

The Lord was with Joseph

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[0 : 00] Well let's turn together to Genesis and chapter 39, looking at the main points in this chapter as we continue looking through the life of Joseph.

Last time we noticed at the end of chapter 37, Joseph had been brought to Egypt by the Ishmaelites and sold there to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

And then you have chapter 38 where there's no mention of Joseph, it's largely about Judah, his brother. Why is 38 where it is? Because it really interrupts in a way, it's an insertion there of an incident which doesn't really seem at first sight to relate to the life of Joseph at all.

You end up with the end of chapter 37, Joseph's mentioned in Egypt, then there's nothing about it until 39 which reminds us again, it picks it up the story at the beginning that he'd been brought down to Egypt.

Well chapter 38 is a very distasteful episode in the life of Judah. It has an account which the Bible doesn't actually shirk from telling us when it's necessary to tell us about people's immoral lifestyles, people's sexual deviations.

[1 : 23] And that's how it is with chapter 38. It tells it as it is. And it's there just very clearly showing the defects in Judah's life.

And one of the reasons it's there is to contrast that with Joseph. It's inserted here into the Genesis account of Joseph's life so that we'll see just how different Joseph is from the likes of Judah. There may be other reasons as well that we don't need to go into why chapter 38 is there, what Judah eventually became and how his life did change and how of course he became the ancestor of the Lord and the tribe of Judah from which Jesus actually came.

But it's a contrast very much to Joseph because there is Judah described in chapter 38 as having now come to live amongst the Canaanites and basically living that same debauched, deviant lifestyle of the Canaanites.

He was very much like them here in the incident that is recorded for us in the chapter when you read through it. But contrast that with Joseph.

Joseph is taken to be in Egypt. A place again of idolatry and spiritual darkness. But he doesn't become like the Egyptians.

[2 : 41] Judah has become like the Canaanites. And Joseph, despite being in Egypt, remains true to his Hebrew roots and especially remains true to his God.

He is such a contrast to the person Judah, his brother, has mentioned in chapter 38. And as you look at that contrast, it comes through very powerfully in what's recorded in chapter 39.

And a number of times in chapter 39, you find this emphasis that you have there near the beginning. The Lord, in chapter 2, verse 2, the Lord was with Joseph.

And these really, in many respects, are the greatest words in the chapter. It's like a piece of music where you have a certain refrain or a series of notes repeated all the way through the musical piece.

Here is a chapter, this particular episode in Joseph's life, where this refrain, this repeated sentence, these words, The Lord was with Joseph, is again and again presented to us.

[3 : 47] That's the secret of his life. That's why the things that are recorded in this chapter worked out the way they did. That's why his life in Egypt is the way it is.

Because the Lord was with him. It explains these developments. It explains how he lived the way he did. It was because the Lord was with him.

And there is something right at the very beginning of the chapter that's thrown at us for a basic emphasis to life. The Lord must be with us.

We must have the Lord with us. In order to prosper in a proper way. In order to be successful spiritually, as well as in other ways.

But especially spiritually. That's the secret of Joseph's life. The Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man. And the chapter ends on the same note.

[4 : 45] The Lord was with him. Whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed. What a great note to begin our Sabbath day. To begin a week with. To actually apply to our lives as we see our life stretching out ahead of us.

However short or long it may be. The Lord be with us. And if the Lord is not with us. It doesn't matter who's with us. Our life will not prosper. And if the Lord is with us.

It doesn't matter who's against us. Our life will prosper. The Lord was with Joseph. And he was with Joseph in two settings.

That the chapter sets out for you. Puts before us. He was with Joseph in Potiphar's house first of all. That's what most of the chapter is taken up with. But then he was with Joseph in prison as well.

And in both of these very different contexts. And really that's one of the wonderful things about the emphasis that the Lord was with him. He wasn't just with him in Potiphar's house where he really prospered.

[5 : 49] And when under Potiphar he was made overseer of all of Potiphar's house. The Lord was with him. And it was the Lord being with him that led to that. That caused that. He was also with him when that changed.

When he went into a very different set of circumstances. He was with Joseph in the prison. The Lord was with Joseph. And even in prison. He made him to prosper.

