

A 40-Year Revival! — Zululand, South Africa

In the annals of spiritual revivals among God’s people, there have been many astonishing revivals; however, the vast majority of these revivals lasted only a few years—and in some cases, only a few months or weeks. Have there been any revivals that lasted for a long period of time? Yes, but only a very few. Following is a story of one such revival among the Zulu people in South Africa that, as of this writing [2006], has lasted over 40 years!

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, about 30 missionaries, both Blacks and Whites living in South Africa, went to do missionary work among the Black Zulu people. However, before the revival broke out in 1966, this group of 30 missionaries ministered to the Zulu people for 12 years—but with grossly disappointing results. It was at the end of these 12 years of gross failings that they began desperately seeking God’s help and reviving, and it was at that time that the revival came! Read about a very dramatic event that caused the missionaries to turn to God in desperate prayer, and a total turn-around in their ministry!

After some very desperate prayer, it was only a few days before this revival broke out among the Zulu people—a revival that is still going on today! The sick were healed, devils were driven out [or expelled or cast out], and they even saw the dead raised up—back to life again—and many miraculous things happened in their midst. But probably the most astonishing is this: that after 40 years, the same spirit is among them, and the same miracles are still happening!

In this writing, we will first look at why they failed; then, what happened in the 1960s that turned the whole mission into a

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real, miracle-working, healing, saving station. Read on, and shout for joy!

When the 30 missionaries went to the Zulu people, they set up large tents, and preached to large crowds. After preaching about Jesus and his salvation, they asked the people: “How many of you would like to know this Jesus and be saved from you sins?” Almost all of them raised their hands. But that was just about as far as it went. There was no real change in their lives; nevertheless, the missionaries kept preaching throughout Zululand and sending to their home base glowing reports about how many hundreds of Zulus “were being saved.”

During one of their meetings before 1966, one event caused the missionaries to really take stock of themselves and their “failed” ministry. A pastor named Erlo Stegen was preaching. This is how he described this event:

I had hardly finished my sermon, when an old woman came up to me and asked, “Mfundisi (Pastor), is it true what you told us?”

“Yes,” I replied.”

“Is Jesus, the White man’s God, really alive, just as you said?”

“Yes!”

“Can you speak with Him?”

“Of course. You can speak to Him too. That’s what we call prayer. Everybody can pray.”

“Oh,” she said, “I am so glad that I have found one person who serves the living God. I have a grown-up daughter who is completely mad. Could you please ask your God to heal her?”

I didn’t know what to say. What a fool I had been! I thought I had been cornering these people, but instead, I had cornered myself without even leaving a loophole. How should I get myself out of this awkward situation? I couldn’t just ask God to heal the girl! What should be done now, what could I do? I had here a simple-minded heathen woman before me. If she had at least been an intelligent person, I could have asked her: “Are you sure that it

is God's will that your daughter should be healed?" or "Might this not be the cross you have to bear?" or "Is it God's time that He should heal her now?" The Bible addresses such problems as the cross that we must bear, submitting to God's will, and appointed times which the Lord lays down. But if I wanted to explain all that to this simple-minded heathen woman, she would only become confused. So I was at a loss, and didn't know what to do. I remained quite calm outwardly, not betraying my perplexity, and finally asked the woman, "Where is your daughter? Is she here?"

"No, she is at home."

That was a bit of a relief. I thought that if I could only gain some time, I would most certainly think of something. "Where do you live?"

"Not so far away, about one kilometre."

"Can we get there by car?"

"Halfway, and then we must walk."

"All right, just give me some time. I'll finish here, and then I'll come with you."

On the way there, she told me that she was a widow and that her husband had passed away four years previously. She had only this one daughter, and a married son who was working in Durban. When we arrived at her home, I looked into the hut and cried out in dismay, "But you didn't tell me half of what I see here!"

In the middle of the hut I saw a girl sitting on the floor, her arms bound to the centre 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. Some of these had healed, but others were still fresh. She pulled at the wire with such vehemence that it cut deeply into her arms. She spoke incessantly in foreign languages, and at times it was not possible to determine which language it was.

"How long has she been bound like this?" I asked her mother.

"For the past three weeks she has been talking non-stop, day and night. She does not eat anything and she does not sleep. We bring her food, but she takes the plate and throws it against the wall."

"But why don't you use something softer to tie her up? It's cruel to bind her with that wire."

"We've already tried everything else. She breaks the strongest ropes, then she runs around, and we can't catch her. She gets into the neighbours' fields and gardens and pulls out the cabbage, the maize and the other vegetables. She destroys everything. The people are afraid of her and the men take their sticks, beat her and set their dogs on her. Often she runs into the mountains and doesn't come back." The woman looked at me, and with tears in her eyes she asked me, "Can you imagine what it means to a mother's heart, to have such a child?"

She continued with her story: "The girl tears her clothing to shreds and runs around naked. She is very dangerous. There is a man here who has a big scar where he was bitten by her. When she bites someone she won't let go until somebody comes to the person's rescue. Once she ran into the school and the children all jumped out the windows and fled from her in fear. The school committee has informed me that something must be done to prevent these incidents. 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 to pay the witch doctor. I haven't got any more money. I'm at the end of my strength."

