

2Timothy 24-09-01b

We're picking up our study in 2nd Timothy, looking at the way that Paul encourages Timothy out of his sorrow, his suffering, his tears, his sort of understandable absorption in his current circumstance. He is enduring hardship. He is getting bad feedback from people around him.

He is discouraged. And this discouragement, disappointment is generally labeled under the notion of being ashamed. When you're ashamed, you want to stop doing whatever it is that's creating this negative feeling and do something different, escape the moment in some way.

But Peter has a message that illuminates two or three of the concepts in 2nd Timothy 1. The first is calling. And instead of creating a theological construct of foreknowledge and election and the certainty of salvation because God forced you into it before you were born, Peter uses the concept of calling. That's the fourth word in his letter.

After he identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, the very next word is you are chosen. Even though you are pilgrims and you are scattered in these far off places, all well outside the land of Israel, you are chosen for this. God has a purpose in it.

And anytime you see calling, it is a hope. It is a contextual clue that there's something bigger going on. Again, Romans 8.28, all things work together for good to those who love God.

That's the first condition. The second condition is recognizing that our calling is something beyond ourselves. We're not called to be blessed and gratified and have a happy time as an objective in itself.

We are called according to God's purpose. And when we are in line with God's purpose, when we are accomplishing God's purpose, you look at the Lord Jesus, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

And the enduring of hardship and suffering that the Lord Jesus in his humanity, in his flesh, went through. Look at where he is now and for all eternity. God has, after he humbled himself and became obedient to the death of the cross, Philippians chapter two, for this reason, God has highly exalted him and given him the name, which is above every name.

We saw Wednesday night, these men that came to David in Hebron from various tribes, and some of them are men of the name, men of reputation. They have accomplishments that are associated with them and with their name forevermore. They are mighty men.

They are loyal men. They are discerning men. They are useful to King David, and they are going to be useful again in the resurrection, in the millennial kingdom.

So what a wonderful thing to have a name that is above every name and that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow. To be called according to his purpose is to get outside of ourselves and put our lives in a context that helps us see its meaning and to understand that even when we are not aware of what God's ultimate purposes are, our faith in him, in his character, in his love for us, in his promises to us, sustains us when we can't see around a blind corner. I don't understand why this is my circumstance.

This is my situation. I don't see how this is doing me or anyone else any good. This just seems to be burdensome.

It seems to be painful. It seems to have no upside. I don't see people coming to Christ and falling at the foot of the cross because of me or my circumstance.

This just seems dismal and getting dimaler. This is where faith and hope kick in. This is where we turn our gaze outside of ourselves and recognize that we have a purpose.

Notice what Peter goes on to say, blessed in verse three, be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy. Remember now, this letter is being received in these far off places where these people have been driven by persecution and hardship. And Peter begins with this idea of blessing.

His abundant mercy, he has begotten us again to a living hope, a living hope. Elpis zoe. It's a hope of life, a hope characterized by life, not death, not loss, but life, life in abundance.

It's abundant mercy, a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice here, he doesn't say through the cross of Christ. It's what follows the cross.

Resurrection is vindication. It is victory. It is ascension.

It is high exaltation. It is victory over death. It is life after death, life evermore.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to, it's not just an end in itself to be resurrected. I was gone and now I'm back. But the purpose of the resurrection is to receive inheritance.

This is a promise that was unfulfilled in life. So if God is going to fulfill his promises of blessing and abundance and reward and opportunities for future service, we have to come back and we have to come back in a new and better way. So we are resurrected to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled.

Circle that word, incorruptible, incorruptible. Thartos, P-H-T-H-A-R-T-O-S means something that is corrupted and therefore perishable. And the two ideas are linked.

Sometimes you will see this word and the opposite, with an alpha prefix, an A in front of it, it means not corruptible, not perishable. It's hard to separate those two ideas. If you

had a piece of fruit that was imperishable, well, it wouldn't get soft spots and brown spots and start to shrivel and leak and attract fruit flies.

It would be just as fresh three weeks from now as it was when you picked it up at the grocery store. It would be imperishable. It would be incorruptible.

