

Post Resurrection Sacrifices

Romans 12:1,2

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OPENING PRAYER:

Our heavenly Father, we thank you again that you have sent your only son, the son whom you love, and bound him by your love for us to the tree on Golgotha. We thank you for his amazing love for you that he became obedient, even to the death of the cross. We thank you that He has loved us with an everlasting love, and finished the work that you gave him to do. We praise you, that you have raised him up. That he is now highly exalted at your right hand. That you have given to him the name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to your glory. We join this night, our father with all the ransomed host, who perfectly worship our Lord Jesus Christ, and join with all your people throughout the world, from the rising of the sun this day, until it's setting, who have given themselves to the praise of the name of Jesus and celebrated the power of His death and the glory of His resurrection. We pray, heavenly Father, that this evening you would close us in with our Lord Jesus Christ, as though we ourselves walked on the road Emmaus that as he opens the Scriptures to us by His Spirit, that we may feel our hearts to burn within us, with love for him, with dedication to him, with love for one another, and a desire to serve you for your honor and glory. Thank you that we are found here. Thank you that you are ours. Thank you that you love us. Thank you that you continue to speak to us to call us nearer to yourself. And at the same time nearer to one another. We pray that you would do as good -- lasting good. Good that will last in our lives from this evening until all eternity. And so we look to you to feed us, nourish us, challenge us, direct us, instruct us, humble us, and exalt us in the grace of your presence for Jesus Christ our Savior's sake, Amen. Please be seated.

SCRIPTURE READING:

Now our scripture reading is from the 12th chapter of Romans. You will find the passage in the pew Bible on page 947. And we have come at last to the beginning of the final section in Romans that extends essentially, from Romans chapter 12, here right through to the end of Romans chapter 16. And these first two verses of Romans chapter 12, provide for us the hinge from chapters one through 11, and especially nine through 11, into what follows from chapter 12 verse three, right to the end of the epistle. So let us hear God's word.

I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

SERMON:

Last Sunday evening, when we came to the end of Romans chapter 11, that study coincided with the end of our missions conference here in the church. And I hope you felt, as I felt, that there was something appropriate about continuing our study in Paul's letter to the Romans. Because towards the end of Romans chapter 11 and verse 32, Paul had made this great statement "for God has consigned all" that is Jew and Gentile, he has consigned the whole world "to disobedience, that in his economy, he might have mercy on all." And in a very real sense, Paul's final words here in chapter 11, "For from him and through him, and to him are all things", provide the ultimate motivation for all gospel mission. Gospel mission is driven, of course, by our compassion for the lost. But our compassion for the lost is driven by our ambition for God's glory. We evangelize the world, where God is not glorified, in order that God may be glorified. Because we believe with the apostle Paul, that from him and through him, and to him are all things. God has consigned, and this was Paul's theme, right from the beginning, all to disobedience, "There is none righteous, no, not one." None may speak a word of self vindication before the throne of God, as Paul has said, there, "every mouth is shut, and the whole world is held guilty before God." And yet, as Paul has demonstrated time and time again, God has shown the riches of His mercy.

You might, however, think that on Easter Sunday evening, it's stretching it a bit to give the sermon this evening the title, Post Resurrection Sacrifices. Is that squeezing a round peg into a square hole? Or two square texts into the round hole of our celebration of the resurrection? You might think so, and think that under the guise of an Easter title, the sermon has got nothing whatsoever to do with Easter because Romans 12 one and two have little to do with the resurrection. But of course, if you thought that, dare I say, you would be quite wrong. Romans 12, one and two, depend on the resurrection! Now, of course that so in the very obvious sense that Romans depends on the resurrection. The church depends on the resurrection. The New Testament depends on the resurrection. We depend on the resurrection. Everything about the Christian faith depends on the resurrection.

But I mean that also in a narrower sense, that throughout Romans, Paul has been demonstrating to us the significance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And although it's inviting you to stretch your memory, beyond where most of our memory banks go, he had actually made this plane right from the beginning. The more you read through Romans, the more you begin to think that once we're finished Romans, we should in fact, start reading it backwards. To begin to see more and more how the seeds that Paul had sown in articulating the gospel in the early chapters are worked out so marvelously in the later chapters. And you remember what he had said right at the very beginning of Romans chapter one -- when he had been introducing his letter, and spoken about being an "apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." Now what lies at the heart of the gospel of God that's been promised in the Holy Scriptures? It concerns God's Son, descended from David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness, through, yes, His resurrection from the dead. And we saw when we were studying these verses, that Paul is not speaking here simply about the deity

and the humanity of Christ. The humanity of Christ descended from David, the deity of Christ, declared to be the Son of God, with power by the resurrection. He is speaking about the two states of Christ. His humiliation in coming as the seed of David... Think of it that the Son of God came in that week embryonic form for our salvation. Lived in humiliation. But in his resurrection was declared by God -- the resurrection was God's declaration from heaven: "This is my son". And I demonstrate that he has gone through humiliation and weakness for your salvation by raising Him from among the dead, in majesty and power and glorious splendor.

