

# They Are Attended With a Conviction of the Reality and Certainty of Divine Things.

by Jonathan Edwards

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*Truly gracious affections are attended with a conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things, which is a reasonable and spiritual conviction that arises from a spiritual view or apprehension of the things of the gospel.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:15, John 6:68, John 17:6, Acts 8:37, 2 Corinthians 4:11, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 11:1, 1 John 4:13, 1 John 5:4

**Topics:** "True Faith", "Spiritual Conviction"

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## Description

Jonathan Edwards preaches about the importance of having truly gracious affections that are accompanied by a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment, emphasizing the solid and effectual conviction of the truth of divine things. He explains that all true Christians have a thorough conviction of the gospel's great truths, ruling in their hearts and influencing their lives. Edwards warns against religious affections that lack a genuine conviction of the mind, highlighting the need for a spiritual belief founded on real evidence and a reasonable persuasion of the truth of the Christian religion.

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## Transcript

V. Truly gracious affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment, of the reality and certainty of divine things.

This seems to be implied in the text that was laid as the foundation of this discourse: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

All those who are truly gracious persons have a solid, full, thorough and effectual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel; I mean, that they no longer halt between two opinions; the great doctrines of the gospel cease to be any longer doubtful things, or matters of opinion, which, though probable, are yet disputable; but with them, they are points settled and determined, as undoubted and indisputable, so that they are not afraid to venture their all upon their truth. Their conviction is an effectual conviction; so that the great spiritual mysterious and invisible things of the gospel, have the influence of real and certain things upon them; they have the weight and power of real things in their hearts; and accordingly rule in their affections, and govern them through the course of their lives. With respect to Christ's being the Son of God, and Savior of the world, and the great things he has revealed concerning himself, and his Father,

and another world, they have not only a predominating opinion that these things are true, and so yield their assent, as they do in many other matters of doubtful speculation; but they see that it is really so; their eyes are opened, so that they see that really Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And as to the things which Christ has revealed, of God's eternal purposes and designs, concerning fallen man, and the glorious and everlasting things prepared for the saints in another world, they see that they are so indeed; and therefore these things are of great weight with them, and have a mighty power upon their hearts, and influence over their practice, in some measure answerable to their infinite importance.

That all true Christians have such a kind of conviction of the truth of the things of the gospel, is abundantly manifest from the Holy Scriptures. I will mention a few places of many: Matt. 16:15, 16, 17, "But whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona;--My Father which is in heaven hath revealed it unto thee." John 6:68, 69 "Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God." John 17:6, 7, 8, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." Acts 8:37, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." 2. Cor. 4:11, 12, 13, 14, "We which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.--Death worketh in us.--We having the spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing, that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Together with ver. 16, "For which cause we faint not." And ver. 18 "While we look not at the things which are seen," &c. And chap. 5:1, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God." And ver. 6, 7, 8, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." 2 Tim. 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Heb. 3:6, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Heb. 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" together with that whole chapter. 1 John 4:13, 14, 15, 16, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Chap. 5:4, 5, "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Therefore truly gracious affections are attended with such a kind of conviction and persuasion of the truth of the things of the gospel, and sight of their evidence and reality, as these and other Scriptures speak of.

There are many religious affections, which are not attended with such a conviction of the judgment. There are many apprehensions and ideas which some have, that they call divine discoveries, which are affecting, but not convincing. Though for a little while they may seem to be more persuaded of the truth of the things of religion than they used to be, and may yield a forward assent, like many of Christ's hearers, who believed for a while; yet they have no thorough and effectual conviction; nor is there any great abiding change in them, in this respect, that whereas formerly they did not realize the great things of the gospel,

now these things, with regard to reality and certainty, appear new to them, and they behold them, quite in another view than they used to do. There are many persons who have been exceedingly raised with religious affections, and think they have been converted, that do not go about the world any more convinced of the truth of the gospel, than they used to be; or at least, there is no remarkable alteration: they are not men who live under the influence and power of a realizing conviction of the infinite and eternal things which the gospel reveals; if they were, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. Because their affections are not attended with a thorough conviction of the mind, they are not at all to be depended on; however great a show and noise they make, it is like the blaze of tow, or crackling of thorns, or like the forward flourishing blade on stony ground, that has no root, nor deepness of earth to maintain its life.

