



“Royal Refusals”

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Saying no may seem like an easy thing to do. But in reality, it’s quite difficult. When the pressure of peers, employers, family members, friends, and the world in general bears down upon us, we can find it hard to refuse their requests or demands. Our lesson today will involve four brave and faithful men who mustered the courage to say no when their souls hung in the balance. They should inspire us to have the bravery and courage of our convictions to refuse the same things that would be offered to us today. Our lesson is entitled *Royal Refusals*. These four great refusals represent the kind of self-denial required of anyone who would be faithful to Jesus Christ today. Do you have the courage to refuse?

Saying no is usually not easy, especially if we have to refuse one who is in authority or one who could decide our fate.

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 moral convictions, and they paid with their lives for doing so. But there are none who possessed more valor than the four people I want to talk 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, the story of the royal adoption and the refusal of all the privileges and power that accompanied it.

Hebrews 11:24-27 “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 have been a hard choice for Moses from a human vantage point because for the first forty years of his life, all he knew were the pleasures and treasures of the royal palace of Egypt. When he 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 grew so numerous and powerful enough to mount an insurrection and go free. So, in order to save his life, that godly and selfless mother, Jochebed, made that little floating cradle, placed her precious boy within it and set it afloat among the reeds in the Nile River. She had no idea what would become of him except that she was trusting God to take care of him, and that He did.

You remember it wasn't long until Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe and she and her servants saw that little ark floating along the riverbank. When they fetched it out of the water and looked inside, they saw the baby Moses, who 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. She took him home and adopted him.

Moses' older sister saw all that transpired that day and courageously approached the princess of Egypt, asking if she could get one of the Hebrew women to come and nurse the child. When the princess agreed, she brought the child's own mother, Jochebed, to care for him for the first few years of his life. In those formative years, Jochebed planted seeds of faith in that little boy's heart that lay there for forty 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. He spent the next forty years in exile until God sent him back to lead the people out of bondage and take them to the promised land. The scripture says that Moses made a choice when he killed the Egyptian, when he left the royal household, when he forsook the privileges afforded him in the palace of the great king. From that day forward, he refused to be called Pharaoh's son. The Bible says that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin (**Hebrews 11:25**). His refusal to be called her son meant that he would forever endure the scorn of the people who had rescued him from the Nile and raised, fed, clothed, and educated him. In 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. He is not a name honored amongst the pharaohs of the past, but his name IS recorded in faith's Hall of Fame. Here we are—3,500 years later—speaking of the faith and fidelity of this great man and his courage. He became the leader and savior of Israel at that time and the one who typified the Christ who would eventually come and free us all from the bondage of sin.

Would to God that more people had the wisdom and fortitude to make such a choice. To see that the treasures of this world fade, but the riches of Christ are eternal.

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 (or affection (KJV)) on things above, not on things on the earth.”

I John 2:15-17 "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

The Christian has severed his ties to earth and its wickedness *that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:5)*. Somewhere in Moses' heart, he remembered that he was not an Egyptian. He was a Hebrew, and thus, he belonged to God and to the people of God. He had the courage to forsake the riches and many privileges that otherwise could've been his in order to obtain heaven. Do you have the faith and courage to make this kind of royal refusal?

Next, there is the refusal of the royal armor by the young man David. There's an important lesson in this as well. In **I Samuel 17**, Israel is at war with the Philistines. Day after day, a champion of the Philistines taunted the people of God, challenging them to send forth a man to meet him. Goliath, at nearly ten feet tall, was formidable and he defied the armies of Israel. King Saul was dismayed and afraid. But though David was but a ruddy youth, he sized up the giant and volunteered to fight Goliath.

I Samuel 17:26 "And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

I Samuel 17:32 "And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

People thought David had lost his mind. Even Saul doubted his ability to meet this giant foe.

I Samuel 17:38-40 "So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine."

Not to even speak of meeting such a large, formidable foe, it must have taken great courage for David to say no to his own king and refuse the armor of Saul. It must have been shocking to watch David take off those protective armaments and step out with his shepherd's bag full of rocks to meet Goliath. It was certainly a courageous thing in itself to refuse Saul's armor and go his own way. Yet, the true and faithful Christian refuses the world's armor as well. In the battle for truth and right, the armor of the world is unproven and insufficient.

Remember that Christians in the ancient Roman Empire were ridiculed, rejected, and even tormented for refusing the pagan Rome and its emperor worship. They were even persecuted because they refused the trappings of an evil system with its paganism. John would say this of them when he recorded the **Revelation**.

Revelation 13:16-17 : He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

Yet those bold and faithful disciples refused, and they paid the price of ridicule, scorn, and many of them even paid with their lives.