But then you notice that Paul immediately says, the implication of that is that the risen Christ has called me to bring about through the Gospel, the "obedience of faith among the nations." The purpose of the resurrection, in this sense, Paul says, the effect of the resurrection through my ministry is that the "obedience of faith" will be nourished throughout the nations. Men and women come to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the scholars discuss at great length what Paul means when he speaks about the "obedience of faith". Those genitives you remember from high school or college grammar, are extremely difficult to nail down. Is Paul speaking about the obedience that emerges from faith? Or is Paul speaking about faith as obedience? Or is Paul actually, as I rather suspect playing on words here, because of the relationship and the language he's using between faith, trust and obedience... In English, those are never the same verb, but in Greek they may be the same verb. And saying to us, of course both our true. Faith is obedience to the command of the gospel to believe in Jesus Christ. And that faith simultaneously, if it's real faith, produces obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. So in a sense, right in the opening words, in a sense, he's given us a summary of the gospel he proclaims from chapter three, verse 21, right to the end of the passage, right to the end of the letter. God has raised his son from the dead, the implication of that is that through the gospel we are summoned to believe in Jesus Christ, in trust and persuasion, and to be resolutely obedient to Jesus Christ. Because he is our divine master and our only Lord. And in that simple statement, don't we have the summary of all that he's been saying, from chapter three, verse 21? Now God provided for us in Jesus Christ a great Savior. And now as we begin to see at the beginning of chapter 12, the implications of that, for the obedient life of the Christian believer.

And actually, that's not the only place where Paul shows us the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. Over in chapter four, verse 25, he said, "Jesus was put to death, in order to deal with our transgressions, and he was raised for our justification." How do we know that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has been accepted by God? By the very same means, the Old Testament believer held on to the notion that the great sacrifice on the day of atonement had been accepted by God. When the high priest emerge from the Holy of Holies and pronounced shalom upon the people. And isn't it interesting, that's exactly the thing that our Lord Jesus does on the evening of the resurrection when he comes and he meets with his people, having died for our sins. Been raised again to demonstrate that the sacrifice has been accepted by God and our sins are forgiven. Do you remember when he came among his disciples what his first word was? Shalom. Peace.

And so, says the Apostle Paul, we are not only justified because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but as he goes on to say in chapter five, verse 10, "If we have been justified by His death and our sins have been forgiven, how much more will we be saved by His life?" And it's one of those "how much more" arguments that Paul loves to use. And the New Testament as a whole loves to use them. If he's died to bring you forgiveness then, of course, having brought you forgiveness at the cost of his death, he will not ignore you now that he has risen from the grave and living in his triumphant life. And so the implication of this, as he says in chapter six is that because we belong to Jesus Christ, we are united to

Christ, who has died not only for our sins, but to the dominion of sin, having died to the dominion of sin in His death, we are raised into newness of life with Him in His resurrection. And even in chapter 11, he goes on to say, that "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us, then he will give life to our mortal bodies through that same spirit." So the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the apostle Paul, is the grounding of our justification. It's the guarantee of our preservation. It is the instrument of our sanctification. And it is also the assurance of our final resurrection.

And he'd even going on your remember when he had been speaking about the way in which God has used the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews to bring in the Gentiles, and how the faith of the Gentiles, Paul believes will prompt the Jews to jealousy, and they're in gathering will be nothing less he says, than life from the dead. And so we might say the book of Romans is all about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ that's written into the very heart of Paul's Gospel. And so now at the beginning of chapter 12, he turns to us, and he says, "Dear ones, brothers", he says -- I wish the English Standard Version didn't put in that little footnote that constantly says, Brothers and sisters, we all know that. Tell us something we don't know. Brothers and sisters, he says, "In the light of these mercies of God, what are we to do?" And his answer is, there is only one thing for us to do. "I beseech you, I exhort you", he says, "by the mercies of God, to yield yourselves to him as living sacrifices". And you'll notice as he says this, once again, he slips in that little word "therefore." I didn't consult the other translations. I've complained about the New International Version, because it misses out so many "therefore" in Romans. And I should have looked at it tonight to see whether I should complement it. Because there is a "therefore" here, and it's one of the more, more important "therefores" in the whole of the Bible. Because what Paul is saying is, hold Romans Chapter One through 11, in your mind, and in your soul, and then let its implications work out in your life.