Weeping, she finished her story with the words, "You know, I have often wanted to take a knife and cut my daughter's throat. At other times I've wanted to bring my own life to an end. But something always held me back. What would become of my daughter? Nobody would look after her. Now I am so glad that I have found a person who serves the living God! Perhaps there is still hope."

When the woman said that, I felt as if my heart had stopped beating. In my innermost soul I cried out to God, "O Lord, you are still the same God as of old. Can't you do something?"

I went to some of my colleagues and shared my experience with them. I asked them to pray with me for this girl. Next I drove to my parents' farm and asked them for a room where the girl could stay while we prayed for her. My parents readily agreed and prepared a room. Together with a few other men, I fetched the girl

and brought her to my parents' house. Everybody in the whole area, the entire tribe, knew what was going on.

I said to my colleagues, "Look, for years we've been praying for revival, but up to now it has failed to come. Maybe this is the match that we must strike to make the fire burn. If this girl is healed, then the revival might finally break out, because the whole tribe knows her: the chief, the children, all the people, young and old. What a mighty victory it would be for our Lord Jesus if this girl were healed. Then the Zulus would realise that Jesus is the only true God."

But we had hardly brought the girl into her nicely furnished room, when she turned the table upside down and began destroying the chairs. We were eventually forced to remove all the furniture, leaving only the bed. But then she attempted to pull out the springs in the mattress, so that we had to take the bed out of the room as well, leaving her only with a grass mat and a blanket.

The next thing that our protégé did was to break the panes and frames of the windows. Within a few hours that room looked like a pigsty in which many pigs had been living.

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. Someone advised me to plead the blood of Jesus, which the devil would fear and flee, but to no avail. On the contrary, the girl began to blaspheme the blood. Again and again those horrible, sacrilegious songs resounded through the room, renouncing the blood and death of the Lord Jesus as only the devil could do. All this time the girl would sit half or fully naked in her excrements, blaspheming. She would stamp on the concrete floor with her bare feet, like somebody attempting to demolish it with a sledge hammer. She carried on like that for hours on end, and the noise and blasphemous songs could be heard from far away.

I couldn't understand it. We had done what the Bible taught us, but it didn't work. Our experience belied the theory.

What was I to do? Go back to the girl's mother and tell her that her daughter had not been healed? Everybody in the area knew that we Christians were praying for this girl. They 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." They were all waiting to see what would happen, and now we Christians had failed. We prayed with all our strength, "O God, it's not our name which is at stake here. People won't say that we have failed, they will say: 'It is their Jesus who has failed.'" But heaven seemed barred, and we received no answer to our prayers. In the end we all gave up and were compelled to take the girl back to her mother.

— End of quote from Pastor Stegen —

The above incident with the demonized girl happened six years before the revival broke out. At that time, Pastor Stegen went through a time of doubt and defeat. He questioned the accuracy of the Bible and prayed to God to send him somewhere else. But he continued to preach. Following is the sequence of events six years later as to:

How That Ministry Was Turned Around

While Pastor Erlo Stegen was preaching one day, suddenly, a young woman, a new convert in the Zulu congregation, stood up. Tears were streaming down her face as she said, "O Pastor, please stop." This is how Pastor Stegen describes this incident:

This young woman interrupted me in the middle of a sentence! Astonished, I asked, "Yes, what's wrong?"

She replied, "May I pray?"

I didn't know what to do. It was like a bolt out of the blue. A newly converted person suddenly gets up, stops the service, and wants to pray. I didn't know whether to allow it. This young person had no theological training, she was no deacon, no elder in the church. Could she even pray? What if she prayed incorrectly? But then I looked at her and I thought, "Well, she isn't deceiving us, she seems to be serious." Thus I said, "All right, you may pray."

This young woman then prayed a simple prayer, "O 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 the same as the one in Jerusalem?"

At this moment my heart began to burn within me. I thought, "Is this [my burning heart] what the disciples felt? O Lord, grant that your children and your church in the world today may be like the early church. Can't you do it once again? Revive your work, O God. Can't the Christians today be like the first Christians again?" With that, I closed the service.

When I got home, I called on my brother and said to him, "You know, a strange thing happened today. The meeting was suddenly interrupted—not by terrorists—but by a prayer. If that prayer was inspired by the Holy Spirit—and I don't doubt that it was—then I believe that the risen Lord, the living God, will again be in our midst and the church of Christ will experience what the first Christians experienced in Jerusalem." A week and a half later, God rent the heavens and came down!

The missionaries were beside themselves with disappointment, frustration, and embarrassment. It was then that they began to take stock of their own ministry, and as they did they realized that the Zulu people who had "become Christians" had not change in their lifestyles. Most continued committing the same sins they had been committing before they "agreed to ask Jesus to save them." For most of them, asking Jesus to come in was more like adding Jesus to the list of their other gods—a mixture of their old religions or superstitions and their "new-found faith." They were merely holding on to the Jesus "just in case there was something to this new religion."

But as the missionaries honestly reflected on their 12 years of ministering to the Zulus, they also reflected on how much they themselves were backbiting, bickering, squabbling, and being disagreeable with each other. In their frustration the missionaries spoke of giving up, of going and getting on with their own life!! They said, "Everyone else seems to be enjoying their lives, but we are working with something (the Bible) that doesn't work!"

