

# The Arm of the Lord - Part 5

by T. Austin-Sparks

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of building on the foundation of the cross with love and spiritual building, rather than the world's standards and values.*

**Duration:** 47:54

**Scripture:** Isaiah 52:13, Isaiah 53:1, Isaiah 54:1, Isaiah 60:1, Romans 3:19, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

**Topics:** "God's Work"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the new prospect and hope that comes with the foundation laid by the cross. The Lord is focused on recovering, restoring, and rebuilding His people. The speaker highlights the bright and hopeful notes struck in the later chapters of Isaiah, but also acknowledges the presence of dark clouds that bring uncertainty. The sermon emphasizes the importance of putting only what is suitable and according to the cross of the Lord Jesus on God's foundation, as there are many things to which God says no.

---

## Transcript

You take up the prophecies of Isaiah again and turn to that part which begins with the 13th verse of the 52nd chapter, recalling that we are encompassing the question that is raised in verse 1 of chapter 53, whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? And inasmuch as this is prophecy in the sense of prediction, we have to recognize that it is a looking back as well as forward. So far as the prophet was concerned it was prediction, but the standpoint even then from which he prophesied is backward. He is looking back upon the world's reaction to the cross of the Lord Jesus.

He is taking the sum of all that happened at Calvary, of the report that went forth as to those happening, and then the reactions to that report, who hath believed it. And then in the light of the seeming tragedy of the cross, this question, to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? The answer of course is found in this whole section. Now we have noted this afternoon that with chapter 54 we find ourselves in God's movement toward recovery and rebuilding.

The cross has cleared the way. The cross has provided the ground for this new prospect, and the new note is struck at this point with chapter 54. You will notice how it begins.

And there are from that point onward a number of these bright hopeful notes that are struck, leading on to such as in the beginning of chapter 60, rise, shine, for thy light is come, glory of the Lord is written upon

thee. Here then, because of the foundation having been laid or provided by the cross, the way opens, the ground clears, the Lord is facing this whole matter of recovery, restoration, and rebuilding of his people. There is a new prospect, a new hope, a new message of encouragement.

But even so, as you read these chapters, you have only to either recollect what you know about the later chapters of Isaiah, or to pass your eye over them hurriedly. Even so, there are light and change in this new prospect. The sun shines, thy light is come, glory of the Lord is written.

It's like the sun rising in the early summer days. And then you know the feeling, that is if you are sensitive to these things, when a heavy cloud passes over the face of the sun. It's only passing over, it may be only temporary, but just for that time, you look to see what happens.

You wonder whether the whole prospect is going to change, whether the bright time is passing, whether that is the end. And it's just like that in these later chapters of Isaiah. Here it is, sun has risen, glory of the Lord, there's a bright prospect.

Then you light on things here and there, like chapter 58, cry aloud, bear not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions. From place to place there are these clouds, dark clouds that seem to pass over the face of the sun, that arise in the presence of this new prospect. And they bring to the heart a feeling of uncertainty.

Is this radiant morn going to pass away too soon? We have mixed feelings about it all. We're not absolutely assured yet, but all is going to work out according to the seeming promise. All going to follow through on this new prospect.

From the Lord's side, there is no question. The Lord has for himself his ground, and the Lord shows himself as one who means to be positive. He is not of two minds.

There is no shadow cast by his turning, by his changing. Everything that comes from the Lord shows him to be one who is out for something. Really after a new day, new situation, I say the Lord is positive from his side.

But it would seem that he is having to go carefully. He wants to be positive. He wants to go right out and have no reserve.

But there seems to be something that is still holding this arm of the Lord. He just cannot go right on as he indicates he would do. The ground, the old ground has suffered a fiery purging in the cross.

Yes, all that stubble has been dealt with. All that tangle and network of thorns, briars, has all been dealt with by the fire. He has come in and got his foundation there.

But there still seems to be a question. I cannot read through these chapters without feeling we are not through this bit of this yet. We are not right out on the other side yet.

