

2 Kings 4:18–37 | “A Mother’s Persistent Faith”
Preached on May 11, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings 4, verse 18. *[pause]*

I thought that I would take a break this week from the book of Ephesians to do something related to Mother’s Day, but it will certainly apply to all of us. *[pause]*

In 2 Kings 4, what we will find is a woman with persistent faith. *[pauseeee]*

Do you have *persistent* faith? *[pause]*

Faith in God is often easy when you go through easy times, but your faith is tested when it’s hard.

Will you trust Him in the hard times, in the sorrowful seasons, and in the difficult moments?
[pauseeeee]

Think about a person who begins a long journey on a boat. *[pause]*

When he starts out, it’s all “smooth sailing.”

The water is calm and easy to traverse, so he thinks, “This is simple!” *[pause]*

At the time, he thinks that it’s easy to trust the Lord and he considers, “Look, the Lord is with me, and He’s making this go well. Isn’t God so good?” *[pause]*

When you see that sailor in the calm waters, he appears to be the most God-reliant person there is, but suddenly the storm hits, the waves rise, and the boat starts to totter...

Now it’s a completely different picture. *[pause]*

He’s no longer acting like that God-reliant, God-confident person—rather, He’s acting more like a guy, who thinks that God has abandoned him. *[pause]*

He’s fearful and doubtful. *[pause]*

He wonders, “Where is God? I thought that He was with me?”

He says, “Why is it that God is allowing this to happen? I thought that God was good?” *[pauseee]*

You see, it’s the chaotic waters that reveal our faith, not the calm waters. *[pause]*

When you look at two basketballs, they both look the same.

But it’s when you put pressure upon them or bounce them that you find out whether they are inflated correctly, or whether they are deflated. *[pause]*

And so the chaotic waters of life put pressure on us and unveil the state of our faith. *[pauseee]*

Is your faith persistent through both the calm and the chaotic waters of life? *[pause]*

Today, we will see an example of a woman and mother, whose persistent faith shines brightly in a world filled with fickle faith. *[pause]*

Let's meet her, shall we? *[pauseeee]*

Before we read verse 18, let me just briefly share a little bit about what went right before this. *[pause]*

This is the time of the ministry of Elisha, and Elisha meets this wealthy Shunammite woman. *[pause]*

Although she was wealthy, she was very generous and hospitable, for when Elisha would travel through the area, the woman would have him over to eat. *[pause]*

Due to her generous heart, she actually made a small room in her house for him to stay in when he's in town.

It was even furnished with a table, a chair, and a lamp. *[pause]*

He never had to worry about food and lodging when it came to traveling near the town of Shunem—what a blessing! *[pauseee]*

Due to all of this, Elisha desires to give her something in return.

You see, her and her husband didn't have a son, yet through the power of God, Elisha prophesies that she will have a son, and it happens! *[pause]*

God miraculously provides a child for her, and there's great joy.

That's the background to what we will find next, for it revolves around this God-given child. *[pause]*

Let's READ verses 18–20 to see what happens next. *[READ]*

The precious, God-given child suddenly dies. *[pause]*

Now we don't know how old he was, but he was old enough to go out into the fields to visit his father.

And that's when he suddenly has pain in his head, and we don't know exactly what he had, but it doesn't really matter to know specifics for the sake of the story...

It's obviously a serious issue. *[pauseee]*

So what does the father do?

Like every father knows, children want their mother the most when they are hurting, so he calls for the child to be taken to his mother. *[pause]*

Mothers are often the more tender and caring ones, and so children want mom when they are hurt or sick. *[pause]*

Wasn't that the case for you growing up? Most likely for most of us, atleast. *[pauseee]*

You then find the child on the lap of his mother for a couple hours.

And you can tell that this mother loves this child, as she has him on her lap for hours, tending and caring for him, as he's in great pain and agony.

But sadly, the boy dies. *[pause]*

You can just imagine the absolute heartache that would come upon her. *[pause]*

It's one thing to go through the death of a loved one, who is older and has been sick for years...