It was about that time [just before the revival broke out] that Pastor Erlo Stegen had a vision or dream in which he was shown that he was committing idolatry. This is how he described it:

Then I suddenly saw a picture, like a vision. I'm not a person who believes in visions or dreams, but I'll never forget this picture. If I were an artist, even today I could still draw it. I saw a Hindu temple with all sorts of gods and idols. I saw myself entering the heathen shrine and bowing down to the ground before the first of these idols and worshipping it. Then I stood up, went to the next idol, touched my forehead to the floor and worshipped that image. Again I rose and did the same with the third idol. I finally awoke with a shout and cried, "Lord, for twelve years I have been preaching to the Zulus, 'I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness...' and here I am, the preacher, bowing down to the idols and worshipping them!" Yes, God showed me that I had been committing idolatry.

Weeping, I went into the assembly room in which I was supposed to hold the service, but I couldn't preach. With much effort I could only stutter, "Let's get down on our knees and pray." I wept incessantly and cried, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." That was how the revival started! God was putting me through His mill, which grinds slowly and minutely. Anybody that hasn't experienced it for himself doesn't know what it means when one speaks of God's mill.

At that time I forgot that I had been a preacher of the gospel for twelve years. I forgot that I had studied and that I had called myself a child of God. I prayed like the sinner in the temple, who beat his own breast [Luke 18:13].

Even before the revival started, the Spirit of God was working among the Zulu people. This is how Pastor Stegen described it:

Although I had no knowledge of it, God was also busy working on the congregation while He was working on me. He began to convict them of their sins. One would go to the other and ask for forgiveness. Husbands would reconcile themselves with their wives, and wives with their husbands. Children would say to their parents, and friends to friends, “I said evil things about you, please forgive me. Forgive me, there was bitterness in my heart towards you. I gossiped about you behind your back. I’m sorry, I should have come to you first.” For Jesus teaches us, “If your brother trespasses against you, go and tell him his fault between yourself and him alone” [Matthew 18:15]. If we gossip behind our brother’s back, we are in danger of hell fire, just as he is because of his sin.

It was also about that time that one of the missionaries spoke up and said, “Why don’t we go seek God?” They all thought that would be worth a try. First they had a series of meetings to seek God’s guidance as to what they should do, and they made 3 agreements.

First: During the first meeting they made this agreement: Not to justify, defend, or excuse themselves to each other or to God in any way when they went to seek God.

Second: They agreed to pretend that they had not read the Bible—that is, to read the Bible without any previous opinions, but to see just what it really says. They said, “Why act as if we know anything? The results in our lives tell us just exactly how much we know”.

Third: To pretend that they were not even a saved people—in other words: start all over again with the basics!

As we look at these agreements, we can see the depth of humility these brothers and sisters plumbed—these were full-time missionaries working in the field of their calling while sacrificing much of what this world has to offer—for the sake of the Gospel. The desperation of their powerless circumstance caused them to take an honest look at their lives before God and come to some honest conclusions, which gave birth to these 3 afore-stated agreements.

Then they found an old barn where they determined they could cloister and seek the Lord together, men and women, Blacks and Whites. They prepared the barn by raking out the cow dung and white-washing the inside walls.

It was thus these 30 missionaries—with Bibles in hand—stepped into THE BARN. This is their testimony: Once inside the barn, they opened their Bibles and began to read. But, what they read convinced/convicted each of them of the failures, disobediences, and unbelief. God dealt with each of them independently for twelve days as they poured over the Word. First they cried softly, but as the days went by, the crying grew louder until on the twelfth day the group was literally crying with one voice to God—crying that He might, “...come down and help them and work like in the days of old!”

This is also the testimony of these dear ones: a noise that sounded like a mighty, rushing, roaring wind came out of a cloud-less, breeze-less blue sky and fell on the building [The same thing that happened to the first disciples in the Bible on the day of Pentecost—Acts Chapter 2]. From that day on, those precious souls were able to touch the world with His love, salvation, and miracles.

God’s blessings were on them so greatly that eventually they started a hospital with no doctors, nurses, or medicines— just a place of prayer. This hospital had three sections:

- ① One for those who were demon possessed,
- ② A place for the mentally deranged and
- ③ A place for those who were terminally ill.

God so blessed this “hospital” that very many found help, healing, deliverance, and salvation—and these blessings continued for decades. Many were made every-wit whole.

Someone asked some of the elders in South Africa how they kept God with them like this? How were they able to keep that presence for over three decades? This is how one of the elders replied: “On the day God came down on the barn, He told the people that as long as they walked in true humility with one another and repented every day, He would remain with them.” To their credit, they remained faithful to this word.

Eventually these brothers started a website that has a lot more information about what happened and what is happening among the Zulus. See: www.kwasizabantu.com. The brothers in Africa are saying, “We have to continue humbling ourselves and seeking God together” and “God comes to help us as we corporately seek Him in true and deliberate humility”.

The following is taken from Chapters 6 & 7 of Erlo Stegen’s book:

Chapter 6 — The Working of the Holy Spirit

The day came when God rent the heavens, as it were, and came down while we were gathered together. Suddenly we heard a noise like a great wind. I can only faintly suggest what happened and attempt to make it clear with a small example. It was similar to air escaping from a pressurized air tank, and it was as if that wind were blowing right through every one of us. The Spirit of God came down and nobody had to explain to anyone else, “Look, God is in our midst.” Everybody was conscious of the presence of God without anybody saying a word. All I could do was to bow down and worship the God of heaven.

