

Episode 3: Spiritual Transformation: An Unveiled Face | Sage Talk Podcast

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Paul: Hi, this is Paul Lawler, and I'm with Al Henson, founder of the Compassionate Hope Foundation, and this is Sage Talk. Last week we had the opportunity to talk about a very exciting topic, and we're going to delve into that same topic today. I'm excited about what we have the privilege of sharing today. We're talking about the issue of transformation, what Jesus seeks, and is willing to do in the lives of believers. Our perspective on this has been as it relates to spiritual fathering and spiritual mothering, and what God is willing to do and desires for his children.

Paul: Last week we talked about this beauty of transformation out of 2 Corinthians 3:18 of when men and women are exposed to the glory of God, when they join God, and things that God is doing through his word, through communing with him. There was an observation that I thought about after that broadcast, something I've observed as a pastor for a number of years, and is a testimony that I hear from time to time. It goes like this. The presence of God has become real in my heart and life. And when I hear that testimony, what correlates with it is I see greater degrees of transformation in God's people. Oftentimes, it's not a sermon. It's not information, although, that's important, it has its place. We're not minimizing that, but we just notice it seems, and this will be hyperbole, but it seems that sometimes it's as if God does more when a person experiences five minutes of being in his manifest presence then we see happen in 52 Sundays.

Al: Amen, yes.

Paul: So it's with that thought in mind that we wanted to journey back to 2 Corinthians 3:18. So let me read it and then what I want to ask you to comment on, again, is these words Paul shares about an unveiled face. So Paul writes. "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 as from the Lord, the Spirit."

Al: Thank you, Paul. Just before I comment to this unveiled face, and some translations will translate it an open face. We were talking about the church there. This is what I find often at best is in our churches we're not having transformation, we're having conformity. There's a world of difference in the two.

Paul: Yes.

Al: People are simply conforming to some kind of religious standard and thinking that because they've conformed to some kind of standard of things to do that they are actually transforming, or spiritually growing.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And that is not true. The thing that as you look at 2 Corinthians 3:18 here, God is glorious.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And this passage is trying to teach us, basically, how to get into the presence of God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And you spoke of that it is in the presence of God. David comes to the end of his life in Psalm 16:11. He says, "In his presence is the fullness of joy." I remember in Moses' journey with God, God was angered by the golden calf, and the rebellious stiff-neckness of the Jewish people. So God said, "Moses, you take the people and go on. And I'll linger behind here somewhere and follow you." Moses just literally said, "No, we will not because the only thing that makes us different is your presence, and we will not go forward if you will not go with us."

Paul: Yes.

Al: I wish every church would stop this next Sunday morning and say we're not going to do anything else except ask the question, how can we have the manifested presence of God among us because we, our children, our grandchildren, our neighbors need to come with us into the presence of God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: One other thought about the presence of God is that when Christ was dying on the cross, and he cried out it is finished, which means he had done everything necessary now for the creature who was in sin to not only be forgiven and saved, but to now be in Christ and Christ in them, and to come into the presence of God and the Holy of Holies. The veil was rent and it was basically that picture of the veil being rent was now my children, you can come into the Holy of Holies.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And into the presence of God. So, 2 Corinthians 3:18 in a simple way as we were talking about the unveiled face is this crying of God, this beckoning of God and God saying, "Come in, come in," but when you come in, you've got to open your face. And the picture sometimes, even though this is audio and not visual, when I'm teaching this, sometimes, I'll get a three by three piece of ply board, and I will have someone stand up, and I say for a moment they're going to be a picture of God. And I'll hold the three by three piece of ply board up between me and God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And I start my movement toward God, and I ask the question, can I see God? And the answer is no. There's a veil there. It's hiding God from you. And then I would ask the question with a smile, can God see me?

Paul: Yes.

Al: And the answer is yes. So this is really not about God seeing you. God sees you.

Paul: Yes.

Al: You're not hiding from God. Sometimes the operation of sin of fear and shame, fear and shame it's the reason why Satan, who is the father of sin, created it, or established it this way. It drives us out of the presence of God.

Paul: That's right.

Al: And here's the point about the veil. The essence when I have this three by three board is that God is not robbed of seeing me, but I'm robbed of seeing God.