It's an amazing thing. When you actually read through this chapter. Your conclusion is. This man can't fail. Whatever circumstances he's in. Because the Lord is with him.

He's bound to succeed. In whatever context. He finds himself. Let's look at him firstly. In Potiphar's house. Now he was brought to Egypt.

And bought by this man Potiphar. An officer of Pharaoh. In fact the captain of the guard. Quite high up in the Egyptian. In Pharaoh's bodyguard.

[6 : 50] Or army. Whatever it was. And just imagine. The humiliation for Joseph. This young man of God. This man of integrity.

This clean living young man. And there he is. Paraded in the slave market. And publicly put. To what would be for him.

Deep humiliation. Because before you bought a slave. You'd have to examine them. Were they healthy? Were all the parts of their body. Healthy?

Did they have lice? Were they diseased? And just imagine. This young man. With his background. With his integrity. Going through that degradation.

But he went through it. And he came. To be bought by. Potiphar. And he made such progress. In Potiphar's house. That he became a successful man. In the house of his master.

[7 : 49] He saw that. The master saw that the Lord was with him. Verses 2 and 3. There's such important emphasis there. And he put him in charge. Of all that he had. But you notice.

That's because. His master saw that the Lord was with him. It doesn't just say that the Lord was with Joseph. Here is this pagan man. This Potiphar. This officer.

Of Pharaoh's guard. And he saw that the Lord was with him. He saw that there was something in this young man's life. That was very distinctive. Different to anybody he'd ever met. And what he had.

Come to realize. Was that. Joseph's God. Joseph's Savior. Joseph's Lord. Was actually with him. And it was through. The life that Joseph had in relation with God.

That success followed him. In whatever he did. The first thing. That you notice from that. Is that. The Lord. Stayed with Joseph. The Lord was not confined to.

[8 : 49] Where Joseph had come from. Where Jacob now lived. He had followed him all the way down. Through his. Journey to Dothan. And then onwards into Egypt.

Every single step of that. The Lord had followed him. And now that he was in Egypt. And in Potiphar's house. The Lord was with him there. The Lord. Never changes.

It's interesting isn't it. That. One of the things we noticed. In chapter 37. Is that there's no mention of God. As such. God is there in it. But there's nothing explicit.

To say. God did this. Or God was with Joseph. Like you have it here in chapter 39. There's no reference there. Of such a thing. At all in chapter 37. So that the whole of that chapter 37. Introducing us to the life of Joseph. Has no explicit reference to God. Though you understand from what's said. That yes. God is in his life. And God is looking after him. But when you come to Egypt. [9 : 46] And when you come to see Joseph in Egypt. The chapter is full of God. Full of references to God. Full of reference to the Lord. Being with him. Isn't that itself interesting. That it's when you come to think.

To read about Joseph's troubles. In Egypt. That you then. Have an explicit reference. To God. Actually being with him. God never gives up. God never leaves his people. God always follows them. God is never detached. From the development of their lives. It's always the case. That the Lord is with them. But the second thing it shows is. That Joseph lived. An openly godly life. When he went to Egypt.

He didn't decide. That better not actually live. The life of a believer in God. Openly. Just in case. It leads to problems. Here I am in Egypt.

[10 : 48] How can I live. A life of a godly. Young man in Egypt. Like I used to live in at home. I'm now in a different set of. Of circumstances altogether. I'm in an environment.

Perhaps even of danger. But certainly of darkness. Where all around me. There is the spiritual darkness. The idolatry of Egypt. I'm in the house of this potiphar. He's dealt kindly with me. I'm his slave. I'm actually now being promoted. To overseer of his house. So I better watch what I'm doing. In terms of my godliness. I'll keep that sort of hidden. I'll do it privately.

It's not like that with Joseph. His master saw. That the Lord was with him. How could he see that the Lord was with him? How could this pagan man. Actually in any way at all.

Conclude the Lord was in the life. Of this young man. If this young man hadn't openly been showing it. And that's surely. Such a great emphasis.

[11 : 44] For ourselves as well. Joseph did not try to hide his faith. He did not try to. Somehow or other. Keep it as far as possible out of sight.

He didn't actually say to himself. It might affect my prospects. So I better just go quietly. As far as my faith is concerned. He showed it openly. He wasn't afraid. Of showing that he was a believer in God.

