

The Arm of the Lord - Part 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing the resurrection power of Christ in our lives, taking our stand on the values secured for us in Isaiah 53, and drawing upon the power of His resurrection.

Duration: 39:09

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, Isaiah 54:1-4, Isaiah 54:14-17

Topics: "God's Work"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the theme of resurrection and its significance in the Bible. He highlights various instances in the New Testament where the resurrection of Jesus brought about profound changes in people's lives. The preacher emphasizes the movement from barrenness to fruitfulness, sweetness to enlargement, and shame to honor that occurred as a result of Christ's resurrection. He also mentions the transformation of the disciples from a small, fearful group to a growing fellowship of believers spreading the message of resurrection throughout the world. The sermon emphasizes the powerful effects of Christ's resurrection and its ongoing impact on believers.

Transcript

We turn again to the prophecies of Isaiah, and this morning we are very definitely moving on to the other side of the cross, on from chapter fifty-three. As we pointed out last night, chapter fifty-three sees the way open and cleared for God by the cross, and a new day, a new prospect, breaking forth after all that tragedy. And when we come into chapter fifty-four, we have what we may call a sample chapter of resurrection.

As very much as we have indicated in the remaining chapters of these prophecies, which indicate what the new day is, what the Lord would have it to be, this very next chapter is a very good example of that new day of resurrection. There are eight features or characteristics of this new day in this very chapter. Eight, as you know, is the number of resurrections, and you can just pass your eye down through the chapter, take account of these things.

In verse one, there is the movement from barrenness to fruitfulness, a first feature of resurrection. In verses two and three, movement from straightness to enlargement, enlarge the place of thy tent, let them stretch forth the curtains of thine inhabitation, bear not, strengthen thy cords, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy states. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand, and on the left, and thy seed shall possess the nation, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

How true of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Number three, verses four to six, the movement from shame to honor, fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame, thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and so on, from shame to honor. Verses six to seven, from forsakenness to fellowship, the Lord hath called thee as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, set by God.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. From forsakenness to fellowship, thou faith, from wrath to mercy, in overflowing wrath, I hid my faith from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. See thee, the look back to the cross in which all those things were true, and now it's resurrection and they've passed, and it's a mighty and wonderful change.

Next, in verses eleven and twelve, from affliction and desolation to comfort and glory, O thou afflicted, tossed with the tempest, not comforted, behold I will set thy stones in fair colors, lay thy foundations with sapphire, and I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones. From affliction and desolation to comfort and glory. Then verses fourteen to sixteen, from oppression to security, in righteousness shalt thou be established.

Thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear, and from terror, for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they may gather together, but not by me. Whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall because of thee.

Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his work, and I have created the waster to destroy. That leads to the last, verse seventeen, from reproach to vindication. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every town that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn.

This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness, which is of me, that's the Lord. Surely a wonderful sample of resurrection, life, power, and glory. As in other connections, so in this, we carry the whole thing over from Old Testament history into New Testament, and into this very dispensation in which we live, the day of resurrection.

How true all this was and is of the Lord Jesus in the first place. There was the negative side, all those things that we have mentioned. The stripping, barrenness, and desolation of the cross.

The straightness, which he spoke, how am I straightened, how am I straightened until it be accomplished. Shame and reproach, forsakenness, forsakenness even of his very Father God. The wrath of God resting upon him.

He was afflicted, afflicted, oppressed, and reproached. All those things were true in chapter 53. Now the whole thing has changed.

And how very true the change is for the Lord Jesus in resurrection. What fruitfulness has taken the place of barrenness? Yes, the corn of wheat falling into the ground, dying, has indeed borne very much fruit. We're only a very, very small example or representation of that today here.

Fruit out of many nations, but representing so many more. Great joy to us, is it not, today to know, and to know personally in so many cases, the fruitfulness of his suffering in the seeing of his seed. Out of barrenness into fruitfulness.

Out of his straightness against which he groans through the great enlargement that has come to him. What enlargement? Out of the shame into the honour. The multitudes and multitudes ever since and today all over the world are just heaping honour upon him.

And so we go on. How true all this is of the Lord Jesus himself in resurrection. But you can see also how true this became of that little band of disciples.

You could say that in a certain sense, at the time of the cross, these negative and dark things were true of them. Yes, everything was gone. The trees were split bare.

It was barrenness indeed. In their hearts they were saying, what has it all been for? Why did we give up everything? We've lost everything. It's all gone.

But see the change from the day of Pentecost and from then onwards from barrenness to fruitfulness. And again you go through all this list of characteristics. From straightness, a little band, a handful of men straightened in a few miles, Jerusalem and Judea and Palestine, little countries, but their sound, said Paul, went into all the earth.