The world wonders why the church rejects its ways today. Its ways of thinking, its ways of religion, its ways of worship. Even the religious world looks in disdain as the faithful few reject the doctrines and traditions of men to only practice what is authorized in the Bible. It seems when everyone else accepts change and unscriptural innovations in the work and worship of the church, the faithful refuse. The religious world says it can't be done without the use of those things that men have invented with which to serve God. But the true people of God refuse to use what cannot be proven by the word of God. It doesn't matter how many go along with error or how small and seemingly insignificant the number of those who refuse may be; if it is not authorized in the word of God, we dare not accept it. We dare not take it into the battle. May God give you and me the courage to go against the tide of popular opinion and refuse the armor of men and take up the armor of God.

Then, there is the royal refusal of the king's food and his wine. Daniel is another young man of spiritual strength and resolve who teaches us an important lesson in saying no. When he was sixteen years old, Daniel was taken off into Babylonian captivity. He was chosen for service to the king and he became God's mouthpiece to his Gentile captors and his fellow Jewish captives. Along with several others, he was placed under the master of the eunuchs for training in the king's service. These 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 the wine which the king drank during the training period, after which they were to be presented to the king for his service.

The Bible tells us 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 (Daniel 1:8)**. You see, Daniel was fully aware that the Jewish dietary laws would not be honored by the King of Babylon. He knew that the meat he would be given was from idolatrous sacrifices. 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 even better than they were without the king's meat and drink, the king seemed to respect Daniel's convictions and constant keeping of his religion because the king promoted him.

Sometimes the world will try to put a Christian at odds with his faith. If you're living for the Lord, there will be times when you will be put to the test. The world will test your convictions to see just how deep and genuine they are. The world will try to get you to compromise what you believe. Severe consequences can even be threatened for not giving in. A corporation or business may ask you to lie or be deceitful in order to protect its interests. Not doing so could mean not getting that promotion, or even worse, losing your job.

Or a boss may demand that you work on Sunday mornings, meaning that you can't keep your appointment with the Lord and worship with a local congregation. Many today have sold out and they don't think that's a very big deal. Not many businesses and companies respect the Lord's Day anymore, but Christians are to respect it. It's a special day. We're told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as some in the early church had begun to make a habit of doing (**Hebrews 10:25**). Today, if you hold that conviction, as well you should if you're a follower of Jesus, more than likely that's going to be put to the test at some point. What are you to do?

Perhaps your family, friends, or that same business place you in a compromising position and they want you to go somewhere and be a part of something that 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 never even try to say no. They compromise because they're 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 likely garner much more respect than compromising or giving in whenever the position presents itself. When you compromise, you're saying to people all around you that your religion really doesn't mean much. That your convictions don't run very deep. That your resolve to follow Christ isn't all that real. 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 to which we must be committed.

Finally, there is the royal refusal of earthly power. In **John 6**, Jesus performed a great miracle that made Him very popular. He miraculously fed thousands of people. When the people saw this, it reminded them of Moses and how the people following Moses long before were given manna to eat in the wilderness. You might say they started a grass roots movement that day to take Jesus and install Him as their king, to free them from Roman rule and lead them to worldly greatness, to which they very much aspired. That may sound good on the surface. The problem is it wasn't God's plan. Jesus knew that the kingdom His Father had waiting for Him wasn't of this world (**John 18:36**). That is a lesson that many so-called Christians need to learn yet today.

John 6:15 "Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself."

Jesus was refusing the kingship they were offering Him. 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, just like many yet today. What they wanted to do was exactly 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 bow down and worship him. You see, the people then were offering Jesus a crown, but it wasn't the kind that He would wear. A crown of gold bedecked with jewels never commands the kind of love, loyalty, and devotion that the King of kings desires. He instead chose to wear a crown of thorns marked with the blood that He would shed for our redemption.

Like Jesus, we too should be willing to say no to this world's crowns. Like the woman who, many years ago, refused to be crowned Miss America because the costume she would have to wear was immodest and indecent and she refused to wear it. That cost her dearly. The glittering crowns we might turn down today might consist of fame, wealth, popularity, or power. But we should be willing to refuse them to follow Jesus. He refused them and so should we. Jesus went to a cross in the ultimate of self-denial and He calls upon us to do the same thing if we would follow Him. Following Jesus requires that kind of courage and conviction. It requires that kind of refusal.

These four royal refusals remind us what it means to take up our crosses and follow Christ. This world's adoption, its armor, its delicacies, or its crowns should never turn us away from the pledge that we make to Christ when we obey the gospel or from the heavenly goal that is set before us. I want you to listen to me today: there is nothing—**NOTHING**--in this passing world for which we should be willing to forfeit the fellowship and favor of God and the joys of heaven. May we all have the courage to say NO as these courageous souls did so long ago.

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