

GRACE NOTES RADIO PROGRAM

THEME: Taking a stand – part 2

SONGS: WALK RIGHT OUT

APPLE OF HIS EYE

INTRO: Welcome to Grace Notes. On our last program Barbara Sandbek began the Biblical story of four teenaged boys who took a stand for the Lord. They'd been captured by the Babylonians and carried off to train for service in King Nebuchadnezzar's court. Their first test of faith was to see if they'd remain true to God's laws. It was a tough one, because it involved denying their physical appetites. They could have feasted on royal food, but instead they asked for vegetables and water so they wouldn't have to eat unclean meat. They were faithful to God, and He was faithful to them. God caused the official to grant their request and at the end of ten days they were healthier and better nourished than the others. Why - because God blesses faithfulness. Today, we'll take a look at how Daniel managed to live a godly life in a pagan society.

Have you ever wondered how different Daniel's life might have been had he not been taken captive? He was from a prominent family in Jerusalem, and was quite intelligent, which was one of the reasons he was taken to Babylon. I imagine he had big plans for his future. But God, in His sovereignty, saw fit to place him in a pagan society, under pagan rule. Even the material he had to study was distasteful to a Jew: it covered sorcery, magic, and a multi-god religion. Imagine working for years for kings who warred against your own people.

Throughout these years, though, Daniel labored respectfully and diligently, but without compromising his faith. He would not bend, even when threatened with death. The Bible gives no better model of how to live with and serve those who don't share or respect your beliefs.

Daniel spent his entire life as an alien in Babylon. We have no record that he ever married or had family members nearby. I suppose he must have been lonely at times. But I believe he had a special measure of God's grace and presence and God also gave him three other believing friends for fellowship. When you think about it, I guess you could say Daniel was like a foreign missionary. And in a sense, so are we. The Bible says that as Believers in Christ, we're aliens here. This world is not our home - our home is in Heaven with our Father. Jesus said in John 15:19b...

You do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. He also said of Believers in Matthew 5:14...You are the light of the world.

Though Daniel was under pagan rule, God helped him to flourish in the middle of it. Often we accomplish more when we have to overcome the odds – because we work harder, we don't take things for granted, and most importantly, we depend on God more. With God, the Great Overcomer, on his side he couldn't lose - and neither can we. No matter what confinements you're subjected to, if you're in the will of God, you will succeed. You may be in a valley ALL your life, but you can walk RIGHTLY in that valley, and shine ever so brightly, as you live a life of praise in the middle of the darkness.

***** WALK RIGHT OUT *****

A few years ago, my husband, Dale and I agreed to let a college student come live with us for a while. In addition to all his personal belongings, he brought along a dog and two canaries. WE HAD A CAT. Now he was not just your ordinary cat. He was a twenty pounder we appropriately called 'Moose'. Moose was relatively old and didn't move fast. If he meowed at all it was hardly noticeable. He was for the most part very docile. I almost thought he was human at times, though I knew he still had cat instincts hidden somewhere.

Brad, the college student, placed the birdcage in the kitchen window near the table. Moose enjoyed climbing up on the chair and leaning over the edge to just 'smell' the birds, I'm sure. You could almost see the drool in the corners of his mouth. He never touched the cage - he just stared.

Dale had spent a good deal of time training Moose to sit on his lap. The poor, old cat would wince for a while and then give in. Eventually, he saw it as a regular ritual and would even jump on Dale's lap. Dale considered himself an 'animal trainer'. One weekend, when Brad was away, Dale decided he would start training the birds. Brad had said that they weren't friendly but there was no stopping Dale. He was going to teach them to sit on his finger. There was only one problem. Moose was lying on the floor next to the cage. I said, "Dale, you can't do that with the cat in the house". To which he responded, "No problem, Moose can't jump that high." And I believed him.

He reached in and the birds immediately moved to the back of the cage. With persistence, he pursued them until he managed to get one on his finger. I figured he'd be satisfied with that, but he wanted to take it OUT of the cage. Ignoring my pleading, he slowly inched his hand to the door. Once outside, the flustered bird hardly had time to notice he was out of the cage, when to my

horror, Moose, jumped, from a prone position, all 20 pounds of him, almost four feet in the air and snatched the bird from Dale's finger. With his catch in his teeth, he raced to the foyer and crouched down with the bird. I hollered..."Dale, Brad's going to kill you". "Moose, stop". We ran to the foyer and gingerly loosed the bird from Moose's grip and placed it, all ruffled, back in its cage.

I sat there looking at the poor frazzled bird and thought of how safe it had been while it was caged. Which led me to think about the confinements God places around us. We're safe when we're where He has put us, but often the grass looks greener on the other side. We fail to see the harm there, so we kick and scream, until finally God lets us have our way. Then we climb out of our cage, so to speak, only to find danger lurking. If you have no peace in the situation you've placed yourself in, you're probably outside of God's haven of rest. I'm thankful that our Father, God is looking out for us, even when we stray, and He is there to pull us from the snares and take us back to safety. Oh, we may be ruffled up a bit, but hopefully, we've learned our lesson to trust God's plan.

God sheltered and cared for Daniel his entire life. He blessed Him with intelligence, good health, influence and success, and ultimately great rewards in Heaven for his faithfulness. King David's prayer in Psalm 17:5-8 could well have been Daniel's, and should be ours as well...

My steps have held to Your path.
My feet have not slipped.
I call on You, O God, for You will answer me.
Give ear to me and hear my prayer.
Show the wonder of Your great love – You who save by Your right hand,
those who take refuge in you from their foes.
Keep me as the apple of your eye.
Hide me in the shadow of your wings.

How consoling to know, that the God who formed us, knows our every need and will guide us through our darkest night. Listen now, to one of my very favorite songs about God's love.

**** APPLE OF HIS EYE *****

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