Believe Right, Live Ready

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[0:00] So open with me to 2 Peter. We've only got two more weeks left in this book, including tonight.! So we're on the tail end of 2 Peter.

When we think about time, time's actually kind of a tricky thing. Time is, in some sense, relative. It's not objective. The passage of time is objective. A minute will always be 60 seconds. But the perception of time, our perception of time, is not always objective.
So you've heard statements like, time flies when you're having fun. If you're enjoying yourself, like when you're at Elevate, for example, it goes by really quickly, and it seems to just slip through your fingers so fast.
If you're bored, time goes so slowly, it seems like. So our perception of time is a little bit subjective. So Lacey was pregnant for nine months.
[1:08] For me, that nine months flew by. For her, she might tell you a different story. But for me, it went by super quick. When she was in labor, we were waiting for her doctor to get to the room. And it took the doctor five minutes to get there, which is pretty quick.

That five minutes felt longer than the entire nine months for me. Five minutes is much shorter than nine months, but the perception of time in those moments made the time seem much longer.
And when we deal with the second coming of Christ, we're dealing with a little bit of our perception of time. It seems like it's been a long time since Christ was here on earth.
It was 2,000 years ago. That is a long time. But in another way, there hasn't been much time that's passed at all. And so we'll be dealing with this tonight as we once again think about the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Our title for tonight is Believe Right, Live Ready. Believe Right, Live Ready. And for our outline tonight, I want to kind of walk through this sentence together.
[2:17] So this sentence, each clause of it will give us our outline for tonight. The Lord is patient, but his patience will run out, so live ready.

The Lord is patient, but his patience will run out, so live ready. So firstly, number one, the Lord is patient.
The Lord is patient. We see this in verses 8 and 9. Peter says, So he starts this new section saying, don't overlook this one fact, beloved.
So he calls them beloved again, which he did in chapter 3, verse 1. A sign of his pastoral heart for them, their siblings in Christ. And if you remember, the false teachers have overlooked several facts.
If you go back to chapter 3, verses 5 through 7, they've overlooked the creation of the world. They've overlooked the fact of the flood destroying the world. They've overlooked the fact that God has judged sinners previously.
[3:36] They're overlooking many things. And Peter does not want his people, and he does not want us to fall into the same trap. He does not want us to forget certain facts.

And here's the fact he wants to highlight for us this evening. With the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.
We read Psalm 90 to begin our service. In Psalm 90, verse 4, Moses prays to the Lord and says, A thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it's past, or as a watch in the night, which is just a three-hour period during the middle of the night.
That's what a thousand years is like to God. Yesterday, when it's over, or a three-hour period in the middle of the night. Why is this the case?
When we think about God, we need to remember that he is outside of time. He is beyond time. Time itself is a created reality.

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[4:47] Time is not eternal. Time is something that was created in the beginning. And so before God created anything, when it was just our triune God dwelling with himself, there was no time.

God existed before time began. But even that statement doesn't actually make sense. Before time began. Because before is a word that has to do with time.
And so we really even struggle to describe before time began. God has always existed. Time itself is a created reality.
And so because of that, God is not bound by time. God is not experiencing life as a succession of experiences, one day after another.
He created time, so he's not bound by it. And because of that, we cannot hold him to our standards of time. This infinite God does not fit into our finite schedules.
[5:55] We can't contain him in our own timelines. He is utterly beyond time because he is the one who created it. And so what seems like a long time to us is not necessarily a long time to him.

He is outside of time altogether. And we get a little taste of this as we grow up and get older. When you were six years old, one year felt like an eternity.
And that was like 20% of your life at that point, roughly. So one year at six years old feels like a long time. Now that you're 15, one year is like 6.7% of your life.
Literally. It truly is. Look it up. Use your calculator. So time kind of dilates a little bit. Time kind of changes for us as we experience more of it.
But God is completely outside of time altogether. Together. And this is true and helpful when we think about our prayers as well.
[7:02] I'm sure if we went around the room, all of us have prayed something specific to God that did not get answered. Or didn't receive an answer that we would have liked. And we think, I prayed for my mom to get better.

