

Abiding in Christ to Maintain Our Organic Union with Him

by Ed Marks

We who have believed into Christ (John 3:16), receiving Him as our Lord and Savior (1:12-13), are now in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30) and Christ is in us (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 13:5). Our ongoing relationship with Christ lies in this organic union with Him. The Lord as the Spirit dwells in our human spirit, and we have been organically joined to the Lord Spirit” (3:18) to actually be one spirit with Him: “The Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17), “the Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit” (Rom. 8:16), and “he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). This “one spirit” is the divine Spirit dwelling in our human spirit, and these two spirits are organically joined and mingled together to be one spirit.

Our organic union with the Lord in our spirit is illustrated by the branches with the vine in John 15. Christ is the true vine, and we are His branches. Thank the Lord that we are the branches of Christ! Just as the vine’s life is in the branches, and the vine lives through the branches, so Christ is our life, and we are His living. In order to maintain our organic union, our life union, with the Lord as His branches, we must abide in Him so that He may abide in us. John 15:4 and 5 say, “Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.” To abide in Christ is to dwell in Him, to stay in Him, and to remain in fellowship with Him.

Abiding in Christ for Him to Abide in Us

To abide in Christ is to live in the Divine Trinity—taking Christ as our dwelling place. First John 2:6 says, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.” Note 1 on this verse in the Recovery Version says,

To be in Christ is the beginning of the Christian life. Our being put in Christ was God’s doing once for all (1 Cor. 1:30). To abide in Christ is the continuation of the Christian life. This is our responsibility in our daily walk, a walk that is a copy of Christ’s walk on earth.

To abide in Christ is to abide in the Son and in the Father by the Spirit (1 John 2:24; 3:24); this is to remain and dwell in the Lord. To take the Lord as our dwelling place is the highest and fullest experience of God. Even Moses, the man of God, declared, “O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations” (Psa. 90:1). To abide in Christ is to dwell in Him, the eternal God, as our Lord, having our living in Him and taking Him as our everything.

In order to maintain our abiding in Christ, the Gospel of John reveals that we must take Him as our necessities. In the Gospel of John, Christ is our life (14:6; 10:10), our breath of life, our water of life, our bread of life, and our light of life to be our abode in life. Christ as the Holy Spirit, the Holy *Pneuma* (Gk.), is the breath of life (20:22). We can breathe Him in by calling upon His name. In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah says that he called upon the Lord’s name out of the lowest pit (3:55). Then he says, “You have heard my voice; do not hide / Your ear at my breathing, at my cry” (v. 56). We can breathe the Lord in as the breath of life by audibly calling upon His name. The Gospel of John goes on to reveal that Christ is the water of life. In 4:10 the Lord told the Samaritan woman, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” The way to enjoy the Lord as the water of life, as the drinkable Spirit of life, is to simply ask Him for it. “How much more will the Father who is from heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13). John 7:37-39 reveals that if we drink of the Lord as the water of life, the Spirit as rivers

of living water will flow out of our innermost being. Our duty as believers in Christ is to come to Christ and drink of Him as the water of life and to flow Him out to others so that they also may drink of Him. John 6:35 and 57 reveal that Christ is the bread of life for us to eat. Verse 63 says, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." Thus, the way to eat Christ as our spiritual bread of life is to eat His words of spirit and life (Jer. 15:16).

John 8:12 reveals that Christ is the light of life: "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." As the light of the world, He shines within us and out from us so that men may see our good works, works that shine with divine light, and glorify our Father who is in the heavens (Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15-16). John 14:21 and 23 reveal that we can abide in Christ so that He may abide in us by our loving Him to the uttermost. When we love the Lord Jesus, He manifests Himself to us, and the Father comes with Him to make an abode with us for our mutual enjoyment. This abode is a mutual abode, in which the Triune God abides in us and we abide in Him.

To have Christ abiding in us is to live with the Divine Trinity—having Christ's presence as our enjoyment for Him to be one with us and to be with every part of our being and every aspect of our living. Matthew 1:23 says that His name is Emmanuel, meaning "God with us." Matthew 18:20 says that when two or three are gathered together into His name, He is with them. Second Timothy 4:22 reveals that Emmanuel, the Lord, is with our spirit.

Matthew 28:20 is a promise that the Lord will be with us all the days until the consummation of the age. Thus, He is with us in our being and living, with us in our gatherings, with us in our spirit, and with us all our days until He returns.

