

Herbert Brown: The Anointed Stutterer

Steve Burchett

James Alexander Stewart was experiencing enormous success as an evangelist. By the age of 20, he was so sought after that he was preaching four or five times a day. He also filled his hours with evangelism in the streets and in homes. This was too much for a young man to handle alone. Stewart comments about his burden:

I began to feel that I needed a co-evangelist to labor with me . . . My heart longed, also, above everything else, for a companion with whom I could share my spiritual experiences, a companion with whom I could pray. . . I felt my greatest need now was for a *praying* evangelist.¹

So he began to pray for a ministry partner, and God answered him in an extraordinarily unexpected way. A man from England named Herbert Brown came to Stewart at one meeting and enthusiastically stated, “B-b-b-b-b-brother S-s-s-s-Stewart, I have-have-have-have wonderful news for you. G-g-g-God has c-c-c-called me to work-to work-to work with you!”

God’s answer to Stewart’s plea for a co-laborer in the ministry was to send him a stutterer!

The popular, eloquent evangelist was not pleased. He even prayed, “Oh God, this situation is impossible. The Holy Spirit is not the author of confusion, and surely would not call a stutterer into His service.” Stewart continues:

I reminded [God] that the reputation of the gospel ministry was at stake. “What will the believers say—to say nothing of the unbelievers!”

“You asked me to send you a co-worker, and I have done so. Do not rebel,” my Heavenly Father said to me . . . “You are not so much interested in the reputation of MY name as your own. You are afraid of being embarrassed with My servant. I know he is a stutterer, but do not forget that he is my precious servant, redeemed at an infinite cost through the blood of My dear Son . . . Can I not be glorified in the weakness of my servant and work mightily through him? It is not your gospel witness; it is Mine.

Soon James Alexander Stewart humbly accepted that Herbert Brown was the answer to his prayer.

Interestingly, when Herbert prayed, his tongue was set free from stuttering. About his praying, Stewart remarks:

He had a holy boldness at the Throne. Yea, may I say it reverently, he was on familiar terms with God. Sometimes he took my breath away with the boldness of his petitions. I soon discovered that he could be friendly with God because he was on intimate terms with Him; they knew each other well.

As these men went forward with the gospel, God’s power was evident in fresh and noticeable ways. Herbert Brown even preached occasionally, but rarely without stuttering. His stammering produced a spray of saliva for all to see and sometimes, if within spitting range, to feel. Nevertheless, God used this awkward preacher: “The Spirit of God drove home the words in power. Nobody ever forgot a message of his, for when he sent them to Calvary or hell, it was with great reiteration!”

Herbert Brown’s handicap sometimes bothered him. He once begged Stewart to pray for deliverance. Stewart replied, “I will pray for you, but let me say that I had rather preach in a stuttering and spluttering way with the anointing you have than to have my liberty without the anointing.”

Consider the following questions in order to think about the lessons we can learn from the life of Herbert Brown:

- Do you understand that your weaknesses are no hindrance to God working powerfully through you? (2 Cor. 12:9)
- Are you as eager to welcome and partner with “members of the body which seem to be weaker” as you are those who are typically considered more attractive and able? (1 Cor. 12:22)
- Pastors, are you satisfied with a well-crafted sermon, or do you long for and experience God’s power when you preach? (1 Cor. 2:4)

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¹ Quotes and facts are taken from a booklet by James Alexander Stewart, *He Was a Stutterer: The Story of Herbert Brown of England—A Mighty Intercessor* (Asheville, NC: Revival Literature, 2007).