



Malvern Mashal Makon 82

In this edition:

Reflections on the ministry of the Welsh Intercessor, Rees Howells

The Lord loves to presence Himself!

We never know what we are sowing

The future of Egypt in the balance

Mission Africa report

There are many books that inspire – and then a handful that really shape your lives. For me, one such was Norman Grubb's biography of Rees Howells, the praying Welsh miner. If you haven't read the book, it's more than worth the effort to track a copy down – and if you have, you might perhaps wish to revisit it. The Lord may well have something fresh to say through it. Published by Lutterworth, it speaks of a quality of relationship with the Lord that leads to the ability to pray prayers that release the Lord's authority into situations far and wide.

The book also makes it clear that such insights and authority are not lightly bestowed. Rees faced enormous tests of faith and obedience in order to be able to pray vital directive prayers during the Second World War. It is a genuinely exciting story, not least for the way in which it reminds us of how clearly the Lord can lead souls that are sold out to him.

Why do so comparatively few experience such things? Partly I suspect because we have grown used to a kind of consumerist religion in the west, which is far less than the raw seeking of God. We live in a 'jungle' where all too little sunlight reaches the forest floor; too many 'competitors' absorb the light in the crest of the trees. That is why most of us know relatively little of the awesome holiness of God, and the clear leading of His Spirit.

Mike, my friend and neighbour, popped down with me for a day to one of the Bristol Prayer Network conferences that Roger and Angie Allen organised. One of the leaders there has such a

passionate and prayerful heart that she is currently – be it said very clearly at the Lord’s leading – on a forty day fast. It was no surprise to find how much Rees Howells had influenced her life too!

As I reread portions of the book one of the things the Lord highlighted for me was how He not infrequently brings us to a place of willingness to embark on some course of action – but then does not necessarily ask us to go right through with the sacrifice. In Rees’s case, he and his friends were doing a heroic job caring for the homeless in their district in South Wales at the beginning of the twentieth century, feeding and clothing them. Soon, he was not only caring for them elsewhere – they were coming into his own little home.

This was a great trial for his brothers. His father finally put an end to the bickering by declaring that, since he permitted the brothers to have whom they wanted to visit the house, if Rees had sunk so low as to have only these people for friends, he would not make any objection. Remarkably, from the moment of that decision, not a single such person appeared at their door any more.

In all such matters the Lord is looking for the direction of our wills. In former times, the Will was described as the ‘Queen of the Virtues.’ We hear much less about it these days, but the simple fact is that enthusiasm and emotions by themselves aren’t enough to accomplish all the Lord has in mind for His people in these days. May we yield our wills to cooperate fully with His purposes – He really does know best!

During the early 1920’s, Rees was having a remarkable time leading large numbers of people to the Lord in both the UK and Africa. He was doing what he had always dreamed of: travelling widely and seeing the revival he had longed for. He had previously given up his own son at the Lord’s insistence so that he could travel to Africa as a missionary – and now the Lord was asking him to lay down this revival ministry in favour of setting up a bible college to train other missionaries! It was a hard and costly calling. But He was thinking of all that He would do through the dedicated band of intercessors who were there: trained and in place when the crisis years of the war came.

As I pondered these stories, it struck me afresh that so much of what I (like so many others) have done and taught in terms of intercessory prayer over the years owes much to the confirmations I read in this book about Rees Howells right back in the 1970’s. The blessing of one man’s sacrifice continues to bear fruit in so many people’s lives many, many years later . . . We never know all we are sowing when we follow His leading!

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I love it when the Lord draws close to people to bring them to Himself, to heal or to provide crucial guidance. What He did in sending an angel to reinvigorate Elijah in the desert in 1 Kings 19:5f) He is very much still doing for many today. Although we may not see anyone who *looks* like an angel, His ministering servants are busy on our behalf – especially when others are praying for the people we are concerned about!

Ros and I constantly marvel at how kind the Lord is letting us see the fruit of something that we sowed years ago and had forgotten all about. Many

lovely stories make their way back to us. For example, many years ago I picked up a hitchhiker somewhere in Northamptonshire and witnessed to him of his need for salvation. Twenty years or so later I hear that he is now a thriving member of Mike and Sue Harris's church. (They call him 'Barnabas', because of his ministry of encouragement). Or a rugby playing fellow student I witnessed to who showed not the slightest interest at the time in what I had to say – but when I met him a few years later, he was training for the ministry, because, as he put it, 'I couldn't get what you said out of my head!' No, we never know what we are sowing – but we must go on sowing!

The Lord loves to presence Himself!

We have been focusing on the prisoners in Iran, and the director of Elam ministries has some helpful points to direct our prayers for those who are in prison for their faith. <http://elam.com/articles/Letter-from-Sam-Yeghnazar/>

Let's continue to expand our prayers for the Lord to reveal Himself to many. *Joel News* reports:

In May 2010 Afghani Christian and Red Cross employee Said Musa was arrested on false allegations. In Oullayat prison in Kabul he has been beaten, forcefully sleep deprived, and sexually abused by prisoners. Afghan judicial officers granted him no protection and at times encouraged the abuse. On December 11, 2010, he wrote from his jail cell that he rejoices in the Lord despite the great suffering. One night Jesus appeared to him in a vision:

"I saw a vision during my sleep one night. I saw the heaven opened and a person, his cloths like snow, his face in dazzling light. He came to me and put his hand on my shoulder and on my head, and told me: 'Please be happy, I am always with you in this jail. I chose you to announce my good news to the people of Afghanistan and all over the world.' I was shaking and trembling with fear. I fell down and could not stand on my feet. He took my hands and I woke up."

