

THE INEXHAUSTIBLE BARREL.

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."—1 Kings xvii. 16.

In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy. Divine love is rendered conspicuous when it shines in the midst of judgments. Fair is that lone star which smiles through the rifts of the thunder-clouds; bright is the oasis which blooms in the wilderness of sand; so fair and so bright is love in the midst of wrath. In the present instance, God had sent an all-consuming famine upon the lands of Israel and Sidon. The two peoples had provoked the Most High, the one by renouncing him, and the other by sending forth their queen, Jezabel, to teach idolatry in the midst of Israel. God therefore determined to withhold both dew and rain from the polluted lands. But while he did this, he took care that his own chosen ones should be secure. If all the brooks are dry, yet shall there be one reserved for Elijah; and if that should fail, God shall still preserve for him a place of sustenance; nay, not only so, for God had not simply one Elijah, but he had a remnant according to the election of grace, who were hidden by fifties in a cave, and though the whole land was subject to famine, yet these fifties in the cave were fed, and fed from Ahab's table, too, by his faithful, God-fearing steward, Obadiah. Let us from this draw this inference, that come what may God's people are safe. If the world is to be burned by fire, among the ashes there shall not be found the relics of a saint. If the world should again be drowned with water, (as it shall not) yet should there be found another ark for God's Noah. Let convulsions shake the solid earth, let all its pillars tremble, let the skies themselves be rent in twain, yet amid the wreck of worlds the believer shall be as secure as in the calmest hour of rest. If God cannot save his people under heaven, he will save them in heaven. If the world becomes too hot to hold them, then heaven shall be the place of their reception and their safety. Be ye then confident, when ye hear of wars, and rumours of wars.—Let no agitation distress you. Whatever

cometh upon the earth, you, beneath the broad wings of Jehovah, shall be secure. Stay yourself upon his promise; rest ye in his faithfulness, and bid defiance to the blackest future, for there is nothing in it direful for you.

Though, however, I make these few observations by way of preface, this is not the subject of this morning. I propose to take the case of the poor widow of Sarepta as an illustration of divine love, as it manifests itself to man; and I shall have three things for you to notice. First, *the objects of divine love*; secondly, *the singular methods of divine love*; and, then, in the third place, *the undying faithfulness of divine love*—"The barrel of meal did not waste, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord."

I. In the first place, let me speak upon THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE LOVE.

1. And here we remark at the very beginning, *how sovereign was the choice*.—Our Saviour himself teaches us when he says, "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; "But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." Here was divine sovereignty. When God would make choice of a woman it was not one of his own favoured race of Israel, but a poor benighted heathen, sprung from a race who of old had been doomed to be utterly cut off. Here was electing love in one of its sovereign manifestations. Men are always quarreling with God because he will not submit his will to their dictation. If there could be a God who was not absolute, men would think themselves gods, and hence sovereignty is hated because it humbles the creature, and makes him bow before a Lord, a King, a Master, who will do as he pleases. If God would choose kings and princes, then would men admire his choice. If he wou'd make his chariots