Paul: Let me just repeat that back to you. God is not robbed of seeing me. I'm robbed of seeing God.

Al: Think about it, Paul, all of us have had this thought.

Paul: Yes.

Al: My faith, my life would be so much different if I could just see God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: Why can't I see God? Why won't God let me see him? And what I want to say to my brothers and sisters is just like your physical body has eyes to see the natural things, your spirit and soul have spiritual eyes. "Look unto Jesus," the Bible says.

Paul: Yes.

Al: "Seeing him" the Bible says, "and beholding him." The Bible encourages us to do. So in the spirit realm you have spiritual eyes.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And you can see God and experience his presence.

Paul: Yes.

Al: So just think about that again. It's worthy of being said again. So often when people are coming to the altar, or they're sitting at home reading the Bible and praying, which is not so often for Christians. I think I know why it's not so often. It's because they're doing this, and they're not touching God, they're not seeing God, so eventually it's dry and boring.

Paul: Yes.

Al: But I'll tell you it's not for me. It hasn't been for decades.

Paul: Thank you, Jesus.

Al: The most important thing in my life is that I can get into the presence of God. And now I've learned how to walk in the presence of God, and live in the presence of Christ.

Paul: Yes.

Al: When I think of that even now thinking about it, Paul, the whole idea is I can get in the presence, I can kiss the [crosstalk 00:10:03]

Paul: Yes.

Al: I can hug God. Think about it. I can hug God, and God can hug me.

Paul: Amen. Amen.

Al: In the spiritual sense, I know that, and I have experienced that. This is the beckoning and the opportunity. It's why back to what we shared last time you live a life like this, and Moses was glorious, but you can become a more glorious being. Sometimes when I'm preaching to a thousand people, I would say, "You don't know this, but I know this and God knows this. You're glorious ones. You're not shamed ones, your glorious ones, and why don't you start seeing how glorious you are in the eyes and heart of God, and start living a glorious life."

Paul: Yes. Al, as you're sharing about the church the people of God experiencing the presence of God through an unveiled face, there's a a brief story that comes to mind in the way God ignites this hunger for his presence. I know we can all quote Blaise Pascal, "There's a God-shaped hole in all of us that only God can fill." I was leading a church service a number of years ago, not presently where I'm serving, but in a former place. God graced us one Sunday by manifesting his holiness, his presence among us.

Paul: I went to the pulpit to preach and I just didn't say anything. There were about 2-1/2 minutes, maybe a little longer where I just stood. I didn't say a word. You could hear a pin drop. Children were perfectly still. I didn't have to give an explanation of what was going on. We all knew that God is here, and let no one just interfere with whatever this moment in the holy presence of God is about, but Al what happened, this is what I want to point to. Not only was that a sacred moment, it marked people. I want God. I want to be in the presence of God. I want to hear God in this way. And isn't it true that when we have the joy of being in his presence, we long to be in his presence. If something's awakened in us at a deeper, more glorious, and life-giving level is that not true?

Al: Absolutely. The psalmist says, "Taste the Lord, and see that he is good." Mom and dad listened to this. You can take your kids to church, you can teach them all of this, and you should, but until your children led by you with an unveiled face in humility and brokenness can come into the presence of God, they'll have nothing to compare the

taste. They're tasting the world. They're going to taste it, and to them it's going to taste good because they've never tasted goodness.

Paul: That's so true.

Al: But when they, like you just explained that scene, when they've tasted the goodness of God, slowly the good taste of the world goes away. You understand? They have nothing to compare it with.

Paul: That's right.

Al: It's interesting that if you go back and study Enoch, which was the one who walked with God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And was with God and then was taken up. The name Enoch means the dedicated one, or the trained up one. And that's what God wants us to do. All the exhortations of parents, it says "Train up your children in the ideas." Train them up since they will dedicate themselves to God as Enoch did.

Paul: That's good.

Al: So I was researching this as a dad and, and I thought, "God, what's the secret here?" There's nothing said about Enoch's dad except his name. His name is Jared, and the name Jared means the prostate one.

Paul: Wow.

Al: The one going down.

Paul: Wow.

Al: And we could tie that into this patch, he's the one who opened his face.

Paul: Yes.

