The Basics of Redemption
1 Peter 1:18-21
80-200

This morning, because it is communion, because we are gathering around the Lord's table, I want to address the issue of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ I trust in a fresh way. Open your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 1...1 Peter chapter 1. I want to read just a brief portion from verse 18 to 21.

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless...the blood of Christ...for He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope are in God."

The word that I want to draw to your attention here is the word "redeemed...redeemed." That is the heart and soul of Christianity, redemption. Our message is a message of redemption. It's easy for us to get distracted into a myriad of other things, but this is the focus that God would have us to have.

The conference I was speaking at this last week, the question came up about...how do we present the gospel? And when we present the gospel, what are the most defining components of the gospel that we must present?

The answer to that question is really bound up in the concept of redemption. It's one of the great words, it's one of the great titles of Christ, Christ our Redeemer. The question is whether or not we really understand the full richness of that term.

I was also thinking, as I watched the recent impeachment effort in the Senate, how that what started out as a certain level of outrage against immorality, outrage against deception, outrage against perjury, outrage against abusive power, outrage against manipulation, etc., etc. There was a great cry about morality. There was a great cry about ethics. There was a great cry about upholding the Constitution, upholding law, upholding the system of jurisprudence in America. There was a great concern on the part of people for justice and morality. And yet, by the time it was all sort of over, it just sort of defused, it just sort of fizzled, it just sort of dribbled away in nothingness. It all ended without anything, without any censure, without rendering of guilt, without anything. It just evaporated, just kind of defused and disappeared.

And I thought to myself as I've looked at that, that that in the hands of the highest level of leadership in our nation was a referendum on the culture war. The culture war has been going on for a long time. The culture war has been an effort I think largely generated by evangelicals to moralize the unconverted. An effort has been made, starting with the Moral Majority, and on into more groups and more associations often called the Religious Right, to try to moralize this nation, to try to elevate its

morality, elevate its ethics and elevate its integrity and so forth. We have been trying to moralize the unconverted.

Well, the culture war is over. That that happened in the impeachment process was a referendum, that was a clear indication of where this nation stands. The culture war is over and we lost. It's over and we lost. This culture refuses to be moralized. It refuses to follow some quote/unquote Judeo/Christian morality. The culture war is over and we lost. By the way, I knew we would and many of you did too because that's the domain of darkness whether it's moral or immoral. Our responsibility is not to moralize the unconverted, it's to convert the immoral. Our responsibility is redemptive, not political. We do not have a moral agenda. We have a redemptive agenda. And none of us should be surprised that we couldn't...we couldn't reform the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan himself. our message is not morality, it has never been morality, our message is redemption. That has always been and always will be the pure and true message of the church. And I hope that people who have literally spent their time and millions upon millions of dollars trying to moralize the unconverted will now turn their attention to trying to convert the immoral.

And at the heart of this matter is the understanding of redemption. It's a great word. It's a word not often used and not fully understood. Isn't it amazing how some childhood experiences stick in our mind? I remember when I was a little boy I read a book, a little book, left an indelible impression upon my mind. It was about a little boy who made a little boat. He got some pieces of wood and he kind of carved them out and glued them together and made a little boat and put a little mast on it and made a little sail and attached it to the boat and worked very hard with his little tools and produced what to him was a very special little sailboat, and painted it up the way he wanted it. Went down to the lake nearby to sail it. It was carried along, however, by a strong breeze and eventually got beyond his reach and then it went out of sight. He was sad about losing this little prize of his own craftsmanship.

And later walking through the little town he lived in he noticed it was for sale in the window of a shop. He went in and told the shopkeeper that it was his and he tried to lay claim to it. He was not believed, however, and the man behind the counter demanded that if he wanted it he'd have to pay for it. He'd have to buy the very boat that he had made with his own hands.

He went home, broke open his little piggy bank and found that he had just enough money. So he returned to the shop, put the money on the counter and bought back his little boat. It was surely his then, twice his, he said, because he not only made it but he redeemed it.

