

# Saying “No” to the Flesh

I. **Prayer** – Lord Jesus, you echoed Hosea’s words that day at Matthew’s home, “*I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.*” Let us be joy—what would it look like if we were the offering, and not that which we put in the offering basket? We be joy, not joy be given, but we be joy offered to you. Teach us how to say “yes” to you and no to the flesh. AMEN

- ✓ I have some shocking news—the sacrifice of animals began with mankind, when all God was asking for was an offering of a lamb
- ✓ That’s right—offer it to God, not sacrifice it to God
- ✓ Is God the one who demands blood, or the one who offers his own blood to end all sacrifices?
- ✓ The one who leads by law or who leads by example?
- ✓ As I opened the book of Leviticus this week and began reading
- ✓ Time and time again, God says, “If the animal, if the bird, or if the grain offering you present...if, if, if—the power of “if”
- ✓ Suddenly it occurred to me—what God was really wanting was for me to offer *myself* in a relationship with Him
- ✓ Not another burnt offering, but a living sacrifice of myself
- ✓ So here’s our scripture lesson today—the first “if” found in the Great Eight, that is Romans 8

## A. TEXT—Romans 8:9a (OS)

***“But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you...”***

- ✓ Notice the little word “if” here
- ✓ If you have the Spirit of God living in you
- ✓ How does this happen?
- ✓ How do you permit the Holy Spirit to control you?
- ✓ How do you have the Spirit of God living in you?
- ✓ Well, in Romans 8:3, 4 Paul begins to help us understand how with a *what if* that God wants to become our passion
- ✓ Let me show you—
- ✓ TEXT: Romans 8:3, 4 NLT (OS)

***“The law of Moses (law of God) was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.”***

***“He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.”***

- ✓ *What if* we no longer follow our sinful nature, but instead follow the Spirit

## B. Tony Hall's story

- ✓ Let me ask you a question— **(OS) Would you fast for twenty-two days if you knew it would net \$100 million for a cause you cared about?**
- ✓ Of course you would—who wouldn't?
- ✓ Well, Tony Hall **(OS)**, a representative in the United States House of Representatives for 24 years
- ✓ Now found himself in Washington leading the International Alliance to End Hunger
- ✓ You can't get within ten feet of Tony Hall without feeling his passion to end world hunger
- ✓ That is Tony's *what if*
- ✓ The genesis of Tony's passion occurred on a trip to Ethiopia
- ✓ As a congressman, he and others were touring a number of sites, including a small medical outpost
- ✓ While there, thousands of refugees, looking like walking skeletons, appeared on the horizon
- ✓ They had walked hundreds of miles to get food—food that had run out when they had arrived
- ✓ When they discovered there was no food, many of them lay down on the ground and waited to die
- ✓ Tony says, "Their moaning will echo in his ears forever."
- ✓ Some mothers handed Tony their children, hoping he could help. He could not.
- ✓ "I stood," says Tony, "and watched twenty-four children die in fifteen minutes...And I never got over that."
- ✓ Returning home, Tony's passion was ignited when Congress cut all funding for the Select Committee on Hunger, the committee Tony chaired
- ✓ With one stroke of a pen, his cause had become a lost cause
- ✓ What do you do, when time and time again, your own cause of living spiritually appears to be a lost cause?
- ✓ Defeat after defeat at the hands of your sinful nature—the flesh?
- ✓ Well, Tony's answer may well lead to your own answer
- ✓ Listen—
  - a. When the committee was cut, Tony was tempted to quit Congress
  - b. Then his wife, Jan, said, "Have you ever thought about fasting?"
  - c. Sometimes the Holy Spirit speaks in a voice that sounds just like your spouse or your closest friend!
  - d. That one question— **(OS) Have you ever thought about fasting?** Changed the direction of Tony's life
  - e. It became the catalyst that caused him to ask, *what if?*
  - f. Tony and Jan were led to a couple of verses in Isaiah