And in the presence. Of these pagans. Of that pagan household. And in Egypt. Joseph openly lived. What you would call now. A Christian life. A clear.

Believing. Distinct. Christian life. And in fact. Far from affecting his prospects. Negatively. It actually worked the other way.

Some people might say. That. In that sort of circumstance. In these conditions. That. In order to actually. Become more influential.

[12 : 43] And more successful. You would have to somehow. Keep your Christian faith. And your Christian profession. Under some sort of cover. And at least not be too open about it.

Or else it might affect your prospects that way. For Joseph it was the other way about. He lived openly as a believer. And such was the integrity of his life. His honesty.

Such was the matter of. The trust that you could put in this man. That Potiphar saw. Here's someone that I can really trust. With all. The.

Affairs of my house. And therefore. He made Joseph. An overseer. Over all that he had. He found favor in his sight.

And he made him overseer of his house. And put him. In charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house. And over all that he had. The Lord blessed the Egyptians house.

[13 : 41] For Joseph's sake. The blessing of the Lord. Was on all that he had. In his house. And his field. So he left all that he had. In Joseph's charge. And because of him.

He had no concern. About anything. But the food he ate. What a fantastic description. Of Potiphar's regard. For Joseph. Of the confidence. That Potiphar had.

In this young Hebrew. A very different person. To himself. And yet. Here he is. Giving everything into Joseph's hand. To look after. Concerning his household. It's a kind of foretaste.

Isn't it? Of what Joseph. Is going to become. For the whole of Egypt. As the story develops. As you know. And as we'll see. God willing. Eventually. Where Joseph comes.

To be placed over the whole of Egypt. Well here's a foretaste of it. Such is his ability. As a man with whom. God is. In whom the spirit. Of God lives.

[14:40] That he is. Placed in charge. Eventually. Of the whole of Egypt. And only Pharaoh. Is more important. And that of course. You then expand into.

How the Lord. Jesus Christ. As. We're reminded of that. By Joseph's life. And by Joseph's. Position. And the way that Joseph's life.

Developed. You actually have. A picture there for you. You are a reminder of. The way the Lord. Jesus Christ. Though. To begin with. Like Joseph. Here in the prison. To begin with. Humiliation. And lowliness. And service. But then comes to be installed. As the head over all things. To his church. Marvelous relationship.

A parallel there. With. The life of Christ himself. So there's blessing. For the house of Potiphar. And in fact. That's something. That also is true still.

[15:38] Of the world. If. If. If. If the Lord was going to take all those people away. If there was nobody left in the world. That was. Going to be. Converted. And be. A Christian.

And be. Amongst the Lord's people. If that had come to an end. Where would the world go? It would just end. There's so many people in the world that are blessed. Because of the people of God. Not that our life is perfect. Not that we are ourselves better than other people. Not because we take pride in our achievements. Everything is to do with God. And with God's grace.

And with God's God given abilities. Everything that we have is from God that is useful. And that is good. But the fact of the matter is that. The Lord blesses the world.

Because his people are in it. And people who don't know God. And do sometimes even hate God. Actually have benefits. For the sake of God's people being in the world.

[16:37] That's how it is. That's how the world has always been. Just like the house of Potiphar here. Is a miniature picture if you like of the whole world. For the sake of Joseph. He blessed Potiphar's house.

And all that he had. So that was his promotion. But then comes temptation. And the temptation comes.

Very clearly set out for us. By way of Potiphar's wife. And isn't it significant too. That it's just when things have begun to go so well.

That this shows itself in his life. And it reminds us that just because things are going well. Doesn't mean that we're not then going to face difficulties.

Temptations. Things which we really need to wrestle with and overcome. Testings in the providence of God. Here is this young man. He's kept himself pure.

[17:39] He's been promoted by his master. Because he saw that the Lord was with him. And then in comes this temptation. This attempt by the evil one through Potiphar's wife.

To get Joseph into trouble morally. So what happened? Well Joseph was. We're told a handsome young man in form and appearance.

And after a time she cast eyes on Joseph. And said lie with me. But he refused. And said because of me. My master has no concern about anything in the house. He has put everything that he has in my charge.

How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? Now there are some very important details there for our own particular times.