Al: Unveiled himself, humbled himself before God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And in essence he released God around him, the presence of God around him. Enoch tasted of God, and dedicated himself to the things of God, and not the things of the world.

Paul: Yes.

Al: This is why sadly to say with a grieving heart why so many, such a high percentage of our children, and our grandchildren are turning to the world where they're no longer under our hand to go to church is because they tasted religion, Paul.

Paul: Yeah.

Al: But they didn't taste Christ.

Paul: Yes, yes, yeah. I see it, too, Al.

Al: Yeah.

Paul: As we're sharing on this verse last week, this week, there's another verse that we realize that the Lord gives great wisdom in terms of how he transforms. On this topic of transformation let's journey. Some of our listeners know where we're going, but let's journey to Romans 12:1-2. So even though there are many that can quote this verse, I'm going to read it where Paul writes. "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." That is a powerful verse.

Paul: I've got a question that I want to ask you. This comes out of just our friendship, our journey together through the years. I'm aware, Al, that one of the gifts God has placed in you is the gift of mercy. I've watched you use this gift, or God flow through your life, and this gift with the hurting, the broken across cultures in the world. I've seen this in Asia. I've seen this with pastors who are going through brokenness of different types. I've watched this in the ministry of restoration through your life as Galatians 6:1 is put into practice. So I'm mindful that this verse begins with an appeal by the mercies of God. Would you comment on that?

Al: Thank you, Paul. Part of what Paul is alluding to there throughout my ministry, ultimately, one of the expressions of that has been Compassionate Hope Foundation, which as I was walking for decades among the brothers and sisters in Southeast Asia my heart, the mercy gift of mine working with the persecuted church also saw the exploited children, the trafficking, and that was how Compassionate Hope Foundation was birthed because with these brothers and sisters we felt God would want us to address this issue. And now it's seven or eight years later in 26, 27 different locations, 43 homes, and 800 plus rescued ones.

Paul: That's amazing.

Al: And we're watching lives being changed. Yes, brothers and sisters, if you want to know Al Henson, my public communication gift is exhortation, but the gift that moves me is the mercies of God, God's mercy, and I certainly have received a lot of that as well.

Paul: Me, too, brother.

Al: Yeah, finding it easy to explore that. So I want to answer your question in the context of these verses because, Paul, if you've been listening this heart of God for us to become like Jesus and be transformed ones, Paul, it's now laid out in the first 11 chapters. All the doctrine in theology of the sinfulness of man, and the love of God, and the grace of God, and the spirit of God, and the gospel that allows us to walk the way God intended us, and desired for us to walk as being the transformed, the ones, the glorious ones. Now he humbles himself and says, "I beg you. I plead with you. And what I'm pleading that you will do is present yourself to God."

Al: I've heard messages after messages on this text saying, preaching, "You need to be holy. You need to be a living sacrifice. You need to be acceptable. And you don't need to be conformed to this world, but you need to be proving what is the good." And people are just weary of trying to do this, worn out, trying in their own heart effort with a genuine heart effort trying to please God. And it's not what the verses are teaching. It's saying "Present." Romans 12:1. I beg you by the mercies of God, and that is this God who is full of mercy, who in his mercy created you, in his mercy desired for you who were in sin to come in and be his son, be his daughter, who by his mercy went to the cross, and died there, bore your sin in his own body, and by his mercy went into the grave, and had victory over the powerful thing called death, and rose up out of that in resurrection power, and then ascended by his mercies into heaven.

Al: By his mercies then the Holy Spirit could descend because now 1 Corinthians 15:40 he had become, and help me that I don't start preaching, but he had become a life-giving spirit, he who was life, and he who was spirit now added to himself the capacity to give it away. These are the mercies of God. The other point of this about the mercy says the thing that keeps us out of the presence, you've heard me say it over and over, is our fear, and our shame that keeps us out of the presence of God. And he sits on the throne of mercy.

Paul: Yes, Lord.

Al: If you read the scriptures, Jesus is right now sitting on a throne of mercy. So when I come into the Holy of Holies, I'm not coming to a judge. That that will come at the Great White Throne Judgment, on the judgment seat, but now I'm on a seat of mercy.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And that mercy is beckoning me into his presence.