I am not sure how it is going to work out yet. The Lord is pretty sure. The Lord is encouraging.

The Lord is saying that as for him, he is not holding back from himself, for himself, but there is something that he is encountering. Let me put it like this. The ground has been cleared and the foundation has been laid.

But now it is a question. What is going to be built on that foundation? And that is just where the uncertainty comes in. It is now not the foundation.

That is settled in the cross. But it is the superstructure. It is what is going to be imposed upon that.

What are you going to build on that foundation? And it is a question. It is a question. That is the point of the question.

That is where the uncertainty comes in. The Lord is not sure what his people are going to put upon his foundation. Well you see, this is an Isaiah.

So far as that Old Testament is concerned, the answer to that question as to the new building on that new ground, as far as that is concerned, the answer of course is found in what we call post-exilic prophets, the prophets after the exiles, Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi. The answer is there what the people would put on the foundation, the new building of what thought it was. But as I said this afternoon, you might say, well that is Old Testament.

That is long ago, far away, remote from us. But you remember this afternoon I told you that in the New Testament there is the counterpart of this in our own very dispensation. The letter to the Romans stands right in there with Isaiah 53 where the cross, the cross encounters all the old rubbish and evil and tangle and deals with it in fiery judgment and clears the ground for a new prospect.

Which new prospect brings into view in chapter 8 and with chapter 8 of the letter to the Romans, God has got his foundation. But what is the counterpart of this other, this following part of Isaiah? It's the first letter to the Corinthians. So patent as you look at it, you know that the apostle coming to Corinth said when I came to you, I decurrent, the language is I deliberately made up my mind that I would know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The foundation has been laid, chapter 3, verse 19, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation. Foundation, Christ crucified, see. The foundation is laid.

The cross in Romans has secured the ground for the foundation. It's laid. It's there, so to speak, in Corinth.

It's there Christ crucified the foundation. And as you read on into this letter your heart almost stands still. You hear Paul saying I have laid a foundation and another buildeth thereon and it's possible to build on this wood a stubble.

Go build that precious stubble and every man's work shall be tried by the fire. Of what sort it is, if any man's work hath lost in the fire, well, what happens? Well he shall be saved. He'll just get in, but so as by fire he will have lost everything.

The big question here, what are you going to put on the foundation? What are you going to superimpose upon that ground of the cross? Are you going to bring back things that are absolutely contradictory to the cross? If so, you see what happens. Now this first letter to the Corinthians is not the letter of the foundation. Romans is that.

It is the letter of the building. That is to say, in what I have just said, I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. I laid a foundation.

I laid a foundation. Foundation is laid. But now that every one take heed what he buildeth thereof.

What he buildeth thereof. And it is impressive, and I am so sorry that the translators have not helped us in this. It is impressive to notice that the original word which means building has been translated into edifying or edification, which is entirely false leading according to our mentality.

If you use that word edifying today, as I have so often said, you think it means edifying, informing your head, getting information into your head, head knowledge. It doesn't mean that at all. The word edifying is the original word for building.

And I would suggest to you that you follow through the eight times in this first letter to the Corinthians where that word is used. It is most searching. It is most enlightening.

It touches on so many things. This whole matter of spiritual gifts is summed up in that one word, do they build up? If they don't, they are no good in the purpose of God. You can rule them out.

They have missed their point. You see even divine gifts can miss the point, can be sidetracked. We will have to touch on that again.

But many things like that, the governing thing of, the governing point, the governing word on all sorts of things, eight different kinds of connections is this word building. Building, building. It is the spiritually constructional side of things that is in this first letter to the Corinthians.

Yes, foundation is laid, Christ crucified. Now the building. And when you come to the building, a real battle starts.

The question is, what are you going to put on that foundation? Let me put it another way. What is God going to allow you to put on his foundation? And you have right through this letter a long series of no's. No's.

Things to which God says no, no. Not that on my foundation please. I have no place for that on my foundation.