And to the ends of the earth, what enlargement, the lengthening of cause, the strengthening of faith in resurrection. From there a loneliness, a terrible, terrible loneliness that came over them when he, as they thought, was dead. But now the marvelous fellowship that has sprung up and been established in the relationship with a growing and ever-growing company of fellow believers.

Yes, it was true for the disciples. All these things came about, this wonderful changeover in their experience. But does it stop there? Does it stop there? No.

Same thing we find in the New Testament became true of every new believer. And on and on till now. These are the things that are the true characteristics of the believer's life, if the believer's life is a true believer's life, a believer's life.

You're living the other side of the cross, or even if you're living in the day of his death, just living with Christ dead. Well, it's not true. But if we are living as true believers on the ground of his resurrection, all these things are true.

They are true. It's a very blessed thing for us here this morning to be able to say without any hesitation, without our tongue in our cheeks as we say, these things are true. He has changed from barrenness to fruitfulness.

He has changed our life from strictness to enlargement. Oh, what enlargement! Yes, he indeed has given us a large place, a very large place. He has changed our lot from shame to honor, from forsakenness and aloneness to fellowship and so on.

This is the heritage of every true believer, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, this wonderful notice struck and sound forth, a new life, a new hope, a new assurance. Well, so it is in the New Testament, you see, the effects of Christ's resurrection. Just note, sometimes you can, the marvelous effect that his appearing or appearances had upon the people concerned.

As far as we can see, there were about ten appearances of the Lord after his resurrection. Five of them took place on one day, between sunrise and perhaps a little after sunset. The other five were scattered

over a period in different places.

But it's most interesting, it's most impressive, it's most instructive to notice just the change that took place between the time before he appeared and the time when he disappeared. Tremendous change that came over the people concerned and over everything. Run through those ten appearances.

The first, undoubtedly, was to Mary Magdalene, who came early to the tomb with spices to anoint his body. You remember the story, we can't this morning describe every occasion, but what a poor, sad, desolate, barren sort of person she was then that morning. What a plaintive note there is, as she behoves him without recognizing him and calls him the God known.

Sir, if you've borne him away, tell me where you've laid him. Jesus only meant spoke her name, Mary. The whole situation is transformed, transfigured.

And she hurries from the tomb, hurries away to tell his disciples. And it would seem that there were other women nearby, and as they were going, she and they could tell the disciples, Jesus met them on the way. And another transforming scene and experience.

Then we're told that he appeared unto Simon. He doesn't want very much imagination to see what kind of Simon he was when Jesus appeared to him. Well, he was not a very happy sort of man.

No, if ever there was a man who felt that he was bereft, bereft of everything, stripped, dark, and in utter despair, aloneness, forsaken, it must have been Simon Peter. Jesus appeared to him, gave him a private appearance, a private interview. Ah, yes.

And it changed the whole situation, didn't it? Completely changed and transformed the whole outlook for Simon. And then to two disciples on the way to Emmaus. What miserable men they were.

What sad men they were. What desolate men they were. They walked and were sad.

It was the longest three miles that ever two men had walked. But then Jesus appeared. Their eyes grew.

They saw him. He went. It was the shortest three miles that ever a man had run.

I don't know whether they did a mile, four miles, or three miles in a minute, but I'm quite sure they were not conscious of those three miles. Distance and time lost all its meaning as they simply hurried back, leaped afoot to Jerusalem to tell the others. Oh, the whole scene was changed.

They came in, came in, and before they could say anything about what had happened to them, they were met with this from those in Jerusalem. The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon. A changed scene into which they came in Jerusalem.

And then to the apostles themselves and some others. Well I, shall I go through every instance? Till the above five hundred brethren in Galilee. His appearance, that is.

His coming and resurrection. Everywhere, on every occasion, just brought about a marvelous change in the whole situation. Yes, Isaiah 54 had a very real fulfillment in their case.

Its resurrection. Its resurrection. What we really are concerned with here, dear friends, is that this should become something for us.

We might again say, yes, long ago and far away, but no. No, the big question which arises with us is, have we any ground for believing that this can be our right up-to-date experience? And I want to say that the New Testament presents us with very solid ground for that. There is very much in the New Testament, after the Lord has gone to glory, in the experience of men and women that had this effect.

Again, I've got, I should have to start to take you through the New Testament. I'm only to take you through the book of the Acts. And look, what about that Ethiopian? On his way home, disappointed and desolate, sorrowful and perplexed.

Yes, we may say that through his servant, Philip, and through the word of Isaiah 53, in the mouth of Philip, the risen Lord met that man. The whole thing was changed. The last we hear of him is, he went on his way for rejoicing.