## C. TEXT – Isaiah 58:6,7 NLT (OS)

***"...this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share***

***your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.”***

- ✓ God is saying, the kind of fast he wants will change your life and the lives of those most in need and close to you
- ✓ Tony Hall stood before a bank of microphones the next day and announced his fast for hunger
- ✓ Tony says,
  - a. “I was afraid of looking like a fool...
  - b. “I figured it might even cost me my seat in Congress
- ✓ That’s what a walk in the Spirit looks like and feels like
- ✓ It felt like one man against the world
- ✓ But *if* God was for it, nothing could stop it
- ✓ The next 22 days would prove to be the most difficult, yet the most amazing days of his life
  - a. His body weakened, with nothing but water to sustain it
  - b. But his resolve strengthened like carbon steel
  - c. Ten thousands high schools joined him in the fast
  - d. Major networks documented Tony’s fast
- ✓ On day 22 the breakthrough happened...
- ✓ The World Bank told Tony they wanted to convene a world conference on hunger
- ✓ More than \$100 million was pledged to the cause Tony cares so much about
- ✓ With the work of microcredit and microfinance, the fund multiplied raising a total of a half billion dollars
- ✓ That was over 20 years ago, but Tony just completed his latest fast this past May 29.

#### **D. Fasting**

- ✓ Tony Hall is quick to caution— **(OS) “You can’t fast into hunger, or any other cause for that matter. You have to fast into God.”**
- ✓ Put it down, the *cause* is not the cause...it’s the effect
- ✓ It is God who is the catalyst for every righteous cause
- ✓ Tony Hall would remark, **(OS) “But when you fast and pray, God leans in a little closer.”**

#### **E. 40 Days of Devotion and Prayer**

- ✓ Beginning April 1<sup>st</sup>, Easter Sunday, we’re going to begin an experience called 40 days of Devotion and Prayer in Preparation for Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming
- ✓ We have a workbook that is available in both English and Spanish
- ✓ Here are the topics that will be covered each day... **(OS-3)**
- ✓ We’d like to make this book available to everyone who would like one

- ✓ We've gotten the cost down to \$10 for English; \$3 for Spanish
- ✓ Clipboards are being passed around for you to sign your name—please sign up
- ✓ What is involved is daily devoting time to reading, responding to the readings and praying
- ✓ We'd sure like you to say, "Yes" and sign up
- ✓ The workbooks will be ordered in the coming week and handed out on the last two Sabbath of this month, 3-24, 3-31

So, *(what if) we were to no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.*" Romans 8:4b  
**(OS)**

#### **F. The "No" muscle**

- ✓ We have 600 skeletal muscles in our body
- ✓ The hardest working muscle is the heart
- ✓ The largest muscle is the gluteus maximus
- ✓ The strongest muscle is the masseter muscle in your jaw that can clench the teeth
- ✓ But of all the muscles I would like to recommend one of the most important muscles
- ✓ The "no" muscle **(OS)**—how do you exercise your "no" muscle?

#### **✓ Fasting (OS)**

- ✓ Spiritually speaking, nothing will take you further, and faster, than fasting.
- ✓ You must fast unto God, and it will yield breakthroughs and break down strongholds
- ✓ At its core, fasting is the way we say to God we need Him more and desire Him more than food itself.
- ✓ Have you ever fasted? Try it, if you have not
- ✓ Begin small, fast from one meal, from certain foods, fast for something God and the Holy Spirit are placing on your heart
- ✓ It may be saying "yes" to God where till now you've been saying "no" to Him
- ✓ It may be saying "help" my family in matters I cannot control
- ✓ It may be saying "yes" to the Holy Spirit
- ✓ Whatever you do, fast to the Lord

#### **I. Hope! – Selections**

- II. Prayer – (OS)** Lord, who of us doesn't want the bonds of wrong-doing broken? Who of us is tired of the bands of the yoke of the sinful nature? Is there a fast the Holy Spirit is calling me to? We look forward to the 40 Days Experience! AMEN