And the first thing that you find there is that the attitude of this woman. And the way that this woman eyes up Joseph and desires Joseph.

[18:42] Is itself something where you find a parallel in the attitudes that you find in the current day. I'm not saying everybody is like that of course.

But then nevertheless there is in our world such a great emphasis on a hedonistic lifestyle. A life of pleasure. Of sinful pleasure.

As the Bible would call it. The things of the flesh. The things of immorality. The things of relationships. That are illicit. That all of these things.

These murky things. As far as the Bible is concerned anyway. They would be called murky. And there are so many ways. In which people now pursue that kind of lifestyle. That kind of attitude. Because it's not just in terms of actual literal physical relationships. Though there's enough of that. You also find it through the internet. Apparently.

[19 : 37] Some report recently I read. Says that the thing for which the internet is most used. Is pornography. And if that is the case.

Then it shows you. That the attitudes. The mindset. Of modern human beings. Is very much. A mindset that's set.

On a hedonistic lifestyle. On a lifestyle. That doesn't really regard. These things are wrong. You can get as much pleasure out of life as you can. Whatever pleasure.

Is pleasure to you. Then do it. And don't let anybody make you feel guilty about it. That's the attitude. That's what this woman. Represents for us. The one that says.

This is for me. And I'll take it. And I'll enjoy it. Well Joseph's response. Is also.

[20 : 35] Exceedingly important for us. And. It's important for every age group. But I think it's important. Especially for younger people. Here was a young man. A man really. Just entering into.

The. Major part of his adult life. And he's faced with this difficulty. With this temptation. And it's not just the temptation from this woman. From Potiphar's wife.

Or just imagine the difficulty. It's meant to leave. And for Joseph at this time. If he doesn't give in. Then he might be in trouble. As you might make it more difficult for him. If he does.

Give in. Then he's in trouble. Because he knows he's done wrong. And he's sinned against his conscience. And his God. But what's his response?

Well he says. My master has not kept anything back from me. Accept yourself. Because you are his wife. How then can I do.

[21 : 32] This great wickedness. And sin against God. That is what Joseph kept in mind. Whatever people might tell him. Whatever attitudes were. Were found around him in Egypt.

Whatever things he saw were common. Such as was the case with Potiphar's wife. What Joseph kept in mind. First and foremost. And kept in his mind constantly. Was that to do such a thing.

As she required. As she demanded. And remember this was going on all the time. It makes it quite clear in the passage. That she was bombarding him. With these requests.

It wasn't something that happened now and again. It was something that happened consistently.

Constantly. Just ongoing. Day after day after day. It was pressure of an enormous kind.

But Joseph openly brought God. And brought sin into his response. How can I then do this great wickedness. And sin against God.

[22 : 36] You see the words he used. Wickedness. Great wickedness. Sin against God. We are experts.

At finding different ways of describing things. Which the Bible calls sin. And that expertise. Is certainly very obvious today.

Adultery. It is not called a sin. In many instances. It is given other descriptions. A bit on the side. A fling.

Words which really kind of tone down. What it really is. But sin to Joseph. Is sin. Wickedness to Joseph.

Is wickedness. Because the one thing he's got in mind. Is God. And the integrity. Of this relationship with God. And the integrity.

[23 : 33] Of God himself. And the name of God. And what Joseph. Will not compromise. Is that integrity. How can I do this great wickedness.

And sin against God. And it's very interesting too. That he replied to her in these terms. She was a pagan woman.

She didn't understand the ways of Joseph's God. And yet Joseph. Openly responded. By mentioning God. By referring to his God.

By referring to sin. And to wickedness. There's witness even in his resistance to temptation. And that's a lesson for ourselves. As he responds to this temptation.

Positively. And in a way that protects his integrity. He becomes a witness for God. Against what this woman wants him to do. It's against God.

[24 : 30] That I would be doing this. He's saying. And if I do this against God. Then it will be wickedness. And it will be sin. Let's maintain our witness. Against the devil's temptations.

Let's be open. In describing what temptation requires of us. Or seeks to attempt to get us to do. It is against God.

And that's what matters most. And. You notice too that. The words in this passage. Are interesting because.

