

# Revival, God at Work

by Erlo Stegen

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of genuine revival as God's work in transforming lives and communities through the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 51:19

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 7:37-38, Acts 1:1, Acts 2:1-4

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his calling into the ministry and the sacrifices he had to make. He shares how he initially resisted God's call and went through a difficult period of disobedience. Eventually, he surrendered to God's will and asked to preach and live like Jesus. The speaker then describes how he gathered a small group of believers who were willing to study the Word of God diligently and seek the truth. They focused on a passage from John 7:37-38, which speaks about streams of living water flowing from believers. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having these streams of living water in our lives and the transformative power they can have. He also mentions the growth of his ministry over the years, with people from all over the world coming to experience God's work. The sermon concludes with a story of a Hindu woman and her mentally handicapped daughter, highlighting the potential impact of believers who have streams of living water flowing from their lives.

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## Transcript

Shall we pray? We pray, Lord, and ask that you would be in our midst. And as we gather here, grant us that we'll be in your presence and that you'll be able to touch our hearts and speak to us. Amen.

The theme for this evening is revival, God at work. I would like to add another two words to that word revival, namely spiritual awakening and also an outpouring of God's spirit, God coming down from heaven. Shall we pray once again? God, we pray that you would be in our presence, touch our hearts, draw us close to you, work in a way that passeth our understanding.

To your glory we ask it. Amen. The theme for this evening is revival, God at work.

I would like to add another two words to that word revival, namely spiritual awakening and also an outpouring of God's spirit, God coming down from heaven. To this theme, I would like to read from the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah, chapter 64, the first four verses. Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence, as when fire kindles brushwood and the

fire causes water to boil, to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence.

When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down and the mountains quaked at your presence. From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God beside you who acts for those who wait for him. We'll stop there.

This is a perfect picture of what revival is all about. Revival is not what many people suppose it to be in these days. Revival is not man-made.

It is not man in the foreground or in the forefront. It is God himself dwelling amongst men, meeting their needs, revealing himself to them. And dear friends, I believe with all my heart there's only one thing that will help us here in our country, in the rest of Africa, in the rest of the world, and that is a genuine Holy Spirit revival, where God himself, as we have read in our text, will rend the heavens and come down, and that he will kindle his fire and will do great and marvelous things in shaking the nations.

Then the world will once again realize that God is on the throne and that God is the first one through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now the first point I'd like to speak about is longing for revival. These days I was reminded of what happened about 67 years ago when God called me into the ministry.

I recalled what I had said in the beginning when Christ called me into the mission field. I recalled what I had said in the beginning when Christ called me into the mission field. It was a great blow to me when Christ called me.

I wanted to be a farmer and make money. I knew that this calling would mean the end of all these ideals and dreams and plans for my future. So I counted the cost and thought that I couldn't pay the price.

Because of that disobedience, I went, so to say, through hell on earth for 18 months. Only after 18 months, I bowed to the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings and said, Lord, in obedience to your call, I want to go. But on one condition, I want to do it as you did it.

I'd like to preach the way you preached. I'd like to live the way you lived. I'd like to be a preacher according to your word, according to the biblical standard.

First of all, I'd like to talk about the point, the desire for revival. Shortly after my conversion, as a young boy, besides reading the Bible, I loved reading books on revival. I read every single book that I could get hold of.

It was too wonderful for me. You know what revival is. Revival is not many people gathering to hear God's word.

It is not churches full of people, so that the churches are too small. Revival is not churches filled with people, but people filled with God. Revival is more than just thousands of people coming together to listen to God's word and then upon leaving say, what a wonderful service.

Revival is exactly the opposite. People go out weeping. Sometimes they lie on the floor.

No, a holy God reveals himself and they see that they are sinners and they repent. Not that they go into the church with their sins, say it was a wonderful sermon and walk out of the church again still with their sins. No, in times of revival, they stay behind, saying we cannot return home without having made peace

with God.

