

Paul Lawler: Hi, I'm Paul Lawler and I'm with Al Henson and this is SageTalk.

Al, when we open the scriptures and read the saints through time, one of the threads that we often see is this thread on the issue of brokenness, and its importance. That stirs a lot of curiosity for people. Then, there are a lot of persons who are just naive around the importance of this. Why is brokenness so important?

Al Henson: If you read the scriptures from beginning to end, another word for brokenness, in the same family we might say, is the word humility, the word repentance. For example, James 4 teaches us that God resists the proud. Literally, he stiff arms the proud, and he gives grace to the humble. So what personally people are finding is, I found in my own life, if there's pride, and pride is probably the foundation to all sin, it is the father of all sin, it was the original sin, because pride basically says, "I'm a little G-O-D." I trust myself. I can control my life. Brokenness is the opposite of that, and I hope in our conversation today, we'll have some time to dig into that a bit.

But one of the reasons why it's important is because it's in the place of brokenness that we make ourselves available to the grace of God. As Paul says in I Corinthians 15, "I am what I am by the grace of God." We learn in Titus and Timothy that God's grace is that that really, really transforms us. So this topic today, that we'll have in this podcast and in the podcast to come, the next one, will be about brokenness. I hope that my brother and my sister will listen in, as you and I chat about, have a conversation about, this Biblical brokenness.

Paul Lawler: Al, would you think it would be fair to say that brokenness is foundational?

Al Henson: Absolutely. I think in the inner heart condition, that opens the heart then to be filled with the grace of God, to be a person of love, to be a person of wisdom, that brokenness is the foundational essential. Even if you want to take the words faith and repentance, there cannot be faith without repentance, and a Godly repentance. And there cannot be a Godly repentance without faith. One does not co-exist without the other.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: I've learned in my life that when I think of brokenness, humility and repentance, that I try to walk before God in a constant state of repentance. People think about, "I need to repent when I've done something wrong." But repentance, at its core, is a turning. It's a turning from unto. It's a turning from sin and the world, but mostly, it's a turning from myself, from a confidence in myself, unto God. So, I'm moment by moment repenting, because I'm moment by moment turning away from myself and my confidence in myself, or a feeling that I need to control my life. I'm turning toward God, and this grace that allows me to do

this, and makes more grace available to me is ... it's foundational. I think, Paul, that across America, this subject is really spoken of very little.

Paul Lawler: Yeah. I would lovingly agree.

Al Henson: When it is spoken of, I sometimes cringe a little, that it's dealt with so lightly and so much on the surface.

Paul Lawler: I think that's a very good point, particularly when we're talking about something that is foundational, and without a proper foundation. We all know just from an architectural observation, the implications of not having a good foundation.

Al Henson: Let's look for a moment into the scriptures, just to see how important and how essential this is.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: David, in Psalm 51:17, David has sinned. He's committed adultery with Bathsheba. He has orchestrated the death of her husband, Uriah. He's brokenhearted. This has been revealed to him. It's been brought to light by the prophet, and David is prostrate before God, and in brokenness. You might ask, "Why did he take that posture?" This is what he says, "Sacrifice is," and this is Psalm 51:11, "Sacrifice is offering the lamb. And burnt offerings to you is not really what you want." So I'm going to give you, God, at this time, what you actually really want from me, as your follower, as as your son. This is what he says, "What you really desire is a broken and a contrite spirit." So that's the offering that makes every other offering a worshipful expression to God. Whether it's our tithes, whether it's our time, whether it's our service.

Paul Lawler: Yes, yes. You know, there's an image that comes to mind, that I've heard from time to time, that brokenness is like when a horse becomes broken. The horse becomes submissive to his master. David, in that picture that you just gave, there's something deeper happening. That is that, there's just a complete submission that ... in that circumstance in his life.

