

Episode 8: Brokenness #2: It's not an Outcome, It's a Lifestyle | SageTalk

Paul Lawler: Hi, I'm Paul Lawler and I'm with Al Henson, founder of the Compassionate Hope Foundation. And this is Sage Talk. Al, I remember a number of years ago and I've been a pastor for over 30 years.

Al Henson: You're really old, you know.

Paul Lawler: Well, as we are in our more seasoned years of ministry, and I shared this in our previous segment on brokenness and we're in part two today of talking about the topic of brokenness and its gift. And I shared the story of a season in my life where I felt like my legs were cut out from under me. And that was when Missy and I were navigating a very serious health issue with our oldest son. And I would add in part two that we're very thankful that that had a very positive outcome. He's an adult now and doing very well walking with the Lord.

But, one of the things that I look back on is I remember when I came into that season where I surrendered to God and that circumstance. And I'm a born again Christian. I had had been regenerated and experienced the call to ministry, but new prod was rising up in my life and the difficulty of it, that circumstance that I described. And when I did come to that place of literally just breaking before God and surrendering the peace of God that filled my heart, such a gift.

Al Henson: Yes.

Paul Lawler: And it didn't necessarily mean that our son was going to be okay. I just knew the peace of God and that meant everything. I commented within a matter of weeks to a more seasoned pastor in my life at that time. He was a man who had about 30 years of experience in walking the Lord, and serving as a very gifted pastor.

And I looked at him in conversation, and I said, well, I've had my brokenness. To which he smiled and kind of laughed in the same way that you just did. And then very tenderly spoke into my life, he said, Paul, I've had many seasons of brokenness in my life and I'll have more.

Al Henson: Amen.

Paul Lawler: And I reflected on what he said. I was in my early 30s at the time, and I realized that I was missing something. And since that time, I, through the years, have grown to understand that this rhythm of brokenness is a gift. In fact, I'm not even sure I would still be in the ministry today if I did not grow in my understanding of this gift from God. So today we're talking about walking in this gift of brokenness. I'm mindful you have decades of experience. What would you share around this gift today?

Al Henson: Just listening to you Paul, three or four things and I'll try just to state them and not dig into them too much. Brokenness it's called a gift. You're calling it a gift, which is right because it comes from God. A brother, a sister cannot bring brokenness into their own life. Only God can actually do that. And as we learned

in our last podcast, we said we trust that there's a verse in John in chapter 21 that says, cast yourself upon this stone and you will be broken and Christ is the stone. It's a choice, but it is a process.

But there is generally an initial work and that initial work then opens up the heart. And the way I like to express it, a heart that then as you process through life, there will be small times of brokenness and in the course of 30, 40 years, there may be three or four significant times of brokenness. But brokenness is not a one-time event. It's a lifestyle.

Paul Lawler: That's good.

Al Henson: It really is a soul, heart and soul attitude. And it is a process and it's ever ... as brokenness is ever deepening inside of us, and through revelation of God and revelation of ourselves as brokenness is ever deepening. Then Jesus said, out of your belly shall flow rivers of water, but rivers, water cannot flow out of your inner being, your belly. He, speaking of your inner being, unless it's broke. It's a broken vessel. And I see the life of my own life and the life of others that as broken is ever deepening that river is ever widening.

Paul Lawler: Let's repeat that. Okay. Say it again please.

Al Henson: As the work of brokenness is ever deepening from within. Then the outflow of God, the outflow of the river of, life, God's life in you and through you is ever widening.

Paul Lawler: That is significant. That is so significant.

Al Henson: One of the things ... the second thing Paul as you were talking is ... thank you Paul. The second thing is that we have an enemy that hates us. And so we have things inside of us that are combating, bringing us into conflict with really trusting God at this kind of deep level. And a part of that is fear. We're afraid if I come to the end of me, maybe I'm at zero. I'm at nothing.