Made by the Creator and then redeemed by the Creator. That's really the story of Christianity, isn't it? And that's Peter's theme in the passage and it's the theme of our faith. Our message is redemption. One of my favorite words in the Bible is "redeemed." You hear me use it often. It may not be often used among Christians, but it should be. We should refer to Jesus Christ much more frequently as our Redeemer, thus exalting this wonderful aspect of His saving work.

One of my favorite Puritan writers and one of the ones who first off influenced me in the early years when I began to read the Puritans was a Puritan named Thomas Watson. Thomas Watson said this, quote: "Great was the work of creation, but greater the work of redemption. It cost more to redeem us than to make us. In the one there was but the speaking of a word. In the other there was shedding blood. The creation was but the work of God's fingers. Redemption is the work of His arm," end quote.

It's true. Redemption is the greater work. Our Lord Himself directed us to the centrality of His redeeming work when He said, "The Son of Man has come to give His life a ransom for many," Mark 10:45. Redemption is more specific than salvation. It speaks of the heart and soul of salvation. It focuses on the fact by which salvation is achieved. Redemption has to do with the purchase by payment of a price. Redemption then focuses on how God bought us from our bondage to sin...how God paid the price. It views man's condition as a prisoner, a prisoner to hopeless iniquity and sees God coming to set the prisoner free by paying the full required price. Sin calls for justice. Justice demands a price. The price justice demands is death. Redemption then of the sinner must come through death.

The imagery shadowing Peter's words here comes from Exodus chapter 12. Turn back in your Bibles, this is so basic to our understanding of redemption, Exodus chapter 12. We'll just read through the first part of this chapter. "Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'This month shall be the beginning of months for you, it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel saying on the tenth of this month they are to each one take a lamb for themselves according to their father's household, a lamb for each household. Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them, according to what each man should eat you are to divide he lamb.'" In other words, have a lamb that is consumed by two families if families are too small to consume one full lamb. "'You lamb...verse 5...should be an unblemished male, a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.'" Verse 7, "'Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts,'" that's the sides of the door, "'and on the lintel,'" that's the crosspiece above the door, "'of the house in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire. They shall eat it with unleaven bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. You shall not leave any of it over until morning. Whatever is left until morning you shall burn with fire. Now you shall eat it in this matter with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, your staff in your hand. You shall eat it in haste, it is the Lord's Passover, for I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, will strike down all the firstborn of the land of Egypt...both man and beast and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments, I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live. And when I see the blood I will pass over you and no plague...that is not execution of the firstborn...will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. Now this day will be a memorial to you and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations, you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance.'"

Now that describes God initiating the Passover which, as you well know, is still celebrated by Jews even today. Let me give you a little bit of background around that passage. One of the patriarchs of Israel, Joseph, mentioned, of course, in Genesis, had been sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers. You remember that. He then became Prime Minister of Egypt alongside the Pharaoh, probably Pharaoh Ramses II. During a severe famine in Israel, you remember, the family of Jacob, Joseph's father, seventy strong came to Egypt to survive. There was food in Egypt but not in Israel.

When they came into Egypt, these Jewish people, these Hebrew people began to dwell there. They were keepers of livestock so Pharaoh gave them their own section of land, it was called the land of Goshen. They lived there and raised their crops and their herds there and they began to multiply. In fact Exodus 1:7 says the children of Israel were fruitful, increased abundantly, multiplied, waxed

exceeding mighty and the land was filled with them. They literally had explosive growth. They reached the proportion of several million people, Hebrew people living in the land of Egypt.

Their status, however, began to deteriorate as they began to grow. They were seen as a threat. And so eventually, of course, they became slaves. The king after Pharaoh Ramses II who knew Joseph, the king who was called the king who knew not Joseph, who didn't have any sense of history and didn't have Joseph to lobby for the Hebrews became jealous of these Jews in his land. Fearing them because they had become so powerful and were so blessed by their God. So he decided to conscript them all as slaves and he turned them into slaves, forced them into making bricks for his great buildings that he was building. However, this concentrated labor, this forced labor, this slavery made them more resolute, made them stronger and their numbers continued to increase. Eventually it was God's time to call them out of Egypt to take them to the Holy Land and establish them as a nation. After 400 years of Egyptian exile God began to move.

