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Aaress Lawless: You and I each long to experience spiritual transformation, but it's so easy for us to grow anxious when we don't see more of it in our lives. Hi, my name is Aaress Lawless and welcome to SageTalk. Today on SageTalk, Al Henson and Paul Lawler are discussing God's desire for us to be conformed into the image of His son. They're also sharing how God has graciously given us His provision, which makes this all possible. With over 75 years of pastoring between them and decades of walking among the nations as they minister to the persecuted church and the least of these, let's join Al and Paul as they shepherd the hearts of faithful servants and Christian leaders in today's episode of SageTalk.

Paul Lawler: Hello, my name is Paul Lawler, and I'm here with Al Henson, founder of the Compassionate Hope Foundation, and this is SageTalk. Our topic today is transformation. And as we journey into this topic, we're mindful that many people in the church long for a greater degree of experiencing transformation, seeing transformation. In fact, I would even say there sometimes is a holy angst around this desire to see more, but yet perhaps a holy angst and discontent that we don't see more transformation.

Paul Lawler: What we're going to draw ourselves toward, a couple of passages of scripture today. One of them is Romans 8:28-29. Allow me to quote that these verses for you with just a little commentary as we journey together today. The scripture says, "God uses all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose."

Paul Lawler: Now, a lot of people read that verse and they stop right there. And I would submit that when we stop in that place without reading the next verse, we miss the precision of the good that God is seeking to work in our lives through our circumstances. And so let's now read the first verse and tether Romans 8:29, the next verse, with it, "For God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Therefore, those whom God foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son."

Paul Lawler: We recognize that the good that God is seeking to work in the life of a believer is conformity to the image of His son Jesus, which is the transformation that we long for, the transformation that's on the heart of the Father. Al, I know you have some thoughts around this as well.

Al Henson: Yes. I'd like to, Paul, thank you. I'd like to tie this back a bit to our first podcast, so we make the connection. When we talked about fatherhood and motherhood and that being life to life, heart to heart. And what this passage, I'm always looking not at just the knowledge of a passage, but I'm always looking at the heart of the passage. And so we find in this, we find the heart of

God the Father for His creatures, His creation. Now in Christ we become a new creation, and His heart is He wants many sons. The phrase you didn't read at the end of verse 29 Jesus is the firstborn of many sons.

Paul Lawler: Yes, yes.

Al Henson: Okay. Now there's fatherhood.

Paul Lawler: That's good.

Al Henson: His fatherhood there. Jesus is the firstborn, but He's not the only son that God wants. And so what he wants is He wants each listener to understand that when they came into Christ, they became the sons and daughters of God.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And so there you are. Yes sir. Yes sir. Don't let that shame speak to you. The truth is, you are a son of God.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: You are a daughter of God. That is who you are.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And the foundational, the highest priority these verses teach us of our heavenly father is He wants every son and every daughter to be just like Jesus.

Paul Lawler: That's right. That's good.

Al Henson: Wow.

Paul Lawler: Yes, that's incredible.

Al Henson: And you have to also understand and believe that if that's what He wants, He's already made all the provision necessary for that to take place.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And that provision is in Christ himself in the power of His death, His burial in His resurrection. And the power of the gospel. That Christ in you has brought in you the power of His death, because there's things in me and in you, Paul, and in every listener, every brother, sister listening, and there's things in each one of us that need to die. Selfishness, pride, foolishness, doubting, the shame you feel, this fear that you feel, it needs to die out.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Jesus had no shame. Jesus was not afraid. And so He wants us to be transformed into the image of Christ. And that the image there literally is not like some picture. It's actually the very essence of the nature of the son Jesus, which is Jesus love. Jesus is wisdom.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And Jesus is righteousness. And I am so grieved and somewhat saddened and may I say, tired of the kingdom now that we think that we can have love without holiness.

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: And we think we can have holiness without love. And we think we can have wisdom without holiness or love. They can't. With God, you can't separate any of these three basic foundational natures of God.

Paul Lawler: It's so good.

Al Henson: And so I see so much of the kingdom, "Oh, we need to love. And if we love we do this or that." And I'm thinking, no, if you really love, you'd also be Holy.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And if you really love them enough, you would tell them that what they're doing is unholy and it's to their destruction.

Paul Lawler: Yes. Yeah. That's wise.

Al Henson: And so He wants us to be conformed to the image. And I felt a need to say that because the image of the son is balanced with the very nature of God, which is love, wisdom and righteousness.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And to God, this is the highest priority. And so much of our teaching and preaching today is you need to do this, you need to do that, you need to give more, you need to serve more. And all of that is true. But our people are serving out of weakness. And they're serving out of their own energy.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And so we have all of this activity Paul going on in the church and they have not learned how to just stop and be.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: See who they are.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And know that their Father primarily wants them to be transformed. The picture that I have to balance this is a statement that you and I use is that our circumstances is-

Paul Lawler: our classroom.

