

"THE WOMAN WHO WAS NOT FOR SALE"

Esther 1:12

INTRODUCTION:

I speak to you tonight about a name <sup>THAT</sup> will live forever - the name of a woman which ought never to be omitted. And this woman is Vashti, Queen of Persia.

Last Sunday night we discussed "The Man Who Was Not For Sale" - Naboth. He refused to sell his property because of God's command to the evil king Ahab.

This evening we want to take another Bible character, little known, because she is overshadowed by Esther - in whose book bears the name and account of this woman.

There are people who will say, well, she was a fanatic. She was really a fool for not co-operating and carrying out the King's command. But she refused to put herself up for sale. And I want us to look carefully at this tonight. Because all the way through the Bible we find people who were able to say "No". Even the Apostle Paul in I Cor. 4:10 said "we are fools for Christ's sake. But ye are wise in Christ, ye are weak but ye are strong. Ye have glory and we have dishonor."

Paul makes it clear that he may be a fanatic - but he will not sell out cheap for any of the wickedness.

Vol. Our story begins in the first verse with the description of King Ahasuerus - who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over 127 provinces.



V. 2  
He had his palace or throne at Shushan - V. 2. Ahasuerus sits in royal state at the center of the table in the great banqueting hall and all about him are arranged the 127 princes of his far flung empire. His kingdom maybe measured by the land surveyor and described by the historian - it extended all the way from India to Ethopia. It embraced in his rule the borders of India on the one side and Egypt on the other. An extent of country about 2500 miles in length. He possessed some of the earth's loveliest lands. The fertilizing waters of the Nile left rich deposits over a portion of his territory.

He is now making an external display. The throne on which the King sat was a chair made of gold. There was costly carpet and there was also a footstool of gold and the King had a gold scepter in his right hand. Close beside him stood a eunuch bearing a fan which his mouth covered for fear his breath would be offensive to the mighty monarch.

182 days or six months the king had been engaged in showing these assembled satraps - the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honor of his excellent majesty.

And for the last 7 days a great banquet had been in operation. Ahasuerus with his 127 princes, all arrayed in their robes with their gems and jewels, flashing. With the vast candelabra hanging from the ceiling and hundreds of candles.

The floor of the banquet hall is a black, white, blue, and red marble. Marble columns hold up the roof from which is suspended a vast canopy of blue, green, and white velvet - fastened with corde of fine linen, to silver rings inserted in the marble columns.



The beds are couches on which the revelers recline - are in keeping with the splendor of all else that night. For they are of silver or gold decorated with the beasts of Persian superstition and wickedness. Every cup out of which the banquetors are drinking is of the purest gold. And each cup wrought and chased with a different design.

Slaves and eunuch black as the marble tiles of the palace floor passed to and fro with liquors. A long train of large trays placed on men's heads on which are shells stuffed of all sorts and perils. Trays filled with sweets. And many laden with fruits.

There is no mention of moral riches but truly they had material riches. The minstrels provide music which flows down - the harp, the flute, the cornet.

And the fountains throw up their silver spray from their basins. And the sweet incense of Persia and India fill the air.

On the central platform were dancing girls - their flimsey garments disclosed their beauty. Seven days have passed and they are still eating, drinking, and dancing. Many have been overcome by drink, fatigue. And are being carried out by their slaves on litters.

Ahasuerus is thinking to himself - what more can I do to entertain and excite these guests. And this is when his alcohol inflamed brain comes to a new idea. The queen, the beauty of all the earth. I will bring in Vashti and display all her beauty to my princes and their ladies. And at that point he summons the seven chamberlains, and commands them to bring in Vashti.

Now this is the old old history of strong drink. Ever since it left Noah,

God-fearing Noah, uncovered in the presence of his sons and by the altar which he had built to God. However common place and fashionable it may be to drink liquor, it is to be remembered that the effect of liquor is to stir up the lower passions of one's nature, to relax the soul's watch over it's safety. In a moment of such relaxation when the stimulation of strong drink has weakened the natural resistance of evil to young men and young women - much has been written about sorrow and shame that can never be reversed.

Much wine had been drunk at this Persian feast. The drunkard is a slave and not a king. Though he may sit upon a Persian throne - no drunkard can inherit the kingdom of Heaven.

