

ERLO STEGEN AND THE REVIVAL AMONG THE ZULUS

The founder of KwaSizabantu Mission, Rev. Erlo Stegen is the youngest of 5 brothers. In his testimony, he explains that when he was growing up, he only went to church because his parents compelled him to go. His attitude was: *“When I’m grown up, I’ll throw all this religious stuff overboard.”* Then God began to convict him of his disobedience towards his parents, his quarrelsomeness with his brothers, and the wickedness of his own heart. *“I was a lost sinner, in spite of the fact that I said my prayers and went to church. God says, ‘**The soul that sinneth, it shall die**’.”* Ezekiel 18:4 *“If sin rules a person’s life, that soul shall die, unless he confesses his sins and forsakes them. I cried to God, ‘Lord Jesus, I need you! Change my life and save me from my sins’.”*

Initially, after his conversion, Erlo Stegen resisted God’s call for him to enter the ministry. *“I was unwilling to go, the price was too high. So, for 18 months, I went through hell as I rebelled against God. The price of disobedience is a thousand times greater of that of obedience.”*

Before his conversion, Erlo Stegen had hated reading books. To him, reading was always a burden. *“After Jesus came into my life, I loved reading the Bible and it became my most precious book.”* Before his conversion, he never sang and would explain to his teachers that he was incapable of singing. *“Yet now I could hardly stop singing.”*

He lost all interest in the parties, dances, and obsession to make money. The things of the world receded and the promises of the Scripture became very wonderful and precious. He was especially impressed with the promise in John 15: 7: *“If ye abide in Me and My Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,”*

John 14:12: *“I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father.”*

John 16:24: *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”*

Erlo Stegen was a missionary for 12 years before the Revival broke out. He was determined not to *“play church.”* He preached straight: *“Repent and change your lives. If you don’t, you are on your way to hell.”*

He saw the debilitating and devastating impact of ancestral worship and witchcraft. One day, after pointing out in a sermon that the founders of all other religions are dead and buried, but only Jesus is alive forevermore. *“His grave is empty because He rose from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and all power in Heaven and on earth are given unto Him. There is no*

other name given among men by which we can be saved other than the Name of Jesus. There is only one way: Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the same today as He was two thousand years ago."

He had hardly finished the sermon, when an old woman came up to him and pleaded with him to pray for her daughter who was insane. Erlo Stegen described the shocking scene: *"In the middle of the hut I saw a girl sitting on the floor, her arms bound to the center pole with wire. The wire had cut deeply into her flesh, so that blood was flowing down, and she was covered with scars and wounds. She pulled at the wire with such violence, that it cut deeply into her arms. She spoke incessantly in foreign languages."* Her mother explained that for weeks she had not eaten anything, nor slept. *"She breaks the strongest ropes, then she runs around into the neighbours fields and gardens and destroys everything. When she bites someone, she won't let go. Look at my cattle pen. I don't have any cows, sheep or goats left. Every animal I owned, I sacrificed to the spirits. The cows I didn't kill, I had to sell them to pay the witchdoctor. I haven't got any money. I am at the end of my strength."*

Then the missionary drove this troubled girl to his parents' farm where they provided a room where the girl could stay while she was prayed for. The demon-possessed girl smashed the furniture, pulled out the springs from the mattress, broke the windowpanes and frames and turned the room into a pigsty.

"We prayed day and night for three weeks, but the girl wasn't healed. Instead I was at the end of my strength and close to a nervous breakdown. The girl sang her satanic hymns incessantly. The girl blasphemed the blood of Jesus. Horrible, sacrilegious songs resounded throughout. The girl renounced the blood and death of the Lord Jesus as only the devil could do. What was I to do? Everyone had heard me preach: 'don't go to the witch doctors, don't sacrifice oxen and goats to the spirits. Jesus is the answer to every problem, come to Him.' We Christians had failed. In the end we all gave up and had to take the girl back."

Erlo Stegen thought that he was a complete failure. *"I had preached the Gospel for 12 years and there weren't even 12 true Christians in conformance with Biblical standards to show for it."* Many hundreds of people had come forward at his Gospel meetings and made public commitments to Christ. He knew that many of these converts still craved cigarettes, engaged in worldliness. He knew that the Bible taught that we were to **"Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world"** 1 John 2:15 and **"Be not conformed to this world"** Romans 12:2. Yet he perceived that his converts were still worldly.

