



**WORSHIP IN THE
COVENANT COMMUNITY**

THE SILENT MOMENT

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FALL QUARTER 2024

Vol. 41

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER

No. 4

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THE SILENT MOMENT—USPS 737-070

The Silent Moment (USPS 737-070) is published quarterly for \$16.00 / year by AMEC Sunday School Union, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37212. Periodicals postage paid at Nashville, TN. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Silent Moment*, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

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The Silent Moment

“A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.”

—— John 4:23



September-November 2024

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Worship in the Covenant Community

Worship is a wonderful opportunity to respond to God—to give Him glory for who He is and what He has done. We worship Him for His holiness and wisdom, His goodness and greatness, His justice and mercy, His salvation and promises. What else would you list?

Whether we're gathered with other believers or we're alone, our worship is an appropriate response to God. The indwelling Holy Spirit prompts us to approach and serve God in ways that honor and exalt Him. In the ancient world, people brought physical objects as offerings. Today, as believers in Christ, we offer *ourselves* to God. In Romans 12:1, Paul writes, "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."

Worship can be time or money that we set aside to honor God. Worship can also be sincere expressions of gratitude to Him or even difficult choices we make that please Him. Sometimes worship is lifting up prayers and songs as we draw near to God in reverence and love. We can worship no matter how we feel in the moment. We worship God because we love and trust Him.

Authentic worship isn't automatic in the songs we sing or in our behavior at church. (It's possible to go through the motions of a worship service when we're self-focused, self-serving, or self-exalting.) True worship comes from a heart attuned to God in everyday life. When we gather with God's people, we bring with us the ways we've responded to God during the week. How have we walked with God in our private lives and with those around us—our family members, neighbors, coworkers, even drivers on the road?

If we're at church (or anywhere) and we recognize we've not been honoring God, we can confess our sin right where we are, and we can receive God's forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). We can recommit ourselves to follow Him in paths of righteousness for His name's sake (Psalm 23:3).

Our worship is so much more than a church service or a set of songs. As we make our way through this quarter's meditations, may the Holy Spirit guide us into thoughts, words, attitudes, and actions that are pleasing to God, and as we gather with His covenant community, may we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Peace to your heart!

Christine Dallman, Editor

God's Goodness

The LORD said to Abram . . . , “I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted” (Genesis 13:14, 16).

Scripture: Genesis 13:8-18

Song: “Good, Good Father”

Philanthropist Larry Dean Stewart (1948–2007) was a Kansas City millionaire known for giving out money each December to people on the streets. He was the original “Secret Santa.” It all began in December 1979 when Stewart was eating in a diner. He noticed the needs of the people around him and was moved to act. Stewart resolved to walk the streets each December, giving money to meet needs. Within a span of 26 years, he distributed nearly \$1.3 million—a profound demonstration of human kindness and goodwill.

God demonstrated His goodness when He gave a priceless promise to Abraham. Abraham’s nephew, Lot, chose what looked like the best of the land, but it turned out to be a place where sin was rampant. God had something better in mind for Abraham and his descendants.

God has good things in mind for His people today as well. He’s promised to be there for us. He has good plans for our lives. As we trust Him, He will meet our needs as He has done countless times before, often just when it’s needed most.

Father, thank You for Your goodness and for giving me what I need. Help me to be thankful for all Your gifts. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Pressing On

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).

Scripture: Romans 8:18-28

Song: “When We All Get to Heaven”

On a trip to Colorado, I wanted a bird’s-eye view of my childhood home, so my husband, Jeff, and I drove up the highest paved road in North America. It was true that the Mount Evans Scenic Byway was paved, but orange traffic cones marked crumbling sections of tarmac. Jeff navigated hairpin turns and white-knuckled it when passing vehicles were coming toward us. By the time we reached Summit Lake, we were practically hyperventilating! Would the view be worth all this effort?

The apostle Paul reminded believers in Rome that the Christian life would not be a smooth journey. Trials and afflictions would come their way, sometimes for the sake of Christ. But Paul encouraged his readers to keep going because of the promise of what is to come.

With everything we see happening in the world, we might feel overwhelmed and discouraged. To keep us focused and hopeful, God has given His inspired Word to encourage us. And as the hymn writer Eliza Hewitt wrote in today’s song, “While we walk the pilgrim pathway, / Clouds will overspread the sky; / But when trav’ling days are over, / Not a shadow, not a sigh.”