Some persons, under high affections, and a confident persuasion of their good estate, have that, which they very ignorantly call a seeing the truth of the word of God, and which is very far from it, after this manner; they have some text of Scripture coming to their minds in a sudden and extraordinary manner, immediately declaring unto them (as they suppose) that their sins are forgiven, or that God loves them, and will save them; and it may be, have a chain of Scriptures coming one after another, to the same purpose; and they are convinced that it is truth; i.e., they are confident that it is certainly so, that their sins are forgiven, and God does love them, &c.--they say they know it is so; and when the words of Scripture are suggested to them, and as they suppose immediately spoken to them by God, in this meaning, they are ready to cry out, Truth, truth! It is certainly so! The word of God is true! And this they call a seeing the truth of the word of God. Whereas the whole of their faith amounts to no more, than only a strong confidence of their own good estate, and so a confidence that these words are true, which they suppose tell them they are in a good estate: when indeed (as was shown before) there is no Scripture which declares that any person is in a good estate directly, or any other way than by consequence. So that this, instead of being a real sight of the truth of the word of God, is a sight of nothing but a phantom, and is wholly a delusion. Truly to see the truth of the word of God, is to see the truth of the gospel; which is the glorious doctrine the word of God contains, concerning God, and Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation by him, and the world of glory that he is entered into, and purchased for all them who believe; and not a revelation that such and such particular persons are true Christians, and shall go to heaven. Therefore those affections which arise from no other persuasion of the truth of the word of God than this, arise from delusion, and not true conviction; and consequently are themselves delusive and vain.

But if the religious affections that persons have, do indeed arise from a strong persuasion of the truth of the Christian religion, their affections are not the better, unless their persuasion be a reasonable persuasion or conviction. By a reasonable conviction, I mean, a conviction founded on real evidence, or upon that which is a good reason, or just ground of conviction. Men may have a strong persuasion that the Christian religion is true, when their persuasion is not at all built on evidence, but altogether on education, and the opinion of others; as many Mahometans are strongly persuaded of the truth of the Mahometan religion, because their fathers, and neighbors, and nation believe it. That belief of the truth of the Christian religion, which is built on the very same grounds with a Mahometan's belief of the Mahometan religion, is the same sort of belief. And though the thing believed happens to be better, yet that does not make the belief itself to be of a better sort; for though the thing believed happens to be true, yet the belief of it is not owing to this truth, but to education. So that as the conviction is no better than the Mahometan's conviction; so the affections that flow from it, are no better in themselves, than the religious affections of Mahometans.

But if that belief of Christian doctrines, which persons' affections arise from, be not merely from education, but indeed from reasons and arguments which are offered, it will not from thence necessarily follow, that their affections are truly gracious: for in order to that, it is requisite not only that the belief which their affections arise from, should be a reasonable, but also a spiritual belief or conviction. I suppose none will doubt but that some natural men do yield a kind of assent of their judgments to the truth of the Christian religion, from the rational proofs or arguments that are offered to evince it. Judas, without doubt, thought Jesus to be the Messiah, from the things which he saw and heard; but yet all along was a devil. So in John 2:23, 24, 25, we read of many that believed in Christ's name, when they saw the miracles that he did; whom yet Christ knew had not that within them, which was to be depended on. So Simon the sorcerer believed, when he beheld the miracles and signs which were done; but yet remained in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, Acts 8:13, 23. And if there is such a belief or assent of the judgment in some natural men, none can doubt but that religious affections may arise from that assent or belief; as we read of some who believed for a while, that were greatly affected, and anon with joy received the word.

It is evident that there is such a thing as a spiritual belief or conviction of the truth of the things of the gospel, or a belief that is peculiar to those who are spiritual, or who are regenerated, and have the Spirit of God, in his holy communications, and dwelling in them as a vital principle. So that the conviction they have, does not only differ from that which natural men have, in its concomitants, in that it is accompanied with good works; but the belief itself is diverse, the assent and conviction of the judgment is of a kind peculiar to those who are spiritual, and that which natural men are wholly destitute of. This is evident by the Scripture, if anything at all is so: John 17:8, "They have believed that thou didst send me." Tit. 1:1, "According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." John 16:27, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." 1 John 4:15, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Chap. 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Ver. 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself."

What a spiritual conviction of the judgment is, we are naturally led to determine from what has been said already under the former head of a spiritual understanding. The conviction of the judgment arises from the illumination of the understanding; the passing of a right judgment on things, depends on having aright apprehension or idea of things. And therefore it follows, that a spiritual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel, is such a conviction, as arises from having a spiritual view or apprehension of those things in the mind. And this is also evident from the Scripture, which often represents, that a saving belief of the reality and divinity of the things proposed and exhibited to us in the gospel, is from the Spirit of God's enlightening the mind, to have right apprehensions of the nature of those things, and so as it were unveiling things, or revealing them, and enabling the mind to view them and see them as they are. Luke 10:21, 22, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." John 6:40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." Where it is plain, that true faith arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. And John 17:6, 7, 8, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send one." Where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them a true

apprehension and view of divine things, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, and was sent by him: Matt. 16:16, 17, "Simon Peter said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." 1 John 5:10, "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." Gal. 1:14, 16, 16, "Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

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