It doesn't get bad spots. It doesn't start rotting. And so the two things are linked.

It is incorruptible and undefiled. So this inheritance can't be tarnished. It can't be turned to an evil purpose.

You won't receive the wonderful blessings from God and have it turn your head. This is why God measures out our inheritance. It isn't going to be in the eternal future more than we can bear.

We won't be absorbed in it and corrupted by it. It is an incorruptible, it is an imperishable inheritance. It is certain, it is an eternal possession, and it isn't something that has any corruption with it, and we will not be corrupted by contact with it.

Imperishable, incorruptible, and undefiled. Unlike things that are a part of mixed motives or selfish, gratifying ideas, it is undefiled. It does not fade away.

It doesn't lose quality. It doesn't lose value. It holds its value.

It is just as fresh 100,000 years into the future as it is in the day that God grants it to us. It is reserved in heaven for you. I am so often reminded of Paul talking about our momentary light affliction that works for us an eternal weight of glory.

Momentary light affliction. If you skip down to verse 23 of this same chapter of 1 Peter 1, look at verse 22. Remember Paul talking about serving God from a pure conscience, talking to Timothy about a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

Look at verse 22. 1 Peter 1. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the scriptures, through the Spirit, in sincere love of the brethren. You have a text note there that says through the Spirit may not be original, but you have purified your souls in obeying the truth in and through sincere love of the brethren.

Obviously, this is done in and through the power of the Spirit. Whether or not Peter mentions that at this point, it is true. So, because you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible.

This is the same word you circled in verse 4. Our born again identity is incorruptible. You can't sin enough to corrupt it. You can't turn it from imperishable to perishable.

We were born again, and this is one of your strong passages for you can't lose your

salvation by falling back in reprobate reversionism or whatever you might think could undo birth. We have been born again, not of corruptible seed that can be tarnished or defiled, but incorruptible. Atharthas, same word.

Through the word of God, the word of God doesn't perish. Heaven and earth may pass away, God says, my word will not pass away. The word of God lives and abides forever.

Peter affirms that here. We've been born again through the word of God, which lives and abides. Lives and abides.

If it abides, it's going to abide forever. The word forever again is questionable. First Peter's got a little bit of a vexed text if you remember our journey through it, but the principles are solid here.

So notice the idea that this power of imperishability, incorruptibility is based on the word of God. The more of the word of God we have circulating in our conscience, purifying our conscience, purifying our heart. If we quit looking at circumstances, we quit obsessing on details of life.

We quit worrying about what does this person think? What will I eat? What will I wear? How shall I live? What's going to happen? The word of God contains a power that is incorruptible and undefiled and fades not away. We are born again of this incorruptible, imperishable power. We are cleansed and purified and can maintain an imperishable and uncorruptible conscience and heart.

We are called to this. Called. Because, verse 24, flesh is as grass, the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

The grass withers, its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever. This is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. This is the word that Paul is encouraging Timothy to not be ashamed of, the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Focus on the big picture, the eternal, imperishable, incorruptible life in Christ that we possess and that we preach. So, if you flip over in 1 Peter to chapter 3, we're going to find this same word again. Verse 3 reminds us of 1 Timothy talking about women who shouldn't have pearls and costly ornaments as their adornments.

Do not let your adornment be merely outward, arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel. Rather, let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptibleness of a gentle and quiet spirit. Notice beauty is in italics there.

It is the imperishability that is in view. The imperishableness of a gentle and quiet spirit. As we develop, cultivate, and grow a gentle and quiet spirit, that is a part of our eternal identity.

We take it with us. It goes forward. It is very precious in the sight of God.

God sees it. God appreciates it. He knows our every need.

He knows our hardships. There is no affliction of which He is not aware. And God appreciates a gentle and quiet spirit that is imperishable.

Now, how can you have an imperishable spirit? It can only come by the power of God. How does the power of God come into the life of a believer, into the spirit of a believer? It is the Word of God that lives and abides forever. And that imperishability, that permanence, that power, when the Word of God is in our conscience, and in our heart, and in our soul, that sustaining power becomes a part of the container.

