

The Arm of the Lord - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The arm of the Lord is revealed to those who have a broken and contrite spirit, and who are humble and lowly in mind.

Duration: 45:50

Scripture: Isaiah 52:14 - 53:3, Philippians 2:3-5

Topics: "God's Work"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker explores the reactions and judgments of both the Gentiles and Israel towards the servant of Jehovah. The world of men is silenced in awe of this servant, while Israel sees him as unattractive and unworthy. Despite this, the servant humbles himself and does not defend himself when oppressed and led to the slaughter. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the profound ways of God as he moves towards revealing his arms through the servant.

Transcript

Isaiah chapter 53, the second part of verse 1. To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? The arm of the Lord. We are at this time seeking the answer to that question. To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Understanding that that is a symbolic phrase, the arm of the Lord, implying the Lord's support, the Lord's cooperation, the Lord's strength, the Lord himself standing by in favor with all his might.

We believe that within this chapter, which really begins at verse 13 of what is marked chapter 52, and beneath the main story that is drawn in such vivid lines, there are to be found those spiritual thoughts of God which are the answer to the inquiry, those thoughts which are divine laws, divine principles, upon which the arm of the Lord is revealed. These are of abiding and universal application, a whole matter of the committing of himself to any person or persons, to any work or service, the showing of his arm. So we continue our investigation to discover what these divine thoughts are.

There are certain things which lie clearly upon the surface, as you have the record before you. First of all, one thing that is very apparent is the main difference between the attitude of man and the attitude of God to this suffering servant of the Lord. Those two attitudes are very clearly defined, very easily marked, and represent two entirely different realms, the attitude of God and the attitude of man.

As to the attitude of man or man's judgment concerning this one, my servant, you find that falls into two parts. Firstly, that of the Gentiles, and secondly, that of Israel. The attitude or the judgment of the Gentiles

on hearing the report and receiving the description is found in those last verses of chapter 52, like as many as were starned at thee.

His visage was so marred more than any man, his form more than the sons of men. So shall he startle, well that is the word, not sprinkle, startle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at him, for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

The report mentioned in the next verse, first of chapter 53, is so marked, the report of him which had gone forth, hath called the nations and the kings to be startled. They shut their mouths in a horrified consternation. The description produces this attitude of dumb amazement and incredulity.

Incredulity, who hath received the report? Not these. Incredulity. This could never be the servant of the Lord.

Such an one, such a one. Tell us that that is the servant of Jehovah. Tell us that that is the redeemer of mankind.

Tell us such a creature stands within the pain of divine approval. Never. They shut their mouths.

Their jaws are fixed. The Gentile reaction and judgment. And then into the long passage of the chapter, Israel's reaction is described.

What is Israel's judgment on receiving the report, the record, the story, the description? Well, how did Israel look upon him? Root out of a dry ground. Nothing beautiful about that. Nothing attractive about that.

Something you might find in the way and kick it out of your path. That's the value. That's the estimate of it.

Despise and reject. That's Israel's judgment. Man of sorrow, acquainted with grief.

Tell us that's the Messiah. Tell us that's the anointed of the Lord. Tell us that's the servant of Jehovah.

Tell us that's the redeemer of Israel. No. Never.

Thousand times never was as one from whom men hid their face. He is despised. We esteemed him not.

You can so easily visualize with mental pictures these gestures and attitudes and looks upon these faces. We did esteem him smitten of God. Smitten of God.

That's the meaning of his cross. He deserved it. God has smitten him.

He deserved it. Smitten of God and afflicted. God has put upon him the judgment which he deserved.

And smitten of God and afflicted. They made his grave with the wicked. What that means I don't know unless, unless that is what would have happened had Joseph of Arimathea not intervened and begged his body and Pilate he would have been flung into the grave with the other malefactors, with the wicked.

That was at any rate the attitude of Israel. The judgment of Israel. But that's only broad outline.

His whole career is brought before us. His birth. His birth is described as a root out of dry ground.

In a sense a very true description. The seed of David seemed to have become very dry. And yet they are so discrediting him in this way.

There is no beauty that we should desire him when we see him. There is no verdant, glorious splendor perceptible in his coming into this world. Who is he after all? Where did he come from? Of course we know more.