But it's still another to face the *sudden* death of your young child, who was healthy just hours before. *[pauseeee]*

As we think about this situation, it shows us that...

I. Following the Lord can sometimes lead us into challenging times. (18–20)

This mother and her child didn't do anything wrong, but were just living their lives, when tragedy struck. *[pause]*

It's not like they were Ananias and Sapphira, who were struck down for lying about how much money they got for selling a piece of land.¹

In fact, it's God who brought the child into her life—she didn't even ask for the child. *[pauseeee]*

She was a godly woman, who sought to follow the Lord, yet all of a sudden suffering entered into her life. *[pause]*

Challenging times met her when it was all just smooth sailing before. *[pauseeee]*

Have you experienced something similar?

You sought to follow the Lord, but challenging, maybe sorrowful, painful, or hard times hit. *[pause]*

It wasn't that you did something majorly wrong, but it happened.

And those can be really stretching, faith-testing times, can't they? *[pause]*

¹ A reference to Acts 5:1–11.

They make us wonder, “God, what are you doing? Why did this happen?” *[pauseeee]*

In most of these times, it doesn’t make sense to us—it certainly didn’t make sense to this woman. *[pause]*

Through Elisha, God promised a son for her, and graciously gave her a son, who she didn’t even ask for.

And now not long after, the son is taken away suddenly at a young age. *[pause]*

It could easily make someone think, “Why would God even do that? Why would He hold out a gift to me, let me enjoy it for a time, but then take it away not long after?” *[pauseeee]*

Has that happened to you? *[pause]*

Maybe it was, “Why did God give me this job, only for me to be laid off a couple years later?” *[pause]*

Or, “Why did God give me this child, only to watch them suffer horrible things?” *[pause]*

“Why provide for my needs in the past, only to bring me to the place now where I can’t pay for this house?” *[pause]*

“Why bring that amazing, close friend into my life, only for them to move away not long after?” *[pauseeee]*

I think of Joni Erickson Tada, who when she was in her teenage years, was gifted as an athlete and loved to be active and do many activities.

But in a tragic accident at 17 years old, she was paralyzed from the shoulders down. *[pause]*

She could have easily thought, “Why give me these natural athletic gifts, only to take them away for the rest of my life?” *[pauseeee]*

For the Shunammite woman, when Elisha prophesied that she would have a child, she even said to him basically, “Please don’t lie to me, and get my hopes up.”

And now her longings were satisfied, and she had great joy in having a child, but it was all dashed to pieces in a mere couple of hours. *[pauseeee]*

The truth is that following the Lord doesn’t mean all calm waters, and no hardships. *[pause]*

Following the Lord actually takes you *through* challenging moments at times. *[pause]*

A Christian’s life isn’t all smooth sailing, rainbows, and butterflies on this side of Heaven, but it’s also facing chaotic waters, storms, sorrow, and pain heaped upon pain. *[pause]*

You will be led to points in your life, where you wonder what He is doing. *[pause]*

You will be led to moments in your life, where things won't make sense to you, but the question is this—what then? *[pause]*

That is, how will you respond to those challenging, confusing times? *[pause]*

How have you responded in the past?...

With despair? With anger? With bitterness? With doubt? *[pause]*

Well let's look at how the Shunammite woman responded, as we continue reading in verse 21. *[READ 21–30]*

Knowing what this woman went through, what are some responses that she *could* have had? *[pause]*

She could have become angry at God. *[pause]*

She could have just given up in despair, and lost all hope, yet she steps out in confident, persistent faith.

And that's because what we see in her example is that...

II. Following the Lord means trusting Him even when things look bleak. (21–30)

It's crazy that right after her son died, she set out to go see Elisha. *[pause]*

It's like her mind instantly went to the solution...

She probably thought, “God used Elisha to bring this son into my life, so now I'll go to Elisha when the son is taken away.” *[pause]*

She didn't waver or doubt as to where the answer lay.