The second thing is, is that the work of woundedness and all of us, we're living in a dysfunctional society, a dysfunctional culture with dysfunctional families and the broken home, we're all being raised in shame-based environments. And shameful things are happening to us with the moral revolution and et cetera, et cetera. And so this sin that has come against us is destroying the sense of worth and value of our soul. And so we're doing everything we can do to try to feel like we're have some worth. And to then get a revelation from God of how wrong I am. It seems to affirm everything we've not wanted to be affirmed inside of us.

And that's why a lot of the conflict is pride coupled with fear and shame and its operation that is keeping us from going at this kind of level with God and into brokenness. But God loves us. And so he's slowly operating and functioning as a sovereign potter in our lives to bring us to this.

And then the other third thing that you shared, and you might want to go back there, we can chat about it a bit, is that if we do come to brokenness, then Satan gets involved in that and says, okay, yep. Now you finally figured it out. You are worthless. You are at the end of yourself. And what you was afraid of yes, it's true. And you said my legs feel-

Paul Lawler: Like they've been cut out from under you.

Al Henson: They've been cut out from under me. Because in many ways I say this, you've been brought to less than zero. When I began to experience brokenness in my own life in my 20s the best way I could describe it as it was not zero. When I saw how wrong I was and what I could not do that I thought I could do and how much I needed God, blessed are the poor in spirit. When I saw all this and begin the pride and how I'd really been the enemy of God and how I'd been so religious and not being transformed, I felt less than a zero. And I thought, God you've made me feel less than a zero but the joy is a God doesn't want to leave you there. It's not where he wants to leave you.

Now he's got you to the place that now God can take this beautiful creature, that you are, this creature, that's wonderfully and fearfully made, and now he can remold him into a new creation and a vessel that God intended you to be in usefulness.

Paul Lawler: Al, this is anecdotal, but as you share that I'm mindful through the years and just like you decades of ministry, that every time I've been braced of brokenness before Christ, he's replaced it with peace, his joy a contentedness. Not a complacency, but a contentedness in Christ. And the gift is Jesus himself. And it's like we talked about in part one, where do I dwell? The Lord says. I dwell with him who is humble of heart, contrite in spirit, trembles at my word and it says, if the Lord just freshly inebriates the heart, the spirit that I am your dwelling place and there's no greater gift.

Al Henson: One of the things that Paul, I have enjoyed observing, as you mentioned, I'm involved with Compassionate Foundation. And the core of what we do is rescuing the least of these. Rescuing children and young ones that have been exploited in Southeast Asian.

Something I have observed where they come to us with Christ, they are broken already. They are at the end of themselves. So we have found it easier in many ways to bring them in, to see them come into Christ, and to see once they come into Christ transformation taking place. But it's interesting to watch the most predominant thing that we have to teach them is that in Christ you're a princess. In Christ if they're a young man, you are a prince. I love the song. I am a child of God. And I often say it to my own soul. I am not the son of God but I am a son of God. And my wife is a daughter of God.

And, so the enemy gets involved and how I could share this is that when God gives a revelation, his revelation is two fold. It's a revelation of you without God, and that's brokenness. A revelation of you without God is utterly wrong, utterly needy, utterly ... you cannot, no matter how hard you try, you cannot fix yourself. You cannot have a purpose and value you. No matter what you try, you can try to fill up your emptiness with money or even in Christianity, people are trying to fill up their emptiness by building the kingdom. And it'll never fill you up. It can only be filled up with Christ.

But there's a revelation then of who you are in Christ. And I like ... and Paul will say this three times to one, he will say Christ in you, Colossians 1:27 the Hope of Glory. But three times to one, he will say you are in Christ. And in Christ you who are wrong have become a righteous one. In Christ you who cannot can now do all things through Christ, which strengthens with you.

And I remember once with one of the young ladies, she shared that she'd been rescued and she'd grown up and matured and she had shared, I have this burden to rescue other girls. And we helped her to start a home with just two or three girls.

Paul Lawler: Oh wow.

Al Henson: And when I talked to her, she'd be easily defeated, which was not to my surprise. And even though she was learning to see herself as a princess, and I just had her start quoting, I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me. And the way you can do that is because you're in Christ.

