

# CHARITY & ITS FRUITS

A Study of 1 Corinthians 13 based on the sermons of Jonathan Edwards

## Sermon 3

**“Nothing can make up for want of sincerity in the heart”**

### **1 Corinthians 13:3**

#### Introduction

*Giving-* “Here is one of the highest kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ mentioned, viz. a man’s giving all his goods to feed the poor. Giving to the poor is a duty very much insisted on in the Word of God... And though the Apostle says so much in both these epistles to stir them up to the duty of giving to the poor, yet he takes care to inform them that, let them so ever so far in it, yea, though they should bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and had not charity, it would profit them nothing.” (79-80)

*Suffering-* “He teaches them not only no performance but also no suffering would avail anything without charity. Men are ready to make much of what they do, but more of what they \_\_\_\_\_. They are ready to think it a great thing when they put themselves much out of their way, or are at great expense and suffering in religion. The Apostle here mentions a suffering of the most extreme kind, suffering even to death, and that one of the most terrible sorts of death, and says it is nothing without charity. When a man has given away all of his goods, he has nothing remaining which he can give but himself. And the Apostle teaches us that if a man does not only give his possessions, but when he has done that proceeds further, and gives his own body, and to be utterly consumed in the flames, it would avail nothing if the heart is withheld.” (80)

Doctrine-“All which men can do, and all which they can suffer, will not make up for the want of sincerity in the heart.”

“There may be great performances and great sufferings without sincerity...\_\_\_\_\_ that men can do in religion will ever be accepted instead of truth and uprightness.” (81)

Edwards stresses that the natural man can do many great things. “Many of the \_\_\_\_\_ have been eminent for moral performances. Some of them have been eminent for justice, and other for their great deeds which they have done for the public good...Many have done great things from fears of hell, hoping thereby to appease the Deity, and make atonement for their sins; and many have done great things from pride and from vainglory.” (82)

Not only can the natural man do great things, but the natural man can also be willing even to give his body over to death. “There are accounts of some who have died martyrs to false religions, though not in any way in such numbers, nor in such a manner, as those who have died martyrs to the true religion. But if many may expose themselves to death for a false religion from natural principles, so without doubt they may from the same principles expose themselves to suffer for the \_\_\_\_\_ religion.” (83)

Edwards states, “Whatever men do or suffer, they \_\_\_\_\_ by all make up for the want of sincerity in the heart.” (83) He then gives five reasons why our works cannot take the place of sincerity of heart (love for God in the heart).

Reason 1: “It is not the external work done, or the suffering undergone, that is in itself anything worth in the sight of God...If God stood in any \_\_\_\_\_ of these things, they might be of value to Him in themselves considered, and separately from any sincerity of heart that they flow from. We stand in need of external good things, and therefore such things offered or given to us may be of value to us in themselves. But God stands in need of nothing. He is not fed by the sacrifices of beasts, nor is He enriched by the gifts of silver or gold, or pearls...And as there is nothing profitable to God of men’s performances, so there can be nothing amiable in His sight in a mere external work without sincerity of heart; for God sees not as man seeth.” (84)

“We may need that our fellow creatures, our neighbors, should suffer for us, should help bear our burdens and put themselves to inconveniences for our sakes. But God stands in no such need of us, and therefore our sufferings are

not acceptable to Him, considered \_\_\_\_\_ as such sufferings undergone by us...For beings are not profitable or lovely to God in themselves.” (85)

Reason 2: “Whatever is done or suffered, yet if the heart is withheld there is nothing really \_\_\_\_\_ to God...So if man...gives without his heart, there is no more truly given to God than if he had none...And therefore God is not his end in what he does or gives. What is given is given to that which the man makes his end in giving. If his end be only himself, then it is given only to himself, and not to God. If his aim be his own honor, then the gift is something offered to his honor.” (85)

Reason 3: “Love or charity is the \_\_\_\_\_ of what God requires from us...it is most absurd to suppose that anything can make up for the want of that which is the sum of all that God requires. Charity or love is something which has its seat (root or foundation) in the heart, and is that in which sincerity does consist; and all that is saving and distinguishing summarily consists in it.” (86)

Reason 4: “If we make a great show of respect to God in which we do without sincerity of heart, it is but...a practical \_\_\_\_\_ unto God.” (86)

Reason 5: “Let what may be done and suffered if there be not sincerity of heart, it is but an offering to some \_\_\_\_\_...it is true that by doing great things and suffering great things something is worshipped; but it is not God that is worshipped. (87)

Application-three different ways that this doctrine can be applied-

1. Self-examination-“If it be so, let this put us upon examine ourselves whether or no we have sincerity of heart.” As we examine ourselves Edwards wants us to remember we do not examine whether our works are big or small but whether we do them with sincere motives. He writes, “God abominates great things without sincerity; but He accepts and delights in little things when there is sincerity. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in sincerity is more worth in God’s sight than all one’s goods to feed the poor; yea, than the wealth of the kingdom given away, and besides a body offered up in the flames, without sincerity.” Edwards also wants us to remember that “God accepts also of a \_\_\_\_\_ sincerity. Through there be a great deal of hypocrisy, yet if there be any sincerity, that little sincerity shall not be rejected because there is so much hypocrisy with it.” (87-88)

Four elements are essential for something to be done with sincerity. Truth is first. There must be a real inward love and honor for God or else something is not done sincerely. Secondly, a thing must be done freely. A person cannot be \_\_\_\_\_ to do something sincerely. Third is integrity. Integrity brings the idea of wholeness (the whole heart and whole soul). A divided heart is not acting with integrity and therefore is not sincere. The fourth element of sincerity is purity. So, a sincere act is something done out of a real love for God (truth) simply because one has a singular (integrity) love God (freedom), without any clinging self-seeking motives (purity).

2. For the lost-“If it be indeed so that by all you can either do or suffer you cannot make up for the want of a holy, sincere principle of love in your heart, then it will follow that you are in an \_\_\_\_\_ condition till you have obtained God’s regenerating grace to renew a right spirit within you; and that do what you will, or undergo and suffer what you will, you cannot be delivered from your wickedness without the converting grace of God...Rest on nothing that you have done or suffered, or that you can do or suffer; but rest on Christ. Let your heart be filled with sincere love to Him; and then, at the last great day, He will own you as His follower and as His friend.” (89-90)
3. Seek to get love-“...cherish sincere Christian love in their hearts. If it be so that this is of such great and absolute necessity, then let it be the one great thing that you seek. Seek it with diligence and prayer; and seek it of God, and not of yourself...Be exhorted, then, as the great thing, to cherish sincere love or Christian charity in the heart. It is that which you must have; and there is nothing that will help your case without it. Without it, all will, in some respect, but tend to deepen your condemnation, and to sink you to but lower depths in the world of despair” (90)