Father, thank You for reminding me that there are better days ahead. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Tell Him Your Troubles

The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all (Psalm 34:19).

Scripture: Psalm 34:11-22

Song: “I Must Tell Jesus”

Helen Roseveare (1925–2016) was a medical student at the University of Cambridge when she received Christ and decided to become a missionary. Upon graduation, she applied with the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) and set off for the Congo. There she was thrust into leadership, but her strong personality caused friction with other missionaries. After five years of service, she went back to England for further training and to consider her future. Ultimately, she returned to the Congo, which had become antagonistic toward foreigners, adding another layer of difficulty to her service there.

When we face struggles like Helen did, how do we overcome our difficulties? Do we chastise ourselves? Do we gloss over problems, telling ourselves to just count our blessings while pretending everything's OK? Or are we honest with ourselves and with God, calling out to Him when we're struggling?

While it's not healthy for us to dwell on our problems, it's also not good for us to deny them. When we read Psalms, we're reminded that it's OK to be honest with God, to bring our pain to Him and cry, “Unfair!” He knows that life on earth includes suffering. He knows what is happening to us in the places where we are hurting and struggling—and He cares.

Father, thank You for understanding my human nature and allowing me to pour out my struggles to You in an honest way. I trust You to intervene and provide what is needed. In Jesus' name, amen.

Singing All Together

Long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God (Nehemiah 12:46).

Scripture: Nehemiah 12:27-30, 44-47

Song: “Come, Let Us All Unite to Sing”

Music is an important part of our life as believers. Yet sometimes our differing opinions about what is appropriate for worship can divide us. I once heard a leader point out that a song I had learned in my early days of following Jesus was not God-centered but man-centered. In another church, I was disappointed when an 800-year-old classic was eliminated from the song list because it was deemed outdated. Regardless of such things, I will keep singing with God’s people!

When the Israelites gathered to celebrate the restoration of the wall of Jerusalem, worship leaders came to direct the people in song. Some tunes were “oldies but goodies,” composed by King David and Asaph. Did everyone remember these songs? Were there new songs as well? In any case, everyone joined in singing with one voice.

When the apostle Paul closed his letter to the Romans, he prayed for believers to glorify God in united worship, writing, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6).

Father, bless the song leaders who are preparing for the upcoming worship service. Help them bring glory to Your name as they point me and other worshipers to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Good Examples

[God said to Solomon,] “As for you, if you walk before me faithfully as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne” (2 Chronicles 7:17-18).

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:12-22

Song: “How Beautiful”

A well-known Christian teacher came to our city to speak at a conference, and I was assigned to be her aide. Turns out, she arrived with a traveling companion, so all I did was transport her to the airport. At the conference, her message was powerful and bold. There was no hesitancy or apology when she shared God’s Word. On the way to the airport, I took advantage of the opportunity to pepper her with questions. I wanted to know all I could about her life because I wanted to be like her.

While no human is perfect—and King David’s life wasn’t without mistakes—God considered him to be a man worth emulating. So the Lord encouraged Solomon, David’s son, to be like his dad. God promised that if Solomon followed Him fully and obeyed Him with a whole heart like David had, Solomon’s descendants would sit on the throne forever.

Who are your heroes of faith? And how are they inspiring you to follow Christ? Maybe it would be a good time to reread a biography or to contact a former mentor. Or perhaps you might consider contacting someone else who is having a positive spiritual influence on your life.

Father, thank You for giving me examples who encourage my faith and inspire me to grow, even while I know You are my ultimate guide. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Prayer 101

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Song: “The Lord’s Prayer”

While on vacation in the Yorkshire Dales, England, my husband and I attended a church service in the nearby market town of Carnforth. That Sunday, Pastor Cristi spoke about prayer. He said that although some people find it easy to pray, no one is born knowing how to do it, and no one has an exclusive gift for praying. Rather, prayer needs to be learned. “Prayer is hard,” he said. “Prayer is a battle. Prayer is a challenge for almost every normal Christian, so there’s no better place to go than to Jesus and see what He teaches.”

The disciples watched Jesus and walked with Him, and when they saw how He spoke to His Father in Heaven, they wanted to learn how to do it too. So they humbly asked Him for instruction, and Jesus honored their request by giving them a framework to follow so they could learn how to pray effectively.