It's a transfigured life, a transfigured situation, because he has come into touch with the risen Lord. And so again, you could go on, you see every one of these wants a series of meetings, doesn't it? You go on like that. The marvelous transformation by a touch of the risen Lord, after he'd gone to glory, change that took place when the spirit of the Lord touched people, came into their lives, came into their midst.

They met sometimes in that perplexity and oppression and suffering and affliction with the threats of the rulers. But they met, and they went away, changed people, full of joy, full of confidence, like that. Well, has the dispensation ended with the book of the Acts? The book of the Acts has never had a conclusion.

It's broken up. The Holy Spirit never intended Luke to write the end of that story, because it had got to go on and on and on to the end of the dispensation. What was true then is to be true in our experience now.

Yes, there's plenty of evidence and ground for this. But then you say, you say, on what ground can this experience be mine? How can this be true of me if the Scripture really gives that which justifies an expectation that it should be true in our case? If we really have got it in the Word that it ought to be like that in our case, then, of course, the question arises, how can it be? How can it be? Is that your question? Well, I want to say as quickly as I can, as concisely as possible, how it can be, how we really can know this. First of all, we must, we just must most positively take our stand on that ground which God has provided for us through the cross of the Lord Jesus.

That is, we must take all the values of Isaiah 53 as provided for us and take our stand upon that ground. What I mean, dear friend, is this, that Isaiah 53 tells us of all that has been done for us. He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. He bared the sins of many.

Our whole state and condition under condemnation and judgment was put on Him by God Himself. He, He made His soul an offering to the divine Father. If you and I still will linger on that ground of question or doubt as to whether the Lord Jesus has done that for our sins, past, present, and future, for us as men and women, if we linger on the ground of doubt or question about that, there is no hope of this transforming experience of resurrection.

If you are still nursing condemnation, still opening your heart or your mind to accusations, you are in effect denying the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, and God cannot show you His mighty arm. So whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Never to any man or woman who brings a question upon the work of the

Lord Jesus in His cross. Never.

Oh no. You've got to get off of that ground, right off of that ground, in every way. And if you are so fond of doubting and questioning and you will so tenaciously hold on to condemnation, can't you swing right over the other way and put all that capacity for doubting and unbelieving round the other way and say about your condemnation, I don't believe it.

Isaiah 53 says that He took all that from me. I definitely do not believe it. I won't believe it.

The cross of the Lord Jesus forbids me to believe that there is condemnation. Put your strong, mighty capacity for unbelief round the other way. Let it be converted.

And now, put it over against all this work of the accusing spirits and the accusing conscience and the accusing heart. Meet the whole thing in the reverse. Mark you, you will never, you will never know this mighty many-sided transformation and transfiguration of life until you positively, positively take your stand on the values which have been secured for you in Isaiah 53.

You will have again the very simplicity of a beginner to sit down with that chapter and as has been so often said, put your name in there. He was wounded for my iniquity. He was bruised for my triumph.

It was the chastisement of my peace was upon Him. With His stripes I am healed. You never get into resurrection glory until you really do stand firmly on that ground.

You see, we are the ground of death. It's in us, not in Christ. We are the ground of death.

We must therefore repudiate our own ground. Yes, I know it well and thousands more. There's one that died in my place.

Faith, faith must credit God and Christ with the full meaning of the cross. It must. Then in the next place, we must take a positive attitude at all times to the power of His resurrection.

It must be this attitude and this position of faith in God that raises the dead. We must really reckon upon that extra and that other which is represented by the power of His resurrection. It is all true that we are this and that is that and things are as they are.

It's all true, we are not putting on blinkers and trying to make believe that we are not as bad as we are or things are not as bad as they are. They are just as bad as they can be inside and out. There's something more than that.

There's an extra and there is an other and that is the power of His resurrection. And we must really take a positive attitude at all times, at all times, towards the power of His resurrection. And then, we must, while of course avoiding breaking the laws of God.

I have to put that in because I've been doing it myself lately. We must, while avoiding breaking the laws of God, definitely draw upon His risen life. You wonder what I mean by that little parenthesis.

Well, if you go on for something like eleven weeks, three, four, five meetings a day without one day's rest, then you are breaking the law of God and God cannot protect you. That's exactly what happens. Oh, how long it takes us to learn these lessons.

It takes us a long lifetime to learn them. We get drawn by need and appeal and so on. I think the Lord is very sympathetic, but nevertheless, He does not set aside His laws.

But that's by the way, that's by the way. Nevertheless, learn the lessons. So, I have to say that while avoiding breaking divine laws, the laws of our bodies, and you can never speak of the laws of nature without meaning God, see.

Laws of nature are God and God is the law of nature. That's not pantheism that I'm preaching, but you see what I mean. The law of nature brings you right into touch with God.