Alcohol is as useless as an article of diet. And it travels through the body and no part welcomes it as a friend. Or provides a home for it. If alcohol impairs the power of the physical system - it further blunts the reason. It prevents the mind from exercising the power of drawing a line between evil and good. It takes away the authority of moral control from a person. Every sincere follower of Jesus Christ should abstain.

The respectable drinker professes to take alcohol just for the sake of genuine excitement. And the feeling of good fellowship it promotes. The feast is dull when alcohol does not furnish its influence. It excites the intellect, promotes conversation. And this promotes laughter.

Now every man at this feast was allowed to please himself. There was no forced drinking at the feast - let the man be a tea totler without asking unpleasant questions. And let him feel that his course requires no apology.

A man ought to be able to refuse wine in the same way that he refuses any other article on the table.



And let the wise man learn to abstain. It is greater good not to take. If we seek the preservation of bodily health - we must not take it.

If reason is to rule, we must not take it.

If the balance of the moral nature is to be preserved, we must not take.

If body, soul, and spirit are to be presented and acceptable and holy and a living sacrifice to God and to Jesus Christ, beware of alcoholic drinks. It is wise to show restraint.

Now all drunkards just like the king had his excuse for this crime.

✓ 1. First, it was giving him (good fellowship). But can friendship be founded on vice - and especially when this vice impairs the memory and sense of obligation. This leads to the betrayal of secrets, it stirs up strife and contention.

It destroys the very capacity of communication.

The drunk may make his company merry but they laugh at - and not with him. The sight of one that is more silly than themselves. I wonder if you have ever noticed that. Most of the time the fellow who is drunk - the people are not laughing with him. They are laughing at him.

✓ 2 - The king also thought it would (drown his cares). But the drunkard's care must arise either from the ill state of his health or a sting of his guilty conscience and he thinks he can drink down remorse.

✓ In the third place, the drunkard has many other excuses. He is exposed to the cares of this world, his business is so heavy, he cannot avoid drinking to excess. And so he easily tempers himself to this.

But the king, just like the other people, will find the miserable effects. It will bring poverty, it will bring contempt, it will bring ill health, it will bring untimely death. The understanding is depraved and darkened. The will of man is made to become feeble. The passions are inflamed and are not governable. Regards for men, reverence for God are destroyed. And the drunk travels along in a train with countless other devices which are found on the broad way.

And of course the king, like others, tried to shift the blame. Like Adam and Eve putting the blame on each other. Now Ahasuerus, the king, was stirred up about the queen. Ahab called Elijah a troubler. Herod beheaded John the Baptist for telling him the truth. And so men go on in their own folly and in their own evil conduct.

These wicked Lords were eager to see the far famed queen. They were anxious to join in with the proposal which the king had suggested.

Now Vashti refused to come in. She refused to expose herself to the gaze of the kings - and his drink inflamed satraps. Vashti said "No, I am not for sale." And this is one of the great God inspired "No's" of all history.

Let all women remember that "No"!

Vashti had world famed beauty. She lives forever in history not because she was a beautiful woman. She lives in history not because she was just a queen.



But because of her character and her respect for herself, that she would not be exposed for a bunch of swine. She counted the cost. And her dismissal from the court. Exile perhaps - perhaps death. But she prized the things of God more even than her life.

Saying "No" made Vashti immortal. And of course, if we had never had this "No" - Esther would never have been heard of. Vashti will forever stand as a symbol of purity and modesty.

She boycotted the feast and she refused the king's command.

She plays her part in the drama and she does not pass off the stage without imparting to us some useful lessons.

Her name is very significant and means in old Persian - the best. She was a good countenance. She perhaps had dark eyes. She had the beauty of the Eastern women. She was strong and yet she was lovely in her strength. Charm and grace. She had a pleasant voice. And she had beautiful locks. And a very excess of beauty.

But we know what the wise man <sup>Solomon</sup> - favor is deceitful, beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord - she shall be praised.

Physical beauty is a gift of God. By no means do we despise it. But there is a beauty that is far beyond that - a combination of moral loveliness. And Christian women need to learn the usefulness of this moral lesson.

Whatever view may be taken of her conduct, this was plain, she was not merely a play thing for man. She was not ready to sacrifice the moral sense in order

to feed her own vanity.