What happened then? The Spirit of God came over that place, that is, over the whole area, and brought the people in. The first person to come was a witch who lived seven kilometres away and was in charge of a training school for witches. God began at the very strongholds of Satan. To use the prophet Isaiah’s words: “The mountains flowed down at Thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth.” The fire burned as if everything were made of dry

brush-wood. When I asked this witch, “What is it you want?” she answered, “I need Jesus. Can He save me? I am bound with chains of hell. Can He break these chains?”

I couldn’t believe my ears! For twelve years I had tried in vain to convert witches, sometimes for weeks at a time, and they had always claimed that their powers were a gift from God. And now, suddenly, right out of the blue, a witch stood in front of me and told me that she was sick and tired of her life, and was bound with chains of hell.

“Who spoke to you?” I asked her.

“Nobody,” she answered.

“Who preached to you?”

“Nobody!”

“Who invited you?”

“Nobody!”

“But I can’t understand this. Where do you come from? What happened?”

“Why do you ask me all these questions? Don’t waste my time! If Jesus doesn’t save me right now, I will die today—and go to hell!”

I had never seen the likes. I continued by asking, “Are you prepared to open your heart to the Lord Jesus and let Him come into your life?”

“I am prepared to do anything.”

“Are you prepared to confess your sins?”

“Yes!”

After she had done all that, she said, “Pray for me, that Jesus rids me of these evil spirits.” And she called the spirits by name: Izizwe, Indawo, Indiki - these aren’t just imaginary concepts. If a person is possessed by the spirit of Izizwe, he can speak in foreign languages which he has never heard or learned.

I didn’t know how to pray for a witch. I had tried it once before, when a possessed person came to me, and I had commanded those forces in the name of Jesus to be gone. The result was that I became the laughing stock of the devils! I couldn’t understand it then. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that they even took Paul’s handkerchiefs, to lay them on those who were

possessed, and the evil spirits left. But my prayers came to nothing and I became the laughing stock of the demons. Now here I stood and was supposed to pray for a witch. I called five or six co-workers together and we sat in a circle with this woman in the middle. She was illiterate, a woman from the heart of the country, who had never worked for Europeans or English-speaking people. We sat on chairs around her and began by singing an Easter hymn with the cry of victory:

He arose — He is the mighty victor!

He overcame the devil — He conquered sin and death!

We need not fear — He's paid the price with His own blood!

As we repeatedly sang that hymn, the woman suddenly jumped off her chair, threw herself down on her hands and knees, and began to move around like a wild animal. She looked like a tiger preparing to pounce on its victim. Her eyes had such an inconceivably terrifying expression that one of the co-workers bolted and ran out of the room in panic. We had to call him back, calm him down, and tell him that we have no need to fear since Jesus has broken all the powers of the devil.

The woman then began to speak to us in English, a language she had never learned. Suddenly many dogs began to bark from within her. Even people outside the door could hear it. A large dog came running and jumped up against the window in search of the dogs. Now it might be possible to imitate just one dog, but by no means an entire pack of dogs—which she was doing [or, I should say, the devils in her were doing].

When that was over, a herd of pigs began grunting and squealing from inside her. We then commanded the powers of darkness in the name of Jesus, whose Name is above all names, to leave. “We are three hundred strong warriors, and we won't leave this person,” they cried out. That was no woman speaking! Other forces were using the voice of a human being. We prayed, “O Lord, set this person free!” Suddenly these demons made a remarkable statement. They said, “We know of God the Father, and even of God the Son, but since the Holy Spirit has come, we are burning. His fire is too hot for us.”

That reminded me of the Scripture: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts” [Zechariah 4:6]. In Ephesians 6:12 it says, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” For years this Scripture had been a mystery to me. How can one wrestle against spiritual forces? Now I realized that it wasn't a battle of flesh against spirit, but of God's Spirit against these spirits of darkness.

Then the first hundred demons left with much shouting and screaming, then the second hundred, and then the third hundred. Up to that moment the face of that old ‘sangoma’ (witch) had retained a dark and horrifying expression, but the instant the evil spirits left her, the expression on her face changed abruptly. She looked like a saint who had been living in the presence of our Lord and Master for many years. With the glory of heaven shining on her face and in her eyes, she cried, “Oh how marvellous, Jesus has set me free! Jesus has broken these chains of hell!”

After that witch came the witch doctors, then the possessed, one after the other, day after day. For two or three months we hardly had any sleep at all. Day and night we were so busy that we sometimes didn't even have time to eat or change our clothes. The Spirit of God would literally go into the peoples' homes and bring them to us. We asked every one of them, “Who brought you here?”

“Nobody!”

“How did you know that we were here? Who invited you?”

“Nobody! Over and over again we received the same answers, heard the same story:

“We can't explain it, but it must have been God! A power within us has driven us to come here. We can't sleep anymore, can't recover our peace of mind, all we can see are our sins!”

It was as if the walls of Jericho were bursting asunder. The possessed came and identified the spirits that were in them by name and number. Many of the things that occurred at that time, we do not even talk about, because people wouldn't understand them;

they would seem like fairy tales. But there is more between heaven and earth than our human mind can grasp. Such things must be experienced before we are able to comprehend what they are all about.

Hundreds of people flocked to where we were in Mapumulo. 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. “What’s the matter?” we would ask. “We are sinners!” was the answer. God’s Spirit had convicted them of sin, of God’s righteousness and their own unrighteousness. It was as if the Day of Judgement had dawned.

