

How 1 Man's Faith Prevailed During Global Crisis

"I want to know that the Holy Spirit is stronger than the devil in the Nazi system. This is the battle of the ages, and victory here means victory for millions of people."—Rees Howells

This quote, taken from the journals of Rees Howells during World War II, captures an uncommon faith, prayer life and vision that the church desperately needs to rediscover today. God used Mr. Howells and the young people with him at the Bible College of Wales in a mighty way to shape international events and the destiny of nations through their prayers.

The world was in crisis, and this company of faith-filled believers became intercessors fully committed to be part of the solution.

Lessons on Faith and Abiding

Every great leader in their life of faith has learned one universal lesson: There are no short cuts. These kinds of leaders are not made in a day but on a daily basis. Rees Howells was no exception to the rule, and he was led by the Holy Spirit to build a life of faith learned through experience. Big testimonies come in growing your faith through the small things of life, as you demonstrate your willingness to listen to the Holy Spirit and follow wherever He leads.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1)

God loves the process of revealing Himself in our daily lives, but the fires of adversity must test us. Rees Howells would say, "You may preach anything and everything without proving anything, which is nothing but spectacular theory! Faith must

become substance before it becomes evidence.”

It is in the testing of our faith when we learn that God really is who is says He is. We need experiential knowledge of God because theories are impossible to lean on in dark days.

The Holy Spirit led Rees Howells into a life of faith built line upon line, experience upon experience. We must learn to recognize the leading of the Holy Spirit each day and respond by abiding in Him and His promises. Only an abiding faith can overcome the challenges to our obedience.

“If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it shall be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:7-8).

Proving God in small things—then larger things—led to an ever-increasing faith to stand in the face of insurmountable odds. One area of faith that was put to the test throughout Howells’ life was in the area of praying for the supernatural provision of finances.

“Unless you can prove God to answer in an emergency and in a test case, it is nothing but talk in a very big way. The ‘old man’ can sound very convincing but he does not see his folly. You can never exercise real faith for £100 [British pounds] unless you’ve had £50, nor for £50 unless you’ve proved God for £20, nor for £10 unless you’ve proved God for £5.

“You only give mental assent and imagine these things, unless you have had an experience with God in the impossible. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.”

This simple growth process of faith led Howells to greater and greater pursuits as he followed the Lord’s leading into a world that was about to erupt in two world wars.

Walking in Obedience

When I read about the life of this man, I see simple but radical obedience. As the Holy Spirit would make His direction known to Rees, there would be an honest wrestling with the weakness of his flesh in order to enter into a life truly led by the Spirit.

“Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41)

Whether we admit it or not, we are way too concerned about man’s opinion, our personal prosperity and an easier way of life free from danger. These fears are jagged obstacles in the path of obedience. Fear-based decisions actually increase the danger level of our lives, though they easily masquerade as so-called wisdom.

The safest place to be is in the center of God’s will. Again, this is all just spectacular theory until it’s put to the test.

In 1915, Rees and his wife Elizabeth had answered the Lord’s call to missions just as World War I had begun. Germany had declared the waters around Britain to be a zone of war, and every ocean vessel was considered an enemy target. Two months before the Howells were set to embark for Africa, a German U-boat torpedoed and sunk the passenger ship Lusitania.

Can you imagine the widespread panic having to travel by ship with the unseen threat of German submarines lurking beneath the surrounding waves? Read the account given of their ship’s passage:

“As they departed from England, many other passengers were fearful that their ship would be sunk like Lusitania, but Rees assured all who needed it that God would protect them. To believe that God would guard their ship from German submarines, and to publicly declare it to those who were afraid, was a leap of faith that few have taken. ...

“Another test came on the journey when the captain lost his nerve and feared for their safety. But they continued to assure the captain of a safe passage through U-boat infested waters because God was taking them to Africa to serve him.”

How important it is to be obedient to the Lord and remain in the center of His will. It not only impacts your own life—it likely impacts the destiny of countless lives around you.

Faith to Move Mountains

In 1924, Rees Howells founded the Bible College of Wales with the aim of training and sending laborers into the harvest field who had learned not only theology but also a practical life of faith. Students were required to “pray through” for victory in their daily needs and burdens whether that was for a needed toothbrush or for tuition.

Inspired by George Mueller, Rees set the standard for his community as he contended in prayer to acquire the massive properties needed for the school to be established. Leonard Ravenhill gave insight into Rees’ hidden life of faith, obedience and prayer in this area:

“After I spoke at a session in the Bible School of Wales, Mrs. Rees Howells called me for a private talk. We stood on the veranda of her home overlooking beautiful Swansea Bay I can see her finger upheld as she said, ‘Many talk of my husband’s buying this place with a shilling [14 cents] in his pocket. What they forget is that he prayed 12 hours a day for 11 months to know the mind of God.’ Brethren, that’s discipline!”

The two-dimensional promises written on the pages of your Bible have to take on three-dimensional reality in your broken life in spite of your failures and weaknesses. We have to learn that God is love; God is a father; God is a healer; God is a provider.

Each of these revelations demands a personal testimony of their proven truth. Without firsthand knowledge of these realities faith will flounder and lack the power needed for an end-time mission. Heed the apostle Paul's warning and resist becoming a person in the last days who is content in "having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:5).

Not long after the school was established, God called Rees Howells into the ultimate walk of faith and obedience—the preaching of the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). He became a man with a world vision. No sooner had he engaged his faith to see the task completed in his generation, than evil dictators and wicked governmental systems arose to stop the gospel's advancement. World War II had begun.

What was created to be a training and sending center transformed into a company of faith-filled intercessors on their faces day after day, year after year facing the crisis of war. Through it all their vision remained—the "Every Creature Vision"—as they contended for God's purposes in the earth and for global obstacles to be removed for the gospel to advance.

However, their stories and testimonies of how they affected the world through their prayers are difficult to grasp unless you first understand their effective lives of faith, obedience and abiding.

Consider again the opening quote and hear the determined cry of a man whose faith and prayers expanded to include nations, world leaders, governmental systems and unreached people groups. Let the words impact your heart and create the same hunger for that kind of faith. Let's follow the example of this humble man of God whose life has inspired thousands of intercessors around the globe.

The Howells Project

Coming soon in the spring of 2016, Justice House of Prayer D.C. invites believers to dig deep into the principles of faith and prayer that will shape the world to come. For four weeks we will look to the life of Rees Howells to create this immersive experience, which will take place in Washington, D.C., and also at Howells' historic well—the Bible College of Wales.

Dark clouds are forming on the horizon, yet the charge of the kingdom remains the same: "Go!" God wants to raise up people who are fully committed to His work in spite of the challenges to come.

The Howells Project is designed to develop a life of faith that can impact world events at the highest levels. Will you answer this call?

*A full-time missionary, **Matt Lockett** serves as Executive Director of Justice House of Prayer D.C. and Bound4LIFE International. Matt's passion is to help father a young, consecrated generation of believers. He travels and teaches on the subjects of prayer, fasting and governmental intercession. He and his wife Kim live in the Washington, D.C., area with their four children. Formerly he had a career in advertising and marketing; these days, he really wishes he had paid more attention in government class.*

Reprinted with permission from Justice House of Prayer D.C.