We felt encouraged when Pastor Cristi reminded us at the end of that church service, “Prayer is a journey. Prayer is a learning process, and we’re [all] at different stages. But one thing that [will] fuel your prayer life is reading the Scriptures. And the more you read, the more you’ll have confidence to come before Him.”

Father, thank You for showing me in Your Word that my prayer life can begin growing simply by calling on You as my Heavenly Father. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Introducing God

Then Solomon stood . . . in front of the whole assembly of Israel . . . and said: “LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way” (1 Kings 8:22-23).

Scripture: 1 Kings 8:22-24, 27-30, 37-43

Song: “Your Great Name”

I turned beet red when I heard the emcee introduce me. I had sent a short bio to make sure the audience knew who I was, but after she’d read what I’d written, the speaker began to elaborate. I was the field leader for an organization, and she wanted to honor me. But there were inaccuracies that made me seem more important than I was. The high expectations created by this made me nervous. I didn’t want to embarrass her, so I didn’t make any corrections, leaving the audience under a mistaken impression about me.

When King Solomon went before the people, he knew the God of Israel and acknowledged Him publicly, accurately declaring the truth about His character. God is the true God, there is no one like Him, and He is the One who can be trusted to keep His promises.

There’s no better way for us to know God than to devote time and attention to reading His Word to become rightly acquainted with Him. Then when we meet others and want to introduce our Savior to them, we can accurately share who He is and represent Him well.

Father, help me introduce You accurately through what You have revealed in Scripture. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Cleaning Out Our Hearts

[Solomon prayed,] “When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin . . . forgive your people . . . whom you brought out of Egypt” (1 Kings 8:46, 50-51).

Scripture: 1 Kings 8:44-53

Song: “Forgiveness”

The fall air was crisp, but it was warm enough for me to sit on the front porch and read my Bible. After praying, I felt refreshed and ready to tackle the worst job on my to-do list: cleaning out the shower drain. Holding my breath and grimacing, I reached in and dug out a glob of soap-scum residue. Yuck! At that moment, I realized that although I had just spent time in fellowship with the Lord, I had a similarly disgusting glob in my heart: bitterness toward a fellow believer.

Despite my deep commitment to God, I will always have the propensity to sin. Solomon knew the same thing about the Israelites, so the young king prayed for them in advance.

The Scriptures tell us that God “knows how we are formed” (Psalm 103:14), and Jesus, our high priest, is able “to empathize with our weaknesses” (Hebrews 4:15). The example of Solomon’s prayer reminds us that God is willing to forgive us when we ask Him to. As His children, we can pray the words of Psalm 139 daily: “Search me, God, and know my heart. . . . See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (vv. 23-24).

Father, thank You for Your mercy. Help me to recognize and forsake sin before it takes root in my heart. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Conquering Through Christ

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:35, 37).

Scripture: Romans 8:29-39

Song: “Jesus Giveth Us the Victory”

Nearly two decades after a freak diving accident left a 41-year-old Chicago man a quadriplegic, he overcame his injury. Of people with that type of injury, 95 percent never walk again. But he did. Then he swam from Alcatraz to San Francisco, a treacherous mile-long struggle through rough waves and cold water. The prison sat behind him as a symbolic backdrop; being paralyzed had felt like being in prison.

As believers in Christ Jesus, we have been set free from an impossible prison of paralyzing sin and shame. Praise the Lord! In this life, however, we will still experience adversity and struggle, injury and pain. Thankfully, as God’s beloved children, we have everything we need in Christ to overcome our hardships. And in the process, we are being made more and more like our Lord. The progress may seem slow sometimes, but His love for us is unshakable.

Jesus is everything to a believer: savior, shepherd, best friend, bondage-breaker, and the lover of our souls. He saves us and strengthens us, and from within His love, He makes us more than conquerors.

Father, thank You for Your conquering love at work in my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Celebrating Eternal Life

It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself (2 Corinthians 4:13-14).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:8-18

Song: “I Can Only Imagine”

My mom passed away in 2022 after a long illness. Many family members gathered to celebrate her life. Even though it was a sad occasion because she's no longer with us, it was also a celebration because she's finally home. As we remembered her life here, there were stories, songs, and lots of laughter. It was beautiful and bitter-sweet.

Today's passage reminds us that our hope for life beyond this one is based in the promise of God's Word. The apostle Paul assured the Corinthian church that the power of God that raised Christ from the dead is able to raise up believers and bring them into God's presence for all eternity.