Al Henson: The word meekness in the Bible, many biblical scholars use the very illustration that you have used, that meekness is power and beauty, reigned in and brought under control. Now, God has given us life. God has given us a mind to think. God has given us a will to choose. But brokenness, meekness, and Moses was said to be the meekest man upon the Earth, is to take this stallion, this beautiful creature that God has created in you and I, and I say that because in brokenness, we see our ugliness. We see our sinfulness. But it is this creature that God has created. Now reined, and with the horse, they say you can take this powerful being and once they are broken, and that's the word that those who train a horse will say, once they are broken, then just with the touch of the riders shifting on the reins, the horse will move and shift and obey the master that is riding it. This is a picture of brokenness.

Episode 7: Brokenness #1: Victory in Brokenness | SageTalk

Paul Lawler: Al, when I was a young, as a pastor, I'm mindful that you and I share something, many things in common, but one of those things is that we both had sons who encountered some health issues that were life-threatening. When my oldest son, our oldest son, Missy and I, was in his early years, a year or two, three years old, he developed some seizures that were causing damage to him neurologically. As I share this, I just recall how I grew very subtly angry, angry at God. And I was very much in control.

Al Henson: What do you think, Paul, as you were growing in anger and taking control, what was driving that internally inside of you?

Paul Lawler: Quite honestly, this is hard to look back on, but I think I was taking the place of God.

Al Henson: Yeah, pride.

Paul Lawler: Yes, very much so.

Al Henson: Interesting. Here's this young pastor given, fully to God. I don't doubt that, yet, in these difficult circumstances, was not being driven by brokenness and the spirit and God's grace. The enemy was taking advantage of that, and of your pride, and driving you away from God.

Paul Lawler: Oh, there's no doubt. In fact, that anger not only drew me away from God, that anger also created even some challenges in relationships, because it just burned inside of me at that time.

Al Henson: But what happened? What happened in the midst of that, Paul?

Paul Lawler: Well, you know how you can grow sick and tired of being sick and tired?

Al Henson: Yes.

Paul Lawler: Well, that that was happening to me over a period of many months. One evening, I hit my knees and I just said, "God." I really came to a place that I believe that the spirit initiated in my heart. I just surrendered. I didn't hear any audible words, but I had this sense that the Lord, as I surrendered, and in those moments, he began filling my heart with peace, I sensed the Lord saying, "Paul, your son was mine before he was yours, and he will be mine after he's yours."

Al Henson: Right.

Paul Lawler: My son didn't get any better right away. In fact, he got worse. But I had peace. There was a victory in the brokenness. Now, I'm not saying that you have to go through a circumstance like that, to be broken. But I found, in that circumstance, a gift in being broken. I learned something that stayed with me in ministry, and that's to not run from brokenness, to not run from surrender in

circumstance, in all of life's circumstances. Our circumstances are our classroom, and in this classroom, I learned something that I've been practicing through the years, and that's to embrace surrender to God on a regular basis.

Al Henson: Amen. Yeah. I love that, our circumstances is our classroom. As I understand the scriptures, the work of brokenness is God's work. It's us that allows him to do that work, and see, God was trying to do that work. God was trying to bring Paul to the end of Paul. And you were, in your pride, resisting that.

Paul Lawler: Yes, very much so.

Al Henson: Fear was in that, and insecurity was involved in that, also. But you know, we find this in the scriptures. For example David, in the text that we just read, he was resisting God. Psalm 32 will tell us that in these days, David would talk about how his soul was ... the voices were roaring inside of him, how he was disquieted, and fear and all of those things, until he ultimately just agreed with God, and gave in and surrendered.

You find, for example, the man Jacob, he's a beautiful picture of this, how he wrestled with God. He was the conniver, and he wrestles with God. One night, he actually wrestles with the angel of the Lord. And he learned, after a few hours ... and it really is a humorous story, but sad, too, and that is that a man would actually externally wrestle with God. But it's a picture of how we internally are wrestling with God.

