

# Prayer - 1 Peter 1:3-5, Part 3

by A.W. Pink

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*A.W. Pink's sermon explores the profound implications of regeneration through Christ's resurrection, emphasizing the believer's living hope and eternal inheritance as joint-heirs with Him.*

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:3

**Topics:** "Hope", "Regeneration"

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## Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the significance of prayer and the divine begetting of believers in his sermon on 1 Peter 1:3-5. He explains that through God's abundant mercy, Christians are reborn into a living hope, making them strangers in this world, with their true citizenship in heaven. Pink highlights that this regeneration is rooted in the resurrection of Christ, which not only justifies believers but also guarantees their inheritance in heaven. He encourages believers to focus on their heavenly inheritance, which is incorruptible and reserved for them, and to remain steadfast in faith, as it is through faith that they are kept by God's power. Ultimately, Pink calls for a deeper engagement with the hope of eternal life, urging believers to look beyond earthly trials and rejoice in their future glory.

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## Transcript

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Let us begin this chapter by continuing our consideration of the acknowledgment of the prayer. It is to be recalled that this Epistle is addressed to those who are strangers, scattered abroad (v. 1). Most appropriate, then, is this reference to the Divine begetting of God's elect, for it is by the Holy Spirit's gracious begetting that the elect are constituted strangers or sojourners (that is, temporary residents of this world), both in heart and in conduct. The Lord Jesus was a stranger here (Ps. 69:8), for He was the Son of God from heaven; and so, too, are His people, for they have His Spirit within them. How that understanding enhances this miracle of grace! Divine begetting is not merely a doctrine, but the actual communication to the soul of the very life of God (John 1:13). Formerly the Christian was both in and of the world, but now his "conversation [citizenship--A.S.V.] is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20, brackets mine). "I am a stranger in the earth" (Ps. 119:19) is henceforth his confession. To the soul renewed by God this world becomes a barren wilderness. For his heritage, his home, is on high, and therefore he now views the things of time and sense in a very different light.

The Great Interests of the Regenerate Soul Are Alien to this World

The chief interests of a truly born-again soul lie not in this mundane sphere. His affections will be set upon things above; and in proportion as they are so, his heart is detached from this world. Their strangerhood is an essential mark that distinguishes the saints from the ungodly. They who heartily embrace the promises of God are suitably affected by them (Heb. 11:13). One of the certain effects of Divine grace in the soul is to separate its possessor, both in spirit and in practice, from the world. His delight in heavenly things manifests itself in his being weaned from the things of earth, just as the woman at the well left her bucket behind when she had obtained from Christ the living water (John 4:28). Such a spirit constitutes him an alien among the worshipers of mammon. He is morally a foreigner in a strange land, surrounded by those who know him not (1 John 3:1), because they know not his Father. Nor do they understand his joys or sorrows, not appreciating the principles and motives that actuate him; for their pursuits and pleasures are radically different from his. Nay, he finds himself in the midst of enemies who hate him (John 15:19), and there are none with whom he can have communion save the very few who "have obtained like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1).

But though there be nothing in this wilderness of a world for the Christian, he has been "begotten. . . again unto a living hope." Previously he viewed death with horror, but now he perceives that it will provide a blessed release from all sin and sorrow and open the door into Paradise. The principle of grace received at the new birth not only inclines its possessor to love God and to act in faith upon His Word, but it also disposes him to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:17, 18), inclining his aspirations away from the present toward his glorious future. Thomas Manton aptly declares, "The new nature was made for another world: it came from thence, and it carrieth the soul thither." Hope is an assured expectation of future good. While faith is in exercise, a vista of unclouded bliss is set before the heart, and hope enters into the enjoyment of the same. It is a living hope exercised within a dying environment, and it both supports and invigorates all of us who believe. While in healthy activity, hope not only sustains amid the trials of this life but lifts us above them. Oh, for hearts to be more engaged in joyous anticipations of the future! For such hopeful hearts will quicken us to duty and stimulate us to perseverance. In proportion to the intelligence and strength of our hope will we be delivered from the fear of death.