I remember one raw, heathen Zulu, a man from Msinga, who sat weeping in a room as if he had been beaten with a club. Because he was making such a noise, I went into the room to see what was going on. “What’s wrong?” I asked him.

“There is just one inch between me and hell—just one more inch, and I’ll be in that place,” he cried.

Again and again we had to reassure those people and say to them, “The blood of Jesus can wash away all your sins.”

“You can only say that,” they would answer, “because you don’t know how grievously we have sinned.” The conviction went so deep, that some of them couldn’t believe that Jesus could forgive them. A general confession didn’t suffice either. Every one of them had the urge to confess their sins individually and to call a spade a spade. Then the light broke through and they received the assurance that Jesus had forgiven their sins. Their faces shone like those of angels. They had come with tears, and they left with joy in their hearts. Their lives had been changed, and all things became new. The women returned home and their husbands declared in amazement, “What happened to you? You have become a new person! You used to wear the trousers around here, you always had the last word, and now, suddenly, you are submissive.”

There was one man who ruled his house with a rod. He didn’t act like a human being, but more like a wild animal. The change in his wife’s life was so remarkable that he asked her in astonishment,

“But what’s happened to you? When I used to come home drunk, there would be a quarrel. Now you remain quiet.” Instead of harshly calling her husband to account as usual, she was now friendly, brought him warm water to wash his feet and would fold back the blankets of his bed. He couldn’t understand such a transformation and said to her, “But what has happened to make such a thing possible? You used to get angry, and now you don’t say a word. I feel like a king. Have you been to see the Christians at Mapumulo and become a Christian? Have you accepted the White man’s God?” Then he added, “If the White man’s God has managed to tame you, although I couldn’t accomplish that with a rod, then it must be worth something.” So you can imagine how surprised a man is, when he suddenly finds his wife completely transformed. It was such a mighty testimony for the Lord Jesus that this man, whose wife had become a Christian, also came to us and was saved.

Children were also converted, and when they returned home, their parents would ask them, “Children, what has suddenly happened to you? You used to argue all the time. You grumbled at your homework and your chores, and constantly talked back to us. Now you are obedient and so eager to do everything. What has changed you so much? Have you become Christians?” Then parents would come and give their lives to Jesus.

God had kindled His fire, and it spread through the valleys and the mountains, so that thousands were saved in one week, yes, even in one day. That happened among the Zulus and the Xhosas in South Africa. There is no limit to what God can do.

The Lord Jesus once stood up in the midst of a crowd during the Jews’ feast of tabernacles, and cried with a loud voice, in spite of the fact that the people wanted to kill Him: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” May God grant that everyone who calls himself a Christian be a real Christian, as the Scripture says. I don’t believe that it is necessary to pray for revival. Revival is the result of a living according to the Holy Bible, which is how we should be living every day.

This means constantly progressing in intimate fellowship with Him, the living God. He wants His church to be a pure bride who radiates His glory.



Chapter 7 — Accompanying Signs and Miracles

When God began working on spirit, soul and body of the crowds which arrived in Mapumulo, that which is reported in the Acts of the Apostles was repeated: signs and miracles occurred. We had never explicitly prayed for such things. Our prayer had merely been, “Lord, rule amongst us, for you are the Almighty God of old.” Because we have experienced this ourselves, we can’t understand religious people who say, “God worked such things in the first century, but not today.” We testify to the fact that God is still the same today, and that He rules on His throne!

We saw the sick being healed, many of them without even being prayed for, simply by being there. Some of them were healed suddenly, even before the service had begun, and others the Lord touched during the service. There were people who cried out in their enthusiasm, “We’ll never take medicine again! We don’t need that anymore.”

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 had experienced that Jesus Christ was their God too.

I remember a blind man, whose eyes had suddenly been opened, walking up and down, shaking his head and crying again and again, “Jesus is my God! He is truly my God!” Sick people would be brought in on stretchers and put on the ground. Sometimes, even before the service started, they would rise and walk around.

Often these people shake their heads and say, “We can’t understand it. We heathens become Christians, but we see some Christians becoming more like heathens. We heathens get dressed, and the Christians get undressed.” Years ago it was difficult to differentiate among the Whites between Christian and non-Christian women. Today it isn’t difficult anymore, because we can even tell by the way they dress. Some of them are only

half-dressed. Thus we can understand why the heathens say this.

Once a man with a huge tumour, which affected him in such a manner that he was lame from the hips down, came to one of the services. Hundreds of people were sitting on the grass around him. All of a sudden the people stood up and went to the other side without saying a word. I asked, “What’s the matter?” When I got there I understood their reaction. This man’s tumour had burst open and released such a terrible smell that it was impossible to sit there any longer. The co-workers came and cleaned the wound, washed the man, and when they had finished, he got up and walked around.

I can only give you a few examples of all the things that happened. I feel as John, who said at the end of his gospel, “...there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were all written, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” [John 21:25]. Although several books have already been written about this revival, it seems as if they have just barely touched on all that God has done, because God has done so much more than can be written.

