



All the doom-and-gloom stuff from earlier in Isaiah was the result of their excessive disregard for the things of God; for not putting God first, for failing to realize that their national purpose was to bring glory and honor to God, not to themselves.

Israel wanted all the protections, hope, and comfort of Isaiah 43, without the reminders in verses 1 and 7 that all things are under divine ownership. This is a timeless temptation. Many preachers teach divine-driven wealth without equal talk about devotion and service to that God. They fail to acknowledge that you belong to God completely, and that God has a lot to say about what you do with the wealth or property that's been entrusted to you. Too often we want the divine benefits without the divine demands.

The other feature to these verses is the use of the word "When..." in verse 2. The promise is not wholesale avoidance of difficulties, but an abiding divine presence *in* them. The simple and unhappy fact is that we will pass through the waters or the fires of life. We still live in the shadow of dreadful mass shootings. We're only fooling ourselves if we think we can avoid these things ever again (although we must do what we can do make this horror less likely). We live in the shadow of people who died this past year. And there will be more hurt in our communities this year. There will be disappointment. The honest truth is that we have not seen our last funeral.

What we cling to in hope, however, is that God goes with us in and through life's difficulties. There will always be a new thing yet to come in God's grace and in his kingdom coming. Nowhere in Scripture are we thrown back onto our own resources.