

## Foreword

The book you now hold in your hands is a labor of love—love for the biblical book of Romans, love for the preacher Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), love for the teacher John Gerstner (1914–96), and love for the Christian church today.

Paul's epistle to the Romans is one of the most beloved writings in the entire biblical canon, especially for Augustinians and Protestants. It is the subject of thousands of commentaries, many by the most important doctors of the church: Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Hodge, and Barth, to name a few. It offers the doctrines of sin, the gospel, and salvation in a nutshell. It is the basis for the structure of the first Protestant textbook in what later came to be categorized as systematic theology, Philip Melancthon's *Loci Communes* (1521). It is a frequently-cited sourcebook of the Reformation *solas*, which teach that salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone because of the work of God through Christ alone. It is the site of the "Romans road," a standard tool for sharing the gospel used by myriad evangelists in the evangelical movement. It is a central text of scripture, in short, employed by many readers as a key to the whole Bible.

Jonathan Edwards never published a major commentary on Romans. He did, however, preach about and write about Romans at numerous times throughout his life. Though he is highly regarded today as a great literary artist, natural scientist, philosopher and psychologist of religion, he was chiefly a biblical thinker, a minister of the Word. And inasmuch as he remains one of the most important thought leaders in all of Christian history, it is high time that someone has put together a major collection of his writings on the biblical book of Romans.

John Gerstner once attempted to compile a similar volume. A famous conference speaker and faculty member at Pittsburgh Seminary as well as Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, he was enjoined by Perry Miller to edit a volume of Edwards' sermons on the epistle to the Romans for *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* published by Yale University Press. He never

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finished this undertaking. But he did spend many summers poring over Edwards' manuscripts. These labors bore fruit in several other publishing projects and, perhaps more importantly, in the pioneering work Gerstner did to promote Edwards among evangelical Christians during the mid-twentieth-century Edwards renaissance.

David Lovi and Ben Westerhoff are two of the evangelicals inspired by Gerstner's work. It is fitting, then, that they are the ones to complete what Gerstner started: a major compilation of Edwards' work in the book of Romans. This is not a volume of sermons. Unlike Gerstner's own project, it contains biblical commentary from many different sources, including sermons, published treatises, and exegetical manuscripts. It is ordered canonically, much as a commentary would be. And it is aimed at Christian preachers and other ministers of the Word. Dr. Gerstner would be proud. In fact, if Edwards was correct about the lives of saints in heaven, Gerstner is looking down in gratitude for the work of Lovi and Westerhoff, joyful for its place in God's eternal plan of redemption.

Whether or not Edwards was right about the lives of those in heaven, I am confident that the saints on earth will profit from this book. May it inspire and inform future ministers of the Word, helping them unlock the treasure chest of scripture for those they serve.

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