Or I prayed for my dad to get a job. I prayed for my aunt. I prayed for so and so. And nothing seemed to happen. And part of what's going on there is we can become impatient with God's timing.
We can say, I prayed. I've been praying for six months and God isn't doing anything. We need to remember that he is outside of time. And so six months when you're suffering seems like an eternity.
But even a thousand years to the Lord is as one day. Now this isn't a mathematical equation. So anytime we see one day in the Bible, we can't read that as a thousand years. This is just a metaphor to try to explain how the Lord is outside of time from our perspective.
And so Peter goes on in verse 9. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness.
[8:13] He's not just slow because it feels like it's slow to us. He's not slow to keep his promise just because false teachers claim that he's slow to keep his promise.

He's not slow as we would count slowness or as these false teachers would count slowness. And if you remember back in chapter 3 verse 4, they're saying, where is the promise of his coming?
He made this promise to come back. It's been so long. Why such a delay? In the Old Testament, there's a prophet by the name of Habakkuk.
And the Lord said to him, Habakkuk was struggling with the Lord's will and how the Lord could have this timing worked out. And he told Habakkuk in chapter 2 verse 3, if it seems slow, wait for it.
Which doesn't seem like that much help if you're waiting for something. He's like, just keep waiting.
But the Lord's point is, you think I'm slow because you're counting me by your perception of time.
[9:15] If I seem slow, keep waiting. But we do need to answer the question, why is there such a delay? We get the Lord's outside of time. We get that a thousand years to him is as nothing.

It's as a day to us. But why has there been such a delay? Christ promised that he would return very soon. The apostles themselves thought that he would come back in their own lifetime.
And here we are 2,000 years later. No sign of Christ. Why has it been so long? Well, Peter actually answers.
So he says he's not slow, but, and that's a big but, God is patient towards you. Not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
So this delay, this 2,000 years since Christ told us he would come back, is not a sign of weakness on his part. It's not a sign of laziness.
[10:17] It's not a sign of him not caring or not being able to keep his promise. The delay is because he is incredibly patient with us. The delay is because he's incredibly merciful and patient

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toward us as sinners.

And this is how God describes himself towards us. In Exodus 34, verse 6, he reveals himself to Moses and he says, I'm Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious and slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
He describes himself as being slow to anger or as patient toward sinners. But don't make the same mistake that the false teachers made.
They saw this delay and thought, if Christ is delaying his judgment, he must not care about sin. And so they mistook his patience with indifference.
They thought, Christ isn't coming back. He's delaying his promise. He must not care about sin. So he is patient, but don't interpret his patience as not really caring about sin.
[11:36] And so he's not up in heaven, dilly-dallying, trying to put this off, trying to delay this. Instead, he's waiting. And there is a difference there.

My dad and I like to go deer hunting. It's been a little bit since we've been able to do that. Any hunters at all? Any interests? Okay. So when we go deer hunting, most of the time we're not talking to each other.
And we're not even together. We kind of go our separate ways and sit there. And if you don't know what hunting is or you're not familiar with it, you would look at us and be like, you're doing nothing. Like, you're literally just sitting there. And in some sense, that's true. We are just sitting there. But we're waiting. And that's different from doing nothing. We are waiting until some unsuspecting Bambi comes out and we kill it and eat it.
Not on the spot, but later. We're waiting. And so that can seem like doing nothing, but there is a difference there.
[12:35] Christ is not unnecessarily delaying. He is waiting. And what is he waiting for? He's waiting for his people to be saved.

He's waiting for people to reach repentance. And he's not just waiting for his people to repent. He's even desiring that everyone would repent.
That all people everywhere would respond to the gospel. And while he's waiting, he is storing up his wrath.
He's storing up wrath against sin and against sinners that one day he will pour out in full. And so it's kind of like, if you see it at the splash pad, like those buckets that fill up and then tip over.
That's what God's wrath is like. Christ is storing up his wrath until one day in the future he pours it all out. But in the meantime, his patience, his kindness is supposed to lead us to repentance.
[13:42] This is what Paul says in Romans 2-4, that the kindness of God should lead us to repentance. And so this whole thing is ironic because what are the false teachers not doing?

