

Responding to God's Abundant Favor

What will you do when Jesus, your King, calls? As believers, each of us has a call on our lives. Each of us can expect to hear the voice of our Lord inviting us not only to enter His inner court, but also to go and bless others in Jesus' name.

What will you do? The lives of Vashti and Esther—two women in Old Testament times who were a lot like us—illustrate the two choices we can make: We can refuse to respond when He invites us to come to Him, or we can answer, “I will.” As we look at their stories, let's ask ourselves:

When the King calls, will we choose not to respond and justify our decision with excuses or will we rise to the occasion, obey His command and be the catalyst for great blessing toward others?

SUMMONED INTO HIS PRESENCE

The book of Esther tells us that King Ahasuerus and Queen Vashti were the crème de la crème of the land, and they were throwing a party—a royal banquet, to be exact. Everybody who was anybody was there. They were eating, drinking and making merry. It was a loud and raucous political bash!

The festivities were taking place in two quarters: The king was upon his throne with his servants all around while Queen Vashti and her court were being entertained in another part of the palace. In the middle of the celebration, however, the king's machismo apparently got the best of him, and he decided that his wife would be the next “dish” to be served!

He sent his servants scurrying with the command, “Tell Vashti that I, her king, require her immediate presence” and then sat down with great expectancy.

When the servants reached the chamber where the women were gathered, no doubt giggling and acting like silly, young girls, chatting about their children and their husbands, they relayed the king's message. Imagine their surprise when Queen Vashti, in front of everyone, said no to the king's command! The queen telling the king no? A wife telling her husband no? It was unheard of!

We could question the king's motives and the "political correctness" of his method. But what he wanted and why didn't matter.

What mattered was that he called Vashti and she refused to come. He was crushed at her disobedience—then angered. How many of us have refused the Lord when He has summoned us into His presence? He's called us over and over and over again, and we've told Him no just as many times, in just as many ways. Certainly, just as King Ahasuerus called Queen Vashti, the King of Kings has called you and me.

What does He want? What does it matter? He has called!

How God's heart must be crushed when we walk away from Him, when we ignore His call! Queen Vashti lost her crown and was banished because she refused her king. Fortunately for us, our King is the God of the second chance. The Scriptures say that God is "married" to the backslider (see Jer. 3:14, NKJV), and even though we may refuse to appear before Him, His mind is still set on us. We must not think for one minute that because we've told Him no, He has forgotten us! We can still repent. We can still say, "I will," and He will draw us to Himself.

HAND-PICKED BY THE KING

But Vashti was dismissed, and the king's servants began to look for a replacement for the queen. They looked everywhere.

They went to the high-rent district, where the top echelon of the community lived, and hand-picked some women for the king's

“tryout.” They went into the colleges and universities and gathered some women there. And they went down to the homeless shelter and the soup kitchen and selected some women there, too. They gave even those who were the least likely to succeed an opportunity to participate.

Where did the servants of the Lord have to look to find you?

Do you remember where you were when the Holy Spirit came and tapped you on the shoulder?

Did He walk into a nightclub? Into an executive meeting? Perhaps into the middle of an illicit affair? Maybe the servants found you in the midst of some deadly habit, lying sick in bed or injured by the side of the road. Maybe you were even sitting in church.

Where were you when the servants found you and said, “The King has need of you”?

The Scriptures are full of people like you and I. Abraham, the Arabic sheik, became the father of many nations when he answered the call of God. Joseph, the boy who was sold into slavery by his own brothers, became the prime minister of a great state when he responded. David, the shepherd boy, became the king of Israel when he answered the call. Esther was an unknown orphan when she chose to answer a call she did not yet fully understand. She became queen to King Ahasuerus, just as if she were the heroine in a fairy tale.

No doubt Esther did not come into the king’s presence offering a list of excuses.

She didn’t go in there the way I did when my preacher-husband, T.D. Jakes, and I first began to get serious. I told him, “I don’t play, I don’t sing and I can’t preach!”

He responded, “Well, what can you do?”

Don’t make the mistake of responding to the call of God by

telling Him who you're not and what you can't do. He knows you.

He knows—and He calls you anyway.

In the days of Esther and Vashti, it was customary to direct all the young virgins who were paraded before the king to one of three places. The women that the king inspected but chose not to become involved with were summarily dismissed and sent to the first chamber, which I liken to the “outer court.” Just about anyone might dwell there. These women had a shallow, one-time experience with the king that led them nowhere.

The second chamber was reserved for those women the king thought had “potential.” He entered into a pseudo-relationship with them, short of making a covenant. This area I liken to the “middle court.”

I'm reminded of those of us who “brush up” against the glory of God, getting just close enough to know that it's real, but who stops there? The Bible calls those women of the second chamber “concubines”; today we would call them “live-ins.”

The third chamber was designated for the queen. It was the place reserved for intimacy, for the one who entered into a covenant relationship. Once you've been there, you can never be satisfied in any other place!

That's where they put Esther in the queen's chamber. They didn't even bother to move her first to one of the superficial outer courts but placed her right in the “Holy of Holies”—in the presence of the king himself.

As the women were paraded before King Ahasuerus the haves and the have-nots, the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful, the talented and the talentless—the king's eyes rested on Esther, and the Bible says he favored her above every other woman in the room.

Do you ever wonder why, out of all the people in the world, God chose you?

Out of all of the people He could have selected-some more beautiful, more talented, more articulate, more intelligent, richer, thinner, taller-He chose you. In His infinite wisdom, He sees not what we are, but what we will become. And just as the king favored Esther, God favors you and me!

PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE

When the king called Esther, she responded, "I will." Later when she asked to see him, he extended his royal scepter to her and declared, "Whatever you request is yours, Queen Esther." Rising to the occasion, she asked that her people, the nation of Israel living in captivity, be saved from annihilation. Her wish was granted, and she became known throughout history as a great deliverer.

Today, God is calling you "queen." You may not feel like a queen; you may not look like a queen; you may not deserve to be a queen. But the scepter is still extended to you. God is saying, 'If you but answer My call, you can ask whatever you want, and it shall be done for you.' Sure, we could make excuses. We could pull out our negative resume. But why not respond "I will" instead?

The third chapter of Zechariah tells how Joshua the high priest stood before the angel of the Lord, with Satan standing at his side to accuse him. That's how it is for each of us. Satan stands ready to accuse us, to tell us what we're not, to remind us of what we've done wrong. But when Satan pointed out to the angel that Joshua was wearing filthy garments, just as he loves to point out our sin, the angel replied, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Isn't this man a burning stick that I plucked out of the fire?" (see Zech. 3:1-2).

You've been plucked out, too! Don't concern yourself over Satan's accusations. God is able to take away your filthy

garments. Joshua the high priest, Esther the orphan-all of us who the enemy said would never amount to anything have been plucked out of the fire.

Satan is a liar. God has called us.

You've been summoned to the King's chamber, to the inner court. Will you go? Can He count on you? Will you be there for Him like He's been there for you? Respond to His invitation today. Say, "I will."

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