And since Paul sometimes said it was not tiresome for him to repeat things, and it was profitable for others, let me repeat one more time, that if there is any book in the New Testament that teaches us the grammar of the Christian gospel, it is Paul's letter to the Romans. Learning to articulate the grammar of the gospel is fundamental to speaking well in your life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have seen that the grammar of the Gospel is that the imperatives of the gospel are always rooted in the indicatives of God's saving grace. And we have had 11 chapters of unremitting indicatives. Stating what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, and rarely telling us anything that we should do. I think there are probably only three points in the first 11 chapters, where the apostle Paul has stopped talking about what God does and turn to us and said, now, here is what you are to do. By my calculation, we've had about 66 sermons on Romans chapters, one to 11, only three points in 66 sermons, in which Paul stops and gives us an imperative. That's one imperative on average, every 22 sermons. And there is a very real sense in which this is the way to live the Christian life, and never the other way around. As Robert Murray McShane used to say, for every glance you take at yourself, and what you are to be, take 100 glances at the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that he has done for you.

If I can put it this way, some of you studied Latin, in high school, or in college. And one of the first things you had to learn as soon as you began to compose sentences, is that the verbs in Latin go in a very strange place, as they do, of course, in other languages. And you had to readjust the way you thought. And the teacher at the beginning said: verb at the end. Verb at the end. Now, you don't speak English that way. You don't say Sinclair to church Sunday Night came. If you say that most of us will think your native language is not a not even American English, never mind English English. You see we Westerners, English speakers, we like to put the doing word near the front. And sadly, we like to do the same thing with the Christian life and how we understand it. The doing words at the front, give me

things to do. But you see we can never speak the gospel clearly, from our lips, or in our lives if we reverse the grammatical order in which the Gospel comes to us. Which is this, God saving grace - immerse yourself in it, let it pour over you, drink it in, and then you will be able to receive and to fulfill the powerful imperatives of the gospel.

And so if you have patiently been listening through the 66 sermons, punctuated, I think by a few more imperatives when the Apostle Paul ever used, I congratulate you on your patience. But you have needed that patience, because the sluice gates of imperatives are about to open out upon you. And if you are not rooted and immersed in grace, these imperatives will destroy you. Because they come like machine gunfire from the Apostle Paul. Sentence after sentence, after sentence, after sentence. It's almost as though he had looked forward to the late 20th and early 21st century, when Christians complain and say you need to give us three things to do. And he now says with a smile, you said you wanted some things to do? Then let me give you some things to do. But if you're not rooted in what Jesus Christ has done for you, then you yourself will be done for.

Now, I don't know if I'll say this again in this series. And since people are always coming and going, in series of sermons, you've maybe never heard this and all your life. But this is, this is a primary lesson in the grammar of the gospel. And we overturn the gospel, and we do damage to our Christian lives -- when we begin to turn that round the other way, and focus on our doing, rather than on his doing. It's only his doing that enables our doing. So the apostle Paul, now as he comes to this hinge, in his letter is making that perfectly clear. So do you want something to do? Then he says, give yourself absolutely without reservation to Jesus Christ. Give yourself absolutely without reservation to Jesus Christ. Be a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ. That's the language he uses, isn't it, I beseech you, by the mercies of God to present yourselves, your bodies, as a living sacrifice to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, here's a very interesting thing. In so much of the literature that pours out upon our world, teaching us how to put our Christian lives together, the word sacrifice occurs very rarely. But in the New Testament, it's the very first word, because the very first word of the gospel, teaching us what to do is this: "Take up the cross. Die in order to live."

And so Paul says to our comfortable, early 21st century Christianity, so you want something to do? Then sacrifice? Well, then, Paul, what shall I sacrifice? We've had an Easter sacrificial offering, shall I sacrifice money? I know there are things I need to cut out of my life, what should I sacrifice? And you see what the Apostle Paul tells us, we have to sacrifice everything. Paul is not calling us to make sacrifices. Paul is calling us to be sacrifices - embodied sacrifices.