When we have Christ abiding in us, we have His living presence. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:10 that he forgave a certain brother "in the person of Christ." The Greek word for *person* may also be translated as "presence" or "face." It is literally the part around the eyes, which conveys the look of a person, as the index of his inward thoughts and feelings. In everything that we do and in every decision that we make, we must have the presence of Christ, doing everything according to His inward thoughts and feelings. In Exodus 33:14 the Lord promised Moses, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." To have the presence of the Lord is to have His inner "smile." It means that we do not grieve the Spirit in our spirit (Eph. 4:30) but that we make Him happy by having a life of living out Christ and a life of laboring in the Lord (Phil. 1:21; 1 Cor. 15:58). We need

to "remain with God" (7:24), remaining in His presence no matter what our status is. In note 1 on 1 Corinthians 7:24 in the Recovery Version, Witness Lee says,

After being called, the believers do not need to change their outward status, but they do need to have a change in their inward condition, that is, from being without God to being with God, in order to be one with God and have God with them in their status, whatever it may be.

This is to have Christ as the One who is "God with us," abiding in us in whatever we do.

Abiding in Christ to Have Him as Our Protection

To abide in Christ, to dwell in Christ, is to take Him in His ascension as our secret place to be our inner refuge, our hiding place, our high tower, our fortress, and our high retreat in our spirit to protect us from all the attacks of the devil. Psalm 91:1 and 2 say, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High / Will abide in the shadow of the

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Almighty. / I say of Jehovah, / My refuge and My fortress, / My God in whom I trust!" In Psalm 31:20 the psalmist asks the Lord to hide him in the hiding place of His presence apart from the conspiracies of men. Psalm 18:1 and 2 say, "I love You, O Jehovah, my strength. / Jehovah is my crag and my fortress and my Deliverer; / My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; / My shield and the horn of my salvation, my high retreat." In John 14:30 the Lord said, "The ruler of the world is coming, and in Me he has nothing." "This means that in the Lord Jesus, Satan as the ruler of the world had no ground, no chance, no hope, no possibility in anything" (Lee, *God-man* 90). Thus, when we abide in Him, the One who dwells in our spirit, Satan has no ground in us, no chance with us, no hope with us, and no possibility to use us for his nefarious purposes. How wonderful it is that we can abide in Christ under the refuge of "His wings" to enjoy Him as our secret place of protection from all the enemy's attacks and schemes! "How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! / Thus the sons of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings" (Psa. 36:7). "With His pinions He will cover You, / And under His wings You will take refuge" (91:4).

Abiding in Christ Being to Abide in the Divine Light

To abide in Christ is to abide in the fellowship of the divine life and to walk in the divine light, that is, to abide in the divine light. The first chapter of John's first Epistle reveals a cycle, whereby we may remain in the divine light. First, we enjoy the eternal life (v. 2). Then from our enjoyment of the eternal life, we have the inner flow of the eternal life, which is the fellowship of life (vv. 3, 6). The fellowship of life within us brings us into the divine light (vv. 5, 7), and being in the divine light increases the need for the blood of Jesus, the Son of God (v. 7). The more we enjoy the eternal life, the more of its fellowship we experience. The more fellowship of the divine life we experience, the more the divine light shines within us, and the more we feel the need for the cleansing of the blood of Jesus so that we may have more eternal life. Such a cycle of life, fellowship, light, and the blood brings us onward in the growth of life until we arrive at the maturity of life for God's glory, His expression. The divine light supplies us with life and exposes our true condition so that we may confess our sins to be cleansed in the blood of Jesus. Furthermore, this

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light has a killing function; it kills the negative things that it exposes.

There is a call in Isaiah 2:5 for God's people to walk in His light: "House of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah." A simple definition of light is this: light is the presence of God. If we are to abide in the divine light, we must see the sources of the divine light. First, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Second, the word of God is light. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet / And a light to my path." Verse 130 says, "The opening of Your words gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple." Third, Christ is light. He declared, "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). Fourth, the life of Christ is the light; as He said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (8:12). Furthermore, "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (1:4). Fifth, because Christ as the light indwells them, the believers themselves become the light. Matthew 5:14 says, "You are the light of the world," and Ephesians 5:8 says, "You were once darkness

but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light." Finally, the churches, as the golden lampstands, shine forth the divine light in this dark age (Rev. 1:11-12, 20). As we live, dwell, and remain in the divine light, we abide in Christ so that He may abide in us.

