

## GETTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN FAITH - PART 2

- I. INTRODUCTION: Vision of spectator becoming participator - God hasn't exhausted His resources.
- A. Not too long ago my pastor and a team of 7 other men went over to South America. One of the men would send daily e-mails of what was happening during the trip.**
1. Reading these reports ministered to me, challenged me, and provoked me.
    - a. **One of the phrases that was used quite extensive though-out the reports was the phrase "*an open heaven.*"**
    - b. Each place they went they were able to minister under "*an open heaven.*"
    - c. **As a result, salvation was poured out on the lost, healing was poured out on the sick, and deliverance was poured out on the captives.**
  2. As I was lying on the floor in my office, crying, knowing that there is an open heaven in South America, there is an open heaven in Toronto, and there is an open heaven in Pensacola.
    - a. **I was crying out to God, that He would give us an open heaven here in Lancaster County.**
    - b. I heard the Lord say to my heart, "*who said it was closed.*"
  3. **I thought the heavens were closed because what I saw or better a lack of what I saw.**
    - a. I thought God would only open the heavens if we met the right criteria.
      - 1) **Sometime He opened sometimes he didn't**
      - 2) The Gas Station Owner in Lake City - If I was nicer he would have opened.
    - b. **In the O.T. God opened or closed the heavens according to if we met certain criteria.**
      - 1) Deuteronomy 28:12 - "*The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens.* (Verse 2 - If we will obey)
      - 2) Malachi 3:10 - "*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.*"

4. The NT Jesus opened the heavens once and for all. He met the criteria for us.
- a. **Matthew 3:16** - *And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, {and} coming upon Him.*

\*When the heavens open the Spirit descends.

- b. **John 1:51**- *And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*
- c. The heavens over Jesus are open and if your in Him they are open over you.
- d. **Romans 8:32** - *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*

B. We are still trying to live in NT times with an O.T. mind set.

**1. The Religious spirit loves rules. Our own flesh loves rules. We want to earn it - we want to merit it.**

- a. In the O.T. obedience would move the hand of God which then would produce faith, in the NT it is faith that moves the hand of God which then produces obedience.
- b. **I was allowing what I saw and heard or the lack of to determine what I believe, instead of allowing what I believe to determine what I see and hear.**

2. Here is my premise for tonight,

- a. **"It's not that the heavens are closed to give, but our hearts have been closed through unbelief to receive."**
- b. It's not that God needs to open the heavens, but our hearts through faith.
- 1) **Worship doesn't open up the heavens but our hearts**
  - 2) The word doesn't open up the heavens but our hearts
  - 3) **Prayer doesn't open up the heavens but our hearts**
  - 4) Fasting doesn't open up the heavens but our hearts

**C. The O.T. gives us two visions of God's glory**

Isaiah 6:3 - *"the whole earth is full of His glory."*

**Habakkuk 2:14** - *"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD."*

Exodus 33:18-19 - *"God's glory is seen in His goodness."*

**1. In Isaiah's vision the whole earth is full of God's glory, but in Habakkuk's vision the knowledge of that glory has yet to fill the earth.**

- a. You can tap into God's glory anywhere - you just need to look up and see the spout where the glory comes out.
  - b. We don't take Jesus anywhere, He is already there, He brings us where He is at.**
  - c. It's our job to let the people know that the glory is already there.
- 2. John saw and open heaven - Revelations 11:19 & 15:5 - "*the temple of God which is in heaven was opened*" Revelations 21:10-25 - "*The gates are never closed*"**
- a. When your talking about something that you or others have never seen before, you have to say that it is like something, so you talk in symbols or pictures.
    - 1) You have to give them something finite to get a glimpse of the infinite.**
    - 2) Jason and the oven.
  - b. John is giving us a picture of what the city of God is like.**
    - 1) In Revelations 21 - can you imagine seeing all that and then trying to describe it to someone.
    - 2) You've got think rich, you can't think penny-anny.**
    - 3) Philippians 4:19 When you don't have enough than just go and get you a hammer and a chisel and knock off a piece of the wall.
    - 4) Somewhere in God, there is a glory place, that has no limit in terms of what you can get.**
  - c. You can't bankrupt his love or grace - Here is a good reaction to His grace more!!!

**D. The Prodigal got in on an open heaven - but the elder brother did not.**

- 1. The Prodigal, left home, went to an ungodly place, rebellious, wasted all that he was given on sin.
  - a. Verse 17 - In my Father's house (open heaven) even the servants have more than enough.**
    - 1) When he got this revelation, he got out of the pigs pen.
    - 2) He had spent all the had, but he hadn't spent all his father had.**
  - b. His dad was looking continually for him - runs falls on his neck - won't let him talk.
    - 1) Robe: an ambassadors robe, He has stature no matter what.**

2) Ring: power of attorney, right now before you get anything resolved, before you get cleaned up, I want you to know that you can still do things in my name.

3) **Shoes: A statement to the servants that the son is still their boss.**

4) Fatted Calf, Music, Dancing: It's party time!

**c. The Father had all these riches stored up for him.**

1) He was saying if He could ever get home, I don't care what he has done.

2) **I'll make him to know how much I love him.**

2. Elder Brother, stayed home, served faithfully in the fathers field and never neglected a command.

a. **Verse 31 - The father is more disappointed with the elder son than he was with the prodigal because he was amazed that he didn't take advantage of all that was his.**

b. He was saying that anytime he wanted he could have thrown a party.

**3. Lessons to be learned from this parable.**

a. The prodigal had it and didn't know what to do with it.  
The elder brother had it but didn't know he had it.

**b. The prodigal tapped into an open heaven through his humility.  
The elder brother was kept from an open heaven because of his pride.**

c. Sin will eventually open your eyes to see an open heaven.  
Religious pride will eventually blind you to an open heaven.

**d. Sinners will find it easier to get in on an open heaven than do religious folks.**

1) Matthew 21:31- *Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you.*

2) Matthew 8:11-12 - *And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline {at the table} with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

The Prodigal got help when he realized "*that in His Father's House (open Heaven) there was more than enough.*"

**The elder brother was kept from an open heaven because he didn't realize that "all that the father had was available to him."**