The person who used to steal stops stealing. He who committed adultery stops doing it. They stop it, stop with their sin when God is at work.

I devoured those books where thousands got converted when God poured out his spirit. I prayed, Lord please, this is what I ask of you. Would you please pour out your Holy Spirit in our area, over the whole country.

There is a difference between evangelization and revival. Revival is when God comes down and the spirit of God brings the people. This happened at Pentecost when God sent his spirit.

Then that divine magnetism was in action. People were drawn by the spirit of God. They were brought in by him.

This has happened now and then throughout the ages. When God works so mightily through his spirit, it is as if the spirit of God literally goes into the homes and brings the people without any church bells ringing, without any invitations. Nothing is announced.

Certainly when the spirit of God comes over those people, they gather together in one place. The second point, this message, is that was how I started. With a longing and desire for revival.

But after 12 years of putting my all into it on the mission field, I was a disillusioned man. Having preached for 12 years, I didn't know of 12 men who were really on fire for God. I held evangelistic campaigns that lasted for 10, 12, 14 months.

Preaching every day of the year, sometimes twice a day, saying I will preach until fire comes down from heaven. People accepted the Lord, sometimes by the hundreds, but nothing changed. And after a while, there was nothing left.

It was then that our hearts cried and prayed this prayer of Isaiah 64. Oh God, that you would rend the heavens and come down. You know how God dealt with us during the time of preparation.

I had always thought that the problem lay with the people who were so hard, but experienced in those days the truth of 1 Peter 4 verse 17. It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God. But revival always begins with the children of God.

Before this, I found the Zulus to be hard against the gospel. It was difficult for them to separate from the ancestral spirits. For them, Christianity belonged to the white men.

And they said, Christianity is good. And it has brought many advantages, such as schools, hospitals. But our ancestral spirits and our own traditions are also necessary.

We still need to get medicine from the witch doctors. The political spirit and hatred toward the whites also made it difficult. And of course, alcohol and other worldly things also played a part.

But it was also hard for me when they would tell me, go and preach to your own people first. You don't know how they get angry with us and shout at us. If the whites get converted, maybe we will listen to you.

All these issues made it very difficult. But since revival broke out, they are no longer problems for us. It was because of these things that I prayed and asked God for a way to convince these people that they don't need all those other things.

I prepared and preached a sermon to that effect, telling them, don't go to your witch doctors and witches anymore. Don't worship the dead anymore. Come to Jesus with all your needs and problems.

I had just finished preaching when a woman came, happy to have found someone who serves the living God. She had an adult daughter who was mad, and she asked me to ask my God to heal her. I went with her to her house and saw this girl in a shocking state.

At that stage, we had been praying for revival for six years. If this girl would be delivered from these powers, that could be the spark that we needed to bring about the conversion of the whole tribe. This might be what we had been praying for all these years.

To cut a long story short, I took her to my parents' place, where we prayed day and night for her for three weeks, after which she was as bad as ever. I was just about a nervous wreck. I felt like the evolutionists who are looking for a missing link to back up their theory.

With us too, there seemed to be a missing link. The promises are in the Bible. In theory it is correct, but in practice it doesn't work.

I had to return to this mother and tell her that it did not work. How could I ever stand in front of these people and preach to them again? They all knew that the Christians were praying for this girl, and now they would say, He said we must stop going to the witch doctors and come to Jesus. But Jesus cannot help either.

Can you understand how I felt? I had to be honest. I could not say to them, it worked when it did not work. I had to be honest with myself as well, and I knew in my heart it did not work.

This was disillusionment and modern ideas. That was a difficult time, and it was the beginning of modern ideas. From that time, I could no longer believe that the Bible was literally the word of God, from cover to cover.

For example, John 14.12 Truly, truly I say unto you, Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do. No, that is not the truth. But I could not call the Lord a liar.

