EXPERIENCING THE PRESENCE OF GOD
Message 1 of 6 in Series
“When I Shut Up The Heavens”
2 Chronicles 7:13-14

Introduction: I have never seen America more polarized, divided, than it is today. One of the major reasons the nation is so divided is because the evangelical church is divided. The sad commentary on the church in America is that we are more known for our division than unity and more known for what we are against than what we are for.

This division and disunity has resulted in much of the church becoming spiritually impotent. We have traded away God’s power for man’s cleverness, God’s anointing for man’s approval, and God’s Truth for man’s point of view. We are in desperate need for the power and anointing of God to come on the church in America today.

We are for God. We are for His Truth. We are for the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are for the power of God. Beginning with the church and with us today, we are for a mighty spiritual revival to come upon this country. Our church is in a desperate need of spiritual revival.

Brother Yun defined revival as “the presence of God.”

In 1995, I defined revival as “the manifested presence of God.”

Title of Series: “Experiencing the Presence of God”
Read 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 (ESV)

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray
and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Title of Message: “When I Shut Up The Heavens”

A Biblical Context: Solomon had built the Temple and had prayed thoroughly, resulting in the power of God’s Holy Spirit coming on it and the people supernaturally. The fire of God had fallen upon the Temple, resulting in the glory of God being so strong they could not even enter into it for worship. They prayed, worshipped, gave sacrificial offerings, dedicated it to God, and had a solemn assembly. Success was all over Solomon and the people of God.

But in the night, the Lord woke Solomon up and gave to him a word, a word for him, the future of God’s people, and a word for us today. In v. 13, God says, “When I shut up the heavens” . . . blessings will be limited and command a period of judgment upon my people. When this happens, remember, tell the people, tell the generations to come the following words . . .

There are five references to the heavens being shut up: Dt. 11:17; 1 Kings 8:35; 2 Chron. 6:26; 2 Chron. 7:13; Rev. 11:6 (Prophetically)

When does God shut the heavens?
1. Our sin.
2. During seasons by His will. (Testing)

Therefore, it is not a matter of IF God shuts up the heavens from us, but WHEN He may choose to shut up the heavens from us. This is why He gave to us 2 Chronicles 7:14. Tell us what to do when He does it.
God qualifies who He is talking to and who has ultimate responsibility and accountability: “If MY people, who are called by My name”

God appeals to us to unite in these ways. To unite means to be joined together, to come together for a common purpose. If we want the fire of God’s presence to come upon us and experience His presence, then we must be diligent to seek Him in these ways. These ways will open the heavens to us.

1. Complete Humility.
“humble”—to lay low before God. The action of humbling ourselves is joined in Scripture with the practice of fasting and prayer. Fasting is abstinence from food with a spiritual goal in mind.

1 Peter 5:6, “Humble yourselves”—we are to take this action. We do so in many ways.
God is NEVER attracted to PRIDE, only to humility.

2. Extraordinary Prayer.
J. Edwin Orr, a revivalist who is now with Jesus, believed that “EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER” is one of the marks of true spiritual revival and awakening.

The National Day of Prayer: a day of extraordinary prayer.

Ill: On one of our campuses, a group is praying early . . . God is moving.

App: Upset over not being able to pray in schools. What about the church? The church practices prayerlessness.

3. Jesus Priority.
"Seek My face”—Jesus 1st. Jesus priority!
We must seek Jesus’ face and who He is, not only His hands and what He can do for us.
Seeking Him, rather than . . .
4. Radical Repentance.
Sin is serious: Jesus died for it.
Unconfessed sin: Results in greater carnality.
Unrepentant heart: Leads to powerless spirituality.
The only answer: RADICAL Repentance . . . a strong commitment to personal holiness.

Conclusion: In James MacDonald’s fabulous Downpour, he illustrates his subject with writing about various great movements of God. When I was a college student, God put one of these great movements on my heart.

In 1904 in the country of Wales, a 26-year-old young man named Evan Roberts was praying for revival in his own life and in his own country. He had been doing so since he was 16 years old. One night he knelt on his knees and prayed, "Lord, bend me, bend me," The Lord answered his prayer.

His life became on fire for God and he and his friends began to ask God for 100,000 souls to come to Christ in their country. On October 31, 1904, he preached his first sermon. As a result of his first sermon, taverns closed, gambling ceased, profanity ceased, old debts were paid, and forgiveness healed broken relationships. Peace and harmony replaced strife and discord. Also, as a result of his first sermon, 16 people professed Christ. The next night, seven more professed Christ. On the third night, 20 received Jesus. Attendance began to boom. After two months, 70,000 had come to Christ. By March of 1905, 85,000 had come to Christ and eventually God answered his prayer for 100,000 people to come to Christ. His cry became, “Bend the church and save the world!”
When we join together in complete humility, extraordinary prayer, Jesus priority, and radical repentance, we will see God hear our prayer, forgive our sins, heal our church, and heal America. We cannot negotiate these; these are non-negotiable with God. These are the ways to open the heavens again in your life and in our church and in our nation.

We need to pray, "Lord, bend me, bend me. "Lord, bend me away from pride, prayerlessness, personal priority and personal sin." "Lord, bend our church and save Northwest Arkansas."