They're not repenting. They're not obeying Christ. And what are they blaming Christ for? They're saying he's too slow in fulfilling his promises. He's not coming back quickly enough like he said. And so that delay was meant to lead to their repentance. But it actually hardened them and they're now mocking Christ for it. The Lord is abundantly patient with us.
God wants sinners to be saved. And if you're a Christian here tonight, that's because of the Lord's patience. Because the Lord has waited to return is why you've had an opportunity to repent and be saved.
This is what our God is like. He desires people to be saved. And so a question we need to ask is, are we like God? Do we want people to be saved?
[14:49] Or are we like Jonah? Who think there are just certain people in the world that are unworthy of God's mercy. And so when you see an unbeliever in your family, in your friend group, at school, here at church, wherever, if you see an unbeliever, what is your heart reaction to them?

Are you thinking they're going to get judged and they deserve it? Or is your thought, I want them to know Christ. I want them to hear the gospel. I want them to repent.
When we have that urgency, when we have that feeling of wanting people to believe, we are imitating our God who made us. We are looking like and reflecting what our God is truly like.
The Lord is abundantly patient. But one day his patience will run out. He will not delay forever. But we see here that God desires everyone to be saved.
He does not enjoy punishing the wicked. He doesn't get joy from sending people to hell. Even though he does get glory from it.

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[16:03] And so I want to read this for you. Ezekiel 18, verse 32. The prophet Ezekiel speaks about this very thing. Ezekiel 18, verse 32. The Lord speaks to Ezekiel and he says, For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord Yahweh.

So turn and live, or so repent and live. The Lord repeatedly says, I do not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. I do not take pleasure in the punishment of sinners.
The Lord does not enjoy that. So our question now is, then why does he do it? He is God. If he does not enjoy sending people to hell, why do people go to hell?
And if he wants everyone to be saved, why is not everyone saved? If God's desire is for everyone to repent, why does not everyone repent?
Is something stronger than the Lord? Is something preventing him from doing that? And people that are of what we call an Arminian persuasion would say, well, the Lord wants people to be saved.
[17:16] He wants everyone to be saved. But he doesn't want to violate people's freedom to choose. He doesn't want to violate anyone's free will.

I can see where they're coming. I think that can be a reasonable explanation. I don't think it is fully biblical. If God desires people to repent, and if he does not delight in sending people to hell, then why doesn't everyone repent?
And why do people still go to hell? I think the most biblical way to think about that is thinking about two aspects of God's will.
Two aspects of God's will. There's his will of decree and will of desire. Will of decree and will of desire.
So when you think about God's decree, you can think about this in terms of this is just what actually happens in our world. This is what actually takes place around us.
[18:24] Why were there storms last night? Because that was God's will. He decreed it. That's what took place. And so his decree is what happens. His decree is his plan.

It's what actually takes place in this world. His desire is what he wants to happen. What he desires to take place.
And so you think about this as his commands. He commands us to obey, and he wants us to obey. That's his desire. So decree what actually happens.
Desire what he wants to happen. So a couple of examples that I think will help solidify this in our minds, to help give us biblical examples. First one would be the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament.
God gave the Ten Commandments to reveal his will to the Israelites. Did God want the Israelites to obey those commandments? Yes, he did.
[19:23] Did they obey those commandments? No, they did not. His desire was that they would submit to him and obey. His decree, his plan, what actually happened was that they rebelled, which was actually a part of his plan, as he predicted.