As God was thus working among the sick, we were reminded of the girl whose hands were tied with wire behind a pole, and who, in spite of our prayers and struggles, had not been healed those six years before. We prayed to God again and said, “O Lord, if that girl and her mother are still alive, couldn’t you work in such a way that we meet them again?” We were therefore thrilled when we saw the mother coming into the tent with her daughter while we were holding a service in the New Hanover district. That evening, God, in His mercy, touched that girl, and she was completely healed and set free!

It often happened that a person who was healed or converted would be a blessing for his entire surrounding area. After a few weeks we would usually be asked to come to that area to preach the gospel, and every time we went, we encountered many people who were like fruit ripe for the harvest. All this happened because of one person who had been converted and then many others had been touched through his testimony.

Once we were invited to hold a meeting out in the open. We accepted, and promised to hold a service on Tuesday at one o'clock. The Zulus aren't so particular regarding punctuality. If you fix the time for one o'clock, then you can just as well come at two. We were accustomed to things like that. But on that day we arrived at the meeting place at 12:30 and found that already three to four hundred people had gathered there. Astonished we asked, "Are you here already? When did you arrive?"

They answered, "Some of us have been here since six o'clock this morning." Of course that wasn't the time they had left their homes. Most of them had been en route for many hours. But, so great was their hunger for the gospel, that they were prepared to cover a great distance, and even wait six or seven hours before the service began. We therefore decided to begin immediately.

At that time we made the services as short as possible, because very often there was no need to hold a long sermons. Because the people had been so convicted of their sins and had such a great desire to confess them, they would tell us what they had to do [instead of us telling them what they had to do]. I therefore went into an old farmhouse to prepare a short message and said to the co-workers, "Before we pray for them, we will give them a chance to settle their affairs with God."

When people come for counseling, we tell them that physical needs are secondary, and that spiritual illnesses must be treated first. A spiritually ill person might be afflicted with irritation, anger, resentment and many other things. To be liberated from them is a thousand times more valuable than to be healed of physical ailments. In times of revival, it isn't even necessary to tell people such things. They will come and say, "We are sick, but we won't worry about that! Pray for us that we may be healed spiritually." In such meetings it sometimes happened that not one person left the place without having cleansed his life and made peace with God. Sometimes the sun would go down and we had to tell the people to go home. "No," they would say, "what is the use of going home? For us that would mean gaining the whole world, but losing our souls. We want to get right with God." Very often

people had to wait for several days before they could get an opportunity for counseling, but they wouldn't go home. Patiently they waited until they had a chance. "We can't carry on living in sin," we would hear them say. "You must bring us to the light. We need forgiveness of our sins." That's why we wanted to keep the services as short as possible.

As already mentioned, I was busy preparing a short message, when a co-worker suddenly came to me and said, "There's a Hindu woman outside who would like to speak to you."

"But that's impossible," I answered. "These people have been waiting for so long, let her tell you what she wants and report back to me." So he went to speak to her, but she was adamant and wouldn't confide in him. The co-worker returned and explained that she would only see me. I sent him away again to let her know that I was too busy. This went on for some time, so eventually I said, "All right, I'll come. It doesn't matter if things don't go the way I like."

I found her together with her sixteen-year-old daughter, and she told me this story: "Do you see my daughter here? She has been mentally handicapped since birth, most probably due to brain damage. I've taken her to see many doctors, and they all said that she was incurable, that she would be like this till the end of her life. So I went to the Hindu temples, but even our gods couldn't help her. Two weeks ago I met a Black man, a Zulu, who said to me, 'Why don't you take your daughter to Mapumulo? There are Christians there who serve the Lord Jesus. If you take her there, they'll 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 was in her right mind. Here she is, you can speak to her."

I greeted her daughter, I spoke to her, and she really was perfectly normal. "From now on, I want to serve your God," she said. "Our gods failed, but your God has healed me."

We should shout it from the mountain tops and proclaim it to all the world: 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?

One of the hottest spots in South Africa is the country around Tugela Ferry. For over a hundred years a war had raged there and countless people have been killed. The revival also soon broke out in that area. We had scheduled services there one weekend, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and the place was packed to capacity. After the services, many people stayed behind for spiritual counseling. Before the revival broke out, I usually asked the people to come forward to accept Jesus, but after the revival broke out, it proved to be unnecessary. The people stayed on their own accord. We read of the apostles that they didn't call anyone forward at Pentecost either. In Acts 2:37 it says regarding Peter's sermon, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" And then they were told what to do. I don't want to say that it is wrong to call people forward to accept Jesus. If God leads that way, then one may do it.

After one of the first services at Tugela Ferry, several hundred people stayed behind and declared, "We can't go home without having made peace with God." I was very tired and said to the co-workers, "I absolutely have to lie down and sleep a bit. If there is anything you want, please come to my room." Around midnight, they came and called me, "There are still a couple of hundred people that want prayer for healing."

I asked them, "Have these people been counseled and made peace with God? Have they done what James says in his letter, 'Confess your sins one to another, and then pray.'"

"Yes," they answered, "we were able to speak with every one of them. But now there are still more than two hundred left who should be prayed for in particular." We knew that we couldn't pray for all those people individually, so we decided to pray for them in groups. When there were so many people, we usually took two or three percent of those seeking help, selected the most difficult cases and prayed for them individually and then for the others collectively.

This time there were ten blind people there, and the co-workers asked, "Couldn't we pray for these blind people separately?" I agreed to that. As we were going through the door

into their room, most of the blind people began crying, "We can see! We are healed!" So mighty was His presence there, that the Lord Jesus had already touched them before they had come into contact with a single human hand. All ten blind people were healed.