#### Union with Christ in His Resurrection, the Cause of Our Regeneration

A further word must now be said upon the relationship that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead bears to the Father's begetting of us to this living hope. Christ's God-honoring work and triumphant emergence from the grave was the legal basis not only of the justification of His people, but of their regeneration also. Mystically, by virtue of their union with Christ in the mind and purpose of God, they were delivered from their death at the hands of the Law when their Surety arose from the dead. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together. . ." (Eph. 2:4-6, ital. mine). Those words refer to the corporate union of the Church with her Head and her judicial participation in His victory, and not to an individual experience. Nevertheless, since all the elect rose federally when their Representative arose, they must in due time be regenerated; since they have been made alive legally, they must in due course be quickened spiritually. Had not Christ risen, none had been quickened (1 Cor. 15:17); but because He lives, they shall live also.

Jesus lives, and so shall I.

Death! thy sting is gone forever!

He who deigned for me to die,

Lives, the bands of death to sever.

He [hath raised] me from the dust:

Jesus is my Hope and Trust.

The life that is in the Head must be communicated to the members of His body.

The resurrection of Christ is the virtual cause of our regeneration. The Holy Spirit would not have been given unless Christ had conquered the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26) and gone to the Father: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13, 14). Regeneration issues as truly from the virtue of Christ's resurrection as does our justification, which is the result of that saving faith in Christ that can only issue from a Spirit-renewed heart. He purchased for His people the blessed Spirit to raise them up to grace and glory. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5, 6, ital. mine). God the Father has shed the Holy Spirit upon us in regenerating power because of the merits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and in response to His mediation on our behalf. The Holy Spirit is here to testify of Christ to God's elect, to raise up faith in them toward Him in order that they "may abound in hope" (Rom. 15:12, 13). Our spiritual deliverance from the grave of sin's guilt, power, and pollution is as much owing to the efficacy of Christ's triumph over death as will be our physical vivification at His return. He is "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), the very life of Christ being imparted to them when they are begotten again.

The Power that Raised Christ Physically Raises Sinners Spiritually

The resurrection of Christ is also the dynamic prototype of our regeneration. The same power put forth in raising Christ's body is employed in the recovering of our souls from spiritual death (Eph. 1:19, 20; 2:1). The Lord Jesus is designated "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5) because His emerging from the grave was not only the pledge but the likeness of both the regeneration of the spirits of His people and the raising of their bodies in the last day. The similitude is obvious. Begetting is the beginning of a new life. When Christ was born into this world it was "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Though untouched by the taint of original sin (Luke 1:35) and undefiled by the pollution of actual transgressions, He was clothed with infirmity because of imputed iniquity. But when He rose from Joseph's tomb in power and glory, it was in a body fitted for heaven. Likewise, at regeneration, we receive a nature that makes us meet for heaven. As God's raising of Christ testified to His being pacified by His sacrifice (Heb. 13:20), so by begetting us again He assures us of our personal interest therein. As Christ's resurrection was the grand proof of His Divine Sonship (Rom. 1:4), so the new birth is the first open manifestation of our adoption. As Christ's resurrection was the first step into His glory and exaltation, so regeneration is the first stage of our entrance into all spiritual privileges.

Glorification Is the Goal of Regeneration

Our seventh consideration in examining this doxology is its substance: "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (v. 4). Regeneration is for the purpose of glorification. We are begotten spiritually to two realities: a living hope in the present, and a glorious

heritage in the future. It is by God's begetting that we obtain our title to the latter. Inheritances go by birth: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). If not sons, then we cannot be heirs; and we must be born of God in order to become the children of God. But "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Not only does begetting confer title, but it also guarantees the inheritance. Already the Christian has received the Spirit, "[who] is the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14, brackets mine). As Christ's part was to purchase the inheritance, so the Spirit's part is to make it known to the heirs; for "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" He "hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). It is the Spirit's province to vouchsafe to the regenerate sweet foretastes of what is in store for them, to bring something of heaven's joy into their souls on earth.