And so I want you to notice here four things that Paul says, characterize our essential response to his exposition of the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the first of them is exactly what I have mentioned, that we give ourselves as living sacrifices to God. Now, of course, in the Old Testament, there were different kinds of sacrifices. There were sacrifices that were made, asking God to pardon or cover over our sin. And that, of course, is the sacrifice that was fulfilled perfectly in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is not thinking of our sacrifice in any sense, whatsoever, as contributing to the forgiveness of our sins. Rather, he has in mind those sacrifices that were brought in light of the sacrifices made for sin. That we should give of ourselves to the Lord, because he has given of Himself to us. The kind of thing that Isaac Watts has in mind in his great hymn, "Alas, and did my savior, bleed and did my sovereign die. Here, Lord, I give myself away. 'Tis all that I can do." Now, we've not really understood the gospel in our hearts, until that's our response. What Jesus wants, Paul is saying, is not your things.

He's got plenty of things. He doesn't want your thing. He wants you to give yourself over to him as a living sacrifice.

So the responses sacrificial. Secondly says Paul, but response is total. Now he says, How are you to do this? Well, he puts it simply like this, doesn't he? He says, "present your bodies" as the English Standard Version translates it. Some other translations think that Paul is using body they are simply as language for your whole person. Give yourself as a living sacrifice in your totality, including now notice this including your body. When you give yourself to the Lord Jesus, you don't do that as some kind of mystical heart relationship. You do that as a human being. As far as I can see, all of us who are human beings and Christians in this room have bodies. Of course, you may be a Christian here who doesn't have a body and that's the reason I can't see you. But I don't believe there are Christians in this world who are not embodied Christians. So the kind of consecration that Paul is speaking about here, is not the consecration of my heart, in distinction from the consecration of my whole being. There isn't consecration of that kind in the New Testament. Consecration in the New Testament profoundly changes what you do with your body. Remember how Francis Ridley Havergal...Isn't this a Francis Ridley Havergal hymn? "Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee? Goes into detail about what you do with your body. So this is one of the great questions for me to ask as a Christian -- as I yield myself to the Lord Jesus Christ. How is this going to affect how I live in the body? How I see things? How I hear things? Where my feet take me. What goes in and out of my mouth. We blithely sing, "All for Jesus, all for Jesus." But that really does mean all -- present your bodies as sacrifices, holy, that is to say, absolutely reserved for the Lord. With a sticker placed over them, "Reserved for Jesus Christ." You remember how Paul makes the point. He says the body is for the Lord Jesus. Now all of us, of course, because we are bodily being struggle, in order to live holy lives in these bodies and, and this is the primary thing to grasp. This is the principle that will enable us to live the Christ centered life. Lord, my body is yours. Indeed, you have been pleased to privilege me by sending your Holy Spirit into my body in order that I might be a temple of the Holy Spirit. I am yours without reservation. In such a way that the principle that drives my life is that I might yield my life to the Lord in a way that will be acceptable to him.

Years and years ago, I think it was a student -- I was a student when one of my friends said to me quite casually but within sight, you know, it's not the difficult passages in the New Testament I find difficult. It's the passages nobody could fail to understand I find it difficult. So here is something for the youngest Christian and the oldest Christian, as I make decisions, as I use my body, as I determine my career, as I have my relationships: Is this acceptable to the Lord? Is this pleasing to the Lord? Is this glorifying to the Lord?

And then you'll notice he says a third thing about this consecration, that sacrificial, it's total. And then he says, It's spiritual. Notice the language that's used here in the English Standard Version, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Now, the word he uses here is the word from which we get the word logical, and the scholars struggle with how to translate this, because it does seem to have a sense of contrast between the merely physical sacrifices of the Old Testament, and the spiritual sacrifices that believers are called to make in the New Testament era. But I think Paul is really trying to convey a notion of, if I could put it this way, logical, spiritual, -- spiritual, logical. He's saying, this is where the gospel drives you. This is the logic of the gospel. If Christ has given everything for you, then the logic of the Gospel is that a true response to the Lord Jesus Christ is that I give myself back to him without reservation. Now, it's simple, isn't it? Wasn't it Hudson Taylor, who said this, "If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, is anything too great for me to

do for him?" Well, is it? The answer to that question could throw you out of Colombia to the ends of the earth? Because perhaps so many of us live actually with the answer, there are many things that would be too great for you to ask from me. I'm appalled how true that is. I've known men go into the Christian ministry, and say to God, it must be in this part of the country. Because this is the part of the country I feel comfortable in. You imagine the apostle saying that? Let's find a nice little corner of Galilee. And perhaps we can transform it somehow or another, and we can all live happily ever after. And the world can go to hell.

