I did deserve her anyway. Submission. It is right.

No matter what he does to me. Always better than I deserve. But submission goes deeper.

There is a third step. A third step. True submission approves of the Lord.

You see, it is one thing to say it is the Lord. Another to say it is right. And another to say it is well.

Job didn't just say it is right. He didn't just say the Lord has given. The Lord has taken away.

He also said, didn't he? Blessed be the name of the Lord. That's the astonishing thing. To be a lost sinner before God, that's a miracle already to see who I am and to acknowledge it, but to approve of it, to amen the ways of God with me when they are against me or seem to be against me.

That goes far, far deeper. Blessed be the name of the Lord. How is it with your child? It is well.

I submit. I approve of God's ways. What an amazing thing this is.

And sometimes as a pastor, you're amazed at the people that don't have this who've been long on the way. And you're amazed sometimes that the people of God who do have this when they're even only a little while on the way. I don't know if the other pastors can identify with that, but it has amazed me.

Not so long ago, I had a woman in my church who just received word that she got cancer. Pretty dangerous kind of cancer. Didn't look very good.

So I went to see her, of course, right away. And when you serve a fairly large church, there are times when your pastoring can just overwhelm you, particularly in such cases. At that particular time, we had five different people in the church with cancer.

And there were times in that period where there were 16, 17 people in the hospital at the same time. And so I stood out in the hallway and I knew before I went in the room that I was about to enter into a situation in which I would have to invest many an hour, many a prayer. I can't explain it to you.

The pastors know. But when you go through someone with cancer over months and years, you go on a rollercoaster ride, don't you? And there's emotion and there's tears and there's prayers and there's well, there's closeness to the person. That's wonderful.

There's so much energy emanating from a pastor in such a case. And I was overwhelmed and I stood out in the hall and I just said, Lord, help me to become fully engaged in my mind and soul and to deny myself as I enter this room and to to to throw myself into this case once more. And I entered the room and I'll never forget what I heard.

How are you, Pastor? How am I? How are you, my friend? Having a rough time? Oh, no, Pastor. Really special. Cancer.

Special. Special? Yes, special. Why special? Well, you see, Pastor, God is dealing with me.

And that's good news, isn't it? Because I've got such a wayward heart. And besides, now that I have cancer, my family is going to come and see me and other friends as well. And I have an opportunity to tell them and show them how wonderful God is.

And didn't you tell us, Pastor, that God makes no mistakes and all things work together for good. So this cancer he's going to use, isn't he? And Pastor, one more thing. I want to be his disciple.

This is a babe in grace talking. She's only converted two years before that. I want to be his disciple and to be his disciple, I have to be disciplined, don't I? And to be disciplined with my hard heart, I need affliction.

And so this is God's gift to me, Pastor. It is well with my soul. And she said, now, don't you go around worrying about me.

God's going to take care of me. I'm well. At first I thought, when I left the room the first time, well, that's a wonderful beginning.

But I know enough about pastoring to know that two months later, there might be a different language when the pain is great and the morphine is high and the chemo is repetitive. But you know, that woman went through that whole bout with cancer, speaking this way the whole time. I never met her not thanking God for having cancer.

It is well. If every person in this audience today who's a true Christian would respond this way to affliction, what difference would it make in Wales and in your churches? Would God use it to bring revival? Would God use it to bless and saturate the churches with a reality of Christianity? Oh, how we need submissive faith. But there's yet one more step.

The fourth step of submission is cleaving to the Lord. Cleaving to Him as my greatest friend when He seems to come out against me as my greatest enemy. Have you ever seen a man with a very faithful dog? The man can tease the dog and throw a stone at him or stick at him.

The dog runs and gets it and brings it back to him. If you are truly submissive, you will take God's sticks and stones and you will bring them back to Him and you will cling to Him and you will cleave to Him. You

will treat Him as your greatest friend no matter what He does to you.

Job reached that point too, didn't he? At least at certain points in his suffering. Sometimes he wandered away. Sometimes faith grew weak.

But there was a time where he said, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. One of my dearest saints in my church is dying these very days. I expect a phone call any day.

This woman has been in the hospital more than 100 times in the last 15 years. And she too is a remarkable example. God applied the words to her soul.

My times are in thy hand. And she asked me long ago already to do that at her funeral. Speak on those words.

My times are in thy hand. The last few weeks she reached the point that her mind is not good anymore. She goes in and out.