### The New Birth Fits Us Immediately for Heaven

Not only does Divine begetting give title to and ensure the heavenly inheritance, but it also imparts a meetness for the same. At the new birth a nature is imparted that is suited to the celestial sphere, that qualifies the soul to dwell for ever with the thrice-holy God (as is evident from his present communion with Him); and at the close of his earthly pilgrimage, indwelling sin (which now hinders his communion) dies with the body. It is all too little realized by the saints that at regeneration they are at once fitted for heaven. Many of them--to the serious diminution of their peace and joy--suppose that they must still pass through a process of severe discipline and refining before they shall be ready to enter the courts above. That is but another relic of Romanism. The case of the dying thief, who was taken immediately from his spiritual birthplace into Paradise, should teach them better. But it does not. So legalistic remains the tendency of the heart even of a Christian that it is very difficult to convince him that the very hour he was born again he was made as suitable for heaven as ever he would be though he remained on earth another century. How difficult it is for us to believe that no growth in grace or passing through fiery trials is essential to prepare our souls for the Father's house.

Nowhere does Scripture say that believers are ripened, meetened, or gradually fitted for heaven. The Holy Spirit expressly declares that God the Father has, "according to His abundant mercy. . . begotten us again. . . to an inheritance." What could be plainer? Nor does our text by any means stand alone. Christians have already been made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and what more can be needed to fit them for the Divine presence? Scripture emphatically declares, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant [slave], but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:7, brackets mine). The inheritance is the child's birthright or patrimony. To speak of heirs not being eligible for an estate is a contradiction in terms. Our fitness for the inheritance lies alone in our being the children of God. If it be true that except a man be born again he cannot enter or see the kingdom of God, then, conversely, it necessarily follows that once he has been born again he is qualified for an entrance into and enjoyment of God's kingdom. All room for argument on this point is excluded by these words, which set forth one aspect of Paul's prayers of thanksgiving on behalf of the Colossians: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made [past tense] us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12, ital. and brackets mine).

### By Regeneration We Are Wedded to Christ

By regeneration we are made vitally one with Christ and thereby become joint-heirs with Him. The portion of the Bride is her participation in the portion of the Bridegroom. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:22), declares the Redeemer of His redeemed. This, too, needs stressing

today, when so much error is parading itself as the truth. In their fanciful attempts to "rightly divide the Word," men have wrongly divided the family of God. Some Dispensationalists hold that not only is there a distinction of earthly privileges, but that the same distinctions will be perpetuated in the world to come; that the New Testament believers will look down from a superior elevation upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that saints who lived and died before Pentecost will not participate in the glory of the Church or enter into the inheritance "reserved for us in heaven." To affirm that the saints of this Christian era are to occupy a higher position and to enjoy grander privileges than will those of previous ages is a serious and inexcusable mistake, for it clashes with the most fundamental teachings of Scripture concerning the purpose of the Father, the redemption of Christ, and the work of the Spirit, and repudiates the essential features of God's great salvation. Writing to the churches in Galatia, largely composed of Gentiles, the Apostle Paul declares, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7). This text alone is sufficient to prove that God's way of salvation has never essentially changed.

All of God's elect are the common sharers of the riches of His wondrous grace, vessels whom He "afore prepared unto glory" (Rom. 9:23), whom He predestinated to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). Christ acted as the Surety of the entire election of grace, and what His meritorious work secured for one of them it necessarily secured for all. The saints of all ages are fellow-heirs. Each of them was predestinated by the same Father (John 6:37; 10:16, 27-30; 17:2, 9-12, 20-24); each of them was regenerated by the same Spirit (Eph. 4:4), each of them looked to and trusted in the same Savior. Scripture knows of no salvation that does not issue in joint-heirship with Christ. Those to whom God gives His Son, namely, the whole company of His elect from Abel to the end of earth's history, He also freely gives all things (Rom. 8:32). That both Abraham and David were justified by faith is plain from Romans 4, and there is no higher destiny or more glorious prospect than that to which justification gives full title. The renewing work of the Holy Spirit is identical in every member of God's family: begetting them to, qualifying them for, a celestial heritage. All those who were effectually called by Him during the Old Testament era received "the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). Heaven-born children must have a heavenly portion.