Al Henson: Is our classroom. And so as I step into my circumstances today, I'm stepping into my classroom.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And here's how we balance this. Well, I'm in this circumstance, I'm going to go to the doing first. In this circumstance, I'm asking the question, how do I wash feet?

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: That's who I am. I'm a servant. Jesus was a servant. How am I washing feet? Is it my wife's feet, my children's feet, my brothers, my sisters, the poor, the hurting, wherever. The enslaved, how do I wash feet? And God, as I am washing feet, I'm learning. I'm growing.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: You're transforming me.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: This is my classroom God.

Paul Lawler: That's good.

Al Henson: And this is critical. So there's not a time that we are transformed and then a time that we serve.

Paul Lawler: Oh, this is so good. Yes.

Al Henson: We're actually serving, going and being transformed at the same time.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: So there's no passiveness in love. There's no passivity in faith. It's all activity.

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: And tying it back, just to share a story, people are learning that I'm the founder of Compassionate Hope Foundation, and there's this young lady, 29 years old. I don't think I'll share her name, but I remember even the context among the nations because she was female and she was young, there were some questions as to could she do this because she was a rescued one. She had been abused and-

Paul Lawler: This was someone rescued out of trafficking?

Al Henson: Yes, yes. She was abused and in many ways. Sold as a child bride, on and on. But she was being transformed. She was growing. And I asked her one day, what would you like to do? What do you think God wants you to do? She started crying. She said, "Nobody ever cared enough to even ask me that Papa Al."

Paul Lawler: Wow.

Al Henson: And I said, "Well our God cares and I care. So I'm asking you." And she poured her heart out about how she wanted to help other girls so that they would not have to go through what she went through.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And so she took in nine girls and I only had three children and I can't imagine raising nine girls.

Paul Lawler: Wow.

Al Henson: So here's this 29 year old, in many ways a young believer, but really growing, hungering for God. And she calls me one day and she says this, she says, "These girls need a dad." She's single.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: "And I am trying to do all I can by the grace of God to be a mother." And I said to her, and I'm thinking of single moms right now, even listening in, in the context of your single moms that are listening in, I said to her, "You have in you the Father."

Paul Lawler: Amen.

Al Henson: And you also have in you the mothering heart of God because there are times in the Bible that He loves us like a mother the Bible says.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And so you have both. God is both of those at heart. And so I want to say what I said to her. I called her name and I said, "God will help you. You're what God has."

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And what God has in you is enough for these girls. And God will help you. He can transform you into not only the mother's heart but into the father's heart.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And then God can use me and others to be a father. And I just think about how in this transformation process that God can pour Himself through us in love and wisdom and righteousness in ways that we can't imagine.

Paul Lawler: Can't even imagine.

Al Henson: Can't even imagine.

Paul Lawler: You know, as you share that Al, there are occurrences that come to my own mind as you share this young lady's story. She steps way out of her comfort zone.

Al Henson: Yes.

Paul Lawler: She's dependent upon the Lord. She's growing as a Christian. But I have observed so many times that some of the deepest transformations happen when we're outside of our comfort zone, when we're depending upon God in a way that we have to. And it draws something out in the power of the spirit through the word of God, the love of God, where He develops us. It's almost like discipleship on steroids.

Al Henson: Yes. Sometimes people are trying to think this through Paul. And then what you're saying is so good. I'll ask them the question. Do I have to grow, transform to go, or do I have to go to transform? And I don't want to get in semantics of words here, but literally I lean to the last one. Because the commandment is go and the commandment to go is to the person who just came to Christ.

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: And that goes back to our classroom or our circumstances, the life around us is our classroom.

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: So as I'm stepping out of my comfort zone, taking steps of faith to obey God, I'm going.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: But I am going fully aware that a lot of where God's taking me in obeying Him is about my own transformation.

Paul Lawler: As well.

Al Henson: As well.

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: Absolutely.

Paul Lawler: You know, I love how you put that. Do I go in order to grow or grow in order to go? And the answer is yes. Yeah. I love how you worded that. And that's so true. And that was true, clearly with Jesus and the way He disciplined, the way He poured into the 12, into the three. In pouring into them, sending them out, I'm sure that they had questions like, "Are we ready for this?"

Al Henson: Yes.

Paul Lawler: And they were developed in that way.

