

# That They Cause Those Who Have Them to Be Fluent, Fervent, and Abundant, in Talking of the Things of Religion, Is No Sign

by Jonathan Edwards

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*Jonathan Edwards warns against judging others by their talk alone, as it can be a sign of either true or false affections.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 25:14, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 15:8, 2 Peter 2:17, Jude 1:12

**Topics:** "True Faith", "False Conversion"

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## Description

Jonathan Edwards warns against judging the genuineness of one's faith based solely on their fluency, fervency, and abundance in talking about religion, as this can lead to both unjust condemnation and misguided confidence. Speaking passionately about religion can stem from either holy or unholy affections in the heart, with strong affections prompting individuals to speak earnestly regardless of the nature of those affections. Merely being vocal about religious matters does not necessarily indicate true grace, as false affections can often manifest more prominently in outward declarations.

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## Transcript

III. It is no sign that affections are truly gracious affections, or that they are not, that they cause those who have them to be fluent, fervent, and abundant, in talking of the things of religion.

There are many persons, who, if they see this in others, are greatly prejudiced against them. Their being so full of talk, is with them a sufficient ground to condemn them, as Pharisees, and ostentatious hypocrites. On the other hand, there are many, who if they see this effect in any, are very ignorantly and imprudently forward, at once to determine that they are the true children of God, and are under the saving influences of his Spirit, and speak of it as a great evidence of a new creature; they say, "such a one's mouth is now opened: he used to be slow to speak; but now he is full and free; he is free now to open his heart, and tell his experiences, and declare the praises of God; it comes from him, as free as water from a fountain;" and the like. And especially are they captivated into a confident and undoubting persuasion, that they are savingly wrought upon, if they are not only free and abundant, but very affectionate and earnest in their talk.

But this is the fruit of but little judgment, a scanty and short experience; as events do abundantly show: and is a mistake persons often run into, through their trusting to their own wisdom and discerning, and making their own notions their rule, instead of the holy Scripture. Though the Scripture be full of rules, both how we should judge of our own state, and also how we should be conducted in our opinion of others; yet we have nowhere any rule, by which to judge ourselves or others to be in a good estate, from any such effect: for this is but the religion of the mouth and of the tongue, and what is in the Scripture represented by the leaves of a tree, which, though the tree ought not to be without them, yet are nowhere given as an evidence of the goodness of the tree.

That persons are disposed to be abundant in talking of things of religion, may be from a good cause, and it may be from a bad one. It may be because their hearts are very full of holy affections; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh:" and it may be because persons' hearts are very full of religious affection which is not holy; for still out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. It is very much the nature of the affections, of whatever kind they be, and whatever objects they are exercised about, if they are strong, to dispose persons to be very much in speaking of that which they are affected with: and not only to speak much, but to speak very earnestly and fervently. And therefore persons talking abundantly and very fervently about the things of religion, can be an evidence of no more than this, that they are very much affected with the things of religion; but this may be (as has been already shown) and there be no grace. That which men are greatly affected with, while the high affection lasts, they will be earnestly engaged about, and will be likely to show that earnestness in their talk and behavior; as the greater part of the Jews, in all Judah and Galilee, did for a while, about John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, when they were willing for a season to rejoice in his light; a mighty ado was made, all over the land, and among all sorts of persons, about this great prophet and his ministry. And so the multitude, in like manner, often manifested a great earnestness, a mighty engagedness of spirit in everything that was external, about Christ and his preaching and miracles, "being astonished at his doctrine, anon with joy receiving the word," following him sometimes night and day, leaving meat, drink, and sleep to hear him: once following him into the wilderness, fasting three days going to hear him; some times crying him up to the clouds, saying, "Never man spake like this man!" being fervent and earnest in what they said. But what did these things come to, in the greater part of them?

A person may be over full of talk of his own experiences; commonly falling upon it, everywhere, and in all companies; and when it is so, it is rather a dark sign than a good one. As a tree that is over full of leaves seldom bears much fruit; and as a cloud, though to appearance very pregnant and full of water, if it brings with it overmuch wind, seldom affords much rain to the dry and thirsty earth; which very thing the Holy Spirit is pleased several times to make use of, to represent a great show of religion with the mouth, without answerable fruit in the life: Prov. 25:24, "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain." And the apostle Jude, speaking of some in the primitive times, that crept in unawares among the saints, and having a great show of religion, where for a while not suspected, "These are clouds (says he) without water, carried about of winds," Jude ver. 4 and 12. And the apostle Peter, speaking of the same, says, 2 Pet. 2:17, "These are clouds without water, carried with a tempest."

False affections, if they are equally strong, are much more forward to declare themselves, than true: because it is the nature of false religion, to affect show and observation; as it was with the Pharisees.[11]

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jonathan-edwards/that-they-cause-those-who-have-them-to-be-fluent-fervent-and-abundant-in-talking/>

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