Well, what about you, and me? When preachers talk this way, we all feel guilty. Actually, if you don't, you're probably in deep trouble. Because he's always summoning us to more. You see, what happens when you become a Christian is that God wants to go down and down and down and down. And the more he goes down, the more you realize that you weren't as tall a Christian as you thought you were. That you hadn't fully dealt with those elements of indwelling sin that you thought had disappeared out of your life. And you begin to experience what the saints have always experienced, that the more you grow, the more you become sensitive to and conscious of the fact that it seems to be this, this sin seems to be deep down as it were woven through the very fabric of your being. And so the Lord Jesus is always saying now more, more, more. And you see what he does to deconstruct us by showing us our sin and our need, he also does to construct us. To make us tall and mature and balanced and strong and muscular Christians. He stretches us by saying now child more and more and more and more. I am going to be asking you for more unendingly. Which is why Jim Elliott who said, "He has no full of gifts, what he cannot keep the game but he cannot lose." Also as a young man had the shrewdness to understand that "It takes the whole of your life to give your whole life to Jesus Christ." And He will unendingly be saying to you, in his love for you, more my child, more my child, more my child. I want all of you my child, because only when I have all of you, will you be really free to live for my glory? So I suppose the question for me is this? Is there something when God pokes around in my life I am actually saying to him, all for Jesus, all for Jesus, but not that? But he doesn't mean to harm you, does he? Does he mean to harm you? Who died for you?

So this consecration is sacrificial, and total and spiritual. And then says Paul in verse two, it's transformational. In this great statement in which he now picks this up, in another imperative to us, so he says, here's the thing, "Don't be conformed to this world", actually better I think, "Don't be conformed to this age". He's not talking here about whether you wear designer ties or don't wear ties because you're doing the things everybody is doing. He's talking about the spirit of the age living in a way that thinks horizontally rather than vertically that lives for the visible rather than the invisible. That lives for the temporal rather than the eternal. Now he says, don't be conformed to that be a nonconformist. But don't just be a nonconformist. To be a nonconformist on its own, would be to be eccentric. And we have room in our church for only so many eccentric people. Okay. I don't know how near the limit we are. Our five ministers contribute greatly to the number -- I certainly understand that. The Christian is not somebody who pigheadedly refuses to conform to the world - period. But the person who sees that his non conformity, how non conformity is driven by the transformation of the gospel.

And here's something to notice. Talking about grammar. This statement is extraordinary grammar. Do you notice that? Don't be conformed to this world. Don't, as JB Phillips put it, don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. That might be a great word for you this week. The world is constantly seeking to squeeze us into its mold. Now he says resist that. Don't be conformed to this world, but "be transformed." Now, what's interesting about the grammar here? It's this. Transformed is passive. It's something that's done to you. He's not saying become a transformer. I know that probably means

something different to under nines. He's saying be transformed. And you see how he understands that the marvel of the gospel of Jesus Christ stretches our grammar to the breaking point, because this is a command. This is an imperative, but it's in the passive. Be transformed. And we have seen before how the apostle Paul loves to understand this is how the gospel works. The transformation of our lives isn't something that goes over our heads as though we were automatons. God does not employ His sovereignty in that way. God employs His sovereignty, he who alone can transform us into the likeness of his son that he'd spoken about in chapter eight verse 29, commands us to be transformed. Well how on earth can that take place? How can you do something that needs to be done to you? Well, this is the marvel of the gospel. And he goes on to explain it in this instance, he says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So that he says, "You may by testing, discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect?" There is something we are called to do that involves something being done to us. So what is it that we are to do in order that it may be done to us? Well, he says, this transformation is done to us -- I wish more and more Christians today understood this -- by the "renewing of our minds" that takes place through the truth of the scriptures. So that as we give our minds to the scripture, as we are doing in our study of Romans and everything else we study as we give our minds to the scriptures, we discover that God Himself transforms us through the truth of the scriptures. And we are being obedient to Him, and He is transforming us. He is doing to us and for us and in us what we cannot do for ourselves. Which is precisely the fulfillment of the prayer of our Lord Jesus, "Sanctify them through the truth, your word, is truth." Which is why this room in which we meet is partly a worship center. It's also partly a hospital in which God does His surgery, and does his medical analysis and provides us out of His Word with the pharmaceuticals that we need in order for our lives to be reconstructed by His grace. And as we place our lives under that word, as we read it for ourselves, as we read it in groups, as we place our lives under the ministry of the Word, the Potter is at his wheel, and he's working upon us, and he's doing us good. And the truth of the gospel grips into our minds. And we begin to discover that we are driven by the truth of the gospel to live for His glory. And he's transforming us -- it's hard work. Sometimes it's sore. Sometimes it takes so long. But he is resolutely committed to transforming us by the renewal of our minds.