But you must remember that Matthew and Luke wrote their records of his birth long years after he had gone to glory. They had set themselves with pains to trace his ancestry. And to find out all these things about his birth.

And we have them in their gospel narratives. But these were not common knowledge in Israel. Look and see a prophet does not come out of Galilee they say.

Can any good thing come out of Galilee? No. There was no carry over. Matthew, I am working towards something.

This whole matter of to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. So follow closely. There was no carry over of human glories and grandeur into this life naturally.

He was born with no human prestige in his life. Well in the description here there are more negative things than positive. There are more handicaps than advantages.

He had no fault. He had no comeliness. He had no beauty that we should desire him.

Let's not attempt mental pictures of the appearance of the Lord Jesus. But this is just how they looked at him. He had a heritage of woes.

A man of sorrows. And acquainted with grief. In his life linked with the tragedies.

The tragedies of human inheritance and experience. Sorrows. Grievings.

And woes. That's how they viewed him. This was man's judgment.

Tell us that that man is Jehovah's anointed and our Messiah. Tell us that that is the servant of Jehovah. Never.

Never. All that puts him completely out of court. There is not one positive factor about him that sets him in the rightful position of a chosen and anointed servant of the Lord, Redeemer and Messiah.

His death. Well what full description there is. He was oppressed.

He was oppressed. Yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth. The lamb that is led to the slaughter and of the sheep that before her shearers is done, yea, he opened not his mouth.

Simple description is something for the slaughter. Slaughter. Horrible word.

Horrible word. Sheep and lamb for the slaughter. Smitten of God.

Smitten of God. That was their interpretation of the cross. Oppressed and his judgment taken away.

Judgment taken away. Well that's their view. That's their view.

The fact was the judgment was being exercised by him over them all at that time. But their view was his judgment is rightly taken away. All his franchise is removed.

All his rights are eliminated. And deservedly so. Cut off.

Cut off out of the land of the living. God has cut him off. God has done it.

This is the judgment of Israel, the judgment of man. Man's judgment is entirely based upon objective considerations. Without any inside knowledge.

That's what it amounts to. Let me repeat that. Man's judgment of divine things and divine persons and divine works is based entirely upon objective considerations without any knowledge of inward reality.

Now when we take these reactions all together we find ourselves in the presence of the deep ways of God as he moves toward revealing his arm. How deep are his ways. How far is he finding out.

How mysterious. But oh how sparkling. When you begin to recognize.

I say put all this together. This interpretation and judgment of the human mind. The mind of this world about this one who we know to be the divine son of God.

The redeemer of men. Put them all together. Here we are right in the presence of these profound ways of God as he is moving, mark you, moving steadily.

Moving with determination. Moving resolutely toward the point of revealing his arm. Tremendous that this should be his way.

You see two questions arise here. Why this universal reaction of the world of men to this servant of Jehovah. Why? That's of course an astonishing thing from our standpoint.

An amazing thing that such judgments and reactions should be possible on the part of men universally. But there they are. There they are.

And we know that they were a fact. And what is more we know that they are still a fact. The mind of this world sees nothing desirable in this crucified one.

Leave that. But we say why this universal reaction and judgment of the servant of Jehovah. And the other question which perhaps goes even nearer to the heart and root of the whole matter.

Why this deliberate method of God making this reaction on the part of man inevitable. Strange things. Oh it seems as though God has gone out of his way to produce such a reaction from men.

Why didn't God give one altogether lovely that all could appreciate. One who would stand in the position of acceptance with all men at first sight. Why did not he to the world bring him in, in state, in grandeur and glory.

Why was he not from the beginning embellished with all the signs of heaven for all men to see. Why did God, it would seem, deliberately take a line that would produce reactions of this kind. They would be inevitable.

They would be inevitable. Draw this picture. This picture.

Visage marred more than any man. Distorted more than the sons of men. All those things.

Draw that picture and then hold it up and say to the world that's your redeemer. It would seem that God has deliberately taken a course to offend. To scandalize.

To produce this very thing. And so he did. And so he did.

But why? Oh we're getting near. Now very near to the real point. You see man's standard of values is an entirely false one.