The last time I was there, just before I got on the plane, she said to me, Pastor, she said, I know that my mind is going in and out. I know that some things I'm saying aren't making sense to you. She said, but don't worry about that.

She said, just take what I'm saying that makes sense and let the rest go. But she said, one thing I want you to know before you go on your trip, the one thing that has never left me is that He is mine and I am His. And though He slay me, it will only be to take me to Himself.

It's all well. That woman has pastored me a lot more than I pastored her in the last few years. Sweet, sweet, sweet submission.

Cleaving to God. I've had times where I walked into the hospital room. I walked around the corner and her face was contorted with pain.

She was grimacing with pain. And I didn't know whether to walk in or walk out. And she turned and spotted me and she said, Oh, Pastor, it's all right.

It's nothing compared to what my Master suffered for me. And she would replace the distorted face with a smile. Sweet submission.

That's the world talking. That's your old nature talking. But we are not submissive.

It ought to bother us. It ought to drive us to the Lord. And we ought not rest until we can say, I bow toward the Lord because it is the Lord.

I bow before the Lord because I justify Him. I bow under the Lord because I approve of Him. And I bow in with the Lord and cling to Him.

That's what true submission is, bowing toward Him, bowing before Him, bowing under Him, bowing in with Him. How in the world can you get that? Well, the Shunammite woman didn't have it in her own strength either, did she? We're all rebels, especially when we don't realize who we truly are. How did she realize it? How could she live this way? How could she say it as well? How could she cling to the prophet, the God of the prophet? Well, it is, of course, because of Jesus Christ.

How much she understood of that, we don't know. But we do know from our perspective, the New Testament perspective, that it's only because of Jesus we can have these four steps of submission. Because Jesus went through them.

Because He is the par excellence submissive One. Because He said whatever happened to Him, it is the Lord. Therefore, I must always be about my Father's business.

He was always conscious of His Father. Always conscious in every footstep that He had to be doing the work of Him who sent Him. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

It is the Lord. And Jesus always justified God, didn't He? All His sufferings He saw as coming from the hand of a just God. He was suffering for the unjust.

That's why as a lamb He couldn't speak. That's why He didn't answer Pilate. Because He, the innocent, was taking the place of the guilty so that the guilty may be set free.

He was oppressed. He was afflicted. Yet, He opened not His mouth.

He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. As a sheep before her shears is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. Why? Because He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And with His stripes, we are healed.

And then, He approved of the Lord, didn't He? Even in His greatest sorrow. Crawling as a worm and no man in Gethsemane. Forgotten by His own disciples who couldn't watch for Him one hour.

No eye to look upon Him. No one to give Him a glance and say, Lord, we understand. Crawling as a worm.

Bleeding. Sweat. Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.

Burying all the hell that all His elect deserve for all eternity. All the sins being pressed down upon Him. And He says, nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.

It is well. And He cleaved to the Lord. In the apex of all human history, in the culmination of all human suffering, forsaken of God, forsaken of man, forsaken of nature, even the sun would shine upon Him.

In the midst of darkness and agony and soul dereliction, He cried out, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? He's still clinging to God. When God pushed Him away with both hands, He reaches out with the open arms on the cross and says, My God, My God, it's because of Christ we can be submissive. And it's through Christ we must go for submission.

Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly. Is it well with you? Are you submissive? Have you learned submission? Have you submitted your whole life to God? Is there any dark area of your life, any besetting sin, bosom sin, darling sin, clinging to your life that you have not surrendered and submitted to God and forsaken and fled from? There's nothing that will damage our lives so much as clinging to bosom sin that will kill submission. You ask, what is submission not? There's lessons there too.

Let me give you three of them very quickly. Notice in verse 27, this woman comes to the man of God. She catches him by the feet.

Gehazi comes near to thrust her away. And the man of God says, let her alone, for her soul is vexed in her. She's vexed.

Does that sound like submission? Yes. Yes. Yes.

Christian submission is not stoicism, my friend. It is not not feeling the affliction. I had a woman once who came to me and said, I asked her how she was doing.

She lost her husband a few years ago. And she said, I'm doing just fine. And it never bothered me.

I never missed him. God gave me so much submission. I didn't know what to say.

But sometimes Christians respond that way. You think because God takes away the burden. That's the way you look at it.

And you don't have any struggle with it whatsoever. That that's submission. Now, I grant certain times God may take away a burden in a special way.