They're very like the words. That were used by Eve. When she was tempted. In the Garden of Eden. Notice here. He's saying here. In verse 9.

He is not greater. In this house than I am. Nor has he kept back anything from me. Except yourself. Because. You are his wife. Now.

[25 : 30] In Eden. Eve had said to. To the serpent. You remember when the serpent came to her. And suggested that. God was being a bit restrictive. In keeping back that one tree.

And of all the rest. That they were not allowed to eat of. This is how she responded. He has given us. All of these trees. Except the tree of life. We are not to eat of it.

And there's. There's. A certain. Amount of. Unhappiness. In her situation. With. God's restriction. The way she's listened to the serpent.

Persuasive voice. In other words. Eve had come to be dissatisfied. With God's arrangement.

Disguided. The fact that God had given everything.

Except the one thing. Was a test for Eve. And for Adam. In which they ultimately failed. But here is Joseph.

[26 : 30] And he's given everything. In Potiphar's house. Except the one thing. His wife. Because she is his wife. And what this passage is saying to us is.

Well Joseph is perfectly satisfied with that. That's God's arrangement. These are God's regulations. This is God's providence. This is the way God has ordered things for him.

And he's happy with God's arrangement. He doesn't want that arrangement to change. He's not in a situation that says. Well if only God had arranged it. So that I could have his wife as well.

Then it would be better. Then I could really. Say that I've got everything. That's how the world would. Actually think. In so many respects today. God's arrangement.

Is not satisfactory. It's too restrictive. Joseph is telling us. This is what is really. To our advantage.

[27 : 27] God's way of arranging things. God's terms. God's regulations. God's wisdom. And setting out things the way they are.

And that's why there's that. Comparison with. The language in. The Garden of Eden. Earlier in Genesis. Here is Joseph telling us. What God has arranged for us in our life.

We are to be content with. We are not to seek to. Reach beyond what God has seen fit to give us. Doesn't mean we don't. Pray for things that we don't have.

But what I mean is. In terms of relationships especially. In terms of the boundaries that God has set. For a proper lifestyle. For the relationships that we have. One with another. Within marriage.

Within family life. Within our workplace. Whatever it is. God has set out these boundaries. We know his commandments. We know his restrictions. We know that he's given us far more.

[28 : 26] Than he's kept from us. And so Joseph's response. To Potiphar's wife is saying. I'm happy with that. I have to be content with that.

And if I try to go beyond it. Beyond God's boundary. I'm doing a great wickedness. I'm sinning against God. And we have to try. And pass that on to.

Our own age. Our own generation today. Well. That was his. Overcoming temptation. In that way. But then things changed. He went one day into the house.

There was nobody else there. But himself. And then she came in. And the way. That things happened. He left his garment behind. Such as. His haste to. To get out of the place.

Protecting himself. But of course. You know how things happen. We don't need to read it through. She made up a story. And eventually it came to. Potiphar's.

[29 : 25] Hearing as well. Now that means that. Doing the right thing. By God. Does not guarantee. That everything will go smoothly.

He was a young man. Who kept his integrity. Maintained his purity. Overcame temptation. Didn't succumb to. The seductive ways. Of Potiphar's wife.

Kept himself pure. In these very difficult circumstances. Kept by God's arrangement. Kept his satisfaction. With God's arrangement. Just because he had done that.

Doesn't mean that everything. Will go smoothly. From now on. In fact. Things get worse. More difficult. At least. Because. What happened here. Was that. The story that she made up.

Quite quite different. To what actually happened. But Joseph is caught. In her scheme. And then. He's put into prison.

[30 : 25] When his master heard the words. That his wife spoke to him. He took him. And put him into the prison. The place where the king's prisoners. Were confined. And he was there.

In prison. Now. That's a very different set of circumstances. Because. Psalm 105. And verse 18. Speaks about Joseph.

Being shackled. Being kept in irons. This wasn't a. Kind of open prison. This wasn't a place. Where you could just simply. Move about freely.

And not be abused. This was a rough. Difficult. Hard place. That's where he's now found. Not because he's done anything wrong.

But in the mystery of God's providence. And God's arrangement. That's where he is. But. The Lord was with Joseph. In Potiphar's house. The Lord was with Joseph.

