

Forget the Former Things

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” (Isaiah 43:18-19 NIV)

As we walk through this weary world... what a pessimistic beginning to a statement that laments the challenges we face in our lives from time to time, even as believers. Yet, we can all resonate with that statement during times of difficulty. Unfortunately, in Christian higher education right now, many of us (librarians) have faced or are facing significant and systemic challenges that do not seem to be fading, which puts pressure on our faith. It is one thing when we face temporary challenges that are resolved in the short term; however, it is quite another thing when those challenges seem to be on an indefinite loop.

So, when we come to a passage, a promise from the Lord, that seems too good to be true, it challenges our faith. That is what we find in Isaiah when God gives Israel, and by extension to us as believers, an enormous promise. “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland (Isaiah 43:18-19).” What a wonderful and encouraging promise. I should forget the difficulties of the past and look forward to the new “thing” the Lord is about to spring on me. God says it is already in the works. Do I not see it? What if I said, “No!”

The challenge and the hope of this promise is the context in which it is located. When we back up in this chapter, we find Israel has been in difficulty for a long period. In verse 2, Isaiah tells Israel that when you pass through the waters and rivers, I (God) will be with you, and the waters will not

overtake you. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned nor set ablaze.

Over the past few years, I have struggled with serving the Lord as a library leader in a challenging environment. I have wanted to see this “new thing” the Lord is doing and move out of the waters and away from the blaze. Yet, I felt like the waters were continuing to rise, pushing me toward the blaze. Then, in what seemed like an out of the blue event, God fulfilled this promise in my life. He did a new thing that removed me from the difficult environment and put me in a new place with a wonderful, hopeful future. Lord, thank you for keeping your promise!

While I want to relish in the “new thing” God has done in my life, God wants me to reflect on the process. *Did you drown while I walked with you through the difficulty?* No, God, you were holding me up. *Did you get burned by the challenges?* No, God, you wrapped yourself around me and protected me. *Do you believe I will be with you during the waters and fires to come?* Yes, Lord, you are faithful. Lord, thank you for keeping your promises!

Brothers and sisters, keep the faith. When you find yourself walking neck deep in water or surrounded by the blaze, remember God is with you because He keeps his promises. Also, keep the faith when God springs the new thing on you because God is with you.



—Ed Walton

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