He then challenged his whole congregation to come to two Bible studies each day: 7 AM and 5PM. *"We will take our Bibles and we won't explain anything away. We won't justify ourselves either, but accept things as they are written."* Jesus said: **"Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise shall enter therein."** Luke 18:17 and *"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."*

They started by studying the Book of Acts. From the outset the Lord took hold of their hearts. The more they studied Acts, the more their hearts were broken. They saw how the early Christians continued with one accord in prayer. They marveled at this miracle. Not quarreling

and slandering behind one another's back, but with unity in spirit. The death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ had so deeply affected them that they were in harmony. They saw that the Lord had promised the power of the Holy Spirit for them to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:8). In Acts 4:31 they read that when the early church prayed, the place was shaken. *"We pray and we don't move the world, the world moves us!" - Matthew 18:3*

"The early church didn't tolerate sin, they had no room and no time for sin, and dealt with it most severely. We worship God and tolerate sin in our midst! If you pray for Revival, you are asking for something the world doesn't understand. We read the Bible so superficially that we cannot grasp what it is all about."

Then, a meeting was suddenly interrupted by a young woman, a new convert, who stood up during the service, and asked if she could pray. Her simple prayer was: *"Oh Lord Jesus, we have heard what the early Church was like. Couldn't you come down and be in our midst as you came down two thousand years ago? Couldn't our Church be same as the one in Jerusalem?"*

"Revive Your work, O God" became the prayer of the congregation. *"A week and a half later, God rent the Heavens and came down!"*

It was December 1966 when the Revival broke out. Rev. Erlo Stegen explained, *"We were at a loss, we had reached a deadlock and we were in a spiritually desperate situation."* In John 7:38, Jesus says, ***"he that believeth in Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."*** When we asked ourselves: *"Whether such rivers of living water were flowing out of our lives?"* We had to answer ***"NO!"***

Erlo stood and challenged his congregation: *"Let us search the Scriptures and let the Word speak to us. Let us not twist and turn what we read. Let us disregard our ways and customs, our church traditions and our personal religious opinions and let's hear what the Bible has to say. Do we really believe as the Scripture says?"*

Erlo Stegen explains that Revivals are terrifying things. When the Holy Spirit comes, He convicts us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. ***"For God resists the proud"*** - 1 Peter 5:5

"What is our greatest danger? In reality it is God Himself. There is nothing in this world that we need fear more than God. Even if the whole world were for us, but God against us, we would be fighting a losing battle."

"Judgment must begin at the house of God. The first thing that happens when the Holy Spirit comes into a person's life is that He convicts that person of sin. There is broke heartedness. Many conversions are not genuine; the 'converts' are not born again with the Holy Spirit. There are 'Christians' who don't even know what it means to be convicted of sin. We cannot love Jesus if we do not know what forgiveness of sins means. The deeper the conviction, the greater the love for Jesus. He, who is forgiven much, loves much."

Erlo Stegen testifies how the Lord convicted them of pride, prejudice and idolatry. *"Let us get*

down on our knees and pray, 'I wept incessantly and cried out 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'" That was the beginning of the Revival.

It was Christmas time when the Revival broke out. *"In times of Revival, the Word of God comes alive. It smites us and pierces our heart. The Word of God is like a hammer that breaks the rocks into pieces. It now became clear to me that it wasn't the heathen who were standing in the way of Revival. I could only cry out: 'Lord, there is only one person who hinders Your work, and that is me! Please forgive me!'"*

They were praying in a cowshed when they heard a noise like a great wind. *"Everybody was conscious of the presence of God. All I could do was to bow down and worship the God of Heaven."*

Then a witch, who was in charge of a training school for witches, came to Erlo Stegen. She said: *"I need Jesus. Can He save me? I am bound with the chains of hell. Can He break these chains? If Jesus doesn't save me right now, I will die today and go to hell! Pray for me, that Jesus rids me of these evil spirits."*

Rev. Stegen and some of his co-workers began to sing hymns of victory, of the risen Christ, the Mighty Victor who has overcome the devil, conquered sin and death, paid the price with His own blood! As they sang, the woman flung herself on the ground on her hands and knees and began to move around like a wild animal. The sounds of many dogs barking from within her and a herd of pigs grunting were heard. *"We prayed: 'O Lord set this person free!' 'Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.' - Zechariah 4:6"*