At this point I would like to add an extraordinary event, which is closely related to the healing of the ten blind people. On that Friday afternoon, a White co-worker was on his way to Tugela Ferry with his lorry [truck] which was jam-packed with people who wanted to come to the services. Forty or fifty kilometres away from his destination he discovered a blind woman with a child standing at the edge of the road, her hand raised to try to stop the lorry. The driver pulled over and asked her what she needed.

"I have heard," said the blind lady, "that there are services being held here somewhere, and I would like to go, too. Could you please take me along?"

"I'm sorry," answered the driver, "but I haven't got any more room for you, the lorry is completely full."

Some people can't understand that there should be no more room on a vehicle, as long as there is still a small bit of space free somewhere. They don't understand or care about weight limits, but in this case the lorry was hopelessly overloaded. The brother attempted to explain the situation to this lady. When she began to weep, he thought of a possible solution.

"The only possibility is if one or two people get off voluntarily. Then you can come along."

But nobody was prepared to stay behind in that unfamiliar wilderness. They finally had to leave the old woman behind, weeping.

That was on Friday afternoon. On Saturday evening, late at night, the ten blind people received their sight at Tugela Ferry. And then a further miracle happened. On Sunday afternoon, as the White co-worker with his overloaded lorry again passed the spot where they had left the woman behind the other day, they didn't find a blind lady, but an overjoyed and radiant woman, who also could see again. Rejoicing, she proclaimed that Jesus had healed her.

“When did it happen?”

“Yesterday, Saturday.”

“What time?”

“Late at night,” answered the woman.

They compared the time, and discovered that it had happened at exactly the same time that the Lord had touched the other ten blind people. The Lord had seen into the heart of that woman and healed her in His grace. Can one understand now why these people say, “There is no other God but Jesus!”

Another incident during that weekend in Tugela Ferry will remain unforgettable for all who experienced it. A girl on a stretcher had been brought to the front near the pulpit. I noticed her during the services on Friday and Saturday evening. She lay there like a corpse, immovable, with her eyes closed. Not even her eyelids flickered. She couldn't move her fingers, except for a single finger of her right hand, which could only be moved with an effort. Later I heard her tale of woe:

She had been completely paralyzed for eighteen months and had been treated in five different hospitals, but the doctors could do nothing for her. Her relatives brought her back home, and took her from one witch doctor to the other. One of them used dreadful ‘medicine’. He caught frogs and fried them in a pan until they were boiling hot, then put them on the girl's head, scalding her skin and hair, but the girl was not cured by this frightful ‘therapy’. Finally she was brought to Tugela Ferry by her sister, who was a teacher. The co-workers told me that this eighteen-year-old girl, whose name was Anagreta, had asked that we pray for her.

“But how can we pray for her, if we don't even know her spiritual condition?” I asked them. “Has she straightened things out, made her life right and made peace with God?”

“Yes,” said the co-workers.

“But how can she do that, she can't even speak?” I asked in amazement.

“We did it by whispering into her ear, and asking her whether there was sin in her life.”

[At this point I must emphasize that there is no use calling upon a person to accept the Lord Jesus, if he doesn't know that he is a sinner. What's the use of trying to send a person with cancer to the doctor, if he doesn't know that he has cancer? Show him that he has cancer, and he will go to the doctor of his own accord, without being told. He will even be prepared to go to a hospital and surrender himself to the knife of a surgeon.]

I didn't give in and continued to press my co-workers: “Does the girl even know that she is a sinner?”

“Yes!”

“How did you find that out?”

“We mentioned various sins and asked Anagreta whether she had ever been disobedient to her parents, or whether she had been unfriendly, angry, unloving, or whether she had ever lied, etc. By the way she moved her eyelid, we could understand whether she meant yes or no. Finally we asked her, ‘Would you like us to pray with you and ask the Lord Jesus to come into your life to take your sins away?’ Again we recognized by the way she moved her eyelid that she agreed. We prayed with her, and now she would like us to pray for her physical healing.”

Then we experienced how God's power was also revealed in that girl. It happened in the same night, in which hundreds of other people were prayed for. We saw how the bones of her body began to shake like the leaves of a tree when a breeze goes through them. An unseen force took hold of her, lifted her out of bed onto her feet, and she started running! In an instant the Lord Jesus had completely healed this girl.

Within a few minutes, hundreds of people had gathered there. Nobody knew where they had come from. There were no church bells ringing, no telephones. Many people who hadn't been present at the service were suddenly there, among them three ungodly men who worked at the magistrate's court in Tugela Ferry, and they asked, “Where is the girl that has been healed?” We pointed to the girl and they explained, “We wish to speak with her alone, without any Christians. Would you allow us to ask her a few questions?” We agreed, so they took Anagreta to a room and cross-examined

her. After a while they brought the girl back and said to her, “The God who has healed you can kill the living and raise the dead. He can do what nobody else can do. Be faithful to Him to the end!” That was the opinion of unbelieving heathens!

The news of this event spread like wildfire throughout the entire area. For a few days it was as if the very air was charged with the presence of God. One must experience such a thing to understand what I am talking about. People would come to that place and be convicted of their sins, just by encountering the presence of the living God.