He commanded obedience. He desired obedience, but he did not plan their obedience. Okay, one more example. Jesus' crucifixion.
The crucifixion of Jesus. Was the crucifixion good? Yes and no.
We call it Good Friday, but it was a pretty disgusting image, what took place. There was a lot of sin involved in what took place. You think about Judas betraying Jesus. You think about the Romans crucifying him.
The Jews also conspiring against him and making false charges against him. So was the crucifixion of Jesus a good thing? Well, yes and no. It was a bad thing that the Romans and the Jews committed the worst sin in the history of the world, murdering the innocent son of God.
[20:37] But it was good because this is what God planned to take place, to save his people. This is what he decreed to take place.

And so the sinners involved in that story violated God's desire. They broke his rules, but they carried out his plan. And so I think it's biblical to think about these two aspects of God's will.
He desires everyone to be saved, like 2 Peter 3 says. And yet his plan is that not everyone will be saved.
And so why is that? He doesn't delight in their death, but he does delight in getting glory through judgment.
And so if he desires everyone to be saved and he does not delight in the death of the wicked, why do people still go to hell? Because God is glorified in judging sin.

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[21:38] He is ultimately committed to his glory above everything else. And Peter's saying this to show that his delay isn't a weakness.

It reveals his heart for sinners. The Lord is patient. Jonathan Edwards was a theologian and pastor in America before it was America.
So before 1776. So over 250 years ago. And he's probably the greatest mind that has ever come from America. And certainly the greatest theologian that's ever come from America.
And he preached a sermon that rocked the colonies to their core. And it used to be standard reading. I hope it still is. If not, you should read it. The sermon is called Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.
And he gives an image of God in that sermon that I think is helpful and is what Peter's talking about here. He essentially says that with one hand, God is holding back his wrath.
[22:41] He is storing up his wrath and his hand is the dam that's holding his wrath back. And with his other hand, he extends it to sinners. Inviting them to come and receive his mercy.

Inviting them to believe in Christ and avoid his judgment. But one day he's going to drop both of his hands. One day it will be too late to repent.
The offer of mercy will no longer be extended and the flood of his wrath will flow for all eternity against sin. The Lord is unbelievably patient. But one day his patience will run out.
So that leads us secondly. That's our second point. But his patience will run out. Verse 10. Verse 10 begins with but. So even though he's patient, even though he wants everyone to repent, even though he does not want anyone to perish, the day of the Lord will come like a thief.
The day of the Lord was a term coined by the prophets in the Old Testament, describing the day when Yahweh himself would set foot on the earth. And it would be a day of unparalleled darkness, destruction, and condemnation, and death ultimately.
[24:00] And Peter says, it will happen. It will take place. It certainly will happen. And it's right on schedule.

It will come like a thief. And it will be like a thief because no thief comes when he's expected. No thief announces the day that he's going to break into a house.
Jesus described his coming like a thief in Matthew 24. Paul described it the same way. And Peter does here as well. My father-in-law, his name is Cy.
He's a church member here. Has been for a long time. He grew up with five siblings. So he was one of six kids. And one time when he was in high school, they went on vacation together to, I believe it was Hawaii, but they went on vacation.
And they got, so it was all the boys in one room. So there's like four guys sharing this room. Cy, my father-in-law, gets up in the middle of the night to go to the restroom and bumps into someone on his way to the bathroom.
[25:03] He's like, oh, sorry. Goes to the bathroom, comes back, no one's awake, so he just goes to bed. They wake up the next morning and his brother's wallet is gone. It's missing.

And Cy, my father-in-law, says, well, you were standing by your suitcase like I bumped into you on my way to the bathroom. He's like, I didn't wake up last night. And so someone was in their room, had climbed up the wall somehow, gotten into their room, stolen his brother's wallet, and left without being detected.
And it's kind of, if you're the thief in that situation and someone bumps into you, you're like, oh, I'm busted. And he snuck out still, so it's kind of funny. But anyway, the thief went undetected.
The thief was not expected. And the way that Peter's describing the return of Christ is, there's not going to be any more warning for Christ's return than there is for a burglar breaking into your house. So we need to be ready. You cannot know when a thief is coming, but you can be ready in the event that a thief does break into your house.
[26:08] You can't know the exact date that something like that would happen, but you can be prepared for it. So I've got someone I know who has like basically an armory in his house. He's got so many guns. It's disturbing.