One can understand how it happened. In the first centuries, they wrote everything by hand, and it is natural that a word might be left out, or something might be written which is not in the original. So parts of the Bible are true, other parts are not true.

And I was the fool who said what was inspired and what was not. During that time, I was not praying for revival anymore, because I could not believe that such a thing was still possible anymore. After twelve years, towards the end of 1966, I arrived at Makumulu, about twenty kilometers from where Guasizabantu is today.

In 1963, I held services there every day for ten months. When I held services, hundreds would attend, and hundreds would come forward and accept the Lord Jesus Christ when I made an invitation. Sometimes so many would want to accept the Lord that there was not enough space for all of them in the front.

My heart rejoiced, but two or three weeks later, there would be nothing left to see. Nothing had changed. Things simply continued the way they had been.

No she-beans were closed. I had sold hundreds of Bibles during that time, but nothing changed. If there was a change, it was very, very small.

Three years later when I arrived there, I found twenty to thirty Christians who met once or twice a week for Bible study and pray. I shared my heart with them and said, Look, people, I can't anymore. I asked these people whether they would be prepared to meet every morning from seven to eight and every evening from five to six.

We would study the Word of God and search for the truth. They were prepared for this. I said we will not excuse or justify ourselves anymore or try to reason anything out of the way.

We will forget our own wisdom and will accept for once that the Bible is the Word of God and allow God to speak to us through His Word. We came to the Word in John 7, 37-38 where the Lord says, He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures say, streams of living water will flow from his innermost being. I said let us begin with this text.

I want to ask, Who of you believe in Jesus? And everyone in that small building said they do. I said so we all believe in Jesus. Now the question is, Are there streams flowing out of our lives? Not only one stream, but streams.

Not only drops, but streams. Water is flowing out of us. Water brings new life.

A desert can be changed into a garden with one stream so that the glory of the Lord can be seen there. If out of one life streams of living water flow, imagine what could happen. But there we were without streams flowing from our lives.

Why did we not believe as we should? We would search the Scriptures to find out. We would test ourselves against the Word of God. We decided to start with the book of Acts.

We didn't want to pick a verse here and there like a child picking raisins out of a cake. We would take all of it. We started with the first chapter and worked through the whole book.

The further we read, the more heartbroken we became because we saw the church in Jerusalem. We compared ourselves to the first Christians and realized that the standard of our lives were as far removed from theirs as the east is from the west. We say that the Lord will return and He will come to fetch His bride, the church.

But what does His church look like today? Where is that bride without spot or blemish? Where is the church that will stand next to Him as His bride? Not in torn rags, but in roads washed whiter than snow without spot or blemish. The further we read, the more we wept. Those prayer meetings were not prayer meetings anymore.

If someone entered that room after a prayer meeting, they would have found a pool of water under the chairs. Not because the people were trying to cry, but because we had been reading God's Word and took it literally. We pleaded with the Lord.

Please, Lord, be in our midst. We read that those people in Acts were together on a daily basis. They loved each other and were of one heart and one soul.

To me, this was the greatest miracle because it was the opposite of what we experienced in our small group. No wonder that the place where they prayed was shaken. In contrast to us, we pray, but our families get shaken.

We are shaken. They met in their own homes. They shared their belongings with each other.

It was clear that Christ was their life. Jesus meant more to them than anything else on earth. Can you understand why we were unhappy, why we wept, why we could not be satisfied with our religion? We cried to God, Lord, we cannot carry on like this.

We will not be able to stand before you, you one day, in this condition. If there would be a church like the one in Jerusalem today, we would want to be part of it. We read about Ananias and Sapphira and what happened to them.

I asked myself, what would I have said if I were Peter? Maybe I would have been too thankful for such a large donation, but Peter was not prepared to accept that money. He realized that something was wrong and he wouldn't even allow such a man to be part of a church. I also wondered what I would have done if Ananias was my brother and Sapphira my sister.