Paul: Al, what you're describing sets the captive free.

Al: Yes.

Paul: It's the person of Jesus who in his authenticity expresses his mercy. It's not religion, in terms of the form.

Al: Right.

Paul: It's the person, and you described that so well.

Al: I want to make sure, because we're coming to the last few minutes of this podcast, I want to tie this all together.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And then you can speak into that, and close this out however you want to. What you're hearing us say is that God himself is the only being that can transform you.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And to experience that transformation with the word of God in your hand and in your heart.

Paul: Yes.

Al: And being led by the spirit of God you're able to unveil your face, humble yourself, and come into the presence of God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: 2 Corinthians 3:18. When you're in his presence, Romans 12:1, you're making a presentation to God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: Remember, you don't have to present yourself perfect. In Christ you're righteous, but you can present the bad part of you, too, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Just present yourself to God.

Paul: Yes.

Al: This is who I am, God. These are the mistakes I've made. This is just who I am, the beautiful person as well as this part that needs to die, and God says, okay, now that you've presented yourself I'm going to give you the grace for you to become holy in lifestyle, not in position, but in lifestyle, a living sacrifice.

Paul: Yes.

Al: You're going to pour your life out because I'm going to pour my love into you. You're going to pour your life out for me, and for others.

Paul: Yes.

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Al: And you're going to be acceptable, and you're no longer going to be conformed to this world, but you're going to be a transformed one because you're going to learn how to do this.

Paul: Yes.

Al: When I was 21 or 22, I thought, man, I am fully given to God. And now at 67, I don't say that anymore. I've given all that I know about me, and all that I know about God, but my yieldedness as my trust has grown, and my faith has grown, my yieldedness has grown indeed. For the presentation is ever deepening, and the renewal is ever deepening, and coming more consistent as I'm being matured, and growing, and transforming in the presence of God. So four things. The presence of God. The unveiled face. I come in, and I present myself to God yielded, trusting, surrendered to his hand, the potter's hand. And then I do this. I renew it day by day, moment by moment in my heart.

Paul: Yes. You know, Al, as you were sharing there was an image that came to mind, and it was an image of a twin engine airplane. I think a lot of the body of Christ flies on one engine, and that engine they see the word, and realize we have a revelation of God through the word of God, and praise God that we do. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet. Man shall not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." But the way God has designed us to function is in word and presence, word and spirit. And what you've described today it's both engines. Now we recognize there are other elements of walking with Christ, and growing in Christ, but coming into the presence of God where the word comes to life because the spirit of God brings life, and also teaches through the word of God.

Al: I need to say this because we tend to doubt. Dear brother, dear sister, God 10,000 times more wants you in his presence than you want to be there.

Paul: Amen.

Al: You don't have to convince God to let you in. He's already done everything so that you can come. Just go.

Paul: Amen.

Al: Just as you are. Just go.

Paul: Amen.

Al: But go with a heart that as you go he wants to change you and transform you. Again, as I said this in the other podcast, and, Paul, you can close this out is if God is using this to touch your heart, and speaking to you ask God, do I have brothers and sisters, or others that I know that would benefit from hearing this?

Paul: Yes.

Al: Please contact them. Send them a link, and encourage them to listen in.

Paul: Yes. Al, thank you. Let's take a moment to pray today as we close. Father, we take a moment to pause and pray, Lord, around this matter of an unveiled face.

Al: Yes, Lord.

Paul: We ask you, oh, God.

Al: Yes.

Paul: Work the power of your grace where we would not hide, but we would come before you just as we are. Prone to wander, Lord, we feel it. Prone to leave the God we love, but we would come to you just as we are, Lord, in a spirit of confession, in a spirit of peeling the veil back, Lord, commune with you. Delighting in that Christ has forgiven our sin, that he has taken our sin at the cross, that we are new creations in Christ. And as we live into this unveiled face, oh, God, we pray again, transform our lives in your presence, and through your word from glory to glory. We thank you as Romans teaches us that you're merciful, and we come before you in the lens of receiving, experiencing the glories of your mercies. And we pray, Lord, let the riches of your mercies touch our lives, renew us, Lord, and that we, too, would be not conformed to the patterns of this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds for your glory. And it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Al: Amen. Amen.