If you put that on my foundation I'll let loose the fire. You may spend your whole life on that and then it all goes up in smoke. It is not suitable to my foundation.

It is not according to the cross of the Lord Jesus. Now it would take us a long time to go through this letter and see all the things to which God says no. We might just touch on two or three perhaps which are indicative of much more.

You can read the letter and you can read it with this in mind. Will God allow anything like that to be put on his foundation? Then the answer is very rarely. If not, let's have the cross consume that right away.

Let the cross deal with that immediately. We don't want that to be held over to an application of the meaning of the cross when it is too late. Have we just scrambled into heaven without anything that we can take with us of our life work? That's the issue.

We don't want that. For the cross to come late or too late to save our life work, to save the fruit of all our energy. When you begin chapter three, my brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto bathed in Christ.

I fed you with milk, not with meat, for ye were not yet able to bear it. Nay, not even now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal. This is the description of carnality.

Whereas there is among you jealousy. Oh, let's weigh it. Even if it's to our own judgment and condemnation, better the cross comes right in now.

There are among you jealousy. God says no to that on his foundation. None of that, please, on my foundation.

The cross which is my foundation says no to that, to that. There are among you jealousies. And strife, strife, you must think this through and face this honestly.

May seem very elementary, my dear friends, but here we are. We are not facing the world, the unconverted here. We are right here in the church, believers, amongst believers.

We're dealing with that and those amongst whom God's foundation has been laid. It's been laid. Who are called saints.

That is, who are regarded by God as his own people. Strife, God says no to that on his foundation. You have that.

You know what's going to happen sooner or later. It's going to be exposed as wood, hay and stubble going up in smoke. That's the value of it.

Are you not carnal? Walk after the manner of men. You're not allowed to walk after the manner of men on God's foundation. Just not allowed.

God says no to the manner of men on his foundation. Or when one says I am a, I need you to put the names in. Names right up to date.

Names right in your own circles, in your own assembly. Names in your own Christian world. Or historic religious names.

Put it in what you like. One says I am of and another I am of and yet another I am of human partialities, human preferences, human likes and human dislikes which produce division. God says no, not on my foundation.

That's not my church. That's not my building. I never build with that and you may not.

You may have wonderful set up, a wonderful set up of your own making with material like that, with stuff of that kind. It's going up in smoke. In the end you'll have nothing.

However much you've had in the meantime. Shall we go on? You see what I mean? You pursue the whole letter like that. Partialities.

What a lot there is about the wisdom of the world here in this early section. The wisdom of the world. The wisdom of man.

Man's mind about things. And God says none of that on my foundation. None of it.

There's no place for your mind at all on God's foundation. It's the only place for the mind of the spirit. If we have not got the mind of the spirit we have no right to be doing anything on God's foundation.

Forgive me for being so exacting, so searching. But you see, are not after all these the troubles? Are not these the very things that are blighting Christianity today? They are. And don't let us think of Christianity objectively.

It comes very near. These are the things, dear friends, of doing the mystery. Perhaps even amongst us.

We are bringing onto God's foundation a mentality that is not the mentality of the spirit. That's what this amounts to. A mentality.

What things knoweth a man concerning a man save the spirit of a man that is in him? What things knoweth a man, what things knoweth the spirit of God? What man knoweth the things of the spirit of God except the spirit of God that is in him? These are two different mentalities, you see. The natural mind, spiritual mind. God says none of the natural mind or mentality at all on my foundation.

Paul here calls this the world coming in and constructing something upon God's foundation. The world coming in. And God says there's no place whatever for the world in any form on my foundation.

If you look at it closely you find that it searches out so much. How the world thinks. The world's standards of judgment and values.

How the world does things. See what was happening here was these Corinthians were trying to make an impression. Trying to make an impression by natural means.

The cross of Isaiah 53 is not a very impressive thing of that nature, is it? There's nothing there that popularizes the gospel. I say as I said yesterday it is more offensive than anything else. Are you trying to make the work of God successful by an appeal to the natural man? No, I hold no grief for ugliness.