***"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."** - Ephesians 6:12*

*"The moment the evil spirits left her, the expression on her face changed abruptly. She shone like a saint who had been living in the presence of our Lord and Master for many years. With the glow of Heaven shining on her face and in her eyes, she cried **'Oh how marvelous, Jesus has set me free! Jesus has broken these chains of hell!'"***

Rev. Stegen recounts that for the next months they hardly had any sleep at all as day and night they were so busy counseling and praying for hundreds upon hundreds sick, troubled and demon possessed people. Time and again people exclaimed, *"A power within us has driven us to come here. We can't sleep anymore, we can't recover our peace of mind, and all we can see is our sins!"*

"Hundreds of people flocked to where we were in Mapamulo. We could go out the front door of the building at any time of the day, any day of the week and there would be a hundred, maybe two hundred, people standing outside. Hardened sinners would be weeping like little children. It was as if the Day of Judgment had dawned. The conviction went so deep that some of them couldn't believe that Jesus could forgive them. They came with tears, and they left with joy. Their lives were changed and all things became new. Children were converted and parents were

astounded at their change of attitude and behavior. Husbands and wives were astounded as their partners were transformed. God kindled His fire and it spread through the valleys and the mountains so that thousands were saved in one week. That happened among the Zulus. There is no limit to what God can do.”

“From that time on the Zulus no longer said that Christianity was the white man’s religion. That was the end of that saying. They have experienced that Jesus Christ is their God too. I remember a blind man whose eyes had suddenly been opened walking up and down shaking his head and crying out again and again: ‘Jesus is my God! He is truly my God!’ Sick people would be brought in on stretchers and rise and walk around...As a rule we never prayed for healing before the person involved, has settled their spiritual lives. Divine healing always begins in the heart.”
The Bible teaches us in James 5:16 ‘Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed.’ Healing of the soul is put first. Physical needs are secondary. Spiritual illnesses must be treated first. To be liberated from irritation, anger, resentment and other sins are a thousand times more valuable than to be healed of physical ailments.”

People would come saying, *“We cannot carry on living in sin. We must bring them to the light. We need forgiveness of our sins. We cannot go home without having peace with God.”*

A young Hindu woman, together with her 16 year old daughter, came and told Rev. Stegen: *“My daughter here has been mentally handicapped since birth. Many doctors have said that she was incurable. So I went to the Hindu temples, but even our gods couldn’t help her. Two weeks ago I met a Zulu man who said to me: ‘why don’t you take your daughter to Mapamulo? There are Christians there that serve the Lord Jesus. If you take her there, they will pray to Him and He will heal your daughter.’ When I heard that I said ‘that is the God I want to serve!’ The moment I said that my daughter was healed and in her right mind. Here she is, you can speak to her.”*

The daughter spoke, *“From now on, I want to serve your God, our gods failed, but your God has healed me!”* Erlo Stegen explains: *“There is no God like Jesus Christ! When will the nations acknowledge that there is no Lord but Him? The Lord of all lords, The King of all kings.”*

At Tugela Ferry, an 18 year old girl, Anagreta, who had been completely paralyzed for 18 months and who had been treated in 5 different hospitals was brought to the services. She lay, immovable, on a stretcher. Her skin and hair was scalded from when witchdoctors fried frogs in a pan until they were boiling hot and then put them on the girl’s head. After counseling her to repent of her sins, Rev. Stegen prayed for her and *“the bones of her body began to shake like the leaves of a tree.”* She leapt out of her bed onto her feet and started running! In an instant the Lord Jesus completely healed this girl.

The news of this event spread like wildfire throughout the entire area. It was as if the very air was charged with the presence of God. Anagreta was taken to Pomeroy Prison where her father worked. He was so filled with joy to see his daughter healed and delivered.

Rev. Stegen explains: *“There is no greater power than that of our Lord Jesus Christ. All power in Heaven and on earth has been given unto Him. Go therefore and teach all missions, baptizing in the Name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things*

*what so ever I have commanded you. What a God and what a Savior! May God grant that our lives do not bring dishonor to His Name, but are such that people may recognize that **the Word of God is the Truth!***”

Dr. Peter Hammond