And this revelation where I am at now, 40 something years walking with God, every moment I have this internal thought pattern, this internal attitude, this internal song that might be singing and it's saying something like this, I am and was wrong. But now I am a child of God. So every moment there's, I cannot, I can. I cannot, but I can. I was wrong, but I was righteous. Yes. And in every moment that's true humility and true trust that I'm fully aware of what I was, yes. But I'm also in the same moment rejoicing because I'm fully aware of who I am and how God can and will use me in his eternal purposes and plans.

Paul Lawler: Al, I think as you share that picture you gave of the young lady in Asia that stepped into this ministry of caring for these orphans, and then you've alluded that you could see that she was coming to the end of herself. I think that's a picture for many of us. Was it A.W. Tozer who once said, I've never used a man greatly until ... or God has never used a man greatly until he's allowed him to be wounded deeply?

Al Henson: The actual words were, I've never seen a man greatly used of God and whom God did not first crush.

Paul Lawler: And the point is that there's a place where we do come to the end of ourselves even after we're born again.

Al Henson: Can I tell you something Paul?

Paul Lawler: Please.

Al Henson: This is the pride of a young man, a young pastor. When I first read that statement, I think I was like 23 years old. You know what I said? I read it and I said to Tozer, even though he was ... I sort of said, Tozer, I'm going to be different. I am so given to God. I am so surrendered to the Lord. I am so trusting in God. No one else understands how much this young man has given to the Lord. And how prideful that statement was, how arrogant it was, and how God over the next years began the process of crushing me.

Paul Lawler: And it is a gift, but it illustrates how we can be deceived and not know we're deceived because we're deceived. And in that deception, it's the very thing where the crushing needs to take place.

Al Henson: Yes, And if I have heard this conversation at 24, 25, it probably would have scared me. I would have been afraid of this. And my brother and sister may be listening in saying, I've heard the old expression, don't pray for patience unless you really mean it. And the thought is this is such God's work. My advice to everyone is don't attempt to do this in your life. This is my advice, desire to know God, seek him, and ask God in His infinite love, and His infinite wisdom to revealate himself to you. God, give me revelation. My people perish for-

Paul Lawler: Lack of revelation.

Al Henson: For lack of revelation.

Paul Lawler: Yes.

Al Henson: And Paul it just saddens me in the churches not only in America but around the world how much little revelation, true revelation, is taking place. And we are even given more to people having a word of prophecy, or speaking a word of knowledge. We're hungry for those kinds of things, and instead of the spirit of God taking the word of God and truly revelation to us God's understanding of himself.

But fear I John, chapter four going back to the fear factor, this is my brother's listing or my sister, or my fellow pastor, or servant of the Lord, I John 4:18-19, and verse 19 says, perfect love drives out all fear. And he that is afraid is not yet made mature in the love of God. And I would say to you, your fear is an indication of your lack of understanding of how much God loves you.

Paul Lawler: Yes. You know as we're sharing around this and it's such a key component, key truth that you've just stated because love does set us free. But I'm mindful of the relationship between our brokenness and poverty of spirit. And you and I've talked about Matthew 5:3 blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of God. Say a word about that again and why would Jesus begin his sermon, really, I think the most strategic sermon he preached, why would he begin it there?

Al Henson: It's interesting. The things of God are very part paradoxical. It seems if you're poor you shall be rich. If you are broken, you shall be whole. If you become a slave of God, you shall be free. He that gains his life will lose it. But he that loses his life for my name's sake will gain it. And the things have got to the natural mind make no sense. They seem unreasonable. And what Matthew 5:3 is Jesus is saying, these will be the spirit and attitudes we call them the beatitudes of my people. And the word poor there means beggar. It literally means beggar. And he's not speaking about physically begging. But being spiritually a spiritual beggar. And again, Jesus says he that is sick, will see his need of a great physician.

And actually back to my thought of every moment in your life, every moment in your life I am a beggar. It's just, it's hard for me to think of that thought without the reality of it experiencing it even emotionally at this moment. And my in my emotions are not sadness. They're actually of joy because in my destitution, in my utter poverty, I have found and experienced the riches of Christ. And I have been made rich and pride doesn't want to need. Pride wants to be self-sufficient.