She knew the truth that Job proclaimed—it's the Lord who gives, and it's the Lord who takes away.² *[pauseeee]*

When you go through a trial, where does your mind go *first*? *[pause]*

Does it go to the Lord, or to a million other places first? *[pauseeee]*

What happens in our challenging times is that our minds get clouded with sorrow, clouded with anger, clouded with confusion, and more.

We let wrong thoughts overtake us, so that the Lord is pushed out of our minds. *[pause]*

Instead of the Lord being the first place we go, He often becomes the last resort we turn to in bleak times.

² A reference to Job 1:21.

Yet in this woman's mind, it was like as soon as it happened, her mind went to the Lord.
[pauseeee]

I think about that story of the Greeks who said to Philip, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."³

Well this woman gets up and thinks, "I must see Elisha." [pause]

In your hardships, in your trials, in the storms of life, and when things look bleak, do you think, "I must see Jesus!"? [pause]

Do you think, "I need to go to the Lord!"? [pauseeee]

This woman is full of faith even in the bleakest moment—I mean, her child just died, but what does she do?...

She doesn't seek to bury the child, but lays him on the bed and closes the door behind her.

Isn't that interesting? [pause]

Why do that? I mean, the kid is dead, not taking a nap! [pause]

Because she is full of faith right then.

When all hope seemed lost, she hadn't lost all hope. [pause]

When death seemed to be the final word, she knew that death doesn't have to be the final word when God is involved.

She had faith that the one who originally gave life to the boy could give life to his dead body, too. [pauseeee]

She was looking forward in faith to what God *could do*, not simply sulking in what happened.
[pauseeee]

I wonder if we live with that kind of faith—a kind of faith that believes that God can do what seems impossible. [pause]

When a person seems like they will never change, do we live as though God can change them?
[pause]

When a person appears to look like someone who would never turn to Christ and be saved, do we live as though we know that God can bring life to even the most unlikely person? [pause]

When it seems like those bills won't be paid, do we live as though God can provide?

Do we live with faith that God can do it? [pause]

³ John 12:21.

Do we figuratively lay the situation on the bed, shut the door, and seek God? *[pauseeee]*

Not only did this woman put the child on the bed in faith, but if you notice, twice when someone asks her what's going on, she responds with, "All is well." *[pause]*

The first time it happens is when she tells her husband that she wants to go see the man of God.

And he's like, "Wait, why are you going there now? It's not a special day or anything," and she says, "All is well," and then leaves. *[pause]*

And then when she gets near to Elisha, Elisha sends his servant to find out what's going on, but the woman simply says, "All is well." *[pauseeeee]*

I pondered over *why* she kept saying that to people.

Like, why keep saying, "All is well," when it appears that all is *not* well? *[pause]*

It could be that she was so focused on reaching Elisha, that she couldn't be deterred by conversation that would get her delayed or sidetracked. *[pause]*

It could be that she kept saying, "All is well," in order to encourage her own heart to trust in God.

Kind of like in a stressful, hard time, if you kept saying to yourself, "It will be OK, God is in control. It will be OK, God is in control." *[pause]*

Or it could be that she truly believed in faith that all would be well, no matter what happened. *[pauseeee]*

Either way, this reminds us that as Christ followers, we can truly say, "All is well," in even the most difficult circumstances.

Because we follow the Lord, knowing that He is good and in control, we can truly encourage our hearts *and* believe in our hearts that all is well, no matter what happens. *[pause]*

That's why we can sing, "When sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, 'it is well, it is well with my soul.'"⁴ *[pauseeee]*

When you are going through hard or bleak-looking times, do you remind yourself, "All is well"? *[pause]*

Do you speak to others in that kind of way, or do people see you as a constantly negative, pessimistic, faith-less person? *[pause]*

The only way that you can say, "All is well," in even the hardest times is if you trust that the Lord is good, in control, and with faith, lay your circumstances in His hands. *[pauseeeee]*

⁴ "It is Well With My Soul," by Horatio G. Spafford, 1873.

You see, saying, “All is well,” doesn’t take away the pain or the tears, for we find the Shunammite woman “in bitter distress” at the feet of Elisha. *[pauseeee]*

Know that as you live this life, you will be in “bitter distress” at times.