You remember the Scriptures say the queen were entertaining the women in her apartment. But the queen's refusal ought to have great influence on women - she did not chose to go around with the crowd and do as the world does. This ought to stand for something. I think women today must have a conscience and the secret of the strength of character lies not only in a readiness to chose the good but also a power to refuse the evil. Woman's influence is powerful, because she acts at the source of human conduct. Measure for measure. She can refuse to be a temptor, she can refuse to temptor.

I've thought about this - if Vashti was simply a vain woman and proud of her physical beauty, this would have been her opportunity. Many of the modern Vashti's would have rushed to the banquet hall, in the spirit of self assertion. They would have been allowed to over master the spirit of vanity. There are thousands of Vashti's today, who do not even have to be invited to the banquet hall. But to go out before the world and seek to display their bodies.

Not only women, but many men have sacrificed far more than Vashti was called upon to sacrifice. In order to obtain even a portion of that applause to present herself at the King's command. But she refused. Bravely she refused.

Now who could reason with a king who had been made unreasonable by wine.

Now to be on the side of right is certainly marvelous and it is great when you have might and there is no opposition. But to get on the side of right,



when it is on the side of weakness and may lead to some judgement - then that is different. I think she ought to receive full credit for her conduct and for being a champion.

Shameful it is that those who profess to believe in persecuted apostles, in slain reformers, in a crucified Jesus - and yet will not follow the method of refusal which this woman followed.

Now what this woman did will be accepted in theory but it will not be accepted in practice. Therefore, the majority of the people will say, she did the right thing. And there are still even wrong doers who will applaud right doing.

But virtue is nobler in a miserable hut than vice is in a splendid palace.

Think of Lazarus with all of his rags. Then Dives in his purple and fine linen.

Behind all of this glitter there would be no inward knowing or reproach of memory for this woman.

She was going to follow a path of duty that was lasting and that was glorious. Multitudes of people have heard her name. Wherever this book has traveled, a memorial will be raised to tell of her modesty and her heroic dignity. And no deed done in a right spirit shall perish.

Those who fight in virtues cause may fall on the battlefield but they conquer even by their defeats.

At this point, think in contrast of Jesus as he was led up in the wilderness and tempted of the Devil. How he refused evil and he had hungered and fasted for 40 days. The Devil wanted him to turn stones into bread. Jesus would not sell out and he told him that man should not live by bread alone.

And then that second temptation when he took him on the temple as quoted in the 91st Psalm and wanted him to perform a great miracle as the Messiah. He said, you ought not to tempt the Lord thy God.

And that third temptation up in the high mountains where he could show him the kingdoms of the world - all these things I will give you. But Jesus refused, to do the great evil, and said - get thee hence.

Now all these temptations Jesus had were different but they were involved in the will of God. And that is what sin always is - departing from the will of God. Now this is the point that great souls have made. At times, rather than give in, they have said "No". They have obeyed someone beyond them.

V, 15  
Now this story which happened perhaps 500 years before Christ was born in this heathen palace and Vashti refused to come at the King's command. According then to the law, she was to be put to death. We do not know exactly what happened to Vashti because she was vanished from his presence and there was a stir among those people who said in V. 18 - because Vashti's action. All the women in Persia would turn against their husbands. They would not cooperate any further. And so they were embittered by her example.

V, 19  
In V. 19 we note that Vashti came no more before King Ahasuerus. A command was written that she be banished forever.



But this banishment cannot banish from our minds the lessons which she left us.

First, she gave herself to purity. In utter abandonment - this is the thing that the Lord wants us to do. Even in this present hour, is to give ourselves unto him. This is exactly what Paul did. He could have stayed and lived in pleasure and comfort. He could have escaped prison and he could have escaped the stocks, the mobs, and the ship-wrecks, and the chains. But he preferred to give himself to purity. And for your very life is involved and your reputation is at stake. And people used to say to Paul, be a diplomat - be proven. But Paul says none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself. Acts 20:24.

Now this is the true way in the progress of Christianity. Dr. Fred Stamm says if you want to see how strong the Christian religion can be, you want to go back to the time when everybody was laughing at it, persecuting it, and trying to kill it.

In that palace that night - it was not easy to stand up and say "No!"