But if something costs you no trouble, you don't need to submit to it because it doesn't bother you to begin with. True submission is amending God's way when the affliction lies heavy upon me. It is truly denying myself and taking up the cross and following him.

Secondly, true submission is not avoiding seeking the reason for God's providential dispensation. Now, I've had a lot of people say to me, and I thought a lot about this in my life, and I actually believe this myself when I was young. We can't ask God why, they say.

Is that right? Well, yes and no, isn't it? You can't ask God why this way. Lord, why are you doing this? Not with a fist. But you can't ask this way.

Lord, search me. And know my heart and try me. And root out every evil way within me.

And lead me in the way everlasting. If it's true that you can never ask God why, then Jesus, I say it, it's blasphemy, I don't mean it, but then Jesus sinned. Jesus asked the greatest why question ever asked.

Why has God forsaken me? And when you feel forsaken of God, and you go to Him in earnest, desiring Him, panting after Him as a harp pants after the water brooks, you may say, oh my God, why has Thou forsaken me? That's what this woman does. She falls at His feet, verse 28. She says, did I desire a son of my Lord? Did I not say, do not deceive me? As if, Elisha, I don't understand.

Why is this happening? And then finally, true submission is not a sitting back with indifference and folded arms and saying the Lord's will be done, whatever be done. If the Lord comes, He will come. If He doesn't, He doesn't.

And so I will go my own way. No, this woman was not happy with Gehazi being sent, was she? She said in verse 30 to Elisha, as the Lord liveth and as my soul liveth, I will not leave thee. Now please bear in mind, she sees Elisha as the representative of God.

She doesn't know Gehazi. You know a little bit about Gehazi. I'm not sure I trust him either.

But Elisha was the man of God and in her mind that represented clinging to God. And this woman, you see, she will not just let Gehazi go. The staff of Elisha is not enough for her.

She needs a person. As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. Submissive faith wrestles with God even as it bows before God.

I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And so Elisha and the woman go together. You know the rest of the story, of course.

Lays himself upon the boy. The boy sneezes, opens his eyes, delivers him to his mother. And then we read that wonderful closing verse, verse 37.

Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground and took up her son and went out. Second time we read the words, and went out. But this time with her child on her right hand.

The God of whom she proclaimed, it shall be well. The God of whom she proclaimed, it is well. She could now proclaim, he has made all things well.

So then in conclusion, what does it have to do with us in the present? Well, my dear friends, there's one place to go for submission. That is, as I said already, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to conclude with two things.

I want to tell you why it is such a grievous offense in God's sight not to go to him very briefly and then quickly tell you how to go to Jesus Christ for submission. Three reasons why it's a grievous offense. Number one, it flies in the face of Jesus Christ's submission.

Shall an innocent, holy, perfect Savior who suffered for me, shall he submit to his Father's will, even to the death of the cross, and I not be willing to suffer even a little bit for his sake? You see what an offense that is? A few weeks ago I took my son golfing. I came home and ten minutes later my wife came to me and said, you know, you just took him golfing and he's grumbling because he has to do some chores. I took him in the side room and I said, son, I just spent the whole morning golfing with you.

You thanked me for it, didn't you? He said, yes. I said, why are you grumbling, doing chores now? He said, I'm sorry, Dad. But you see, that's what we are like as Christians.

It's terrible. Jesus Christ does everything for us. He suffers and dies and agonizes, as we heard last night, we who deserve the curse and wrath of God.

And then we grumble when we have a few chores to do and a few sufferings to bear. Who do we think we are? Secondly, to not submit is so grievous to God because by not submitting we are really saying, my Father in heaven doesn't know best. He doesn't know how to rule my life.

My lack of submission is nothing but rampant, sinful, godless humanism. Saying I want to be captain of my own ship and master of my own fate. And not believing John 13, 7, what I do now thou knowest not, but thou shalt know hereafter.

Be anxious for nothing. True Christians ought not worry. They ought not be in the worrying business because their Father knows best.

Thirdly, a lack of true submission is at the same time symptomatic of a lack of self-knowledge even as it gives a poor testimony to the world. Those who don't submit show they don't know themselves. You see, young people, may I say to you, because this is so contrary to what the world says to you, the only truly happy people in this world are the people who realize the curse of God and the wrath of God against sin

as we heard it so potently last night.

And who realize their own sinfulness over against that wrath, who realize they deserve indeed nothing but death and hell. They are the only truly thankful people in this world because whatever they receive is above what they deserve so they can be thankful for it. If you think you've got it coming, you've earned it, you deserve it, you're not happy when you get it, you say, I earned it, you pocket it and you say, I earned it.