It blesses us with endurance, with permanence, with stability. That's what Peter is talking about here. It is imperishable, incorruptible.

It is as eternal as our resurrection. If you remember 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul is talking about the rapture, and he says in 1 Corinthians 15, 52, we will be raised imperishable and we will be changed. We will be raised incorruptible.

It's this same Word. It is the same Word that describes God in Romans 1.23. Remember when Paul is talking in Romans 1 about how people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness exchange the glory of God for the glory of created things, four-footed beasts, and so on? But there's an adjective there. They exchange the glory of the incorruptible God, the imperishable God, the permanent and eternal and unchanging God, Romans 1.23. When you get your eyes on the world and on created things, and you exchange God's imperishability, His glory for things that are corruptible, we lose our heritage, we lose our opportunity.

This is where the power is, the context of eternity. Now, this context of eternity is really something, and Peter is going to return to it just as Paul does. But continuing in our passage back in 2 Timothy, share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, this power of imperishability and incorruptibility, eternality, eternal value.

Verse 9, He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, the calling that Peter reminds the scattered Diaspora Jews of in his letter, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose. People that say Paul didn't write 2 Timothy, have they read Romans? Those who are called according to His purpose? He's reminding Timothy of that same truth. We have been called with a holy calling, a calling to sanctification, to separation, to dedication.

Something that is holy is dedicated to God. It has been taken out of the world and dedicated to special service and function in the realm of worship. It's dedicated to God.

It has His name inscribed on it. And this calling is a dedication to God, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus. You know now, anytime you see in Christ Jesus, it's time to go back and read Ephesians 1, in Him, in Christ, in Him.

I refer to it quite often. We haven't read it in a while. Let me just quickly review for you Ephesians chapter 1. This is the in Him chapter.

Got the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, got the faith chapter in Hebrews 11. You've got the in Him chapter in Ephesians 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. That is verse 1, in Christ Jesus.

You are sanctified in Him and if you are faithful in Him, this letter is for you. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

That's in Christ. Number 2, just as He chose us in Him, we are elect in Him. That's the third in Him, verse 4. Notice, when did He choose us in Him? Before the foundation of the world.

Before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1.4. Now, flip back to 2 Timothy. God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus, when? Verse 9, here.

Before the world began. Why does Paul emphasize this? There are a number of things that we are told took place before the world began. You think about John 1.1. In the beginning was the Word.

The Word was with God and the Word was God. By Him all things were created and without Him nothing was made that was made. He was in the beginning with God before the world was created.

He was present and operating in creation, along with the Holy Spirit. If you go to John 17.24, Jesus talks about the glory that was given to Him by the Father, because He loved Him before the creation of the world. God's love was expressed in a plan that was a hope for the Lord Jesus.

Before the world was even created, the Father loved the Son and gave Him glory that is future. That glory is going to be revealed in the Incarnation and in His life and in His work on the cross and in His ascension and His being raised and exalted and given the name that is above every name. That glory was a hope.

That plan and purpose was a hope before the world began. The Lord Jesus Himself

operated in obedience and dedication to the plan and purpose of God based on promises that were made before time began, before the foundation of the world. Talk about context.

Human history has to happen for these things to be fulfilled. And the Lord Jesus sees Himself before creation, included in God's future plans and purposes. We are given grace and a purpose.

God assigned us a purpose and provided grace before the world began for you and for me. God sees the end from the beginning. He knows us from conception to glory, birth, life, death, past, present, future.

He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works. We didn't earn it. We didn't deserve it.

It's God's purpose and grace given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. In 1 Peter 1, verse 20, we were just in 1 Peter, if you flip back there, knowing you were not redeemed with corruptible things, silver and gold, your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers. You were redeemed, verse 19, 1 Peter 1, with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world. Peter and Paul are so sensitive to this historical, eternal context in which our lives are placed, in which the Lord Jesus Christ is placed. And because we are in Him, we share that eternal destiny that was fixed before time began and extends through time and into the eternal future.

He was foreordained before the foundation of the world and manifest in these last times for you, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. It's not only Paul that understands the triad of Christian virtues. Your faith and hope are in God.