Pliny wrote his emperor Trajan in that early day about early Christians. In effect this is what he wrote -- "They are nice people. But they are headed wrong. They just don't know life. They ought to fall into our Roman methods of living and they would know what life is. They are enthusiastic but they are impractical. They have ideals which are too high for human nature to practice."

Now this is the modern trend of talk today. Fall in with the Roman methods of living. When in Rome, do as Rome does. The early Christians had fallen in with the Roman method of living.

What if Vashti would have fallen in with the King's way of life. They would have gone staggering down the filthy highway of wretched impurities. And her avenue of unmentionable sorrow would have swallowed her up. Thank God, she did not fall for this method of living but she stood up and spoke out against such methods of living. And attack the corrupt customs and practices of that empire. And we know more about how God was working in those days.

Second, she dared to do the impossible. Now this has impressed me about Vashti. Here was something that was impossible. In fact, they probably called her a fanatic. But it is refreshing to note that the fanatics of yesterday are the heroes of today. Have you ever thought about the early disciples who dared the impossible. They went out, a group of fishermen, some of them were tax collectors with their leader crucified and gone from them to undertake to evangelize the entire world. They lived like victims. They did not look like men who were going to do something but they are victors now.

You can take any field of endeavor tonight which you wish to go into and you will discover those who are tempted to do the impossible certainly achieve something. And it is worthwhile to think about Vashti, who dared to do the impossible.

You think about Robert Fulton in the early part of the 19th century. All who talked about a steamship that could float upon the water were fanatics and it was an impossibility. Now you stand at the water today and you gaze at the mighty ocean going vessels, they seem to master the seas and be a floating palace. The majestic ships that almost a half a mile long - as they launch out across the ocean. And in 45 days time they cross mighty stretches. Well, we say now that



he was wise.

You think about the airplane today and it has not been about 60 years ago - that Orville and Wilbur Wright startled the whole nation by perfecting a plane that would rise from the sand dunes in N. C. and stayed up in the air for 12 seconds. On that day, a New York newspaper reporter was dismissed for turning in such an incredible story. Well, the Wright brothers were fanatics - they dared to do the impossible. Today they are heroes.

Just like Lindberg crossing the ocean by himself. It was accomplished. Some of the morning papers said that he was a flying fool. But today he is a fool for fame.

You take the telephone - people talked about something like that, they were fanatics. But you can talk between London and New York in 15 seconds. We say, well, that man must have been a genius.

You think about the railroad - pulled by steam. And today by diesel. And on it will go. And it will travel 60, 80, 100 miles per hour. We say how famous that it.

We think about the time Henry Ford said I am going to perfect an automobile so that every man can have something to ride in. And today we say he was a wizzard.

Look at Columbus that dreamed of a new world - started out on an uncharted course. And people who called him just a fanatic - he made possible for the first pilgrims to come to America. And today he is really an immortal.

You take Dr. Kagawa - and they called him such when he gave up riches. Just to be a Christian. They said you are burying yourself in slums, filth, and disease. And where is he now - he has written more than 90 books - more than 1 million 200 thousand copies have been sold to help Japan's slum conditions. He helped to elevate millions of laborers. He set in motion a nationwide evangelistic movement. He is a hero. He is a preacher of power, a dynamic writer. But a hero today.

Daniel refused to obey the decree that said you cannot pray unto God. Be careful now Daniel, be reasonable with your religion. Your religion is important but it is not that important. Don't be too straight laced. Here was a man that stood up for his convictions - he went straight ahead. He was put in the den with the lions and later he was put next in line with the King in power.

Even Jesus our Lord dared to do the impossible. When he was getting ready to go to Jerusalem he said you are foolish. It is needless to expose yourself. Why was he going to Jerusalem - be honored and crowned. To be humiliated and crucified.

Now today, dear friends, many people and many Christians especially never face anything worthy of their best. They shun the real issues of life. They evade the challenges that God has given them. They hold back on the impossible. They work their way through life like a crayfish - backing up from impossible responsibilities and obligations. They do not want to move on as Vashti - thus they lose the best of life.