But if a thief breaks into his house, it will be a bad day. And it will be the last day for him. But he is ready in case something like that happens.
But what's going to take place on this day, on the day that the Lord returns? Well, Peter describes three different things. He says, firstly, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar.

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And the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved. And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. So the first thing he says is the heavens will pass away with a roar. The heavens here refers basically just to the atmosphere and outer space. So anything that's not earth. And this word roar is an onomatopoeia. So it sounds like what it's describing.
[27:06] This is like the boom of an explosion as the heavens themselves disintegrate. And not just the space, not just the outer space, but the heavenly bodies as well will be burned up and dissolved.

So these are things like the sun, moon, stars, planets, outer space and everything in it will melt. It will be burned up. And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.
That term burned up is actually an ancient medical term used to describe fevers. And so the temperature's elevated when the Lord returns and everything just melts.
And so everything, the heavens, what's in the heavens and the earth itself will be judged when Christ returns.
Every evil deed done on this planet will be fully exposed. It will be made public. Whether it's the Epstein list or your search history or how you treat your parents or how you treat a boyfriend or girlfriend, everything will be made known.
[28:18] Nothing will be hidden from anyone's sight. The Lord Jesus Christ will reveal everything. There will be no place to hide.

Nothing will be hidden. God already knows all of that information. God already knows everything about us, but He will make it public on that day.
He will expose it on that day. Every evil deed done on this earth will be exposed. The Lord is patient, but His patience will run out.
So number three, so live ready. So live ready. We see this in verses 11 through 13 and Peter starts to apply what he's been teaching.
What's the point? Why is he reminding these people of these things? Why is he reminding us? How does he want us to live? Verse 11. Since all of these things are thus to be dissolved or melted, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?
[29:26] Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God. thinking about the end times isn't just to satisfy our curiosity.

It's not just an academic pursuit where we're like, I'm curious about how the world's going to end. Let me learn. The study of eschatology or the end times should lead you to a better life, to a better way of living.
And so if you ignore this, if you forget the return of Christ, if you don't study the end times, you will not live well. I remember talking to a guy right out there in the hallway of our church a few years ago and we were talking about the end times.
He was asking me some questions about where I stood, if I was pre-millennial, amillennial, post-millennial. You don't need to know what those terms mean but he was just asking about the end. And he said to me, you know, I used to spend a lot of time studying that stuff but I figured out it really doesn't matter at all how I live my life.
It really doesn't, it's not that relevant to how I live the Christian life. I think Peter would completely disagree with that. He's pointing us to the end so that we will live well now.
[30:39] He's pointing us to how this world is going to end so that we can live lives that glorify and please the Lord here and now. And he describes these lives as of holiness and godliness.

Holiness refers to external actions, a life of purity, godliness is internal attitudes, how we relate to God. It's a God-oriented life.
And he says in verse 12, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God. I like to golf. I'm not any good at it but I enjoy it and one time my dad and I went out golfing with some friends and there was a guy golfing by himself that had to join us and so he was with us for the day and one of my friends made a putt that kind of went around the hole a couple times and then dropped. Some people call that luck. Some people call it a toilet flusher. When that putt dropped he said, clean living. What he meant was like if the guy had been a scoundrel that putt wouldn't have gone in.
[31:43] So he was just saying the guy had lived a clean life. It was kind of funny. Thank you for laughing. And Peter is saying our lives are to be marked by this clean living.

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This godliness and holiness. As we're waiting verse 12. Peter is going to use this word three times in these three verses.
12, 13, and 14. He's going to use this word waiting. This should characterize us as believers. We are waiting for something.
We are waiting for the day of the Lord. And it's because of this day he says the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn.
So he's reviewing things that will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. But when we think about the day of the Lord we are not just waiting for judgment. We are not just waiting for God to destroy the world and recreate it.
[32:45] We're not waiting for him just to bring judgment. We're also waiting for something that's far better than this life. We're waiting for him to keep all of his promises and that's what Peter says in verse 13.