If such a thing would happen today, what would we have said? Maybe the whole Christian world would say, no, no, no, this is just not right. Be careful, that is a dangerous sect. Remember, if you pray for revival, you pray for trouble.

If you don't want trouble, rather stop praying. If there is one thing the devil hates, it is that God is in control of his work and that he is working. The devil does not want God to work and he will resist it with all his might.

We can testify to this. This is how it was in that church and this is what the preachers of that day looked like. Now we can understand how it was possible that they not only shook the earth, but also the very foundations of hell.

The Lord says that if the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power. A spiritual life is a life filled with power. The Bible says, if we believe as the Scriptures say, not our theories and doctrines, but as the Scriptures say, our lives must be witnesses of whatever the Scriptures say and testify to the world of the truth in the Scriptures.

When God came down, God willing, we might still have an opportunity to share a bit of how God took us through His mill before He could come down and start working. I will never forget that day when God ran to heaven and came down. It is over 50 years ago now, but I remember it like yesterday.

I know one thing, that God is able. He is still the same He can fulfill His promises and if we serve Him with all our heart and if we pray to Him, Oh God, work, He will work, because He did it in this area over 50 years ago. The day He did that, there was a God consciousness.

There was something in the air, a hope, a knowledge. God had begun. God was at work and I made statements.

I don't know where they came from. I got up and said, people, I'd be prepared to go to Russia now and proclaim the gospel there. And I believed that God could send a genuine revival even there.

This was at the time when Russia was still a closed country. And I said, I don't know of a place where God can't work. That is what it is like when God comes down and begins to work in revival power.

What He has done in these nearly 53 years of revival is great grace. There were big challenges along the way, but we praise God for having kept us and carried us through to this day and that we still see Him at work in a marvelous way. When God came down in 1966, more happened in two or three days than in the whole 12 years of hard work on the mission field.

There were no church bells ringing. There was no organization work. There were no invitations sent out.

The Spirit of God came down and He literally went to the homes and brought the people and He started with the very strongholds of evil. I remember when the first person came. It was a witch who had a training school for witches.

We were in a service in the cow shed which we had cleaned by taking out the cow dung and chasing out the rats and snakes. I was told that there was a witch outside who wanted to speak to me. I went out and asked her what she wanted.

She said, Tell me, can Jesus set me free from the chains of hell with which I am bound? I was amazed because for 12 years I had been trying to convert witch doctors and witches, but they were hard and told me that they did, what they did was a gift from God. And now this witch said in desperation, I am bound by the chains of the devil. I asked her who had preached to her, but she said nobody.

Who told her that she was going to hell? Nobody. I couldn't believe what I heard. We had prayed for God to work and here he convicted her of her sin.

The Holy Spirit had come and his shoulder touched the shoulder of this witch and he brought conviction to her. She realized that she was lost. I called a co-worker and told the witch that if she wanted to be set free, she could use the opportunity to pour out her heart to this co-worker and she could confess and put things right.

Afterwards she asked me to pray for her that God would drive out these evil spirits, the Ndawos, the Ndiges, the Ndloses, the Zizwas, the latter being the spirits of the nations, when they have the ability to speak in languages they have never heard before or have never learned. I did not know how to pray for such a person, but we sat down in a circle and started singing, My Jesus lives, what shall I fear? Suddenly she went on all fours and her face was like that of a wild animal ready to pounce on its prey. One of our co-workers got a fright and jumped up to run out of the room, but I called her back and said, Don't fear, come back, our Lord is victor.

Don't fear, come back, our Lord is the victor. We prayed and then the demon started speaking. Firstly many dogs barked from her and then many pigs started squealing in her.

Then she spoke to us in English. She an illiterate person who had never gone to school or worked for English people. The demon started speaking in a man's voice, We are 300 strong warriors and this is our home.

We will not leave this person. The Bible says that we are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of darkness. We continued praying and then the demons cried out, We are burning since the Holy Spirit has come.

