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Rees Howells, excerpt: Ethiopia - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/8/7 22:35

Ethiopia

Soon after the crisis of March 1936 came the fight for Ethiopia. It was hard and long, and seemed to end in dismal failure. As soon as it was apparent that Mussolini intended to invade the country, Mr. Howells and the College saw what lay behind it.

Ethiopia, through the influence of the Emperor, was opening in a new way to evangelical missions and there was a prospect of widespread evangelization in many areas. Mr. Howells realized that once again it was a campaign against the enemy in the Church of Rome, for if Italy captured the country it would be the end of the Protestant witness there.

The battle of intercession lasted for three weeks. "It was as if we were fighting in the country itself," said Mr. Howells. "We believed that God would not give Ethiopia to the Fascist dictator." The fight became fiercest when the Italian army began to get near the capitol, Addis Ababa. The College journal for those days reported:

April 24 "Day of prayer and fasting (except for breakfast). Great burden as we pray for the Ethiopians. It gets really hard towards the evening and news in the paper is very serious. We are believing the Italians will not enter Addis Ababa."

April 25 "Four meetings of prayer. There is a big burden to be carried. We are believing that the Lord will intervene and give the Italians a setback."

April 28 "The burden is great. Many feel assured that the Italians will not enter Addis Ababa and the whole College is coming up to believe this big thing."

(continued from a previous thread)

April 29. "We are coming up in solid faith to take hold of the Lord to stop the Italians."

May 1. "The fight still very fierce. We had three wonderful hours with the Lord pleading for the hundred missionaries in the capital. *The Lord tells the director that he is to go back from public life for the next ten years and intercede for the nations.* Oh, the joy of being in this life and taking part in the battle of intercession!"

May 4. "Day of prayer and fasting; there is a big burden for Addis Ababa, as we read of the rioting which started when the emperor left the palace. Hard day, but we are believing the Lord is going to intervene, although He is allowing the test to run very high."

May 5. "Still big burden for Addis Ababa. Italians march in at 4 p.m. this afternoon."

It was the first lesson for many in the College of what we have seen a number of times in Mr. Howells's life, namely, the death in an intercession which has to precede the resurrection, and the test on intercessors as to whether they can walk through their valley of humiliation, of apparent failure, with an unmoved faith. The very thing they believed for did not come to pass. The Italians were not to occupy the capital, but they did so, and the Emperor was a fugitive. Rome had triumphed. It seemed the end of gospel work in the country. But Mr. Howells explained to the College the principle that has already been referred to; that apparent failure may only be a steppingstone to greater victory. The College record continues:

May 6. "The Director has more light on intercession to show us - that unless we had interceded for those men in Ethiopia, we would never have suffered with them; and if our prayers were of faith, we have only had a setback and not a failure as the result of unbelief. Great public meeting at 7:30 p.m., when the Holy Ghost revealed to us Joseph 'the dreamer' who stood to what God had shown him and went through tremendous testings, but finally saw what he believed come to pass."

In order to keep the story of God's dealings with the College concerning Ethiopia as one whole, we will rapidly review the

happenings of the next few years, although it takes us well beyond the date we have presently reached.

Although the day had come when Mussolini had captured the country, the College never lost faith. The Emperor came to England, and then, of all the unlikely things, came to the College. Who but God could have directed his steps to the company of people who had probably prayed in more concentrated fashion than any others for him and his people?

It happened that Alfred Buxton, C.T. Studd's son-in-law, who was leader of the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society in Ethiopia, knew that the College had a home and school for missionaries children. He wrote to Mr. Howells to ask if he would take into the school Lidj Asrate Kassa, the son of Ras Kassa and a relative of the emperor. (He later became known as Dejamach Asrate Kassa, and became Governor-General of one of the large provinces of Ethiopia.)

A year later the Emperor himself asked if he could come and visit the College and see Asrate. He was given a civic welcome in Swansea by the Mayor and Mayoress, Councilor David Richards and his daughter, and taken to the Guildhall, where he signed the Visitors Book. The Mayor, in addressing him, said that he was still "Your Majesty" to him, and he believed to the people of Swansea, and they hoped that some day he would be restored to his country. Only God could do that, he added. The Emperor then visited the College and School, where he had tea.

Mr. Howells had just bought the mansion in Penllergaer, and he offered it to the Emperor for his residence in England, until their prayer was answered and he was back on his throne. As they drove up the avenue of over a mile, ablaze with rhododendrons and azaleas, tears were in the Emperor's eyes, and he remarked to Mrs. Howells, "If heaven is a more beautiful place than this, it must be very wonderful. What your husband has done reminds me of an Ethiopian proverb: 'The man who has only God to look to can do all things and never fail.'" The Emperor was also much moved to hear how Mr. Howells had been called to help the Jewish refugees because, as he said, "I am a refugee myself."

A few days later he wrote:

*Haile Selassie I
Elect of God, Emperor of Ethiopia*

*To Rev. and Mrs. Rees Howells,
It is with profound gratitude that I want to write to you today to thank you most heartily for all the kindness you have shown me during my visit to your Bible College last week. It is an inspiration to me to have seen all the wonderful things that the Lord has been leading you to do among those of your own people and those who have found a refuge in your country. I do pray that God in His grace will continue to bless this great work of His very richly.*

*Sincerely yours,
(Signed personally by the Emperor).*

The Emperor's private chaplain, and his son-in-law, Abye Abebe, now Brigadier-General and Minister of War, came to the College for a period as students. In the summer of 1939 the Emperor himself spent a fortnight in camp in the Penllergaer grounds, and came down each night to the meeting in the College. By the end of his stay, the outbreak of war was imminent and he went straight back from the camp to London, and later from London to his own country. In June 1941, when the Emperor reentered his capital, he sent Mr. Howells this cable:

You will, I know, share in my joy at entering my capital. I send you this telegram in remembrance of past sympathy and help.

Emperor Haile Selassie.

To which Mr. Howells replied:

Thank you for telegram. praising God daily for restoring Ethiopia and giving back your throne. The Lord bless and keep you and give you peace.

Rees Howells, Bible College, Swansea.

God's answer was perfect. The expansion of missionary work in the country since the expulsion of the Italians has been by far the greatest in its history. Just as it was to be later in the World War, so now, the answer to the intercession could

not have been complete until the aggressor had been so dealt with that he could not rise up and menace the country again; and when the missionaries returned, it was reported in the Walamo district that they could not account for the revival which had been actually going on during the Italian occupation, when some 500 converts had increased to 20,000!

From: Rees Howells, Intercessor. By Norman Grubb

An interesting link:

(<http://www.byfaith.co.uk/paulreeshowells.htm>) <http://www.byfaith.co.uk/paulreeshowells.htm>