

## Beto Brown Testimony

Allow me to introduce myself: My name is Heberto Jesus Brown-Heredia, I am 43 years old, and I am from the state of Campeche. I am currently living in the city of Merida and am studying my final semester of theology at San Pablo Theological Seminary.

As for me, I could tell you that I identify a lot with the character of Jonas, since I spent a lot of time running from this calling to pastor ministry because I didn't consider myself qualified to fulfill it, but now I have been understanding that God is who makes us able and if He calls us, it is also He that will sustain us during the ministry since it is not our efforts nor our abilities, but it all comes from the Lord who called us to His work. This process has not been easy. My mom was the first Christian in my family, and she took it upon herself to instill in me from a young age a love, respect, and devotion for God and His Word, for which part of my childhood I spent in the Church of Nazarene where I had my first approach with the Lord.

Later, and for various reasons, my mom suffered a strong disappointment which ended with her separating from the church, but not from God. At that time, I was in middle school and began to study at the Marist School. During this period, I was instructed in the Catholic religion, the principles that had been instilled in me from God's Word always prevailed in me. So I took what served me and that which didn't, I put it aside.

After finishing middle school, all of my high school, college, and my first few young professional years I spent apart from the church and the Word of God. I only remembered Him when there was a problem or in moments of anguish and sickness, but God has always been good and faithful, since there was no lack of people that would bring His Word to my house. Although my mom did not go to a church, she always stayed faithful to God and His Word, hence He always corrected me through her. In all of this time that I stayed away, in the deepest parts of my heart, there was a hope that one day I would return to the path of God.

So when God's time came, we met some brothers in Christ who began to visit us in the house and began Bible study groups, and the Lord began to do His work to change my heart and prepare the way for my reunion with Him. I began to go to the study groups that they were doing in my house, and after some time, I went to the church where these men went. That day, I was so impacted by the Word, the preaching was about Jonah, and many of the things that the pastor said that day were necessary for me to hear, these words came to heart and swayed my life. From that moment, I

began to get involved not only in the study groups but also in the church, where I stayed for about nine years. I was baptized there, became a leader, and was serving that time with the youth of the church.

At the start when we went to that church, my mom and I found some things that were new for us and that we didn't understand, like speaking in tongues, falling in rest, holy laughter, things that we hadn't seen at the church where we went before. But when one comes in contact with the idea that everything that happens comes from God, you let a lot of things go, and so from there began our indoctrination in this church, first with the encounter, and then with the post-encounter. But as the years went by the church changed more and went away from the original church I had come to know. Later, the pastor became an apostle, and then the excess began in the church, the prosperity doctrine entered, positive thought, paternity doctrine, where the apostle functioned as your spiritual father, for which, although what he said was not in the Word, you had to obey and respect it. And the church increasingly walked away from the Word of God, giving more importance to the man than to God, and I increasingly felt unaffiliated with what was happening in the church. It was a time of so much desolation in my soul because the church that felt like my home was no more, I felt that I didn't belong to this place, but I also didn't have anywhere else to go. What I didn't know was that God had already made His plan for my life and in that time of need, I had my first approach with the doctrines of grace that were, for my life, a great discovery that brought comfort, rest, and joy to my soul. Although I hadn't understood these doctrines before, especially in depth, the little bit that I had come to know was enough because it was what I needed and yearned for in those moments.

A little bit later, because of a friend, I went to the House of Prayer, Chuy Olivares's church. Its ministry is similar to that of Alducin. Upon arriving at this church, I was met again with my fundamentals in the Word and I saw myself through them like a mirror, and the way I was living wasn't pleasant. God then put in me a longing to search for sanctity in my life, looking to please Him, be obedient to His commands, and do His will. Through this church, a purification happens of all that I had experienced and learned in the charismatic church. God began to change my wants and desires and made me want to know more about His Word. The joy that only God can give returns to my soul and life. After some time congregating in this church, a Biblical institute opened in Merida on the weekends. I sign up and begin to go, and there I have a major introduction to theology. I finished the basic course, and due to the health of my mother, I couldn't continue at the institute. Even so, a few of us in Campeche began a study group about the doctrines of grace that, for me, was the meat that nourished my spirit. While this was happening in my life, I was given the opportunity to serve in the church in the educational ministry. I began to start my first steps of preaching. From then on, God

began to change my life and turn me toward where He wanted me to go. My mom was the first person that told me that if I wanted to be a pastor I had to prepare, if that was what the Lord was calling me to do. However, without knowing it, the most difficult part of my process for which God was preparing me was coming.

After serving at the church for two years in one of the study groups, my mom fell and broke her hip which meant we had to miss a lot of church because she had to be on bed rest. They were very difficult months but there were also many blessings because we were able to secure our faith in God, to trust in Him, and depend on Him in every moment. This same year, my mom began to have other health problems brought on by diabetes and this also caused us to grow closer to God and His Word. Without knowing it, God was strengthening me and preparing me for what was to come, the passing of my mom who was everything to me. It was the two of us against the world, my mom was my friend, my counselor, but the most valuable thing she had left me was my faith in God and a love for our Father. I knew that I wasn't alone, that my Father was with me and wasn't going to leave me.

The following months were very difficult but all that time I was asking God to strengthen me and teach me His will for my life. I never liked to make decisions lightly, I have always waited on God's confirmation, and in His Word He showed me that it was time for me to leave my city and my family. I give thanks to God that he has given me a new direction for my life, such that the desire to prepare to serve Him was growing stronger. So I began to look at seminaries to prepare myself. I visited the Mexican National Seminary Presbytery, the Reformed Seminary, and the Baptist Seminary in Puebla. While in Mexico City, I was told about San Pablo Seminary in Merida. I took the first opportunity I had to visit and learn more about the admissions requirements. Upon returning to Campeche, I began to prepare everything to change my residency since my pastor and church were understanding of the desire that I had in my heart. So I followed their advice to leave everything in order before leaving Campeche to study in Merida. The time for my departure came, and the church saw me off and prayed for me so that God would work according to His will in this new stage of my life.

When I arrived at San Pablo, I didn't have a background in the Presbyterian church, only that they baptized babies like the catholic church. Since I wasn't Presbyterian, I had to search for a field that would allow me to do my service, and due to my family's friendship with a Baptist pastor, I was given the opportunity to serve in his church for two years. However, as I advanced in my studies and knew more about the reformed doctrine, God began to change my convictions. It has been a privilege to start growing my roots in Presbyterianism, to be part of the San Pablo family, and to have all of the valuable people God has placed in my life such as the pastors and teachers that I

have met in these three years, those which have supported me in this transition process to the Presbyterian doctrine. Now more than ever, I am convinced that I want to be part of this great family. I have now been a member of Antioch Presbyterian Church since last year after attending for about three years. In this same way, I am awaiting the time to be ordained as a candidate in this holy ministry.

I have always believed that if you are on God's path, and in His will, He will give you what you need to be able to fulfill His goal. As such, He has also given me a wife with whom we are learning to please God with our marriage and continue preparing ourselves for the ministry to which He has called us. The beginning of our family has not been easy, but God has been our provider and sustainer in everything during this time. Although we have experienced many difficult moments, we have never lacked a roof over our heads or food on our plates. Above all, the love of our beloved pastors and brothers and sisters in Christ have been reflected in these moments when we have really needed them. I give thanks to God for the life of each one of them that God has used as a blessing in my life and marriage.