We cannot bear this anymore. There on our knees I remembered the verse from Zechariah 4,6 Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit. I never knew before how one fights against these forces.

We replied, you will have to leave because Jesus conquered on the cross. The first hundred left with great noise, then the second hundred and then the third. You know what the face of an old witch is like, but after she had been delivered, her face changed and she looked like a saint who had lived in the presence of the Lord for years.

She smiled and said, Thank you Lord for setting me free from these terrible chains. I thank you my Lord. It was a heavenly smile.

It is now over fifty years later, but I don't forget that smile. After that she lay down and the Lord took her. She had walked for seven kilometers from her school for witches, saying, I am going to die, but woe to me if I die before the Lord has set me free.

In the last minutes of her life, she met with the one who broke the chains of hell in her life. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit. The Holy Spirit convicted people.

He went into their homes and they came to make peace with God. People came to confess their sins without us having preached to them. No arguments.

Is this a sin or not? The Holy Spirit had done His work in their lives. After her, others followed. More witches, then the witch doctors, then the possessed, and after them.

Many others came from all walks of life. Day and night they came. For two or three months we got very, very little sleep.

We were sometimes worked, sometimes we worked right through the night, day and night. No time to eat. As one group left, the next ones were there.

Any time of the day, any day of the week, I asked each one personally, tell me, how did you get here? Who told you about this place? And the answer was, no, nobody. The answer was always, no, nobody. Yes, but why do you come here then? We are bound and felt that we should come here.

We can no longer sleep. We have no peace. Then we realized that it was God who was busy working through His Spirit to bring the people to come and hear His Word and make peace with Him.

Some heard a voice out of the blue which said, go to that place, to that house, and they will tell you what you should do. Some didn't hear or see anything, just a feeling inside that they had to come. This is the way it has been since the beginning of revival.

People came, some of them raw heathen, strong-blooded thirsty men, but now they were weeping like little babies, as though somebody was standing behind them with a whip beating them. Some would say, what's the matter? And they would answer, we are sinners. It seems as if there is only one inch between us and hell.

Sometimes it was as if the day of judgment had already arrived. People were unable to go to work. Children couldn't go to school, but came to look for help.

Sometimes when we came out of the house, we would find a hundred, two hundred people outside in the garden, on the lawn. Any time of the day, any day of the week, young and old, Christians, non-Christians, the learned and the illiterate, they would all come and say, we are on our way to hell. The Spirit of God has convicted them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

But even though they came weeping, they left again with radiant faces. They had peace in their hearts and were the happiest people. Back home, the husband would ask his wife, what has happened to you? And the parents would ask the children, children, why have you changed so much? It was exactly as the scripture says.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. This way the name of the Lord Jesus was praised and glorified.

This is how it all began. And those streams which started flowing way back in 1966 are still flowing to this day and more than ever. People come from all over the country, all over the world, from all continents.

It is God who is at work, not something which we do. No church bells ringing, no invitations. It is not our planning, but God who came down and is glorifying His name to this day.

To Him all the glory. The prophet Micah was right when he said, who is a God like you? There is no other God like the Lord. A Hindu woman came with her daughter.

One day we were invited to hold a meeting out in the open at a certain place. Before the service started, a Hindu woman came together with her 16-year-old daughter and told me this story. 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 to 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 Zulu man who said to me, why don't you take your daughter to Mapumulu? There are Christians there who serve the Lord Jesus. If you take her there, they'll pray for him and he will heal your daughter.

She continued, 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 spoke to her and she really was perfectly normal. She also said from now on, I want to serve your God. Our gods failed, but your God has healed me.

We should shout it from the mountaintops 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 Lords and the King of Kings.

Let us pray. We bow to You, the only living God. There is no God as You are, Lord.

You are alive. You are real. Nobody is like You.

So we bow to You, Lord Jesus, because You are the only one, the true God. We thank You that You are alive and You are still working. We thank You for Your great deeds.

Amen.

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