And God knows it. It is utterly, utterly. Because it is the result of man's pride.

It's offended pride you know. Isn't it? It's offended pride. Tell us that we've got to come down to that.

To that level. We've got to accept that for our salvation. That we have got to condescend to that level.

No. Never. It's contrary to human nature.

Yes it is. Because human nature is what it is. An utterly false standard of values produced by man's pride.

So the suffering servant is an affront. An affront to human pride. An affront and an offense and a scandal to man's standard of things.

For this very reason neither Jew nor Gentile would receive the report. Pride would not allow it. We've found when I survey the wonders I pour contempt on all my pride.

That ought to be the effect of the cross. No. For them.

For the world. For man being what he is. His pride will not accept that.

And therefore he is despised. Rejected. No beauty that we should desire in him.

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the deep undercutting of false glory. It goes right to the very taproot of man's self-esteem. Self-importance of man's pride.

It goes right to the very root of life that is based upon man's own prestige and values. Even though Mark you, even though he may, from this world's standpoint and according to this world's standards, be something and have something. By birth.

By birth. Or by acquisition. By his brains or his cleverness.

By his hard work, his study. He may have acquired some position. Some glory.

Some success. Some prestige. If you base your life upon anything like that.

Base your life before God on anything like that. You are numbered with those here who are in absolute contradiction to the divine standard of values. The fact is, dear friends, that when we come to the cross, our very rightful glories from this world's standpoint are going to be undercut.

They are going to be emptied out. Poured down the drain. Look at Saul of Passos.

Had he something to glory in? He tells us. Oh, he tells us. Of all his advantages, by ancestry, by birth, and by upbringing, and by training, and by acquisition, and by success, he climbed to the top of the ladder.

Or did he think of it when he came into the presence of the cross of the Lord Jesus? Refuge. Refuge. For him life was not based upon that.

And he knew quite well. He knew quite well that that was out of the divine court as a basis of any standing with God. Believe me.

Believe me. If you are coming into the fellowship of God's servant and God's son in heart, in spirit, in truth, that's the way all your own natural values will go. And you are destined to come to a place where anything that you have from behind, long ago, before your birth, or in birth, or since your birth, anything that you might glory in, will become nothing to you.

You will see that that thing always contains a threat, a threat to your spiritual life, if you are not very careful. I'm thinking about basing life before God upon that sort of thing. I'm not saying that there are no values in those things, but if you begin to bring those into the presence of God, and begin to calculate with them, and make something of them, very well.

You see where you are? Whose company you are in, you do not come into account with God. God has discredited all human pride. In the cross of the Lord Jesus he has utterly undercut all man's glory.

That picture described here, painted here, of this suffering servant of Jehovah, in all the agony, in all the distortion, in all that is so terrible, is a portrait of what sin does in the sight of God. Of what pride does in the eyes of God. That's how God views man.

After all, these people who would not receive the report because of pride, are the people who are described in their very image in the sight of God by that man hanging on the cross. He bought our sins, our iniquities, our transgressions, all that we are was put on him, and that's how we are in God's sight. He was not brought there into that condition because it was true of him, but because it was true of us.

That's the whole argument of the chapter, isn't it? How man sees it, and how God sees it. Oh, what a difference. But, listen again.

Not only life based upon things that in their own realm are legitimate and true of merits and values, either inherited or acquired, but mark you, life based upon assumed importance. This may be more subtle and this certainly is more terrible when a person who has no natural rights to be anything begins to assume that they are something, to display some self-importance. Oh, this is even more horrible with God.

No right, whatever, and yet taking position and stuttering about in the very house of God and contrary to the spirit of this servant of the Lord, letting their voice be heard, he shall not cry nor lift up his voice. Nothing about him that is assertive, loud, noisy, and yet people can assume positions even in the very house of God which make them noisy and self-assertive, bringing attention to themselves, and assume something. The psalmist says, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.

What is true of us after all? What is true of you? What is true of me before God? Before God. And after all, it's before God, isn't it? That things are weighed rightly. The apostle said, Love is not, what a phrase, what a phrase, tucked up, full of air.

That's all there is. Love is not tucked up. There's no inflation of man in the presence of God.

