

# The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

## Romans Chapter 12: “The Essence of Christian Service”

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul called for us to present our lives as a sacrifice unto God. This passage is metaphorically referring to the burnt offering found in Leviticus 1. The fact that we are a “*living*” sacrifice confirms our Christian lives are an ongoing continual process. In Numbers 28:3-8 it speaks of a continual burnt offering. It was to be offered every morning and evening to commemorate Jewish devotion to God. The Israelite man would come out of his tent in the morning, the smoke of the offering and proclaim, “I hereby dedicate my life to you today LORD”. In the evening he would see the smoke and say, “I also dedicate my family for your service as well.”

We also are to “continually” offer ourselves daily for the service of God. Jesus said in *Luke 9:23* “*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*” This continually perpetual pattern was carried out in the lives of the New Testament Christians.

- The Christians in Acts 2:42 were “continually” devoting themselves to the fellowship of the saints.
- The Apostles taught in the Temple and from house to house “every day” in Acts 5:42.
- The widows were ministered to “daily” in Acts 6:1.
- The Christians were advised to “continue” in the grace of God in Acts 13:43.
- The Bereans searched the scriptures “daily” in Acts 17:11.
- Paul reasoned in the School of Tyrannus “daily” in Acts 19:9.
- Romans 11:22 tells us to “continually” be kindness of God.
- Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, “*I die daily.*”
- Colossians 1:23 reminds us to “continually” remain in the faith.

There is a call for each and every church member to live their lives daily for the cause of Christ. In that way we become a “living and holy sacrifice” unto God.

In *Ephesians 4:1* Paul further states “*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...*” Christians are in a life-long relationship with their Savior. We are to “*walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light*” (1 John 1:5), resulting in fellowship with the Creator of the universe (John 1:3). We are all called to serve God fully and the only alternative to this is becoming a spiritual zombie.

We are called not to conform, but to be transformed. To appreciate what Paul was teaching, it is necessary to look closely at a couple of the key words.

The first is “conformed” (συσχηματίζω). It means *to fashion oneself* into the shape of another. It is middle action, implying something that one does to self. In other words we are the ones who have a decision to resist being fashioned into the pattern of the world. It is our own decision to fight against the natural tendencies of the world. *1 Jn 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

# The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

The second word of focus which Paul used for “transformed” (μεταμορφωω), from which we derive *metamorphosis*, being similar to a caterpillar in a cocoon. It is passive action, which is something we allow to occur to us. The caterpillar has the decision to make and enter the cocoon, but God is the One who ultimately makes the change into the butterfly.

To the non-conforming Christian there awaits a wonderful transformation by God. Jesus wants us to passively submit our gift for His purpose, surrendering ourselves to be clay in the hands of God (Jeremiah 18:6). The old Christian hymn written by Adelaide A. Pollard says it best.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me after Thy will,  
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

We are called to be a living sacrifice to God, but how do we accomplish this? Paul exposes three ways for the Christian to carry this out. They are the following.

## 1) Employment in Spiritual Giftedness

Romans 12:3-8 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. <sup>4</sup> For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

They are to be a living and holy sacrifice unto God by keeping thing in perspective concerning their spiritual giftedness. We all have our strengths and weaknesses; we all bring something to the table for service to God; we are all not same in our spiritual passions. He said something similar concerning our differences in *1 Cor 12:14-17 For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?*

What are these spiritual gifts to which Paul refers to? They are not referring to the miraculous gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12:8-10), but ministerial passions within us. They are found in Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:7-13. Some cross over from one list to the other, but in all there are ten.

