

~Other Speakers A-F: Andrew Bonar:

1 Kings 17

'To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.'
(Rom. 14: 9)

There never was a resurrection in the world or in the Church of Christ before this one. Yet it is a resurrection in very quiet circumstances. The Lord does not make a work about His wonders, for what are wonders to Him? Sarepta was a town of Syro-Phoenicia. I have sometimes thought that the Syro-Phoenician woman belonged to this place. I should not wonder but that the Lord had gone out of the coasts of Israel in order to see it. I remember it, forty years ago. It was a place of villas for the people of Tyre. On this account the woman would spread the news all the better among the Gentiles there. But let us keep to the story of the widow. Christ refers to it, showing He had read it carefully, as setting forth the sovereignty of God. Let us look at

I. This incident as bearing on the widow.- She must have had some acquaintance with the Hebrew truth and the Hebrew prophets, for when Elijah appeared to her in the name of his God she was not at all surprised, but put faith in the God of Israel. First her faith was tried, then it was rewarded. 'Her barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail.' Would you risk anything in faith for the Lord? Are you conscious that you often do things simply because you believe they are God's will? Did you ever do so without being rewarded? It is not like the Lord to forget those who do anything for Him.

One day this woman's son sickened and died. Could there be a greater affliction to a widowed mother? Is this the reward of faith? No doubt she hazarded a great deal in taking in a Hebrew prophet into her house, and is this the way the Lord rewards her? No doubt Elijah prayed for her son; yet he died. It is remarkable how it affected her. 'Thou hast brought my sin to remembrance.' How affliction brings sin to remembrance! It is one of the Lord's ways of convincing of sin in the case of His own people. If you let the Spirit of the Lord work in you it will always have this effect, and a most blessed effect it is. The Lord wanted to humble the woman. Perhaps she was getting a little proud of her barrel of meal. Ay, and perhaps she was beginning to feel that she deserved it, for taking the prophet into her house. The Lord drives all this out of her. But still, is it kind to do this to a believing woman? 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, in that ye ministered to the saints (Heb. 6:10). Now she has ministered to the saints. Well, God has rewarded her, and this is His way of preparing a greater reward - a kindness such as had never been granted to a saint since the Flood, before or after. You see the Lord empties before He fills. When you are overtaken by some bitter grief, say, 'Now I know the way of the Lord. He is preparing something better for me.' It ended in the widow's son being given back to her from the grave. 'Now I know,' she says, 'that thou art a man of God.' Did she not know that before? Yes, but have you not noticed that there are times when the truth we know is lighted up as with a flame? I referred to walking forty years ago on the shore at Sarepta. I well remember how Mr. M'Cheyne and I used to say to one another, as we walked in other parts of Palestine with our Bibles in our hands, 'We believed the Bible before, but now we believe it more than ever.' Some of you have felt this after a time of affliction.

II. This incident as bearing on Elijah. - I think Elijah was a little stumbled at first. He seems not to have known what to say. 'Give me thy son.' He goes up to his upper room, and there he is, alone with the dead child. You see what he is about. He speaks to the Lord for him, not to his mother. Three times he cried. It often puts me in mind of our Lord's words, 'Ask, seek, knock.' 'Asking' is when we pray, but 'seeking' is more earnest still, and 'knocking' is more and more in earnest. Elijah had never heard of a resurrection before, but he does not hesitate to ask this of the Lord. You see we may ask Him to do greater things than He has ever done yet. Don't confine yourself to the same things over and over again. I think Elijah took a hint from former things done for him. There was heaven, sealed and opened again, - there was the barrel of meal not spent. 'Lord, Lord, do greater things!' What a simple resurrection, done so quickly, done in a private house, done in an upper room. I don't know that men would hear of it till long afterwards. The heathen would not believe the woman's story. The Lord likes to do great things, if we would not make a great noise about them. Let them tell their own story. I think the Lord was preparing Elijah for greater things still. We may in this respect compare him to David slaying the lion and the bear by faith. When we are dealing with the Lord we always act on this principle, 'greater still, greater still.' Here is the man who was never to die used by God to bring life to one who was dead. God let him look into the cavern of death, and see how He could bring back from death. And the Lord was teaching His servant in his retirement what He could do for a dead nation.

When the Lord gives you any remarkable visit in your retirement He means you to use it. We need a great awakening. God does not want us to be content with what we have got. Have you cried to the Lord for the quickening of souls as earnestly as Elijah cried for the quickening of life in that dead lad? If we were intensely in earnest we would see reviving.