#### The Nature of Our Eternal Inheritance

"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." The heavenly portion reserved for the people of God is one that is agreeable to the new life received at regeneration, for it is a state of perfect holiness and happiness suited to spiritual beings who possess material bodies. Many and varied are the descriptions given in Scripture of the nature of our inheritance. In our text (v. 5) it is described as "the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (cf. Heb. 9:28), that is, salvation in its fullness and perfection that shall be bestowed upon the redeemed at Christ's glorious return. Our Lord Jesus describes it as His "Father's house" in which there "are many mansions," which Christ Himself is now preparing for His people (John 14:1, 2). The Apostle Paul refers to it as "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12, ital. mine), and to the future inhabitants of that glorious realm as "the children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5, ital. mine). No doubt these expressions point to the moral perfection of Him in the blazing light of whose Presence (Isa. 33:13; 1 Tim. 6:13-16; Heb. 12:29; 1 John 1:5) all the saints shall one day dwell. Furthermore, they underscore the spotless purity that shall characterize each of those who shall "dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Ps. 23:6; cf. Dan. 12:3; Rev. 21:27). Paul further describes it as "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10), upon which the hopeful, believing eye of Abraham was fixed. He also calls it "a kingdom which cannot be

moved" or "shaken" (Heb. 12:26-28; cf. Rev. 2 1:10-27).

The Apostle Peter refers to Christians as those whom God has "called. . . unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Peter 5:10). Elsewhere, he calls our inheritance "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). The Lord Jesus prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory" (John 17:24). The glorified Christ, in His revelation to the Apostle John, describes the saints' inheritance as "the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7), from which we may infer that Eden was but a shadow. Looking forward to this Paradise, David declares, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

### The Significance of the Term Inheritance

In his commentary on 1 Peter, John Brown makes the following pertinent observations on the significance of the use of the term inheritance:

The celestial blessedness receives here, and in many other passages of Scripture, the appellation of "the inheritance," for two reasons: to mark its gratuitous nature, and to mark its secure tenure.

An inheritance is something that is not obtained by the individual's own exertions, but by the free gift or bequest of another. The earthly inheritance of the external people of God was not given them because they were greater or better than the other nations of the earth. It was "because the LORD had a delight in them to love them" [Deut. 10:15]. "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own right hand save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, for thou hadst a favour unto them" [Ps. 44:3]. And the heavenly inheritance of the spiritual people of God is entirely the gift of sovereign kindness. "By grace are ye saved" [Eph. 2:5]; "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" [Rom. 6:23].

A second idea suggested by the figurative expression, "the inheritance," when used in reference to the celestial blessedness, is the security of the tenure by which it is held. No right is more indefeasible than the right of inheritance. If the right of the giver or bequeather be good, all is secure. The heavenly happiness, whether viewed as the gift of the Divine Father, or the bequest of the Divine Son, is "sure to all the seed." If the title of the claimant be but as valid as the right of the original proprietor, their tenure must be as secure as the throne of God and His Son.

### The Excellence of Our Inheritance

The excellence of this inheritance or everlasting portion of the redeemed is described by four expressions. First, it is incorruptible, and thus it is like its Author "the incorruptible God" (Rom. 1:23). All corruption is a change from better to worse, but heaven is without change or end. Hence the word incorruptible has the force of enduring, imperishable. Nor will it corrupt its heirs, as many a worldly inheritance has done. Secondly, it is undefiled, and thus like its Purchaser, who passed through this depraved world as uncontaminated as a sunbeam is unsullied though it shines on a filthy object (Heb. 7:26). All defilement is by sin, but no germ of it can ever enter heaven. Hence undefiled has the force of beneficent, incapable of injuring its possessors. Thirdly, it is unfading, and thus it is like the One who conducts us thither, "the eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14, ital. mine), the Holy Spirit, "a pure river of water of life" (Rev. 22:1). The word undefiled tells of this River's perennial and perpetual freshness; its splendor will never be marred nor its beauty diminished. Fourthly, the phrase reserved in heaven speaks of the location and security of our

inheritance (see Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:18).

As we consider the four descriptive expressions in verse 4, several characteristics of our inheritance come into view. To begin with, our inheritance is indestructible. Its substance is wholly unlike that of earthly kingdoms, the grandeur of which wears away. The mightiest empires of earth eventually dissipate by reason of inherent corruption. Consider the purity of our portion. No serpent shall ever enter this Paradise to defile it. Behold its changeless beauty. Neither rust shall tarnish nor moth mar it, nor shall endless ages produce a wrinkle on the countenance of any of its inhabitants. Ponder its security. It is guarded by Christ for His redeemed; no thief shall ever break into it.