Al Henson: And again, to those Paul that are thinking about mothering and spiritual fathering, this is what I've learned in life. There's a mystery about what I'm about to say. So you're not going to be able to fully or can't articulate it. And you're not going to be able to articulate it. But there is a mystery. I've watched it when I sit down with a brother.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Or even when I'm sitting down with my wife Susan, and we begin to talk about Jesus and the things of God, there's a mystery that takes place and biblically, I understand. It's spirit to spirit.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: It goes heart to heart, life to life, and then into a Holy realm of spirit to spirit.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And there's a transformation that takes place. The word I want is a transference. There's a transference. And I can say watching this, and parents, you need to listen, no matter what you teach your child, no matter what they see you do, the greatest thing you will do is to transfer your spirit and soul to them. And if you've ever found a reason to make sure you find healing and to make sure you

are set free, and make sure you're walking in the spirit, it's your children. Because you will transfer at the spirit level. It's a mystery about it.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And that's why often that parents who are deeply wounded and shamed people do shameful things that shame, and woundedness will transfer to their children. But in the same way when we talk about transformation, that's why we need to be being transformed.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: So that when I am fathering someone or mothering someone, that there is a mystery about the spirit transfer. And we see that in Ephesians 4:16 in the body of Christ as each member, the spirit is supplying one to another. And so in transformation, this becomes the critical issue.

Paul Lawler: Al, as you share that, I'm drawn with a thought of a particular passage of scripture. It's II Corinthians 3:18. And so let me read it because it's one of those key scriptures in the New Testament, and there are many, around the topic of transformation. But it's where Paul wrote, "But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just from the Lord, the spirit." I know that when we had talked about this verse at one time, there was some thoughts you had, particularly around that phrase that's a hinge pin in the verse. It's like strategic, this whole thing of an unveiled face and how it sets us up to experience transformation from the glory of God.

Al Henson: I'm glad you led us there because if I'm listening, I'm beginning to ask the question. Okay Al, okay, Paul, got you. God wants me to be transformed. How?

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: And I can tell you that if you ask people, they would give you a hundred different answers and you'd be confused. And what this passage does is brings us to what I think is the, if I'm bowling, it's the head pin.

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: It's the head pin of transformation.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And the verse that you just read, and let's put it in its context so you see the beauty of this. Paul is talking about the law of the Old Testament, the age of the law and the time of the law of versus now the time of the spirit. And he uses

Moses as an illustration. How that Moses went to the mountain and he came into the presence of God in the context of the law.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: The 10 commandments.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And again, he came into the presence of God in the context of the law, he comes out of the mountain and he's shining so much and so glorious. And I remember that movie-

Paul Lawler: Ten Commandments.

Al Henson: The Ten Commandments. Yes. And I always had this picture of Moses as... What was the actor's name?

Paul Lawler: Charleston Heston.

Al Henson: Charleston Heston, thank you. I'm older so I have to turn to Paul sometimes to help my mind work. But he comes out of this mountain just glowing. And the Bible says that it was hard for the people to look up on him. He had such a beauty and glow about it. And this passage, Paul in II Corinthians three says, "If you think that the law could transform once this glorious, how much more?"

Paul Lawler: Oh yes.

Al Henson: How much more?

Paul Lawler: Yeah.

Al Henson: And so in my twenties I began to think, this is what I want. I need to understand something in this text because I want the how much more.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: If Moses could come out of the mountain glowing, I'd like to come out of the mountain, my feet glowing also.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: But anyway, the question that you ask is in this verse of scripture, and it says, "But when we all," and here's the condition, "with an unveiled face behold as in a glass."

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: No one would ever see God face to face. But we'll behold as in a glass, in a mirror, we are transformed by His spirit from glory to glory.

Al Henson: And so I want to chat about the unveiled face.

Paul Lawler: Please, yeah.

Al Henson: Just for a few minutes, Paul if that's OK. and I'd like to take it from a couple of directions. First of all, you need to understand what the face means. When I think of Susan, my wife, first thing I see is her face. That's who I remember her by.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: When I think of anyone, it's by the face. And so the face represents the essence of who you are, who you really are. So the unveiling means that when you come into the presence of God actually to get into the presence of God, you must be unveiled.

Paul Lawler: It's good.

Al Henson: Your very essence.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Now, this is not so easy because the marring of sin has caused our soul to be afraid that if someone really knew us, they wouldn't love us.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: To be afraid if they knew what we had done, they would reject us. And the shame factor that we feel somewhat dirty and especially in the presence of a Holy, Holy God.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And this is why Paul was constantly saying the greatest need is for you to understand the love of God that you might comprehend with all of the saints what is the width and the depth and the breadth and the height of the love of God.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Because it's the knowledge of the love of God that enables you to know that with God you are saved. Perfect love drives out all fear.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: You are safe with God. He sits on a throne of mercy, not a throne of judgment.