As Christians, we have a celebration coming when we reach the end of our earthly lives. For us, physical death gives way to eternal life. Heaven will warmly welcome those who have received salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Our home will be with Him. We can only imagine that joyful celebration awaiting us!

Father, I'm so grateful that You sent Jesus to make a way for me to join You in Heaven for all eternity. All my days, I want to live to honor You. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Waiting Turtle

I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God. . . . Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me (Psalm 69:3, 15).

Scripture: Psalm 69:1-15

Song: “While I’m Waiting”

In Canada, painted turtles are born in autumn but stay underground, frozen with no heartbeat. They barely have brain activity. The turtles wait patiently for the warmth of spring to thaw their frozen hearts. It takes six months. When the temperature rises, their hearts slowly begin to beat, bringing them back to life.

The hearts of Christians can seem frozen at times. We may be dealing with hard places in life while still growing up spiritually. We can easily become angry because God allowed something unfair to happen. We may retreat in our immaturity. But we still hope in God. We wait. We know He’ll work everything out for good in His perfect timing. Like the painted turtles wait for the warmth of the sun, we wait for the warmth of God’s Son. Jesus’ love is able to thaw our frozen hearts, reviving our faith and our joy in Him.

The wait may be painful, but hope is powerful. We don’t know what God will do, but today we can renew our confidence that He has our best interests at heart. We’ll eventually see His powerful work in our lives, making us more like Jesus. His purpose for our waiting is perfect for our growth.

Father, I will choose to trust You in the waiting times of life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Restored with Gold

Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. . . . But as for me, afflicted and in pain—may your salvation, God, protect me (Psalm 69:20, 29).

Scripture: Psalm 69:16-21, 29-36

Song: “Safe”

Kintsugi is a Japanese art form of repairing damaged ceramic. Instead of concealing the brokenness of a dish, it's sealed with lacquer that is mixed with a powder form of some metal, such as gold, platinum, or silver. The mended markings on the vessel—now filled with gold where cracks had been—are a beautiful reminder of its restoration. A broken dish becomes a unique piece of art.

When we have a deep flesh wound, there'll be a scar—a mark reminding us we were once badly injured but have experienced healing. It's like that spiritually with our hearts. God is close to the brokenhearted and saves those crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18). He remains near when it seems everyone else has abandoned us. He binds the pieces of our broken hearts together again. When we're crushed, and we don't think we can hold it together, He holds us in His powerful hands. We may have a scar on our soul from the experience, but it reminds us of God's healing.

True healing for our deep wounds comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. He may guide us using others who are wise, but it is His powerful work in us that makes us whole.

Father, please bind together my broken places with Your mighty healing power. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Stress Test

The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. . . . May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance (2 Thessalonians 3:3, 5).

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Song: "Be the Strength of My Life"

Heart trouble runs in my family, and most of us struggle with some sort of heart issue. Diagnosing a heart problem usually involves a stress test. My test was harder than I expected, and by the time I finished on the treadmill, I was exhausted and ready to go home. Thankfully, the test results revealed that my heart was generally in good condition.

In our spiritual lives, God may give us a spiritual stress test to help reveal the condition of our hearts. The source of the stress may come in the form of an illness, marriage struggles, job loss, financial distress, or some other issue, large or small. Over time, we might become weary of constant stress in a particular area of life. But the strain might be helping bring to light what we need, whether it's to develop perseverance or to make some kind of change. The irony, though, is that the stress test is not for God, the Great Physician, to be able to see the problem; He already knows. It's for us to see our *own* heart issues.

When we understand what is needed, we can seek God's grace to begin making changes. Thankfully, God knows our hearts and will help strengthen them as we look to Him.

Father, show me what the stress in my life reveals about my heart. In Jesus' name, amen.

Eyes That See Us

Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, “. . . Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God” (2 Kings 19:15-16).

Scripture: 2 Kings 19:14-19

Song: “His Eye Is on the Sparrow”

At four weeks old and still covered in down, a peregrine falcon chick has giant eyes. Those big eyes can see prey a half mile away. When they're ready for flight, they'll reach speeds between 60 and 200 mph (100 to 320 kmph). Once nearly extinct, these endangered birds are tagged with loose-fitting metal bands and will be tracked for life.

