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GRACE NOTES RADIO PROGRAM

THEME: Taking a stand - part 3

SONGS: KEEP YOUR EYES UPON THE CROSS

JESUS HOLD MY HAND

INTRO: Welcome to Grace Notes. We've been studying the lives of four teenaged Jewish boys, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. We've seen them removed from their family and its Godly influence, trained in pagan culture, and tempted with things that would make ANYONE want to compromise. So far, they've passed all the tests with flying colors. On our program today, Barbara Sandbek will tell us about an even bigger test they had to face. Will they give in? Stay tuned and find out.

The parents of these young men must have been grieved when they were taken away to a pagan land, but I'm sure God gave them faith to believe that their boys would live out their Godly upbringing. Though the teens' at-home training was short lived, it was enough to affect them their entire life. So I say to you, parents, make sure you spend QUALITY time with your kids, in the Word - you may not have QUANTITY time. Trust that God's Word will remain with them, even when they're not with you. And remember the general principle found in Proverbs 22:6...

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.

The Bible tells of other young men who were placed in a similar situation and remained faithful. Joseph was sold into slavery when he was a teen. Moses was moved into Pharaoh's court right after he was weaned, at about five years of age. I love those verses in Hebrews 11:24-28...

By FAITH, Moses, when he had grown up, REFUSED to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He CHOSE to be mistreated along with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

That sounds so much like Hebrews 12:2, written about our Lord Jesus. It reads...

...Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the JOY that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus and Moses both focused on a future reward – for Christ, it was bringing many sons to glory - for Moses, it was his inheritance in Christ.

It's hard to understand, sometimes, why God keeps us here on this earth in the midst of such immorality, after we've accepted Christ as our Savior. Yet even Jesus, sinless as He was, was sent here to live among sinful people. He did this to provide, and show the way to the Father. And Believers are given GRACE and POWER to live a life that points others to Christ in this dark world.

The key to successful Christian living, independent of our environment is FAITH, FORTITUDE and FOCUS. To do this we need to keep OUR eyes on the cross and not the world around us.

***** KEEP YOUR EYES *****

Temptations come against our body, our soul, and our spirit. God allows us to be tested, not so we might fall into sin, but so that we might have increased faith and be victorious. 1 Peter 1: 7 says...

These (trials) have come so that your faith – of greater worth than GOLD, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

God will never allow us to HAVE TO yield to temptation. The situation will not be so difficult that we can't stay true to Him.

Daniel and the boys' first temptation was against the body. In order to keep the Lord's command not to eat meat sacrificed to idols, they had to deny their physical appetites.

God showed Himself faithful as he paved the way for them to obey Him. And God blessed them for their faithfulness by causing them to look healthier and more nourished than all the others, even on a vegie and water diet.

But, faith untested wanes. Following each successful testing, there will be a new test to build our faith.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream.

The Babylonians believed the gods communicated to them through dreams. The Israelites believed that Jehovah God spoke through dreams, both to the righteous and unrighteous. Some dreams were clear and direct, while others

were symbolic, requiring an expert to unravel. The difference between the pagans and the Jews approach to dreams was in the method used to interpret them. The pagans used divination – a process by which they solicited the help of evil spirits using magic, witchcraft or enchantment. They often inspected an animal’s liver for distinctive marks or shapes, or threw sticks or lots, or looked for meaning in the onset of a storm, the baying of dogs and the slithering of snakes. The Israelites were not to use these methods according to Leviticus 19:26b. They were to seek the face of God for the revelation.

Daniel 2 says that King Nebuchadnezzar wanted his wise men to not only interpret the dream but to tell him what the dream was. If they couldn’t, he’d have them cut into pieces and their houses turned into piles of rubble.

Here’s a test against the soul. They faced death. I’m sure Daniel’s pagan peers probably tried their magic, but couldn’t discern the dream. Would Daniel go along with them to be one of the boys, or would he pray and seek God’s face? This was certainly not what they had been taught in the Babylonian school.

Once again God paved the way for obedience. Daniel 1:17b says...
...Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

Daniel, along with his supporting friends, chose to plead for mercy – that’s praying - big time, to the Lord, rather than succumb to the methods of the day. Another test passed. And again, God was faithful. He revealed the mystery to them.

In our society, people everywhere are consulting psychics, horoscopes and tarot cards for their answers, rather than seeking the God of the Universe, who sees and knows all. It’s the ‘in’ thing to do, even among some professing Christians. This is an abomination to God.

So what can we expect from God in this day and age? - the same thing as in Old Testament times – only more. As Believers, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us. God will still pave the way for obedience and reward us for it when we seek His guidance as we travel through this pilgrim land.

*** JESUS HOLD MY HAND ***

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Sandbek Ministries

P.O. Box 581

Fallston, MD 21047

or visit us at our web site at www.gracenotesradio.com.

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