We come into the presence of God, we become terribly deflated. It always was so. When I saw him, I fell on my face.

Well, see, this is man's standard of values and God's in contrast. What a difference. This disfigured, marred servant is God's way of showing us what we are in his sight.

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What a difference. This disfigured, marred servant is God's way of showing us what we are in his sight. Oh, there's something deep, deep in the ways of God.

Here I say we are in the presence of the deep ways of God. For man has ever, since the day of the fall, sought to draw attention to himself, sought to draw things to himself, sought to be something in himself, sought to have glory for himself. That was the heart of the whole thing.

Pride, pride. It brought Satan from his highest state and it brought man from his highest state. A seeking of a glory for himself.

God has repudiated the whole thing in the cross of the Lord Jesus to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed, not to anybody who has any of that about him or about her. That's the answer. Here are your principles of divine committal.

To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? To this man will I look, even to him who is of a broken and a contrite spirit. God beholdeth the proud of power. Pride is an abomination unto God.

I quote the scripture. See, the cross of the Lord Jesus on the one side is the undercutting of all our pride, all our self-importance, of life based upon a false standard of values. But on the other side, the cross is the uncovering of that which is God's standard of values.

What is it? Now, you know very well that the letter to the Philippians, a great letter of the cross, isn't it? A great letter of the cross because the second chapter of that letter is the most perfect compliment to Isaiah 53. I'm not going to read it, but you know it. But look, listen, how this part of the letter begins.

If there is therefore any exaltation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, of one mind, doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, each counting other better than himself. What a challenge. Wouldn't that undercut all our criticism, even of those whom we feel we've got something, in whom we've got something to criticize? Pointing out their faults and calling them by this name and that, each esteeming the other as himself.

That brother, that sister, may have some very glaring faults, but God only knows. I may have very much worse. Each counting other better than himself, not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

This word mind is cropping up, isn't it? Cropping up. This mind, have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who existing in the form of God counted not the being on an equality with God as a thing to

be held on to, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond slave. He made in the likeness of men, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death.

Yea, the death. This is the compliment, I said, of Isaiah 53. What follows immediately is the compliment of the end of Isaiah 52, My servant shall be very high, wherefore God hath highly exalted him, given him the name which is out of God every name.

What is the basis of the arm of the Lord being revealed? To whom? To these. To these. Described in this second chapter, the letter to the Philippians.

If you'd like to go into the third chapter, you have all those things in which man glories, of which man takes account, upon which man builds, as mentioned by Paul as to his past life. But God did not look toward him in this way of approval and blessing to stand by that man. He met him and laid him low in the dust and broke him and shattered him and then afterward lifted him up.

You see the principle? It's all so clear. The chief evil with God is pride. The chief virtue with God is meekness.

Always it's like this. So this is but a little further look into this great chapter in Isaiah to discover on what ground the arm of the Lord will be revealed. To find the answer to the question to whom? To whom? And to those like him.

Of this mind. Of this mind that was in Christ. My dear friends, you and I are more and more amazed, more and more amazed when we think of this servant of the Lord knowing beforehand what he was going through, what it was going to mean and to be what he was going to experience and suffer being willing to take that course in order to redeem us from our pride.

The iniquity of our pride. You know that word iniquity? You know that the root of that word iniquity in the Hebrew means alliance with Satan? Yes, there you are. To deliver us from that inward alliance with Satan in his pride the servant of the Lord went down to the depths of degradation.

Here we see what pride is in God's mind. A man's false, utterly false standard of death. Surely there opens up to our eyes the infinite value of self-emptiness, of having no confidence in the flesh, of weakness in that realm, of the meek and the quiet spirit which is our great pride, Peter says, in the sight of God.

I leave that with you. We want the arm of the Lord for us and not against us. We want its girding, its support, its strength in our lives, in our fellowships, our assembly and our service.

This is the ground. This is the ground. Nothing that is a contradiction to this will ever find that hand lifted up on our behalf.

He'll leave us. He'll leave us to get on with it and to wallow in the mire of our own creating until at the cross we pour contempt on all our pride and are crucified to all the world and all the world is crucified to us and most particularly the world of our own heart. We pray.

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