

until he has come to understand the danger of abusing it, and realizes the temptation which it brings to rely on it as the chief means of rendering his message effective. To charm by grace of diction, or to dazzle by splendor of imagery, is not to convert men to goodness. Wisdom of speech is more important than fluency. The preacher may well be haunted with the fear of speaking unadvisedly with his lips, and tremble lest he do harm where he wished to do good only.

3. Quite as important as humble penitence to the preacher is the sense of his being forgiven and reconciled to God. The prophet's lips were touched with a live coal from off the altar that purged away his sin, and assured him of his personal acceptance before God. As his main work was to plead with his fellow-countrymen for repentance, that they might be at one with God, it was obviously a matter of importance that he should be able to assure them from his own experience of the certainty of forgiveness.

4. The prophet felt himself under a divine constraint to preach, but yet willingly offered himself for the work. In response to the appeal, "Who will go?" his reply was, "Here am I; send me." He went forth in obedience to no social custom or family influence, but under the prompting of his own heart, as moved by the Spirit of God. So Jeremiah felt the Lord's message as a "fire in his bones," so that he could not be silent, notwithstanding the unwillingness of the people to receive his message.

5. The message given to the prophet was a warning to the people that by rejecting him and his appeals, they were spiritually degrading themselves, to their own ultimate ruin. But it was indirectly a hint to the prophet himself not to expect too great results from his work. It would be largely one of failure and disappointment, however earnest he might be. He should therefore school himself to the experience, and not be altogether cast down, as if the blame were wholly his own.

6. Notwithstanding apparent failure, he was still to cherish an inextinguishable hope for the future of the people.