It seems to me that these four expressions are designed to cause us to make a series of contrasts with the glorious inheritance that awaits us. First, consider the inheritance of Adam. How soon was Eden corrupted! Secondly, think of the inheritance that "the most High divided to the nations" (Deut. 32:8) and how they have defiled it by greed and bloodshed. Thirdly, contemplate the inheritance of Israel. How sadly the land flowing with milk and honey wilted under the droughts and famines that the Lord sent in order to chasten the nation for their sins. Fourthly, let us reflect on the glorious habitation that was forfeited by the fallen angels, who "kept not their first estate" (Jude 6). These woeful, benighted spirits have no gracious High Priest to intercede for them, but are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Knowing our own remaining corruption, well might we shudder and ask with pious self-distrust (see Matthew 26:20-22), "What will keep us from such a doom?"

#### The Guarantee that We Will Receive Our Inheritance

We come, finally, to reflect upon the infallible guaranty of this doxology, which graciously answers the question of trembling saints just posited: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time." Here is the cordial for the fainting Christian! Not only is the inestimably glorious and precious inheritance secure, "reserved in heaven" for us, but we also are secure, "kept by the power of God." Here the Apostle Peter's doctrine perfectly coincides with that of the Lord Jesus and of the other apostles. Our Lord taught that those who are born or begotten of God believe on His Son (John 1:11-13; 3:3-5), and that those who believe have eternal life (John 3:15, 16). "He that believeth on the Son hath [presently and continually possesses] everlasting life" (John 3:36, ital. and brackets mine). He further taught that those who believe not do not believe because they are not His sheep (John 10:26). But then He goes on:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one (John 10:27-30).

The Apostle Paul also declares the fact that none of Christ's brethren shall ever perish.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35, 37-39).

Yet the question remains to be answered, "What is the principal means that the power of God exercises in preserving us, in order that we might enter upon and enjoy our inheritance?"

### Faith Is the Means of Our Preservation

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith." John Brown's insights are of great value on this point:

They are "kept"--preserved safe--amid the many dangers to which they are exposed, "by the power of God." The expression, "power of God," may here refer to the Divine power both as exercised in reference to the enemies of the Christian, controlling their malignant purposes, and as exercised in the form of spiritual influence on the mind of the Christian himself, keeping him in the faith of the truth [italics mine] "in the love of God, and in the patient waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ" [2 Thess. 3:5; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13, 14]. It is probably to the last that the apostle principally alludes, for he adds "by faith." It is through the persevering faith of the truth that the Christian is by Divine influence preserved from falling, and kept in possession both of that state and character which are absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance.

The perseverance thus secured to the true Christian is perseverance in faith and holiness; and nothing can be more grossly absurd than for a person living in unbelief and sin to suppose that he can be in the way of obtaining celestial blessedness.

### Though God Keeps Us, We Must Believe

By the almighty power of the Triune God, we are kept "unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." But the same gracious Spirit who keeps us also inspired Jude to write, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21, ital. mine). By Him also the Apostle Paul wrote, "Put on the whole armour of God,. . . Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:11, 16). Therefore ought we frequently to cry to the Lord with the apostles, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). If our cry is genuine, then we may be certain that Jesus, who is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2) will hear and answer in a way best suited to our need, though perhaps by means of adversity.

The apostle's reference to the heavenly heritage of believers was a most appropriate one. He was writing to those who were, both naturally and spiritually, away from their homeland, aliens in a strange country. Many of them were converted Jews, and, as such, fiercely opposed and most cruelly treated. When a Jew became a Christian he forfeited much: he was excommunicated from the synagogue, becoming an outcast from among his own people. Nevertheless, there was rich compensation for him. He had been Divinely begotten to an inheritance infinitely superior, both in quality and duration, to the land of Palestine. Thus his gains far more than made up for his losses (see Matthew 19:23-29, especially v. 29). The Holy Spirit, then, from the outset of the Epistle, drew out the hearts of those suffering saints to God by setting before them His abundant mercy and the exceeding riches of His grace. The more they were occupied with the same the more their minds would be lifted above this scene and their hearts filled with praise to God. While few of us are experiencing any trials comparable to theirs, yet our lot is cast in a very dark day, and it behooves us to look away from the things that are seen and more and more to fix our attention upon the blissful future awaiting us. Since God has designed such for us, how we should glorify Him in heartfelt worship and by adhering to His promises by "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26) to the end!

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