But ultimately, God did the work of breaking or cracking his hip, and Jacob finally realized how foolish he was, to try to wrestle with God. And he just gave in and said, "Yes, Lord," which is another picture of brokenness. It's interesting, Paul, that at that juncture, God changed his name. Because it was the act of his willingness to become broken before God, that God was working in his life, that God knew would literally then change from the nature of Jacob, and he called him Israel, a Prince with God.

Paul Lawler: Al, I think what you just shared is like this banner in which we all need to see, that really says to us, "Don't run from brokenness. Don't resist being broken."

Al Henson: I would, to bring this back to the heart of God about this, and the importance of it, I would want to draw people's attention to Isaiah 66:1-3. I'd like to quickly walk us through that.

Paul Lawler: Please.

Al Henson: Isaiah 66:1, God is presenting himself as he is, this powerful almighty God, beyond comprehension. So he says, "I sit in heaven, is my throne." That's the universe, the stars or the moon, "I sit above the heavens, as on a throne," which is pretty huge. And then, "I rest my feet. The Earth is my footstool." This is who I am.

Then, God asks two very deep, intimate questions, that ... in this passage. He says, "Where is my dwelling place? And where is my place of rest?" I want to just make sure we take a moment and think about those two. They're questions that the spirit of God sort of revealed to my own heart, decades ago.

Now, his dwelling place in the old Testament was the temple. Now, we are the temples of living God. So any fellow brother or sister out there, you have become the dwelling place of God. So that question is answered. You are the dwelling place of God. He lives in you, and you live in him. But now the second question. That's not enough. It's not what God wants.

Paul Lawler: That's right.

Al Henson: God says, "Where is my place of rest?" What he wants is to, as he lives inside of us, for there to be no resistance either way, no conflict, no mistrust, no valuing of anything above him, so he can actually sit inside of us, in essence, and go, "Ah."

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Just, "Ah."

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: A love feast, an internal, resting, love feast, place of rest.

Paul Lawler: Wow, so good.

Al Henson: Paul, these next verses are very hard to embrace. Nevertheless, they are true. Then God says in verse three, he says this, "Okay, you come, and you obey me, and you offer me a lamb. But if you don't come with a broken and a contrite spirit, and one who fears and trembles at the things of God," verse two, "If you don't come that way, then it's as if when you offer me a lamb, you offered me a dog."

Paul Lawler: That's right. Yeah.

Al Henson: Or when you offer other sacrifice, he goes on, like a cow, he says, "It's if you actually murdered a man." This really, it really struck me decades ago, that, "Oh my. I can put my offering in the plate on Sunday, or I can bring my offering of attendance to church, or I can offer my acts of kindness, but if they're not coming from a broken and a contrite spirit, they're like a staunch, something very worshipfully stinky in the nostrils of God.

So I begin then, many decades ago, four decades ago, 40 years ago, began to say God, "Please God help me. I agree. It helped me to understand this."

Paul Lawler: Yes. You know he also, in that chapter or in that verse, says that he dwells with one who is humble and contrite of heart. I've always thought of that word, humility, as where the heart become sensitive and responsive to God, with a deference for others. And that word contrite, you know, one of the images that comes to mind is how our foremothers and forefathers, when they would kill a deer or a buffalo and then they were taking that leather and pounding it out, and pounding it out with a mallet to soften it, so they could wear it as clothing, so that that clothing, when they put it on, wouldn't chafe them or cut into their skin, but it would just move with them. It's a picture of a contrite heart, that what God's saying is that, "I want you to move with me. Be humble. Be sensitive and responsive to what I'm revealing and speaking to you through my word, and then move with me. Move with me. This is where I dwell." It's so true, because these are descriptions of the gift of brokenness that we see that's ongoing and available to the believer.

Al Henson: Yeah. To me, brokenness is, it's God's work. But it is us who allow that to take place, and stop fighting and resisting God. As you were telling that, I was thinking of a passage in Jeremiah, where God tells Jeremiah the prophet, who is the weeping prophet, and with Israel in mind who was a rebellious people, resisting God. They hadn't stopped a lot of their religious practices. But internally, they were rebellious and resisting God and then also embracing the world.

