

loved to lean on his own understanding and to cavil at the ways of God. And how often has Jehovah been obliged to resort to severe measures in order to bring His servants around to do His bidding. The prophets of Israel were no exception. Jonah is the outstanding example or sign of them all in showing what human nature will do if left to itself. The prophets had to be called to their tasks and constrained. When Isaiah was called, he said: "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips!" (Isa.6:5). After purification he was ready to go. Jeremiah spoke even more clearly of the irresistible constraint of Jehovah upon him to make him speak to a people to whom he was a "laughing stock all the day and a derision." "And if I say, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, then there was in my heart a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jer.20:7).

III. The prophets were sent largely in order to preach judgment, a thankless task. Hence, the people received their message with aversion; they were ready to blame the prophet rather than recognize him as Jehovah's messenger. Now, from one point of view the commission to preach the destruction of Nineveh must have appealed to Jonah. Hence his disobedience must have had a special cause. And indeed, it seems clear from a later confession, that the prophet had misgivings, that the mercy of God would be shown to that wicked city. And indeed, his fears were not unfounded. Along with the sovereign grace and unmerited mercy which Jehovah would ~~show~~ be obliged to show to His own people, so chronically rebellious and unbelieving, so God at the outset gave a conspicuous example of His sovereign grace in staying judgment upon the cruel and haughty enemy of His own people, their eventual destroyers. The Ninevites repented in sackcloth and ashes. In this regard they were a sign of all heathenism, from whose <sup>dom</sup> ~~in the~~ <sup>in the</sup> midst ~~the~~ Christian dispensation so many would turn to the Lord and