In fact, in the original language, it actually says that her *soul* is in bitter distress within her. *[pause]*

She was in distress and anguish over the loss of her son deep within her, and that’s what sometimes it feels like to go through trials. *[pause]*

No—faith doesn’t take away the tears, but faith through the tears shows someone who is looking in the right place and believing that the Lord has the answer, no matter what happens. *[pauseeee]*

The Shunammite woman also shows us the need for persistent, determined faith. *[pause]*

When you read this story, the persistence and determination come out so clearly. *[pause]*

In determination, she immediately sets out to visit Elisha...

She calls for a servant and a donkey, and even tells the servant, “Do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.” *[pause]*

She travels to Mount Carmel, which is about 15–20 miles away, so this may have been about a 5–6 hour journey one way.

Talk about determination! *[pause]*

She’s so determined to see Elisha that she isn’t even delayed by Elisha’s servant coming to inquire about what’s going on, for she must see the man of God. *[pauseeee]*

Determinedly, persistently, urgently she travels straight to Elisha, and when she gets there, she holds onto his feet.

In a way, she was clinging to the Lord through clinging to Elisha, God’s messenger. *[pauseee]*

In her darkest moment, she determined to go to the place where she could hear from God and where God would work, through His prophet. *[pauseeee]*

Are we that persistent and determined to go to the Lord in our dark hours? *[pause]*

Many times, we are the opposite of this woman, where we could easily get delayed and sidetracked from going to the Lord...

We think, “Well, I gotta do this first, I gotta talk to this person, I gotta do this or do that first, and then later on I’ll go to God at bedtime or something.” *[pause]*

No, no—we should be like this woman, doing everything possible in determination to go to the Lord immediately! *[pauseeee]*

In order to do this, we must see that He is our answer, He is our solution, He is what we need!

More than rest, more than your to-do list, more than talking to others, more than anything else, in your hardest trials and darkest days, you need the Lord first. *[pauseeee]*

In faith-filled trust, determination, and persistence go to the Lord, for even when (and especially during) bleak times, you can trust Him. *[pauseeee]*

We learned about the death of this woman's son, and we learned about her faith-filled journey to see Elisha, but now what's going to happen? *[pause]*

Will her journey of faith be worth it, or will it only end with “bitter distress” as the final words? *[pause]*

Let's READ and find out, starting back up in verse 31. *[READ 31–37]*

Elisha sends his servant to go ahead, and lay Elisha's staff on the face of the child, but it doesn't do anything.

So Elisha finally gets there, sees the child for sure dead on the bed, shuts the door, and prays. *[pause]*

Then he does something very interesting—he lays on the child, putting his mouth, eyes, and hands on the child's mouth, eyes, and hands. *[pause]*

He then got up, walked around a little bit, and did it again.

After that, another intriguing detail is shared—the child sneezes 7 times and then opens his eyes. *[pause]*

He's alive!

The woman is called in, so she comes in, falls at his feet, and then gets up, takes her son, and goes out. *[pause]*

Talk about a miracle! *[pauseeee]*

This ending shows us that...

III. Following the Lord is always worth it! (31–37)

Don't you love that feeling of something being “worth it” in the end? *[pause]*

When an Olympic athlete is training hard everyday, it's not pleasant, but when they receive that gold medal, they consider it worth it all. *[pause]*

When you are working hard at your job, it's not always pleasant, but when you see the outcome of paying your bills or seeing projects completed, you think, "It's worth it!" *[pause]*

So also, in a much greater, more eternally important way—it's worth it to follow the Lord, it's *always* worth it. *[pause]*

In our lives as followers of Christ, it won't always be pleasant...

There will be days of "bitter distress" and great sorrow.

There will be pain, effort needed, and various trials that come our way, but it will always be worth it to trust Christ. *[pause]*

We are called to live by faith, trusting in the promises of God, and looking forward in confident hope.

But how can we live this way?...