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. We're waiting for a world that's better than this one.
We're waiting for a life that's better than this one. We're waiting for a world that isn't marked by sin and rebellion but is marked by the dwelling place of righteousness.
And it's according to his promise. The false teachers have started to scoff at Christ's promise. And Peter's saying it's according to Christ's promise. We're waiting for a new heavens and a new earth.
I know I've read this for you recently but John describes these things in Revelation 21. He sees a new heavens and a new earth and it's the place where God will dwell with his people.
[33:52] In verse 4 he says God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

this is the place where righteousness will dwell. This is the time when the knowledge of God will fill the earth.
The image of God will faithfully reflect who he is across every plain and mountain of this world. It'll be a world where there's no more sin.
And if you're a Christian you'll be there. You will be in this new heavens and new earth. And you'll never have a sinful thought again.
Can you imagine that? No more jealousy no more envy no more pride anything that marks us as sinners here and now will be completely gone in the next world.
[34:55] This is not like our world at all right now. Righteousness doesn't naturally dwell within us within our families in our schools in our friends in our homes this world will be completely different.

Is the way you're living your life right now compatible with heaven? Are you living your life right now in such a way that it'll match how you'll live then?
Obviously we can't be perfect now but is your life marked by righteousness now? Are you pursuing righteousness righteousness right now? Are you trying to obey Christ here and now in this life?
That begins and ends with worshiping Christ with loving Christ and following him. Everyone wants to go to heaven. I've never met someone who doesn't want to go to heaven.
Everyone wants to go to heaven but not everyone wants Christ. Christ is the central theme of heaven. Christ is the central theme of this world.
[36:06] People want peace. People want luxury. People want enjoyment. People want ease of life. People want to avoid suffering but do they want Christ? He is the one who makes heaven glorious.

He is the one who makes heaven a world of joy. Heaven is the place ultimately where Christ is worshipped. And so if you don't worship Christ now there's no guarantee that you'll enjoy heaven then.
That's what heaven is about is the worship and glory of Christ. Is your life marked by those things now? What do you think about the return of Christ?
Do we think about it enough? Could we be described as waiting for it like Peter calls us to here?
And I used to think that Christ's return would kind of be like a buzz kill.
I was like I hope Christ returns but I want to get married first. I want to get out of high school first. I want to have kids first. I want Christ to return but not too soon. I don't want him to ruin plans I have.
[37:16] But the return of Christ is what life is about. And that may seem like an overstatement but it's easy to neglect it. It's easy to resent it. What does the New Testament teach us about Christ

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though?

Colossians 1.16 says all things were made through him and for him. You were made for Christ. Christ. This world was made for him to rule.
This world was made for him to receive all glory from. And so when we think about the return of Christ this is the moment when we will see him. This is the moment when this creation itself will serve its purpose that it was created for.
It will be for him and presented to him as a gift. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. He will also get rid of sin and death in this world. This world including us was made for Christ.
And when he returns we will all fulfill our purpose. Whether that's in praising him as those that he has saved or that's being condemned to an eternity in hell.
[38:28] He will get glory from both. This is what life is for. Live your life now. In a way that you will enjoy Christ forever then.

Let me pray. Father we thank you so much for the opportunity to study your word. We don't take that lightly. It is a gift for us that you have spoken to us and that we have access to those words in our language.
I pray that we would not take the Bible lightly or take it for granted. I pray for students here who don't know Christ that you would open their eyes to see their need of his sacrifice and his death on the cross for them.
I pray that we would remember as we think about you Father you rejoice when sinners repent. You desire everyone to repent.
I pray that our hearts as a church as a youth ministry as individuals would also line up with your heart's desire that sinners would repent and find the grace of Christ.
[39:36] I pray as we go to small groups that they'd be helpful in a good time of fellowship Lord and it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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