The Pharaoh who was cruel and who hated the Hebrews and yet was greedy for their slave labor wouldn't release them. You remember Moses said, "Let my people go," and Pharaoh refused to do that, so God unleashed on Egypt plague after plague, a series of ten plagues culminating in the final plague which was the supernatural execution of the firstborn animal, the firstborn in every family. This is a cataclysmic judgment. The firstborn in the family was the heir to everything the family possessed, the favored child. The tragic judgment resulted in Egypt letting the Israelites go and several million people exited Egypt, you remember, the story of them crossing the Red Sea and Pharaoh then changing his mind, chasing them and having his entire army drowned.

But the death angel was going to move through Egypt and slay the firstborn child in every house...an unthinkable judgment on this vast race of people. In order for the Hebrews to be spared this divine assassin, this assassin angel, God instructed them to kill a lamb or a kid, it could be a goat, of the first year without a blemish, without a spot, offered as a sacrifice to the Lord and splatter its blood around the door at the top and on the sides so the death angel could see the blood and know that they had obeyed God and offered a sacrifice and spare the firstborn.

Now follow the thought. The lamb's life was given in place of the life of the firstborn. The lamb died as a substitute. It is a substitutionary death, listen, that paid the price God required and redeemed the firstborn from death. It would be hard to imagine the busyness of that time, the busyness of the preparations, the activities of the families as two weeks ahead of time they get this lamb, they bring it into the house, they live with that lamb, they begin to understand what's going to happen. This lamb that they come to know as a household pet is going to be the substitute that's going to die in place of the firstborn. the firstborn is then going to be ransomed by the bloody death of the lamb.

I'd like to think that if I was a father in that time I would go out there and when I got a big container full of that lamb's blood and was going to put it on the doorposts and lintels, I want to make sure that that death angel didn't look very long, or was slightly hindered somehow in his sight that he would never have any reason to miss my house. And so I'm sure I would be sloshing blood all over the place on the outside of that house to make sure I wasn't missed. And so you can imagine that these front doors were literally a wash in blood on that night, giving some kind of a picture even of the cross on which the future, final and glorious Lamb would be slain. It was the blood then that redeemed the family from divine judgment. It was the death of a lamb that paid the price to satisfy God and the angel passed by. As evening came those people gathered around the table, they had their sandals on, they had their loins girded which means they were ready to move. They had the belt

cinching their garments together, they weren't in a relaxed position. They had their staffs in their hands ready to walk and hike. They were ready to move. They ate quickly, hastily in order to leave that night because that's what exactly what was going to happen.

As soon as all these people started dying all over Egypt as this divine assassin angel started executing them, the Egyptians it says in Exodus 12 were urgent among the people that they might send them out of the land in a hurry for they said we'll all be dead. And so they had to move immediately that night. God thereby had decreed that this passover would be celebrated every year since that time, and it has as a memorial to remind Israel that they were delivered from devastating judgment through a lamb who died in their place and paid the price to ransom them...a redeeming, ransoming substitute. That then, of course, becomes the dominant theme of the Old Testament sacrificial system. And throughout the Old Testament era, even into the life of Christ in the New Testament, millions and millions and millions of lambs were slain in this blood-letting sacrifice which pictured substitutionary death which was a price paid to ransom sinners. That's what was behind Peter's words.

Now look at what Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1, "You were redeemed, a price was paid for you, not with perishable things like silver and gold...verse 19...but with precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, even Christ." All of that imagery finds its way to the cross and we are redeemed by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The ransom price required by God was death...the ransom price required by God was death. And the Lamb died to pay the ransom price, it was the Lamb's death for our life. He died that the death angel might pass us by.