I believe that God is a God of beauty or for crudeness. But if we think that we are going to make God's work successful and acceptable by display, by appeal to the soul of man artistically or aesthetically or any like that, we're on wrong lines. Let me put it the other way.

The appeal, the impression, the grip, the overwhelming has got to be essentially and only spiritual damage of an inward kind. Not what appeals at all to the natural fancies of people. The arm of the Lord will not be revealed to the natural man in any way.

The arm of the Lord will not be revealed to the world for its good. The arm of the Lord will not be revealed to any mentality of man. Only against it.

There is one here. To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? You move on into this letter and you find the cross touches so many other things. It touches our emotions, our passions.

There's a lot about that, isn't there? The natural emotions and the natural passions. Not only the mentality but our feelings, our emotions. And the Lord says none of that on my foundation.

None whatever. Oh there's so much that the cross here says no to as to building. I invite you to look at it more closely.

It is not my purpose to give an exposition of the letter to the Corinthians. I want to get to the heart of things. What is it that God says may be put on his foundation? Because there's a positive side in this letter.

It would be very pathetic wouldn't it if it were all negative. If you all the way through to the end it was no, no, no, no, no. Never.

Take account of that because you notice I have said before today you can never come into God yes until you have accepted God no. But there is a God yes. And a very mighty yes in this letter.

What is it? What is it? Let us look at it. We think we know it. Well perhaps we know the letter.

Perhaps we know the words. I suggest that we know practically nothing of the thing itself. Chapter 13.

The apostle when he reaches this point writes off everything that is not spiritually constructive. Though, mark you, it may have been something that God gave. It has been taken hold of and used for man's gratification, for man's pleasure, for man's satisfaction, for man's glory, spiritual gifts, tongues and all those things.

They have brought the mind and emotion, mentality of the natural man down upon those very divine things and robbed them of their value to build up and made them just display things, glorying in spiritual gifts. And the apostle here writes that all off that they were never given for that. And even though given of God they may amount to nothing when it comes to building.

That's the word he uses here. If I speak with the tongue of men and of angels but have not love, I am become sounding brass, clanging, extant spiritual gifts which have failed to fulfill their purpose, building the house of God. They don't cling to anything that does not serve their purpose.

Paul dismisses it. But notice he's reaching after the positive through the negative all the time. And if I have the gift of prophecy, know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, quite scriptural, quite scriptural.

That is what the Lord Jesus said, if you have faith of the great of masters, then you shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and cast into the midst of the sea and it shall be done. That's perfectly scriptural and you can be perfectly scriptural and you can have faith like that. And it means nothing if it fails to build up the house of God.

If it does not result in this spiritual structure, it becomes negative. Exit all knowledge of mysteries and secret law and faith that moves mountains. Out you go if you do not build up.

It becomes negative. Exit all knowledge of mysteries and secret law and faith that moves mountains. Out you go if you do not build up.

That's the value of your life. Have not love. I am nothing.

With all that, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be bound, if I am a philanthropist, if I am most charitable in my giving, even sacrificial in my giving, and even if I am a martyr that I give my body to be burned, that can all be done without any constructive value in the building of the house of God. And if that is so, it is nothing.

And have not love. And have not love. It profiteth me nothing.

Now, that's the showing out, of course, of things, wonderful things, wonderful things in themselves, but which have failed to serve the purpose for which they were given. And that is spiritual building. Now the positive.

What may you put on this foundation? Let us bring in that to which God says yes. He says no to that, no to that, no to that, nothing. But where does his guess lie? There it is.

Love. Love. Suffereth long.

That a wholesale rebuke to Corinthians, who went to court against their own brethren in Christ, because their rights were injured or taken from them. So they dragged them before the magistrate. Right away.

Love. Suffereth long. And is kind.

You may put that on the foundation. That kind of thing is constructive, isn't it? Yes. Love envieth not.

I don't know how you feel, dear friends, when we really quietly like this work our way into and through every clause. You want to stop and say, say no more. That finds me out too much.

