

That They Much Dispose Persons With Their Mouths to Praise and Glorify God, Is No Sign

by Jonathan Edwards

The sermon emphasizes that outward praise and glorification of God do not necessarily indicate true grace or faith in a person's heart.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 25:16, Isaiah 66:5, Daniel 3:28, Mark 2:12, Luke 7:16, Acts 4:21, Acts 13:48

Topics: "True Worship", "Heart Transformation"

Description

Jonathan Edwards discusses how the mere act of praising and glorifying God with our mouths is not a certain indicator of true religious affections, as even those without grace can exhibit high affections towards God. He emphasizes the importance of examining the heart and motives behind expressions of praise, highlighting that genuine grace goes beyond outward displays of admiration and must be rooted in a transformed heart. Edwards warns against mistaking emotional responses or verbal expressions of gratitude as evidence of true spiritual renewal, citing examples from Scripture where even graceless individuals praised and glorified God fervently.

Transcript

X. Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of religious affections by this, that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify God. This indeed is implied in what has been just now observed, of abounding and spending much time in the external exercises of religion, and was also hinted before; but because many seem to look upon it as a bright evidence of gracious affection, when persons appear greatly disposed to praise and magnify God, to have their mouths full of his praises, and affectionately to be calling on others to praise and extol him, I thought it deserved a more particular consideration.

No Christian will make it an argument against a person, that he seems to have such a disposition. Nor can it reasonably be looked upon as an evidence for a person, if those things that have been already observed and proved, be duly considered, viz., that persons, without grace, may have high affections towards God and Christ, and that their affections, being strong, may fill their mouths and incline them to speak much, and very earnestly, about the things they are affected with, and that there may be counterfeits of all kinds of gracious affection.

But it will appear more evidently and directly, that this is no certain sign of grace, if we consider what instances the Scripture gives us of it in those that were graceless. We often have an account of this, in the multitude that were present when Christ preached and wrought miracles; Mark 2:12, "And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." So Matt. 9:8, and Luke 5:26.

Also Matt. 15:31, "Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel." So we are told, that on occasion of Christ's raising the son of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:16, "There came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people." So we read of their glorifying Christ, or speaking exceeding highly of him: Luke 4:15, "And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all."

And how did they praise him, with loud voices, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David; hosanna in the highest; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," a little before he was crucified! And after Christ's ascension, when the apostles had healed the impotent man, we are told, that all men glorified God for that which was done, Acts 4:21. When the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia, heard from Paul and Barnabas, that God would reject the Jews, and take the Gentiles to be his people in their room, they were affected with the goodness of God to the Gentiles, "and glorified the word of the Lord:" but all that did so were not true believers; but only a certain elect number of them; as is intimated in the account we have of it, Acts 13:48: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

So of old the children of Israel at the Red Sea, "sang God's praise; but soon forgot his works." And the Jews in Ezekiel's time, "with their mouth showed much love, while their heart went after their covetousness." And it is foretold of false professors and real enemies of religion, that they should show a forwardness to glorify God: Isa. 66:5, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word. Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified."

It is no certain sign that a person is graciously affected, if, in the midst of his hopes and comforts, he is greatly affected with God's unmerited mercy to him that is so unworthy, and seems greatly to extol and magnify free grace. Those that yet remain with unmortified pride and enmity against God, may, when they imagine that they have received extraordinary kindness from God, cry out of their unworthiness, and magnify God's undeserved goodness to them, from no other conviction of their ill deservings, and from no higher principle than Saul had, who, while he yet remained with unsubdued pride and enmity against David, was brought, though a king, to acknowledge his unworthiness, and cry out, "I have played the fool, I have erred exceedingly," and with great affection and admiration, to magnify and extol David's unmerited and unexampled kindness to him, 1 Sam. 25:16-19, and 26:21, and from no higher principle than that from whence Nebuchadnezzar was affected with God's dispensations, that he saw and was the subject of, and praises, extols and honors the King of heaven; and both he, and Darius, in their high affections, call upon all nations to praise God, Dan. 3:28, 29, 30, and 4:1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37, and 6:25, 26, 27.

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