Next morning, the co-workers asked me if they could take Anagreta to the Pomeroy prison, because her father worked there. They took the Land Rover and drove there with her. When they knocked on the prison door, it was her father who opened up. Astonished, he saw the co-workers and then his daughter, who was walking towards him. At that moment he thought it might be just a ghost, and he cried, “Is it you?”

“Yes, father!” He was so filled with joy at what he was seeing, that he forgot to close the prison door, and the co-workers said to him, “You’d better lock the door, or your prisoners will escape!” Then they told the happy father what had happened.

In conclusion, let me bear witness to the fact that there is no greater power than that of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was no lie when He said that all power in heaven and on earth was given unto Him. He said those words to His disciples before His ascension into heaven. What happened then? Some worshipped Him, but others doubted! It is difficult to believe that all power is given unto Him, but it says explicitly in Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given unto me in heaven and in earth.” For this reason His disciples are able to carry out His command, “Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you.” What a God and what a Saviour! May God grant that our lives do not bring dishonour to His name, but are such that people may recognize that the Word of God is the Truth!

Epilogue

Over 32 years have passed since the beginning of the revival in Mapumulo [this was written before 2000] and yet the rivers of living water are still flowing, indeed, they have constantly risen. The Word of God, from which this mighty revival was born, continues to spread and is going forth in power locally and internationally.

The little Zulu congregation has become a large mission with headquarters at Kwasizabantu (meaning: the place where people find help) - not far from Mapumulo. Countless people continue to seek and find help for spirit, soul and body. Since the revival began, there hasn’t been a day in which people haven’t been convicted of sin, converted and found a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The mission, though it has buildings to house about 4,500 people, constantly has the problem of too little accommodation because of the constant flood of people seeking the Lord. Hundreds, often thousands, gather for daily services. Not only locals come for help, but people from all over South Africa and from other countries and continents as well. One visiting minister remarked that it is like the first Pentecost. When asked what he was trying to say he declared, “I went around counting the people’s different nationalities and arrived at 14 languages—and that at a single service!”

By God’s gracious guidance and miraculous provision an auditorium has been built to seat 10,000. Besides regular Sunday meetings, this massive structure is also used for special conferences for youth, ministers, etc.

The revival centre now has about 140 out-stations. Some of these out-stations have become mission centres for their local areas.

Erlo Stegen is assisted by a team of over 130 co-workers and about 150 temporary helpers at Kwasizabantu. Teams are constantly invited to preach at schools, youth groups and to many different denominations.

Although Kwasizabantu mission is not a church-planting ministry (if people are blessed, they are encouraged to return to their own denominations to shine for the Lord), there are a number of groups in many countries officially associated with the ministry. Centres have been bought or built in Germany, France, Rumania, Switzerland, the Netherlands and elsewhere and are run in fellowship with Kwasizabantu brethren.

Since 1986 an immensely successful private Christian educational institution, Domino Servite School [DSS], has been training children from grade one through to grade 12. Over 500 children attend this school at the mission and most of them are boarders because of the distance which many of them have to travel. Besides DSS there are a number of other educational projects at the mission, including:

- ① Cedar College of Education - a private Christian college with a four-year course to train teachers. It is accredited by Potchefstroom University of Higher Christian Education.
- ② Thabitha Adult School - a centre for training illiterate adults to read and write and for giving further education.
- ③ A University of South Africa examination centre—for those students and members of the local community who are studying with this correspondence university.

Over 20 other projects are being run to generate funds. Kwasizabantu mission has a policy not to solicit funds or send out letters appealing for donations. The 340 hectares of land are used for intensive farming. Farm products are for use at the mission and for raising funds. Some of the projects include: ① a green house project of a huge hothouse and plastic tunnels which produce vegetables of the highest quality. ② Kiwi vineyards produce fruit for local and international markets. ③ a printing press to print locally produced pamphlets, newsletters and books. ④ a jam factory which turns out tens of thousands of homemade jams and pickles for mission use and for sale. ⑤ a bakery which bakes a minimum of 400 loaves a day and which sells bread and confectionery. ⑥ a dairy and yoghurt production plant. Yoghurt is

sold to shops, hospitals and airline companies. ⑦ a water factory (Ekhamanzi) which produces bottled water and juice for the South African and international market.

All this is to the honour and glory of Jesus Christ, who is working so mightily in His resurrection power in spite of the fact that there are times of great opposition, negative assessments, misinterpretations, and sometimes defamations (according to Matthew 5:11) in which Jesus said:

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you,
and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

This should come as no surprise, as wherever God is at work, the devil is also there to do his dirty counter-work. He is always upset when his prey is snatched from him and his kingdom interfered with. Erlo Stegen and his fellow co-workers are determined, by the grace of God, to stand on the principles of the Bible alone despite opposition or praise.

May the godly reader be inspired to intercede for this precious work of God that it might continue to go forward in the power of the Holy Spirit. The sceptics we challenge with words of Philip to Nathaniel: “Come and see!”

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Published by Kwasizabantu Mission E-Mail: mail@ksb.org.za
Private Bag 252, Kranskop 3268, South Africa

— End Chapters 6 & 7 —

As of 1999, there are 140 outposts of this mission in South Africa and Europe [most in Europe].

This booklet edited and printed by:
Brother James e-mail: Brother.James777@gmail.com
4912 Lancer Drive
Knoxville, TN 37921-3014 U.S.A.
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