Then we must go on. For after all, it is what God is calling for. Love suffereth long.

Is kind. Love envieth not. Love vaunteth not itself.

Is not puffed up. Go back to chapter 8 and you will read this. Knowledge puffeth up.

Love buildeth up. There's a great deal of difference between puffing up, inflating, filling with air, and there's nothing after all in it, and building up. Love is not puffed up.

There's nothing false, artificial, inflated, make-believe, pretend about love is not puffed up. It's the balloon idea, isn't it? Oh, how large you can blow it up. But you've only got to put the tiniest point of a needle in it, and where is it? It's gone.

All right, Paul says, it's no use putting that on God's foundation. But love is not like that, Paul. Love is not puffed up.

Does not behave itself unseemly. Unseemly behavior. Spend a lot of time on that, couldn't we? Is it seemly? Is it seemly? Does it become a Christian? Does it become the Lord Jesus? Does it become that holy house of God? Does it become the cross of the Lord Jesus? Is it seemly? Love is seemly.

It does not behave itself unseemly. Love, seeketh not its own, does not want to have its own way, does not work to its own end, does not draw to itself, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, rejoices not in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Love bearest all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Love never faileth. You may think that I'm not saying very much tonight, but I am saying a great deal. I like to read that chapter in a translation, which I think a classic.

You'll allow it. I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if I have not love, I'm a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. I may prophesy, fathom all mysteries and secret laws.

I may have such absolute faith that I can move mountains from their place, but if I have not love, I count for nothing. I may distribute all I possess in charity. I may give up my body to be burned, but if I have not love, I make nothing out of it.

Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy. Love makes no parade.

Love gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful. Love is never glad when others go wrong. Love is gladdened by goodness.

Always slow to expose. Always eager to believe the best. Always hopeful.

Always patient. Love never disappears. You may put that on the foundation.

And that is all that, all that, is what God says. Yes, to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? To that, just to that, dear friend. Forgive me if I seem not to have given you a great fulness of new life, but I just feel so strongly that we've got to face this matter of what the cross sets aside and what the cross brings in.

What may be put on God's foundation and what may not be put on it. It concerns every one of us that it's not quite seriously as to what there will be at the end. Really, that's what matters, what there will be at the end, not what there is now, gaudy and display and showy and popular and receiving men's approval and applause.

No, but what there will be at the end. And God is moving here, as you see, to build up, to build up, to build up, and then having shown what he will not use in his building, he says, this is what I will use. This is the stuff, the material of the building, the church, and this is really what does build up, not build it up.

Oh, may the Lord use this word to our heart, to smite our heart if need be, to enlighten our heart as to what real values are. Oh no, all these things are not the real values, not even spiritual gifts are the real values unless, mark you, the effect of them is real spiritual increase amongst the believers. That's the test, that's the test.

It's not the things themselves, not their presence, not what the Lord gave them, but whatever those gifts may be, there are many of them, the test, the test of every gift is, does it really build the church? Does it really build the house? Is it really resulting in a larger measure of Christ? Is it? Or these things may be an obstruction to Christ. You see, what this letter says so clearly is this, that spiritual gifts are no guarantee of spiritual maturity. Here you have the most immature of the churches, the most immature, he said, I fed you with milk, you bathed, you still bathed, the most immature of the churches yet, yet characterized by all these gifts.

Not that the gifts are wrong, but they've been sidetracked, or they have been brought under arrest, they have not served the purpose for which they were given, that is bringing to the full measure of Christ, the full measure of Christ, that's the object. And love does that, love brings to the full measure of Christ. Oh may we have that love, this kind of love, this is not natural love, this love springs out of the cross, it's the love that comes right out of the work of the cross in us.

We cannot get it by striving after it, but it will, it will rise and grow as the cross does its work in us. It just will be found more and more love according to the work of the cross in our hearts and in our natures. The Lord increase our love.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0104.mp3>  
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/the-arm-of-the-lord-part-5/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**