



ROYAL REFUSALS

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Saying 'no' is usually not easy, especially if we must refuse one who is in authority or one who could decide our fate. Solomon said in Proverbs 20:2 "The wrath of a king is like the roaring of a lion; Whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own life." History is replete with stories of courageous people who stood up to dictators and despots, refusing to compromise their beliefs and their convictions and paid with their lives for doing so. But there are none who had more valor than the four people I want to talk to you about today. Their 'royal refusals' are inspiring accounts of faith and determination that, had God not been with them, they too would have paid the ultimate price. They serve as inspirational examples to those of every age who must learn to say "NO" to the world and its allurements if they are to be loyal to the King of kings.

First, there is the story of the royal adoption and the refusal of all of the privileges and powers that accompanied it. The scripture reads in Hebrews 11, verses 24-27: "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." This must be a hard choice for Moses because for the first 40 years of his life, all he knew were the pleasures and treasures of the royal palace of Egypt.

When Moses was only three months old, his mother had to give him up due to an order from the Pharaoh to kill the Hebrew children lest the Hebrew slaves grow so numerous and powerful enough to mount an insurrection and go free. So, to save his life, that

godly and selfless mother, Jochebed, made that little floating cradle and placed her precious boy within it and set it afloat among the reeds in the Nile river. She had no idea what would come of him except that she was trusting God to take care of him and that He did. You'll remember it wasn't long until Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe and she and her servants saw the little ark floating along the riverbank and when they fetched it out and looked inside, the baby Moses began to cry. The princess's heart was moved with love and compassion, and she decided that this child of Hebrew slaves would become her own and she took him home and adopted him. Moses' older sister saw all that transpired that day and courageously approached the princess of Egypt and asked if she could get one of the Hebrew women to come nurse the child, and when the princess agreed, she brought the child's own mother Jochebed to him to care for him for the first few years of his life.

Jochebed planted seeds of faith in that little boy's heart that lay there for 40 years until one day, when he was long-since grown, he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave and he was so enraged with righteous indignation that he rose up and slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. When the word was out, Moses' life was endangered, and he spent the next 40 years in Exile until God sent him back to lead the people out of bondage and take them to the Promised Land. Moses made a choice when he killed the Egyptian and left the royal household. He refused to be called Pharaoh's son and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. His refusal to be called her son meant he would forever endure the scorn of the people who had rescued him from the Nile and raised, fed, clothed, and educated him. It meant the sacrifice of wealth, power, influence, and all the pomp and glory that went along with being a prince in Egypt. But Moses made a wise choice, for today he is forgotten in the annals of Egyptian history, His is not a name honored among the pharaohs of the past, but his name is recorded in faith's hall of fame and here we are 3,500 years later speaking of this great man and his faith and courage. He became the leader and savior of Israel in that time and the one who typified the Christ who would one day come and free us all from the bondage of sin.

Would to God that more people had the wisdom and the fortitude to make such a choice: to see that the treasures of this world fade but the riches of Christ are eternal. The apostle Paul said in Colossians 3:1-2: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." John said, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17). The Christian has severed his ties to earth and its wickedness as Paul said in Galatians 4:5 "that we may receive the adoption of sons." Somewhere in Moses' heart he remembered that he was not an Egyptian; he was a Hebrew and he belonged to God and his people and he had the courage to forsake the many riches and privileges that

otherwise could have been his in order to obtain heaven. Do you have the faith and courage to make this kind of royal refusal?

But then we turn to one of the most famous stories of the Old Testament that took place in the Persian Empire. It's the very brief story of a queen who refused to lower and degrade herself for someone else's delight. Her name was Queen Vashti. Her husband, Xerxes, ruled the vast Persian empire and according to Esther, chapter one, he throws a drunken party to flaunt his wealth, power and success. The party, if you can imagine, lasted for six months and was a scene of debauchery and excess. Every intoxicating drink they could provide flowed like a fountain in those 180 days and when the feast came to its grand conclusion, the inebriated and godless king told his eunuchs to go fetch his wife and order her to put on her crown and appear before the drunken hoard of men. The bible doesn't tell us much else. I suppose the majority believe that his demand was lewd and exploitive, with some even suggesting that he wanted her to appear unclothed with nothing but her crown. The bible doesn't specifically say that but at the least, it is probably safe to assume that he was objectifying and degrading this beautiful woman by his order. She was a beautiful woman, as the very meaning of her name suggests. But thank God, whatever all the motives involved were, she had a line she would not cross. She flatly refused to lower herself and be made an object of ogling eyes. She apparently had more shame and dignity than to place herself before those people and allow herself to be looked upon in that way! It cost her dearly. It cost her the crown, her royal marriage, and possibly her life as her furious husband deposed and banished her and perhaps even had her executed.