Now, however, notice this. And with this, I need to finish. Although I've much still to say on this, that will need to wait until we do Romans backwards. Mind renewal is not the ultimate goal. Now, this is very important for us in this church because as I said the other Sunday, people say to me, of course, First Presbyterian Church is a teaching church. And your ministers are committed and your Sunday school teachers and multitudes of others who share in the ministry of this church, we are resolutely committed to the teaching of the Word of God. But the goal, the final goal is not teaching. Indeed, the final goal is not merely mind renewal. The final goal is the transformation of life that takes place, ultimately, through the transformation of our affections towards the Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly Father, and the blessed Holy Spirit. And I think this is very important for us when we are a church that has given itself to teaching and when many of us are parents who have resolutely given ourselves to teaching our children. The goal here is not mental. It is moral! The goal here is not informational. It's character building! The goal here is not ultimately intellectual. It is ultimately affectional! So that we may, as he says here, by testing, by experience, discern, have a taste for, sensitivity to, love for the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Now, to whom good and perfect and acceptable? Well, the commentators are all at sixes and sevens about this as well, probably both God and us. And that's what mind renewal by the gospel is ultimately for -- to change our affections towards the Lord, which changes our behavior towards the Lord.

Now, we have many keen Christian parents, young Christian parents, in our church. I urge you to understand this as you teach your children. Producing children whose heads are packed with Bible knowledge is not the same thing as children, whose affections have been captured for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in a season of time, I think, when many people have their minds full of information. I noticed this with students. Now that as one of our elders wives assures me I really am elderly. I noticed this with students that their information package is often way beyond where their emotions are. And their minds are packed with information, but they are affectionately and emotionally retarded human beings. So let us never forget that the purpose of all this has got to do ultimately with our relationship to the Lord. And as Paul is going on to show and the rest of most of Romans without relationships with one another.

Do you know it may surprise you, the person who probably grasped this most clearly on this landmass was the man who most scholars and most Americans think was probably the greatest intellectual, this landmass has ever produced: Jonathan Edwards. The soaring intellectual genius, Jonathan Edwards says this, "When I am teaching God's word, my aim is" listen to this "to raise as high as possible towards the Lord the affections of my people." And as they would say, at home, if it's good enough for Jonathan Edwards, it's good enough for you and me. Because at the end of the day the Lord Jesus is not a purveyor of information about himself for its own sake. He is the lover of our souls. And he wants us to be the lover of the Lord. Which is why when you think about it, the greatest commandment is what? "You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength." After 11 solid chapters of indicatives, it's almost as though the Apostle Paul is saying, now what I'm really talking about here is, boys and girls, which is what we all are, boys and girls, do you really love the Lord Jesus? My, my you'll not go far wrong -- there.

Maybe that's why, at the end of that walk the Emmaus road, the disciples did not say, wasn't that an absolutely terrific piece of biblical theology the stranger taught us. I'll bet it was a marvelous piece of biblical theology. But what they said was, "Did not our hearts burn within us? As he talked with us, on the way." Oh for burning hearts for the Lord Jesus, this resurrection Sunday evening.

Well, I probably ought to publicly repent, since we've no meal tonight that I've taken some of the meal time with a different kind of meal. But you will forgive me for that. I trust.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father. What a gospel this is. What a savior. What a freshness there is about your word. How it seems to come at us, sometimes seems to meet us head on and other times, sneaks up on us. Sometimes puts lights on but we, we never knew where to find the switch. Sometimes shows us dark places that we never knew existed. Always calls us to know and to trust and to love the Lord Jesus Christ. And so this Easter Sunday evening we pray, that as in measure, we have experienced the presence of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, that you will grant us hearts that will continue to burn with the deepest affection for him, that we may live in these poor bodies with all devotion to our dear Savior. Fill us more and more we pray with your Holy Spirit. Fill us more and more with your word. Renew our minds that our lives may be transformed. Transform our lives that our affections for the Savior, and for all he has saved will simply grow and grow in the joy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we ask this in his name. Amen.