Five days later, on December 16, he wrote again about an unusual occurrence, this time involving a Taliban prisoner:

"A person who is accused of murder is sleeping in front of me in the corridor of the jail. He's a hundred percent extremist, a Taliban person. One night he wanted to kill himself. I prayed for him and told him: 'Please be patient, believe in Jesus Christ, he's the only person to forgive you and save you and release you from this jail.' At first he began screaming and insulting me. He told me: 'You're not clean, you're not a Muslim!' But I told him, 'Oh my friend and brother, please think about my word.' Then I prayed for him throughout the night."

Musa continued: "While all the prisoners were at sleep, he woke up and sat on his place. He came near my bed and told me: 'Please forgive me, brother. You're really a true person. I have seen wonderful dreams. A very light person spoke with me. He was an amazing person. I fell down on my knees and to the ground. He told me, please believe in your friend Said Musa. I am the Lord Jesus Christ. I forgive you now. I was shaking in

my body from fear and then I woke up.' He told me he now believes in Jesus Christ."

Various human rights organizations have taken up Musa's case and are asking us all to pray for him and his family.

Once again we come face to face here with a level of intensity that few of us know much about. Let's not be content to remain on the spiritual sidelines and regard from afar!

Talking about situations that require ongoing prayer

Egypt remains in the balance

'The sound of many voices rising from the street' continues to echo across the Middle East. What is increasingly clear is that what has happened in Egypt over these past few weeks may well be about something more than 'simply' establishing a thriving democracy.

According to e mails reaching us, there is great concern in the Christian community because the army have asked a member of the Muslim Brotherhood to chair the Committee overseeing the revision of the Constitution.¹

It is unusual to be able to link a biblical nation to a modern one so clearly; God has used Egypt in various ways through the centuries, (for both the Josephs in Scripture for instance!) though He adds many provisions to put no trust in it. (You will be familiar with the warnings in Isaiah 30 and 31).

Many of us are aware that what has happened in Egypt is having major knock on effects around the region, not least because Arab nations look to Egypt for leadership because in many ways they regard Egypt as their 'mother.'

Some of today's prophets are also suggesting that what emerges there is likely to be a pointer not only for the Middle East, but for the West too – in the sense of new links and alignments between religious and political leaderships. The events are therefore highly portentous.

The following are some of the prayer points I received the other day, speaking first about a remarkable meeting that Christians were able to organise in Tahrir Square:

¹ Freemasons have always been extremely taken by things Egyptian, largely as a result of the obelisks, which were dedicated to the sun god Ra. The [Illustrated history of Freemasonry](#) records that "Egypt has always been considered the birthplace of the Mysteries. It was there that the ceremonies of initiation were first established, and there that truth was first veiled in allegory, and the dogmas of religion imparted under symbolic forms."

There is a great deal more one could say about this, but you can follow it up on the Internet if you like (Try Egypt & Freemasonry & birthplace or some such specific search word on Google). Freemasonry was banned in Egypt in 1956 and in the Sudan in 1970, but it is important to realise that very influential people do have "sacred" ties with, and a particular interest (one could almost say reverence for) this country, which, according to Herodotus, is where formal organised religion began.

The worship leader got the crowds to sing “Bless my nation” and other songs, quoting Isaiah 19 “blessed be Egypt my people”. There was then preaching about Jesus, the son of Mary, who, because of love, was silent in the face of His tormentors. He subsequently got everyone to sing the national anthem together, followed by sixteen minutes of singing the verse of the song “send us your rain. . .” It really did rain later on as a great sign!

In this atmosphere of worship, in which the small groups of Christians were encircled by Muslims pledging support and unity,¹ one friend was approached by a well known die hard Muslim Brotherhood member who writes venomously in the press against Coptic Christians. He apparently

- Pray that this new-found unity between believers will not wane. Pray that new believers will be discipled, and that the signs and wonders experienced in the last few days will encourage believers to press in for a spiritual revival in the nation.
- Pray for an open heaven over Egypt, and opportunities for sharing the Gospel.
- Pray that Christians in the new Egypt are given the right to worship freely, without fear of persecution – and that the ban on Christians acceding to high office in Egypt will be lifted.

apologised for everything he’s ever written and said he had not realised that Christians could be patriotic and proud of Egypt, and he promised to write more favourably in the future!

Another friend, M., has had around 75 people meet in her home for impromptu prayer meetings every day since these protests began. She reports that these believers come from across the denominations and would never have met together for prayer had there not been such a crisis in the nation. Many are also new believers! This pattern of meeting in homes for prayer has been repeated in every neighbourhood of Cairo and increasingly also in Alexandria. Women are largely the leaders of these new ‘house churches’.

Mission Africa Report

We are delighted to be able to post this link to [Mission Africa’s first mission](#) without Terry Charlton’s actual presence. It is well worth reading: many are continuing to come to the Lord Jesus and to be built up. The work is in good hands! God bless,

Robert & Ros

www.ruachministries.org

¹ There has been considerable support and sympathy as a result of the bomb outside the Coptic church in Alexandria.