The cry today is let things alone - as they are. Most of us are just letting things alone as they are. In the domestic realm, in the education realm, in the



national realm - we stand by watching our high ideals as they are shattered, our moral standards collapse, we have drunkenness, immorality, and we are losing our respect for even those who profess to be Christians. Vashti dared to do the impossible. I don't want you to forget - God specializes in these impossibilities. The victory is not on the other side - the battle is the Lord. He will make a way for his sheep. And he says I will go with you - every test thou be with you. But if you have got a problem, you can't help but make it because God majors on impossibilities.

Third, she offered the world something it needs. As I thought of Vashti and the whole area of the world, she offered the world what it needs. She did not indulge and use the license to do as she pleased. But she gave the world something it needs. Stability. No doubt all through her life she had been a stable person. You know this is one of the main reasons why people do not attend church at all, or only occasionally.

The church offers them what they know deep down in their hearts they need most but what they want least.

There are so many people who are near-sighted. They see only the present. They never lift their eyes to peep beyond the rim of time and get a glimpse of themselves in the light of eternity. We need this stability tonight.

Fourth, she gave us deep loyalty for the right. If there is one lesson which she opened up for us - it is that of loyalty to the right. Now this is the reason why our pioneers were able to be trail-blazers, and to get out into the new mountains, cross the rivers, etc.

The great dangers of life is not that it may go wrong. It is that we may not go at all. We may not get moving - we may not get out in the path.

We have some sort of love for God but it is in a common place. What true mother can love in a common sort of way. What true patriot love in a common sort of way. Did God love us in that way. God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Now we are living, loving, and serving the Lord in such a common place way - that we need a deep loyalty for the thing that is right. There are people who have met Jesus Christ and go to church maybe once a quarter. They don't want anymore - because they don't love God anymore. They don't go anymore because they don't care anymore. Some of us are on a religious diet so scant that our souls are dying.

Fifth, she won the victory by conquest. She had to face it and she said "No" - I will not go into this evil banquet. Now I hope we will remember these lessons she left us. She gave herself to purity, dared to do the impossible, left us something that we need, gave us loyalty for the right, and then won the victory. These heroes would neither back up or give up. They never asked, is this an easy road. They only ask, is this the right road. The question was not what do I want to do. It was, what ought I to do. It was not is this the course of policy. Their question was, is this the course that principle dictates.

Now these questions answered and no hardship was too great or danger too terrible, or night at that midnight hour too dark, or road too rocky, no sacrifice was too costly for Vashti.



She has such a challenge for mothers, for women, to mold their thought and character in each generation in the formative period. She has such a message and influence for wives. The power of a trusted and loved wife over a husband cannot be estimated. Gradually and surely, and tenderly this constant companionship shows in the character, happiness, and work of a couple. It is something to offer to women in general as they come in intercourse with the world.

Do you remember the appeal of the Italian patriot, Garibaldi for volunteers. He said I offer you battles and fresh glory - who is willing to follow me will be received among my own people but it will be at the price of great exertions and great perils. I require nothing of you but hearts filled with love for your country. I can give you no pay, no rest, and food will have to be eaten where it is found. Whoever is not satisfied with these conditions had better stay behind.

Nurse

It is on terms similar to this and even harder that Jesus Christ challenges us. If any man will come after me - let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. He does not say I have boundless riches for you. Here is what he says. Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has not where to lay his head. But while he does not offer gold and silver, he offers them things immeasurably greater. He offers you a promise for every hour, comfort for every sorrow, sunshine for every shadow, a song for every sigh, strength for every weakness, rest for every labor, and grace to save, grace to sustain, and love to enfold you.

*of mad & sad story of A Nurse who gave a patient the wrong dose of medicine.*

As a result the patient died. She had chosen to change the physician's prescription. Ignorant and a poorly prepared nurse. (No well trained and experienced nurse would undertake changing the physician's authority.)

What are we giving those who look to us for truth and guidance. Anything less than the word of God will not give them strength to endure in this pagan society. And people today would like to change the prescription. But

it is always the same. Ahab wanted to change it. But Naboth <sup>*Yahweh*</sup> refused.

Remember the <sup>*woman*</sup> man who was not for sale.

*Isaac - sold out to Jacob - Bowl soup*



It will require a staggering faith on your part to go out and to influence all the tomorrow's which you face. But may the challenge of Vashti be the implement of witness in your own daily confrontation of the wilds of the Devil of this world.