The word "redeemed" by the way, just as a note there in verse 18, alutroo(?) or lutroo, this form of it, alutrothete(?) means to be set free by a ransom paid. The noun form means a ransom. It's a technical term for a price paid to buy back somebody headed for judgment, to buy back particularly a prisoner of war or to buy a slave's freedom.

To understand the Christian faith then is to understand redemption, ransom, substitutionary death, that's at the heart of what we must understand.

Four questions Peter answers here, just briefly.

Question number one: what were we redeemed from?

In the case of the Passover which I read out of Exodus, they were redeemed from divine judgment, from death, from execution at the hands of the death angel.

What were we redeemed from?

Well, in a word, sin...sin. We were redeemed from sin. I was asked this week in the question and answer session with pastors, "When you present the gospel we have so many different ways to present the gospel, so many different approaches to the gospel, so much confusion about what the gospel is and what elements of the gospel are necessary to be believed, we have all these people saying...well, you need to present this and you don't want to present this cause it's divisive...and all these different perspectives, what is necessary?" They asked. I was interested in that fact that they were still asking the question even though they were in spiritual leadership.

The first thing that's necessary is to discuss sin. We have to understand the human predicament. We are sinful and we are headed for death, physical and eternal. We are doomed to the divine judgment of God. We were redeemed then from sin.

Now how are we to characterize sin?

Well there are four terms in the passage that do that. Go back to verse 14, Peter says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts," let's stop right there. The first characteristic of sin is a moral characterization. It is lusts that define us. Now what are lusts? Epithumiain the Greek, strong desires in the heart for what is evil...strong desires in the heart for what is wrong. We are driven by a hankering for what is wrong. This is what Genesis 6 indicates. God looked at the wickedness of man and saw that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Our motives are corrupt, our desires are corrupt. From the depths of our heart the imaginations of our mind are wicked.

James talks about lust conceiving and bringing forth sin. We are fundamentally wicked. We have deeper than our thoughts down deeper in us than our conscious thoughts we have these hankerings, these cravings, these longings for what is wrong and what is evil. We are a flesh-controlled person. Down deep in us there are cravings to lie, cravings to fulfill our sinful passions. These distortions deep in us lead to sins of all kinds being conceived in our minds.

Again I say our lusts in some ways are deeper than our thinking. They rise into our minds and they are expanded into imaginations and fantasies that then give birth to sin which produces death. We are morally corrupt deep down, that's why trying to moralize unconverted people is futile. All you can do at best would be turn them in to hypocrites.

Secondly, our sinfulness is defined for us in verse 14 not only as lusts which were yours, but he adds, "In your ignorance." Not only are we sinful morally, we're sinfully intellectually. That is to say we are ignorant of God. We are ignorant of God's law, ignorant of God's standards. We cannot know God. The natural man doesn't know the things of God, they are foolishness to him. John 17:25 Jesus said, "The world has not known you," we don't know God, we don't understand His truth. We don't therefore have enough information to live as we ought to live. We are characterized in Romans 1:28 as having a reprobate mind, as being driven by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, of the pride of life coming out of those evil hankerings and having no restraining knowledge of God in our minds. We are ignorant, we have no knowledge of God. So we are sinful morally and we are sinful intellectually.

Thirdly, he talks about sin effects us socially. Down in verse 18 he says, "We were redeemed with...not with perishable things like silver and gold, from your futile way of life." That means...matiosin the Greek means empty, better yet, valueless, valueless. We would like to think, I think, that we're making great contribution to humanity, we're making a great contribution to the world and great contribution to people around us and we have some social benefits to lay on the world we influence. The truth of the matter is we are meaningless, we are powerless, we are pointless, we are valueless. All is, as the writer of Ecclesiastes says, "Vanity, vanity, vanity, nothingness, nothingness, nothingness." Socially we make no difference over the long haul. Our life is empty as far as having any value to anyone else, any real spiritual, permanent, eternal value.