But the truth is, is that we are utterly need God and we utterly need our brothers and sisters in God's work, in and through them into our lives. So blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the things of God. They will receive the grace of God. And back again I would just say pray God, please grant me revelation of me and of you, and then move on the light that God gives you.

Paul Lawler: Al you again, I've noted this before. We both spend a lot of time in global context and an observation I think we would share is that with physical property, there is a more or shall we say, a deeper awareness of spiritual poverty. And it is a concern sometimes in the American church who we love deeply that. We're not tarnishing a part of the pride here, but we do notice that hunger, that sense of poverty, the awareness doesn't seem as keen.

Al Henson: There's a reason why Jesus said that it'd be harder for the rich man to come into the kingdom than for the camel to get through the eye of a needle. And what I've seen just in observation in America and other places where there is plenty, and I don't, until you've walked in the poverty in the world, you have no ... it's really hard to understand how much we have. How much we really have.

And what happens is our plenty are having land, having a house, having vehicles, having money in the bank. All of this simply mask us. It says to us, I ... it's like the rich man looked at warehouses in the Bible and says, I have no need.

And what you're saying, Paul, is that the physical things that we have, the enemy uses those to blind us and to mask us from our spiritual needs. And I've had the privilege of walking with the poor of the poor in the world. And I've had the rich the privilege of walking with some of the richest of the world. And I've found in the riches of the world that God can even relate to them.

Paul Lawler: Amen. Oh, I've seen it too.

Al Henson: And I've seen it. And so some of the brothers and sisters that I walk with, and humanly or some of the richest people in America, and yet they walk with great brokenness and great. And God uses them in great ways of generosity in the kingdom.

Paul Lawler: Which illustrates why brokenness is such a gift. Whether it's for the rich or for the poor or someone anywhere on the socioeconomic scale, that this is a gift from God, birth from God, which lays the seed so that the revelation of God would take root in our own hearts and lives.

Al Henson: Yeah. I remember being in the sixth floor of a corporate office with the founder and CEO of the corporation. And I remember talking to him about the least of these. And he gave a gift, and what I said to him, thank you on behalf of the least of these and yes, thank you. He wept and he said, oh no, thank God, and thank you that God would allow me to be a small part.

Paul Lawler: Amen.

Al Henson: That's humility and brokenness. Instead of being proud of what he had done, he was humbled and he was given the privilege to give this kind of way into something eternal. This is humility and brokenness.

Paul Lawler: And as you describe that picture Al, it's a picture of a person experiencing the living Christ working and flowing through his life. A person who's been set free in the joy of the Lord.

Al Henson: Amen.

Paul Lawler: Let's pray as we close today. Father, we pray, increase our understanding around the gift of brokenness. God, we lift the person listening to you today that may be walking through a season where it feels as if their legs have been cut out from under them and we pray that in the circumstance that Lord, you indeed would reveal the love of God in Christ Jesus. That you would demonstrate to this person that there indeed is more of you and that you are the sustainer. You're the one who redeems. You're the one who has all power to take this circumstance and work good in the heart, the conformity to Jesus Christ that sets the captive free. That births hope because we recognize hope is a person. His name is Jesus.

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Al Henson: Amen.

Paul Lawler: But we pray also for the person who is walking on the mountain top. Things are good. They're not in a season where they sense their legs have been cut out from under them, but yet Lord, brokenness is a gift to that person as well. Just as we heard illustrated in the man who is looking out the window of his office and who just gave a large gift for the least of these who are hungry and need to be clothed and educated around the world. Lord, that person also discovered something sacred and a gift from you. And just as that man knew great joy through his brokenness, we pray for persons who are walking in seasons that are positive and good and life-giving that you give the gift of understanding and experience of brokenness that yields great fruit and the advancement of the kingdom of God. We pray this in the loving and strong name of Jesus. Amen.

Al Henson: Amen.