In contrast to the peregrine falcon, our spiritual vision is limited. We cannot see our way forward on our own. At times, we may even experience complete helplessness like Hezekiah did in today's passage. At such times we're reminded how much we need God's wisdom, guidance, and intervention. We're suddenly aware that we have no idea what's ahead or how to navigate it. But God does. His sight is perfect because He's omniscient—He sees and knows everything. And He is able to do anything.

Like the baby falcons are tagged for tracking, God has marked us with His Holy Spirit. There's no way He can lose track of us, and no one can snatch us away from Him (John 10:28). He is able to guide us through this life all the way to eternity. We are precious in His sight (Psalm 116:15).

Father, thank You for seeing me and for caring about what concerns me today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Audacious Prayer

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him. . . . ‘Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came’” (2 Kings 19:20-21, 28).

Scripture: 2 Kings 19:20-31

Song: “Seek Ye First”

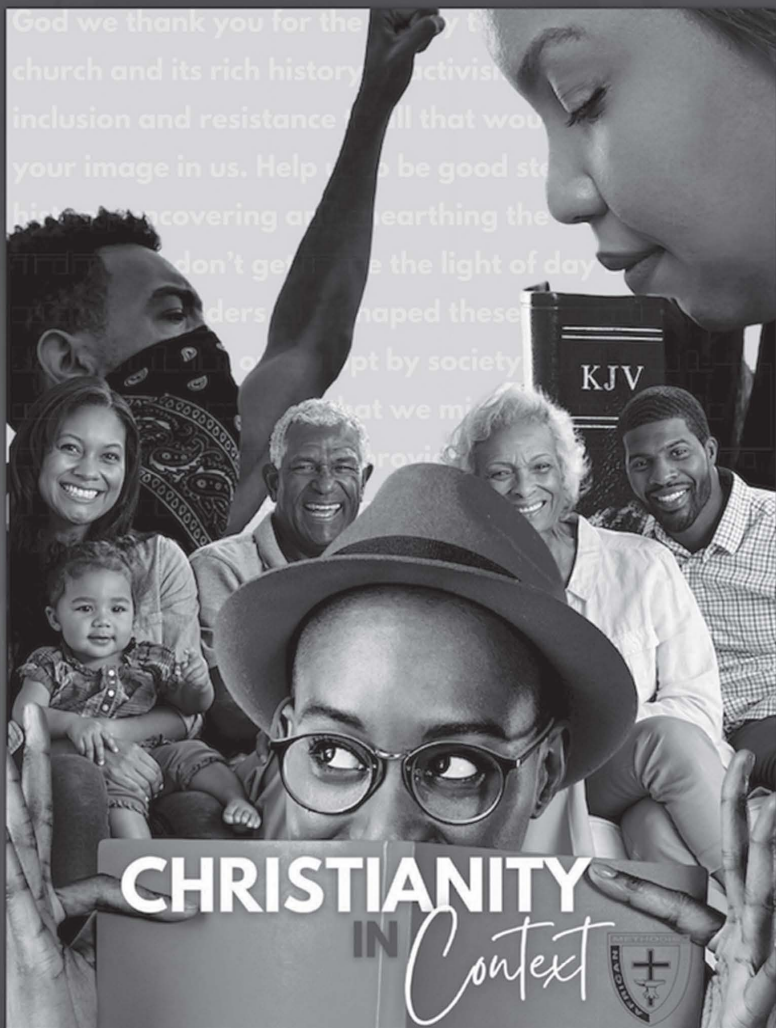
In the South, a certain form of audacious behavior is referred to as a “hissy fit.” An example of this would be a child acting out—screaming, stomping their feet, maybe even rolling around on the floor—because they didn’t get their way.

As God’s children, we don’t need to throw a temper tantrum to get God’s attention. Though at times it may seem He’s not listening—and we might grow frustrated waiting for Him to answer us—we don’t need to give up or act out. Instead we can continue audaciously asking for what we need, and He *will* answer us (Matthew 7:7-8).

Hezekiah brought his petition before the Lord, spreading out the letter full of audacious boasts and threats sent by the king of Assyria. God heard and answered Hezekiah’s prayer, delivering him and the kingdom of Judah from attack. God is faithful and good, and it is in seeking Him and waiting for Him that we learn to trust Him.

Father, please hear my prayers, but do what is best in Your sight. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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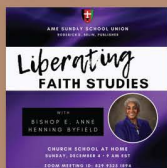
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