So, we in definition from this text are sinful morally, intellectually and socially. We could add one more, religiously. We are lost even though we're religious. Verse 18 says that we were not redeemed with perishable things from our futile way of life, then this, "inherited from your forefathers." What that simply means is it's just referring to what tradition was passed down to us. In the case of Peter he was from a Jewish environment, he would be looking at apostate Judaism and he would say, "Your religion was corrupt because you were an apostate Jew." If he was talking to Gentiles he would say, "Your religion was corrupt, your religion of paganism, you were involved in pagan religion and that was in evidence of your degenerate sinfulness."

Morally, intellectually, socially, religiously, every way you cut it, we're sinful. Our morality is not what is acceptable to God. Our minds aren't acceptable to Him. We can't attain to Him. Our social impact is zero and our religion is a damning religion. This is the state of our sin. It is pervasive. We are fettered.

And when you ask people today, you know what I mean, when you define sin, how do people usually define it? I mean, gambling, drinking, committing acts of sexual sin. It's far more than that, that's sort of superficial. when you look at the Scripture's definition of sin it makes plain that we are in a prison cell and the prison cell is primarily that of alienation from God. And there's no jail break for us by our own hands. We are separated from God with the coils of a twisted self. Our self is tortured into ugly shapes of conceit and fear, resentment, rebellion. It's a slavery too terrible, too tyrannical for us to ever extract ourselves. And so we are in desperate condition. The punishment for this is damnation. The condition of unredeemed man is so pervasive it totally engulfs him and there's absolutely nothing he can do about it and God has promised to judge him for it.

He is degraded. He is defiled. Once a companion in the Garden of God he is fit only now to have fellowship with devils and demons. His flesh is filthy. His body is stained and need of cleansing. Its members and faculties are given to unclean thoughts and words and actions. There's no part of him that is fit for union with God. The Scripture says his tongue is deceitful, his lips are poisonous, his throat is like an open tomb, his eyes are full of adultery and pride, his ears are deaf to God's voice and truth, his hands do evil and his feet are swift to shed blood. His mind is depraved and reprobate. His heart is desperately wicked. His will is unrepentant and hard. He resists God. He refuses life. His conscience is evil. That's pretty comprehensive stuff.

It's not one faculty that sin has defiled, but like a strong poison it soaks in and eats through everything we are and man therefore is left in this utter darkness, darkened mind, groping, unable to comprehend the light, walking in all kinds of wickedness, doesn't know where he's going, stumbles, doesn't know why he stumbles or how to get up. And you can see the desperation. It is from that that he needs to be redeemed. That's what we were redeemed from.

Next question...what were we redeemed with?

Verse 18, not with silver and gold, not with any perishable commodity, not with any decaying commodity, this isn't some ransom price that...that could be used in an earthly environment such as you would read about back in the thirtieth chapter of Exodus. This isn't some earthly ransom. There is no coinage. There is no human wealth. There is no earthly commodity that can pay the price.

So, verse 18 says, "We were redeemed with precious blood," that means death, the death of someone precious, the death of a precious Lamb, an unblemished spotless Lamb. Blood is a vivid way to describe death, the sacrificial death was the price paid.

Now that doesn't surprise us because we know if we know the Old Testament that that's the way God designed it. That there needed to be a substitute to pay the price of redemption, to pay the ransom to God. It takes the death of a substitute. And it takes the death of a spotless Lamb without blemish who is precious.

And who is it? End of verse 19, it's Christ. That's why John the Baptist looked at Jesus when He came down to the Jordan River and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

And that answers the third questions...who were we redeemed by? The answer is Christ. We were redeemed with blood, the death of a substitute Lamb. Who was it? It was Christ. He's the perfect, spotless, unblemished sacrifice for sin. He's the one more precious than any who ever lives, more valuable than any other who ever walked on this earth. It was His precious life that was given for us. He died on the cross to pay our ransom price, to satisfy the justice of God, the person of Jesus Christ.

Peter not wanting to just leave it at that shows why Christ was so precious, or how He was so precious. Verse 20 says, "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world." That is to say God planned this from before the foundation of the world. It was predestined. These are exquisite elements of the preciousness of Christ. He was the predestined one. If He was predestined from before the world began, before creation in eternity past, of course He then was a member of the trinity.