Paul Lawler: Thank you God.

Al Henson: And He's a God of grace, long suffering and merciful. And you can come unveiled into His presence. You can come before God and when God sees you, He will see this beautifully, wonderfully created creature that you are now in Christ. He'll see you righteous.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: You're justified to be in His presence and when He looks over at the ugly part of you, He understands that He's already done all that's necessary to take care of that at Calvary. The selfish part, this prideful part, this part that that drives you into make poor decisions and poor relationships and God, when when you come in his presence, you begin to see not only the beauty and glory of God-

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Which He unveils to you, the power of His gospel, which makes all that God is available to all that you need.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Because part of you needs to die and a part of you needs to go forth in glorious resurrection life day by day, spiritual resurrection with Jesus.

Paul Lawler: So good. So good. Al, as you share that, I've got a friend named John Riddle who uses an analogy of three valves.

Al Henson: Please share that with us then.

Paul Lawler: It's like this flow of picture of being in the full presence of God. It's a good image I think for having an unveiled face where Jesus said, "I'm living water," and He refers to three valves of the heart. The first valve is confession of sin. First John tells us if we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Paul Lawler: You referenced the Gospel that even Paul's spoke in I Corinthians, excuse me, in a Ephesians six, that our foundation is the Gospel. Even preaching the Gospel to yourself, remembering that He who knew no sin became our sin so that we would become the righteousness of God. And so we do come before God with unveiled face knowing that we're justified, that we're cleansed in Christ. We're not condemned.

Paul Lawler: And I know there's much more we could say about that, but the second valve we turn is dying to self. Because Lord, give me the grace today to choose for you and not myself.

Al Henson: Amen.

Paul Lawler: To live, for you, to move not in my preferences, but in Your purposes.

Al Henson: I like that. Give me the grace.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Because you can't, you can't die. You don't have to. You just have to believe that. Be willing.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And He will give you the grace.

Paul Lawler: Yes. That's so good. And then the third valve we turn for the flow of living water is simply communing with Jesus. And so this image of an unveiled face, I can come before God. This veil can be removed. There's thin space between us and God to delight in being in His presence.

Paul Lawler: But this first takes us somewhere, it doesn't stop there. It says it's unto something which is so beautiful. And these words that we're being now transformed into the same image.

Al Henson: Amen. That's the Romans eight.

Paul Lawler: Yes. From glory to glory. From this exposure to the glory of God. I think the Greek word there for some of our students or maybe pastors, doxa, the glory of God that we're exposed to through the word of God, the spirit of God, presence of God, ministering in the name of Christ to the poor, the broken and the oppressed, and the lost.

Al Henson: Amen.

Paul Lawler: And we are transformed as as we walk with Him.

Al Henson: And let me make a closing comment and then we'll pray Paul. Our listeners, but as you're listening to this, my brother, my sister, just hunger for transformation. And the main thing that you're hearing us say, get into the presence of God.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: The way you get in is through an unveiled face and in His presence you will be transformed. And think about that and consider that and let God help you to understand that. And we pray that you might, if God is using this to touch your heart, would you call?

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: A brother or sister and give them a link to this and have them listen in also.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Jesus, we thank You so much for Your love for us and that You who have chosen... You've chosen us. And Your desire for us is to be sons and daughters just like Your own son. And You've made everything that we need in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for that to happen. And then You put us as we walk in obedience to You in the crucible of learning, growing and changing in transformation as we serve You and obey others and [inaudible 00:25:49].

Paul Lawler: Yes, God.

Al Henson: I pray You'd help each brother and sister listening in to be encouraged by faith to begin this kind of walk or strengthen this kind of walk with You in Jesus' name, amen.

Paul Lawler: Amen.

Aaress Lawless: As we close this episode of SageTalk, I want to encourage you to allow God to do His transforming work in your heart and life. Now, we'd love to hear your thoughts or questions you might have about today's episode. You can write to us at info@sagetalkpodcast.com. And if you would like to learn more about spiritual transformation, we've written a helpful resource you can download for free on our website at sagetalkpodcast.com.

Aaress Lawless: In our next episode, Al and Paul are going to introduce us to the concept of an unveiled face and how the presence of God can become real in your heart and life. Be sure to subscribe to SageTalk in your favorite podcast app so you don't miss it. Come back soon and join us on SageTalk for another time of spiritual shepherding heart to heart and life to life.