He says, "Jeremiah, go down to the potter's house." And the potter there is a picture of God. And, "Watch the potter, how he spins the wheel," which is the picture of the sovereign working hands of God. And then, "How he first must mar the clay," which is another word for brokenness. And the picture that you just used is that, that clay, the Potter, the master, God, he wants to make of us, as the potter would of the clay, a new vessel. It's interesting. "A new vessel," it says, "After his own making."

Paul Lawler: Oh, wow.

Al Henson: We can't choose and say, "God, now I want you to make me, but this is what I want you to make me to be, other than to be like Christ."

Paul Lawler: That's good.

Al Henson: So it's a vessel of his own making. But first, he has to mar that. So, this principle of brokenness that, it's threaded all through the scriptures, in many different words, is ... The picture that I like to give, Paul, is ... and this is audio, so I'm going to try to ... If you can just, if you're listening, if you can visualize, turn on the camera of your mind.

What I want you to do is, I want you to take your will, and picture it like a rubber hose. The will, by the way, is sacred. It was given to us by God. It's holy. But many times, it does a lot of unholy things, and thinks a lot of unholy things, this

will. So we got this will, and it's a rubber hose, and it seems very flexible and pliable. But most wills that we pick up are not. I want you to picture an iron rod being put through the hose. And now, you pick up the hose and it's not movable. It's stiff. This is why God says, in the old Testament, "You're a stiff necked people."

Now, the iron rod is the pride of humanity. It's my pride, your pride, it's our pride. Brokenness is when we come to a place of the end of ourselves, no pride in it, no confidence in ourselves. And that pride is taken out and removed and replaced with humility and brokenness, so the will is broken, and pliable with God. So it just moves.

One of the things that, before we end here, that ... People come to me often and say, "Al, can you explain surrender? What's it like?" What I will say is, "Every morning in my heart, I get up and I picture a blank sheet of paper. Then at the bottom of that sheet of paper, I just sign, Al Henson."

Paul Lawler: Yes, Lord.

Al Henson: Now I say, "God, the answer, you fill it out in the course of the day. The answer is yes."

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: But see, so many people, even those that are surrendered, that think they're surrendered, "God, if you'll tell me what you want me to do, then I'll pray about it. I'll think about it."

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: Full trust and full casting oneself up on God, and surrender, is already saying, "Yes, Lord. The answer is yes. Now you tell me what you want me to do, and orchestrate my life today by your spirit."

Paul Lawler: Amen. That's so powerful. This is a conversation that we're, as we're in, we're going to pick up and do a part two on brokenness, as well. We're going to talk about, in the next episode, how to walk in the gift of brokenness, why also, there's so little revelation in our lives related to not being broken.

Al Henson: Right.

Paul Lawler: So I hope those that are listening today are going to pick up on, where we pick up again here, in part two. Al, thank you so much.

Al Henson: Oh, thank you, Paul. Thank the Lord.

Paul Lawler: Father, we want to take an opportunity to come before your throne and pray for the young man or the young woman listening today, that this may be a whole new concept, a whole new category for them. We pray, Lord, that you would gift them with an increased understanding that leads them more deeply to their designer. And Lord, out of flowing into their designer, the father, son and Holy spirit, that they will flow more fully in their design. God, we pray that you work brokenness, that as a gift, that births the conformity to the person of Jesus.

We pray this, Lord, for the housewife, God, the business woman, the businessman, God, that may be listening today. And pray, Lord, that as he or she is being salt and light in the home and in the marketplace, God, that you will cultivate them, develop them in new levels through this gift of having a contrite, humble heart, trembling at the word of God, in a way that out of the gift of brokenness, an unprecedented level of fruit and kingdom advancement emerges.

Al Henson: Amen.

Paul Lawler: This we pray, in the strong and loving name of Jesus. Amen.

Al Henson: Amen. Amen.