Sometimes convictions come with a heavy price, but I wish more of us had those kinds of convictions. I wish more modern women (and men for that matter) had enough shame and modesty to refuse to put their bodies on display to incite lust and desire. I wish more people would think seriously about the way they stain themselves with the muck and sin of this world by the immodest, suggestive, and revealing clothing that has become so normalized today. Even Christians have been desensitized to it and are wearing things that would have been shocking to sober minded and moral people just a few generations ago. Of course, if you don't keep up with the fads or if you speak out against them, you'll pay a price too. The world will make fun of you and saddest of all, some worldly, carnally minded people who claim to be Christians will too! It's hard to say no to the throng. It's hard to be out of step with what's popular and accepted by a sinful culture. It's embarrassing to be looked at as a prude or a religious zealot because you refuse to go to places where people are drinking and losing their inhibitions. Or because you refuse to dress in an immodest fashion. Or because you say I will not participate in what is questionable or wrong even though most others will. It's much like the young contestant many years ago who refused to be crowned "Miss America" because the costume she would have to wear was immodest and she refused to wear it. Queen Vashti may have been a worldly woman from a godless people herself, but at least you can say one thing about her. She had more dignity than to go along with the

king's unholy demand and we need more people with the courage of such convictions today – outside AND inside the church.

That reminds me of another royal refusal; that of a man who WAS a follower of God and who did live by the law of God and that is the brave prophet Daniel and his refusal of the king's food and his wine. Daniel is another valiant and faithful soul who teaches us an important lesson in saying 'no'. When he was sixteen years old, Daniel was off into Babylonian captivity. He was chosen for service to the king and became God's mouthpiece to the Gentile captors and his fellow Jewish captives. He along with several others were placed under the master of the eunuchs for training. They were gifted and talented young men who found favor with the king and the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank. We're told though in Daniel chapter 1, verse 8 that "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore, he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." He was fully aware that the Jewish dietary laws would not be honored by the king of Babylon. He knew that the meat he was given was from idolatrous sacrifices and therefore, because of his deep convictions, he refused to eat. He would rather offend the king of Babylon than offend the God of heaven. When time showed that Daniel was faring better than they were without the king's meat and drink, the king seemed to respect Daniel's convictions and his consistent keeping of his religion because the king promoted him.

Sometimes, the world will try to put a Christian at odds with his faith. The world will try to get you to compromise what you believe, and consequences can be threatened for not giving in. A corporation or business may ask you to lie or be deceitful to protect its interests. Or a boss may demand that you work on Sundays meaning you can't keep your appointment with the Lord to worship with the local congregation. We are told "not to forsake the assembly of ourselves together as some in the early church had begun to make a habit of doing." (Hebrews 10:25) So, what are you to do? Or perhaps that same business, or perhaps family, or maybe friends place you in a compromising position and want you to go somewhere and be part of something a Christian really has no business being a part of. What will you do? Do you have the courage of Daniel to say 'no'? Many people never try to say no. They compromise because their afraid of what may happen if they refuse. But if you have honest convictions and you stay sincerely true to those convictions, such faith and fidelity will garner more respect than compromising and giving in whenever opposition presents itself. Resolve to be like Daniel! Resolve to put Christ and His will first in your life and you won't be sorry. This is yet another royal refusal we must have the courage to commit ourselves to.

Finally, there is the royal refusal of this world's crowns. In John 6, Jesus performed a great miracle that made him very popular with the people. He miraculously fed thousands of people and when they saw this it reminded them of Moses and how the people following Moses were given manna to eat in the wilderness. And so, they started

a grassroots movement that day to take Jesus and install Him as their King to free them from Roman rule and lead them to worldly greatness. That may on the surface sound good but the problem is Jesus knew the kingdom His Father had waiting for Him was not of this world (John 18:36) and therefore the record says in John 6:15 that “Jesus, therefore, perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.” This refusal is remarkable because Jesus had come into this world specifically for the purpose of becoming our king. But the Jews misunderstood the nature of His kingdom and what they wanted to do was what the devil had proposed to Jesus when he tempted Him in the wilderness, promising to give him all the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would worship him. The people were offering Jesus a crown, but not the kind he would wear. A crown of gold bedecked with jewels never commands the kind of love, loyalty, and devotion that the King of kings desired. He instead chose to wear a crown of thorns, marked with the blood he would shed for our redemption. And like Jesus, the glittering crowns you and I might turn down could consist of fame, or wealth, or popularity, or power, but we should be willing to refuse them to follow Jesus. He refused them, and so should we.

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