So, while not violating God in His laws, in the body and so on, we must deliberately at all times draw upon His resurrection life. We must do it. We must do it.

We must keep a tight hold, so to speak, on the risen life of the Lord and draw upon it. Make a very practical thing of it. When I was a little fellow, I remember to this day something that my mother said to me.

She was telling me, describing the death of my grandfather, an old man of 84, and she was sitting by his bed as he was slowly, slowly passing away, a very strong man physically. And she told me, she said, he had hold of my hand in a tremendous grip. I was praying for him, but he was gradually sinking away.

And I don't know what the science of this is, whether there's any truth in it at all, but I remember what she said. She said, I felt that he was drawing the very life out of me. I felt my vitality being sent.

He was pulling something out of me to hold on to life. And at last, I could stand it no longer. I just hanked to wrench my hand out of his.

And when I did so, he went. Well, I don't know what that means at all, whether that really is a true thing. But to me, it's an illustration.

We have literally got to draw vitality out of our Lord. It's an attitude, a grip of faith, that we must lay hold on life, as Paul said to Timothy, lay hold on life, draw on this life. It must be something that we do.

Yes. We, I fear, dear friends, are far too indefinite in this matter of our relationship to our risen Lord. Too indefinite.

We believe in the resurrection. We believe in resurrection life. We believe that it is for us.

But we are not definite enough about it. Now, begin by saying, do I need resurrection life? Do I? Am I in need of the power of his resurrection? Of course, if you have no sense of need, then you won't be definite about it. But if you have, in any way, in any way, you really feel your need of the power of his resurrection, that the arm of the Lord should be revealed in that way to you.

Do you sense your need? Secondly, is there scripture? Is there scripture? Is there that in the word of God which justifies me in believing that that life is for me? Then the third thing will be, let me get to the word and find out what the word says about this. Let me gather up, search out, all that the word of God says about this matter of resurrection life for me. See, it's an exercise.

Not just some random test. But what does the word of God really say about this? Get a strong foundation of scripture under your feet. If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead be in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by his spirit that dwelleth in you.

That's in the Bible. See, it's an exercise. Not just some random test.

But what does the word of God really say about this? Get a strong foundation of scripture under your feet. If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead be in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by his spirit that dwelleth in you. That's in the Bible.

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh. That's scripture. Now, get to it.

Gather it all up. All that you can find. And then take it to the Lord.

And say, Lord, your word clearly says, and here it is, you can quote scripture to the Lord if you like. It's a very healthy thing to quote the word to him. Remind him of his word.

Say, now, Lord, you have said, you have said that the power of the resurrection is to be now known in your people, in believers. He said it. Here is your word about it.

Present it to him, all that you can find. Be very definite on this matter. Bring it to the Lord.

We are far too indefinite. We might say marvellous things, wonderful things, but a far greater testimony of resurrection lies if only we would be more definite about Jesus. That is the way of it.

It's not going to be casual. It's not just going to happen. Any dilly-dallying about this thing will not find us coming into the good of it.

But here we must be positive. We must be definite. We must make this a very real matter because it's not just personal for our good.

The whole testimony of our risen Lord is bound up with it. And this applies in many ways, of course. It applies to ourselves individually, spiritually, spiritually.

Let's get hold of the word for ourselves spiritually as to life, as to resurrection, for our spiritual life. Many of you no doubt are in real spiritual need of life, new expression of life spiritually. It may be physically, and it can be physically, blessed be God, that we can take life for our bodies.

We may know the resurrection life of God carrying us on through impossible physical situations, making a marvellous testimony. Yes, physically. It may be in relation to our ministry.

We may need a new expression of life in our ministry. The bearing of his arm through our ministry. Well, it's the same principle, you see.

For after all, all ministry has to be fulfilled in the power of his resurrection, or true spiritual ministry. There is no other. It may apply to the company of the Lord's people, of which we are a part, or in which perhaps we have some responsibility and we are very burdened.

And the great need is, oh, that the arm of the Lord should be revealed. Oh, that the power of resurrection should be manifested. Things are going down, down, death, weakness and dishonour and so on.

This is not glorifying God. What are you going to do about it? Well, the same exercise. This resurrection of the Lord Jesus is for every aspect of the life of the believer and the church.

But it does not just happen. I say again, we've got to take a very definite and positive attitude to this matter. If we will.

If we do. Some of us do know with a long history that this really does work. It really does work.

The miracles of sustenance and enablement and supply and carrying on and raising up again and again and again result from a definite faith-laid hope on the fact that Christ is risen for us. He died for us. He's risen for us.

He dies in our place. He lives in our place. He is a living God.

Heavenly Father.

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