



## Pastor's pen

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.  
Isaiah 43:1b-3a

Dear Bethel Church family and friends,

I pray you are all well and resting peacefully in the loving arms of our dear Savior. As I pen these words, the seasons have changed from fall to winter, and we look forward with great expectation and joy to the annual celebration of Our Lord's birth. With Christmas right around the corner, I want to return to our study of God's precious promises to us as His people. How come? Because our Heavenly Father is a covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God, as both the regular changes of the seasons and Christ's incarnation remind us. Therefore, to better understand Him, we need to recognize and value what He's promised us as His children. Hence, our study of the Scriptural promises God has given to His people.

This month, we're going to investigate one of the Lord's assurances found in Chapter 43 of the book of Isaiah. Why Isaiah, the son of Amoz? Because the word pictures he paints under the Spirit's guidance are virtually unequalled in the rest of Scripture. And I'm convinced that it's only when we have a clear view of God, as well as a passion for His holiness and His glory, that we become the growing, excited, world-transforming disciples He's called us to be.

Unfortunately, sometimes in our haste to appropriate the Holy One of Israel's guarantees for us, we take them out of context, leaving us unable to apply them correctly. Therefore, let's spend a moment and consider the original background of these verses. Isaiah has been writing to the people of Judah about their coming exile. Even though things seem to be prosperous in the kingdom, the prophet has been preaching a message of judgment. How come?

Because God's people have not been faithful in keeping their covenant obligations. As he closes chapter 42, God's servant asks this pressing question, "Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers?" Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, proceeds to explain why Judah was sent into exile, "Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law." So, what did Isaiah write would be the result of this disobedience? "He poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart." Right on the heels of this promise of punishment, we read of God's promise of protection for all His covenant community. While their sin has resulted in God giving them over to punishment by the Babylonians, He has not abandoned His own. The people of Judah can expect God to be with them even through the tribulations expected in the coming deportation.

So how does this apply to us today as daughters and sons of the King? As members of God's covenant people, we too are protected through suffering, not from it. It has been said before that if you are not currently facing some trial or tribulation in your life, you are likely either just coming out of one or will be encountering one really soon. Why? Beloved of God, we live in a fallen world, corrupted by sin. On top of that, we carry our own fallen nature with us every moment of every day. Oftentimes, God allows these trials to take place to transform us, to make us holy. And just like ancient Israel, we can be confident that God will be with us as we go through difficult times. Are you struggling today? Let me encourage you to seek refuge in the arms of our Heavenly Father, for He has promised to protect you, to be with you even as you walk through the storms of life.

May the joy of Christ fill your hearts as we celebrate Our Lord's incarnation and look forward hopefully to His second coming.

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor Chris

## this week

Sunday's sermon:

*Ending Well*

Ecclesiastes 7:1-13

## volunteer schedule

[Infant Nursery](#)  
Ann Carol Love  
and Abby Chidester

[Toddler Nursery](#)  
Staci and Brett  
Brackett

[Worship Training](#)  
Danielle Austin and  
Amanda Brummett