# The Book of Romans

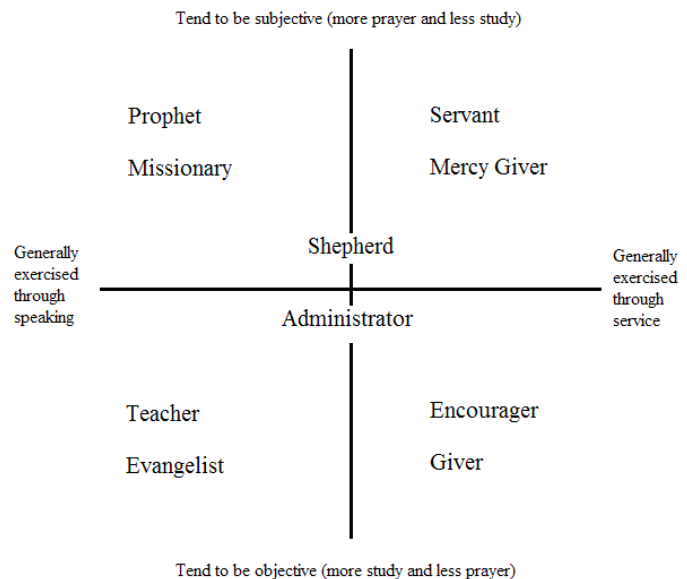
By Doug Hamilton

## The Non-Miraculous Gifts or Passions and the average percentage

- Apostle –the passion of missions 5%
- Evangelist –the passion of proclamation 10%
- Prophet –the passion of confrontation 2%
- Teacher –the passion of teaching 8%
- Exhorter –the passion of encouragement 3%
- Shepherd –the passion of nurturing 18%
- Mercy Giver –the passion of mercy 20%
- Servant –the passion of service 22%
- Giver –the passion of charity 2%
- Administrator –the passion of organization 10%

Peter makes reference to them in *1 Peter 4:10-11* *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup> Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

They are divided up in the following way: The gifts on the left side of the graph are typically exercised in speaking and the right side is through action. The top section tend to be more subjective and the lower section is objective.



We tend to naturally expect everyone else to be like us, even though most of the congregation is different. In the mission of the church each person wants to carry out their part of the mission where they have strength, yet all are needed for the church family to function as a well-oiled machine. In every mission there is a need for many types of Christians. It is in the employment of all these people that allow the work to be done. When we neglect this, people burn out, tasks are left undone and the mission fails. When the mission is over, the “*living and holy sacrifice*” element is removed.

## 2) Encouragement in Purity

Romans 12:9-13 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*

<sup>10</sup> *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*

<sup>11</sup> *not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;* <sup>12</sup> *rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,* <sup>13</sup> *contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

The saints were being encouraged to be pure in the way they were living. It covered many aspects of their lives.

# The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

- They were not to be hypocritical in any way. Their sincerity should be very apparent to the others around them, not fake, but real and sincere. Their life was to be pure.
- They were to hate those things which were evil and cling to that which was good. The word for abhor is to utterly shocked. When evil in this life rolls up on us, we should be shocked! To cling is to grab with strength. The stand was to be pure.
- They were to show a preferential love for the fellow saints. Paul said something similar in *Galatians 6:10* *So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.* Their love for the brethren was to be pure.
- They were to have joy in serving God, for His commandments are not grievous (1John 5:2). Their service was to be pure.
- They were to be pure in their prayers, their trials, their giving and their hospitality.

Everything they were to do was to be from a pure perspective, without adulteration in anyway. Purity was to be their way of life.

### 3) Effectiveness in Relationships

Romans 12:14-21 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. <sup>17</sup> Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. <sup>19</sup> Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

In their relationships with each other and the world, they were to be effective in the efforts. There are seven qualities they were to have which would make them effective for others.

- a) They were to not revile when being persecuted.
- b) They were to rejoice with others who are going through the good times.
- c) They were to weep with those who were going through the tough times.
- d) They were to reach out to the hurting they encountered.
- e) They were to not be "know-it-alls".
- f) They were to not be vengeful, but to leave it to God.
- g) They were to overcome the evil around them with good.

If they followed Paul's advice, they would always be effective in their service to the Father. If they did not, then they would not. The same applies to us today.

Conclusion: We are called to be a "living and holy sacrifice" to God. How do we do this? Through the empowerment in spiritual gifts, encouragement in purity and to have effectiveness in our relationships. If we focused in such a way, then we would be exactly what God has called us to be. If we know to do good and do it not, to them it is sin (James 4:17).