And he goes on in verse 22, which we just read earlier, since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, in sincere love of the brethren. In 21 and 22 of 1 Peter 1, you have faith, hope, and love tied to this purpose and destiny that was ordained by God before time began, before the foundation of the world. Paul is reminding Timothy of this same thing.

The Holy Spirit is reminding you and me of this same thing. If we get short-sighted, if we are myopic and we only concentrate on the moment, on how do I feel, what is happening right now, and we do not by God's grace and in God's power widen our view to understand that this plan and purpose puts us in an eternal situation. There is an eternal past where we were in the mind of God, a gift to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him we share sonship, inheritance, priesthood, destiny, purpose, and function now and in the ages to come.

Our momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal, imperishable weight of glory, inheritance. We will eternally reflect God's glory, imperishable, incorruptible, that fades not away. So, 2 Timothy 1.10, this grace and power were given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

It has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality. Guess what the word immortality is there? Remember when we saw this aphartos idea, incorruptible? He has brought life and aphartos. Here it's a noun instead of an adjective.

It's imperishability, incorruptibility. It's not just immortal. They've got fantasy movies and comic book heroes that are immortals.

They're related to Zeus or something. They can't die. You can slam them around and hit them with Thor's hammer and they just come right back because they're immortal.

It just means you keep on lasting. No, this is imperishable and incorruptible. It is so translated many places.

You can use the Strongs and look this up. It is life and life of an imperishable and incorruptible quality. We sometimes wonder, well, if I still have free will in the future, would I fall and do like the angels did in the past and Satan and a third of them get cast to earth and you've got the lake of fire prepared for them? And if God doesn't strap down my volition so that I'm always positive, could I at some future point do what the angels did? No, we have been born of an imperishable and incorruptible seed and God has brought life and imperishability, incorruptibility to light through Christ.

We don't have to worry about future corruption or any kind of circumstance where somewhere down the eternal road we suffer the fate of the fallen angels and Satan himself. God brought this insurance. It was a horrible thing that Satan and a third of the angels chose against God and through Christ, incorruptibility, imperishability has been revealed.

God had the plan that this will never again happen. Remember when God says, I will never again destroy the earth by a flood? I did it once, never going to do it again. The next time he destroys the world, it'll be by fire, but he's never going to do it with a flood.

Well, God has brought incorruptibility, imperishability to light through the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul says, I was appointed a preacher and apostle and a teacher of this truth, a teacher, a preacher, and an apostle. This is the reason, verse 12, that I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed, not ashamed.

Remember when we circled, do not be ashamed back in verse eight, Timothy, don't be ashamed. Here, I am not ashamed. Why? I know whom I have believed.

I know whom I have believed in the past and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until the day. I know my calling. I know the certainty of my position in Christ.

This is why suffering doesn't faze me. It doesn't discourage me. It doesn't lead me to tears.

Timothy, share with me in sufferings, verse eight, share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God. I am persuaded. Remember in another place, Paul says, I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nothing will separate us from the love of God.

I am persuaded. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing can separate us from the eternal calling that God designed before the world began in and through Christ for his own glory.

The Lord Jesus has already experienced his life on this earth. He died, he is resurrected, and is now in glory. We are in him.

We share that destiny. We share that future resurrection. This life, this life, is so short and so momentary.

You're going to wash the car for a couple of weeks, but you will have the skills that are learned in these seemingly tedious and unmeaningful experiences. It will serve us in the imperishable and incorruptible and eternal service to God in the future. It is a part of our inheritance.

It is a part of our opportunity. The key to working through difficult circumstances is context. It is so still.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the wonderful truth of your word that illuminates, enlightens, shines a bright light on our path. We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that your Holy Spirit will reveal your power not only to work through our situations and our challenges, but to have the love, the joy, and the peace that are the fruit of the Spirit, that we will enjoy them ourselves and be able to shine them forth and express them to others, that we will be sensitive to your eternal purpose that is accomplished in our lives on a daily basis as we seek to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, to be worthy of him as disciples, to take up our cross and follow him, and in so doing to arrive at that place of future service and function that he currently occupies even now at your right hand.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.