But if you're amazed by what you receive because it doesn't compare to what you deserve, you're content. I told you about my mother who said anything above hell is a gift. My mother is one of the most happy people I know on the face of this earth because she lives that out.

You see, when we don't submit, we reveal, don't we, that we're thinking far too much of ourselves and far too little of God's disciplinary paternal hand upon us. As Hebrew 12 puts it, in order to make us wean from this world and ripened to be his child. And even as we act that way, we leave a bad taste in the mouth of the world.

The world looks at us and says, well, he's no different than we are. It responds the same way to affliction that we do. Well, last thought then.

How do we live through Christ Christianly? Let me give you seven quick things that you can put down and you can meditate on. Number one, consider Christ's afflictions. Just meditate on his afflictions.

Hebrews 12, 3 says, if you want to know how to respond to affliction, consider Christ. So, number one, consider Christ's afflictions. What he has gone through and you'll have nothing to complain anymore.

Number two, consider the power of Christ to deliver you and to guide you in your every affliction. He, Taylor, makes your afflictions better than your best suit of clothes that fits you. Number three, consider the presence of Christ.

He's in no time absent from us. Our Heidelberg Catechism says so beautifully, no time absent. He's always standing on the shores of our lives as we sail out over all the rough winds and waves.

He'll never get us beyond his high priestly eye. He'll never remove us from his high priestly heart. We're never beyond the grasp of his high priestly hands.

We're never outside of his high priestly hands. We're never outside of his high priestly hands. We're never outside of his high priestly hands.

We're never outside of his high priestly hands. We're never outside of his high priestly hands. We're never outside of his high priestly hands.

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We're never outside of his high priestly hands. We're never outside of his high priestly hands. We're never outside of his high priestly intercessions.

He ever liveth to make intercession for us. And our un-brotherliness to him will never un-brother our precious elder brother from us. His presence is always there.

Believe him. And believe that all those waves of tomorrow's impossibilities that are breaking in upon the beaches of your life, he will bring them to a melodious whimper at your feet. They will not drown you.

They may alarm you, but they won't drown you. He will take care of you. Believe that.

Consider the presence of Christ. And then consider the perseverance of Christ. He having loved his own, loved them to the end.

And if he loves his people to the end, he will care for you to the end. He's done too much work on you to let you go. And from all eternity, he's loved you with love unspeakable.

Five, consider the prayers of Christ. His prayers cannot fail. Bring all your prayerlessness to his prayerfulness.

His prayers will be answered. Six, consider the goals of Christ. Why does he afflict you? Deuteronomy 8.2 says to humble you.

Zephaniah 1.12 says to teach you what sin is. Zephaniah 15 says that you will seek God early. Those are all good things, aren't they? John Bunyan said God's people are like bells.

The harder they are hit, the better they sound. You see, God teaches us, said Thomas Watson, through afflictions to treat the world like a loose tooth in our mouths which being easily twitched away doth not much bother us. You see, God ripens us for glory.

By winning us from this world. And finally, seven, consider the end of Christ. The end of Christ is that you, his bride, may be with him whereforever where he is.

John Trapp put it this way, he who rides to be crowned ought not fear a few rainy days. You're riding to be crowned, dear child of God. And everything your father does with you is to crown you on the great day.

Be submissive. Well, I close then with this one illustration. You know how Persian rugs are made.

It's an old illustration. You know it, perhaps. But let's hear it again.

The rug maker climbs up some scaffolding. He calls down to his rug makers for all colors of string, all colors of yarn. They hand him up also the dark colors symbolizing affliction, the brown and the black.

And underneath they see only a gnarled mess. They don't understand, just like you don't understand why God's dealing with you the way he is. But one day the rug maker says, friend, come up higher.

And the rug workers, it is said that they never fail to be amazed when they climb the ladder and get on the scaffolding and see the perfect pattern and all the hues in the right place. The skill and the wisdom of the rug maker. One day God's going to say to you, friend, you whom I've taught to hand up the brown and the black strings with an amen from your heart in true submission, you come up higher.

And when we climb the scaffolding and we enter into the gates of pearly bliss and we behold as a perfect rug our lives, we will see that every string was in the right place. He made no mistakes. We needed just the amount of black strings he called for.

Trust him and say unto him, by thy grace it is well with my soul. Amen.

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