Because we serve a God who gives life, and brings back to life! *[pause]*

That's what the Shunammite woman knew, and what Elisha knew.

And it may even be that Hebrews 11:35 is talking about women like this Shunammite woman, for it says that by faith, "Women received back their dead by resurrection." *[pause]*

In fact, the whole chapter of Hebrews 11 is all about people of faith, but it's also showing us that trusting the Lord is worth it! *[pause]*

Do you believe that trusting God is worth it?

We serve a Lord who gives life! *[pause]*

He raises the dead, like this little boy, who suddenly died, but then was miraculously made alive by God. *[pause]*

For the rest of that boy's life, every breath he took would be a constant reminder of the Lord's power to give life. *[pause]*

Is every breath that you take a reminder that God gives life? *[pause]*

Not only did God raise this little boy in 2 Kings 4, but Christ died and rose again from the grave, so that *we* could have life. *[pause]*

He conquered the grave for us, so that we wouldn't have to taste eternal death. *[pause]*

He took our sins upon Himself, died for them, but then rose again victoriously, proving that the redemption had been accomplished....

God gives life! *[pauseeee]*

Because of Christ's work, we can have spiritual life, for God took us who were dead in our sins and made us alive.⁵ *[pauseeee]*

You see, this little boy being raised from the grave isn't just a nice little story and that's it. *[pause]*

It points us to the God who gives life to people, who desperately need it, and it points forward to the day when Christ comes again and will raise our mortal bodies to immortality. *[pause]*

If you have trusted in Christ to be saved, you will receive a resurrected, glorious body, no longer to taste death or decay ever again. *[pause]*

The little boy of 2 Kings 4, would have to die again, but we will be raised to never die again, but to live with Christ forever.

So what else can we do with this news other than what the Shunammite woman did? *[pause]*

We fall at the Lord's feet in worship and gratitude.

Then we go in joy, knowing that it's worth it, it's worth it, it's worth it to trust the Lord! *[pauseeee]*

So...

Follow the Lord, trusting Him with everything—it's worth it!

You will face challenging situations in life. *[pause]*

You will wonder what God is up to.

You will be confused at times, grieved deeply, and feel bitter distress. *[pause]*

Your faith will be stretched and tested, but how will you respond? *[pause]*

Will you trust Him even when everything looks bleak?

Will you put your faith in the God who gives life? *[pause]*

Go to Him, trusting Him with everything—it's worth it! *[pauseeee]*

Moms, you will likewise face a lot of challenging times. *[pause]*

There will be times where your children are sick, in danger, or otherwise out of your control—will you give them up to the Lord? *[pause]*

⁵ See Ephesians 2:1–5.

Will you go to the Lord first, and trust Him like this mother in 2 Kings? *[pause]*

Will your faith be one that's tested by fire, but one that comes out more precious than gold?⁶
[pause]

Even in the hardest moments, will you look to the Lord and be able to say, "Lord, I'm not exactly sure what you are doing, but this I know..."

You are good, You are in control, and so in that knowledge, I know that all is well with You on the throne"? *[pauseeee]*

Christian, it's worth it to trust and follow Christ...

The one who originally gave our physical bodies life can give us resurrected bodies someday.
[pause]

If the Lord can give life to those who are dead, then what can He NOT do?!

Run to the Lord, grasp His feet, and lay out your bitter circumstances to Him, remembering who He is.

For the better Elisha has come! *[pauseee]*

Elisha was just a man, but Jesus was both God and man. *[pause]*

Elisha had to pray for the Lord to bring the boy to life, after his staff didn't work, yet Jesus would tell people to rise with just a word or two, and then *He* rose from the grave. *[pause]*

Jesus is the better Elisha, the perfect prophet, who wasn't *only* a prophet, but He was prophet, priest, and king—the Messiah, the Lord of all. *[pause]*

He is God who took on flesh, and in Him and through Him, we find forgiveness, meaning, hope, and *life*. *[pause]*

He's worth turning to, abiding in, clinging to, and trusting with everything.

⁶ An allusion to 1 Peter 1:6–7.