Secondly, He was incarnated, He has appeared in these last times. He wasn't made in these last times, He just appeared in these last times. That means He came into the world. He was predestined and He was incarnated,phaneroo, a historical event to make plain and clear, manifest to reveal. Chosen in time, chosen in eternity rather, revealed in time. His appearance was through virgin birth, as we're learning in Luke chapter 1. He came into the world. So this...this Lamb, this ransom was predestined and was incarnated.

Thirdly, he emphasizes in verse 21 that He was raised from the dead. This was a divine affirmation that His sacrifice was complete and perfect. And then it says God not only raised Him from the dead, verse 21, but He also gave Him glory. That's His ascension. Who is the Lamb? It is Christ, the One who lived before time and was predestined from eternity to be the sacrifice, the One who was incarnate, virgin born, came into the world, died on the cross. The One who then was raised from the dead and followed that up with an ascension into the glories of heaven...the predestined, incarnated, risen, ascended Christ, the most precious person ever, died to purchase our redemption. That's why the song writer wrote, "Precious Lamb of glory, loves most wondrous story, heart of God's redemption of man, worship the Lamb of glory."

Final question...what were we redeemed for?

Well, first of all, verse 20 says, at the end of the verse, "For the sake of you," for your sake. All of this

is for us. All of this is for us.

What does it bring to us? Verse 21, "Who through Him are believers in God. It was for our sake so that we might be believers in God. It was for us, to make us believers in God, to bring us to God so that, end of verse 21, "Your faith and hope are in God." You have hope in this world, you're most miserable. "But it was for us to bring us to God, to make us believers in God whose faith and hope would be in God." Just defines the fact that we are linked to God. He is the One we trust. He is the One in whom we hope. He is our life. We live in faith. We live in hope in our God.

That's what salvation does, it brings you to God. And all your trust is in God and all your hope is in God both in time and eternity. This is redemption. This is our message. If you're going to talk about the gospel, let me tell you how to talk about it. Talk about sin, then talk about substitution. And when you talk about substitution talk about the ransom price paid by Christ as the Lamb who died in our place to satisfy the justice of God. And then talk about submission. Sin, substitution and submission, talk about the fact that you must come to God submitting by recognizing your sin and embracing Jesus as Lord to receive the gift of salvation. That's the gospel.

As we come to the Lord's table, what is portrayed here so vividly is this whole matter of redemption. The bread speaks of His body given for us. The cup of His blood shed for us. This is the heart of our faith. That's why we do this. Join me in prayer.

Father, as we gather at Your table at this time we ask that You would lead us through a time of heart examination. Help us because You have told us to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith, to examine ourselves to see if there's any sin our lives. Help us to be honest before You even now.

Let me help you with that by having you ask some questions in your own heart. Have I unashamedly acknowledged Christ before the world? Have I trusted in His Word and His promises? Have I been thankful for all His blessings? Have I endeavored to serve My God and keep His commandments? Have I worked for My Lord and His church for His honor and glory? Have I been faithful in my prayer life, faithful in my attendance to worship? Have I dealt with the sins of my heart? Have I tried to make my home holy? Been faithful in all my relationships? Have I at all times tried to do unto others who I know Christ would want me to do? Have I been proud, self-centered, envious, covetous, selfish, discontent? Have I humbly received counsel and reproof and been willing to acknowledge my sins? Have I been angry? Have I used my Lord's name in vain? Have I been disagreeable, fault-finding, vengeful? Have I borne malice or hatred in my heart? Have I ever rejoiced at the misfortune of others? Have I failed to be patient, kind, forgiving? Have I faithfully given my substance to the Lord? Have I cheated, lied, been wasteful, impure in thought, word or deed? Have I acted dishonorably in any way? Am I sorry for those sins? Do I long to be more like Christ? Have I been faithful in praying for the lost, studying the Word? So the list would go.

Lord, You know that we've fallen short in these areas. Cleanse us, set us on our feet, make us more like Your Son.

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