Abiding in Christ by Abiding in His Word

We can abide in Christ so that He may abide in us by remaining and staying in His word so that His words will remain and stay in us. In John 8:31 the Lord said, "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples." Abiding in the Lord's word is equivalent to abiding in Him. In John 15:7 the Lord said, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you..." The Lord's words abiding in us is equivalent to Him abiding in us. Thus, if we want the Lord to abide in us, we need to abide in His written, outward, and constant word, His *logos* (8:31, Gk.). When we abide in His word, His *logos*, His words (plural of *rhema*, 15:7, Gk.) will abide in us. *Rhema* is the Lord's instant and spoken word. It is His personal speaking to us both from and based upon His *logos*. This shows how crucial it is for us to daily read, pray over, and muse upon God's Word, so that He may continually speak to us. When we abide in His word so that His words may abide in us, we are sanctified by the washing of the water in the word (*rhema*) to become more and more the glorious church that He desires (Eph. 5:26-27). We abide in Him and His words abide in us so that we may speak in Him and He may speak in us for the building of God into man and man into God (John 15:7; 2 Cor. 2:17; 13:3; 1 Cor. 14:4).

Abiding in Christ by the Teaching of the Anointing

First John 2:27 says, "As for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him." The anointing is the moving and working of the indwelling, compound Spirit, typified by the compound ointment in Exodus 30:23-25 (see notes on these verses in the Recovery Version). This inner anointing in our spirit moves and works to apply all the ingredients of the processed Triune God and His activities into our being so that we may be fully mingled with Him for His corporate expression. The Triune God, after passing through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, has become the all-inclusive, life-giving, compound Spirit (John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45; Phil. 1:19). He is within our spirit to anoint us, to "paint" us, with the elements of the Triune God. The more this anointing, this "painting," goes on, the more the Triune God with His person and processes is transfused into our being. We need

to be “painted” persons, those who are saturated with the anointing. This “paint” on us should always be “wet.” We should always have a fresh application of the all-inclusive Spirit as the divine paint so that we may paint others with the all-inclusive Spirit (Psa. 92:10; Zech. 4:14; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8). By the anointing of the all-inclusive, compound Spirit, who is the consummation of the Divine Trinity, we know and enjoy the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as our life supply.

Christ as the Head of the Body is the anointed One and the anointing One, and we are His members enjoying Him as the inner anointing for the fulfillment of His purpose (Heb. 1:9; 3:14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22). The anointing, as the moving and working of the compound Spirit within us, anoints God into us so that we may be saturated with God, possess God, and understand the mind of God. The anointing communicates the mind of Christ as the Head of the Body to His members by the inner sense, the inner consciousness of life (Psa. 133; 1 Cor. 2:16; Rom. 8:6, 27). This is the teaching of the anointing. When the Head wants us, as members of the Body, to move, He intimates it through the inner anointing, and as we yield to the anointing, life flows freely from the Head to us. If we resist the anointing, our relationship with the Head is interfered with, and the flow of life within us is stopped (Col. 2:19). The teaching of the anointing has nothing to do with right or wrong; it is an inner sense of life (Acts 16:6-7; 2 Cor. 2:13). If our natural life is dealt with by the cross and if we submit to the headship of Christ and live the Body life, we will have the Spirit’s anointing and will enjoy the fellowship of the Body (Eph. 4:3-6, 15-16).

The holy anointing oil, the compound ointment, in the Old Testament was used solely for the purpose of anointing God’s dwelling place and the priesthood. Hence, only those who are for God’s dwelling place and for the priesthood can have the enjoyment of the compound, all-inclusive Spirit as the anointing (Exo. 30:26-31; Phil. 1:19). Furthermore, the anointing of the compound, all-inclusive life-giving Spirit is the element of our oneness for the building up of the Body of Christ in the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. Psalm 133 is the praise of the psalmist in his going up to Zion for the inestimable oneness among his people (v. 1). He likens this oneness to the fine oil upon Aaron’s head that ran down upon his beard and even to the hem of his garments (v. 2). The oil here is the holy anointing oil, the compound ointment, spoken of in Exodus 30:23-33 and typifying the anointing that dwells in our spirit. Note 2 on Psalm 133:2 in the Recovery Version shows how the priesthood, the Body of Christ, the anointing, and the oneness are inter-related:

Aaron typifies Christ as the High Priest (Heb. 5:4-5), and Aaron’s garments typify the church, the Body of Christ, as the fullness, the expression, of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; see notes 2¹ and 2² in Exo. 28). The oil running down from Aaron’s head to the hem of his garments signifies that both the Head and the Body, both Christ and the church, are under the anointing of God’s fine oil (Heb. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:21). The anointing of the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit is the element of the genuine oneness (Eph. 4:3-4a and 3²).