[31 : 24] In the prison. These words continue. The Lord. In verse 21. But the Lord. Was with Joseph. And showed him. Steadfast love. And gave him favor.

In the sight of the keeper. Of the prison. The favor of the Lord. Followed him into the prison. There's one of the great points. Of the passage. The Lord did not prevent him. From entering into the prison.

The Lord did not arrange things. So that after this incident. In overcoming temptation. Everything was then fixed. And he remained faithful. In Potiphar's house. And he served Potiphar.

From then on. No. It's a very different story. Just because he overcame temptation. Doesn't mean that the Lord. Prevented him. Entering into a circumstance. Much worse. The Lord didn't prevent him.

Going into prison. But the Lord went into prison. With him. And that's what makes the difference. It would have been. A very much more harsh.

[32 : 24] And difficult prison. If the Lord had not been with him. What a great benefit that is. For any human being.

To be able to say. That because they are a believer. Because they trust in the Lord. Because as we've read. And sung in Psalm 91. The Lord has been made our refuge.

We have made the Lord our refuge. What does that mean? It means that wherever we go. The Lord will be with us. We carry him with us. What a great thought that is.

For yourself today. Whatever unfolds in this week. If the Lord is with you. What does it matter? Even if your circumstances change drastically.

In the course of a few days. Just as it was for Joseph. Even if life becomes hard. And bitter and harsh. If you can say. Well the Lord will still be with me.

[33 : 25] And I know that the Lord will be true to his promise. Therefore I don't need to be afraid of the new circumstances. I don't need to worry about how things are ultimately going to develop.

Even if they are going to develop. In the short term. In a way that makes it difficult for me. You see the Lord was with Joseph. Can you say.

Can I say today. Whatever the rest of today holds. Whatever tomorrow holds. Whatever providence. In God's wisdom. I am brought into. Can you say.

Well. The Lord is going to be with me. I have given my life to the Lord. I have his promise. That he will never forsake me. That he will always be with me. How often you come across in the Bible.

These words. Fear not. For I am with you. It doesn't actually say. Fear not. For I am with you. In certain conditions.

[34 : 24] Fear not. For I am with you. When everything is going well. It simply says. Fear not. For I will be with you. Fear not. Fear not. Fear not. And one of the things.

That we don't perhaps think of. Often enough. And it's a really precious thing. Is the loyalty of God. Yes we often think about.

Our need to be loyal to God. And that's good. And we need to be loyal to God. Just as Joseph was. The loyalty that he showed to God. And being true to God.

But. There is something even more important than that for us. Something. Without which we don't have the comfort. That Joseph had. In his soul. And that's the loyalty of God to his people.

We have a loyal God. A God who is faithful. You see the words there. He showed him steadfast love. And gave him favor. That's the great word in the Old Testament.

[35 : 23] For covenant love. It's loving kindness. It's a word that's used about God. Especially in his relationship with his people. In covenant with them. In the bond with which he's bonded to them.

A bond that he has created in love. That he maintains in love. Steadfast love. Is God's loyalty shown.

In maintaining that relationship of love to his people. And even in prison. The Lord showed him. Steadfast love. And here's another promotion.

The keeper of the prison. Because he saw the Lord was with him again. He actually put him in charge. Of all the prisoners who were in the prison.

Whatever was done there. Joseph was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention. To anything that was in Joseph's charge. Because the Lord was with him. Whatever he did.

[36 : 26] The Lord made it succeed. What a remarkable statement. How much I would like that to be through more of my own life. That whatever I do.

The Lord made it to succeed. Well there it is. The Lord was with him. In prison. And even there he's promoted.

Even within the confines of the prison. Okay. He's still in prison. He's still under harsh conditions. Compared to outside of the prison. But even within the prison. Because the Lord is with him.

The Lord makes him succeed. And he's given him promotion over all the other prisoners. That's the secret. To a successful life.

The Lord is with you. May it be so. For you and for me. Let's pray. O Lord of God.

[37 : 26] Help us to believe. That you are ever with your people. That you are ever loyal to that relationship. Which you create. And which you sustain. Help us we pray.

To know your steadfast love with us. In all the changes and circumstances of life. Help us to depend upon that steadfast love. And on your loyalty to us.

Receive our thanks we pray. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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