

Standing Strong When Circumstances Shake Your Faith

As he sat in his prison cell, surely he must have reflected back on the incredible ministry he had once had. He had been called by God from the time he was still in his mother's womb, to preach repentance from sins – to prepare the way of the Lord. There was nothing at all average about him. He had a clear and strong destiny, and as a young man, he set out to fulfill it.

Crowds of people gathered by the river where he preached a strong message of repentance. One by one people repented and were baptized. Day after day he preached, baptized, and even criticized those who thought they had no need to repent.

He stood strong and fast against sin – and that was what eventually grated on the political leaders until they arrested him and threw him in prison.

And there he sat in the cold, dank cell filled with rats and insects of all sorts – dirt, filth, maggots, lice and stuff no one even wants to talk about.

As time went by, doubts began to plague his thoughts. Perhaps he was just another radical in a long line of radicals that had excited and moved the masses, who were here today and tomorrow forgotten. Surely, just as he had disappeared from the scene, another one would rise up in his place. Who was he to think he was actually a prophet of God? Who was he to think that **he** was called by God to prepare the way for the Messiah? The very Messiah his ancestors had hoped to see in their lifetimes. The very Messiah that King David himself had spoke of.

How presumptuous of him to think that *he* would be called to such an honor.

And yet – there was his cousin Jesus.

Jesus.

Was he ***really*** the Messiah?

He had been so sure. In fact, he had never been more certain of the time.

There was the baptism and the dove.

But was that just a figment of his imagination?

Oh to be sure again! Oh to know that all that had happened wasn't just another show of radicals with eloquent words void of substance.

And it was in this time of weakness, despair, and doubt that John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to ask Him if He really was the Messiah, the Christ, God incarnate.

And just when you think that Jesus might have criticized John for his doubts – after all, John was his cousin. He had been the first to declare Him the Messiah. Jesus' response is not at all what you would expect.

He turns to John's disciples and simply tells them to relay to John what they had seen: miracles and deliverance. No criticism, no condemnation.

Then He turns to the multitudes and starts to talk about John: about his strength of character and prophetic call to prepare the way for the Messiah. He even goes so far to say that there was no greater prophet ever born.

No greater prophet. Greater than Isaiah and Jeremiah, Elijah and Elisha and Samuel.

And while I read this and pondered on its message, I began to see God's love and mercy in a whole new dimension.

There is not a Christian in all of history who hasn't faced times when their faith was weak.

If there is anything this story reaffirms for us, it is that God is more merciful and loving than we have ever imagined. I have known – known very well – the side of God that is righteous and holy. And He *is* righteous and holy. But He is also merciful and loving. His mercy and love perfectly balance His righteousness and holiness in a way that is hard for us to comprehend. Actually – we can't understand it with our minds. We have to experience it.

Perhaps you feel distanced from God right now.

Maybe you have lost your passion for Him and His word.

Maybe you are walking through a time of great pain.

Perhaps all you have ever thought and known is being tested.

Do not be afraid to come to Jesus with your doubts and questions. He won't turn you away. He won't rebuke you, criticize you or reject you. He will lovingly show you His power and might.

And just as later on, John had the strength He needed to stand strong in face of the greatest test he would ever face – martyrdom – and He gave his very life for Christ, so you will find that as you come out on the other side you will have greater strength than ever before!

It is in those times of great weakness that He becomes our strength!

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When Rosilind isn't writing, she is dreaming up recipes and searching for ways to organize her home better. You can find her at A Little R & R, where she writes about missions, marriage and family, toddler activities and her recipes.