Thus, we may say that the ground of oneness is simply the processed Triune God as the anointing applied to our being.

Abiding in Christ by Not Quenching the Spirit and by Not Grieving the Spirit

We can abide in Christ by rejoicing always, praying unceasingly, and giving thanks in everything. This is the will of God concerning us, and this is the way that we do not quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:16-19). Not quenching the

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Spirit is related to our function in the Body life (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6-7). In addition to not quenching the Spirit, we should not grieve the Spirit in our daily living (Eph. 4:30). For the indwelling Spirit to be grieved in us means that He is unhappy with us. When He is unhappy within us for whatever reason, we will be unhappy also. His happiness is our happiness. When we enjoy the salvation of His countenance (Psa. 42:5), He becomes the salvation of our countenance (v. 11). If we are enjoying the Lord in all our situations, we are abiding in Him, and we will be able to say with the psalmist, “By day Jehovah commands / His lovingkindness, / And by night His song is with me, / A prayer to the God of my life” (v. 8).

No matter what our circumstances are, we should always rejoice, unceasingly pray, and give thanks in everything. In Philippians we see that even though Paul was a prisoner of the Roman Empire, he wrote a letter to the saints that was filled with joy and rejoicing. In every petition of his concerning the Philippians, he made his petition “with joy” (1:4). Even though he discovered that some were announcing Christ out of envy, strife, and selfish

ambition (vv. 15-17), he declared, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truthfulness, Christ is announced; and in this I rejoice; yes, and I will rejoice" (v. 18). Paul was confident that he would continue with the Philippians for their progress and "joy of the faith" (v. 25). He asked the Philippians to make his joy full by thinking the same thing, having the same love, being joined in soul, and thinking the one thing (2:2). In verses 17 and 18 Paul triumphantly declared, "Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and I rejoice together with you all. And in like manner you also rejoice, and you rejoice together with me." In referring to his sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippians, Paul said, "I have sent him therefore the more eagerly, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor" (vv. 28-29). In Philippians 3:1 Paul said, "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, for me it is not irksome, but for you it is safe." Paul told the Philippians that they were his joy (4:1), and he imperatively told them, "Rejoice in the

oneness with the cross (cf. Luke 9:23). Only the cross of Christ can deliver her from the situation caused by introspection.

Christ wants His seeker to remain in the cross, in a crucified condition, continually (Gal. 2:20a; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10-11). However, to remain in the cross is a difficult matter, like entering into the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice high in the mountains by a rugged road. In order to empower and encourage His lover to rise up and come away from her low situation in her introspection of the self, Christ empowers her by showing her the power of His resurrection [S. S. 2:8-9a], and He encourages her by the flourishing riches of His resurrection (vv. 11-13). It is by the power of Christ's resurrection, not by our natural life, that we, the lovers of Christ, determine to take the cross by denying our self (Matt. 16:24). It is also by the power of Christ's resurrection that we are enabled to be conformed to His death by being one with His cross (Phil. 3:10). The reality of resurrection is the pneumatic Christ (John 11:25), who as the consummated Spirit indwells and is mingled with our

regenerated spirit (1 Cor. 6:17 and notes). It is in such a mingled spirit that we participate in and experience the resurrection of Christ, which enables us to be one with the cross to be delivered from the self and to be transformed into a new man in God's new creation for the fulfillment of God's economy in the building up of the organic Body of Christ.

By the power of Christ's resurrection to bring us into oneness with the cross, we can abide in Him so that He can abide in us for the building up of His Body and the preparation of His bride.

Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (v. 4). Paul's imprisonment did not prevent him from rejoicing always. He was a person as a pattern who did not quench the Spirit and did not grieve the Spirit.

Abiding in Christ by Remaining in the Cross

We can abide in Christ by remaining in the experience of His cross. The loving seeker in Song of Songs progresses in her growth in life until she is called by the Lord to remain in the cross. Song of Songs 2:14 says, "My dove, in the clefts of the rock, / In the covert of the precipice, / Let me see your countenance, / Let me hear your voice; / For your voice is sweet, / And your countenance is lovely." Note 1 on this verse in the Recovery Version is particularly illuminating:

Here Christ, considering her His simple lover (My dove), wants to see His lover's lovely countenance and hear her sweet voice in her oneness, union, with the cross, signified here by the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice. This is Christ's call for His lover to be in

We can be delivered from the self only through our oneness with the cross, and we can be one with the cross only by the power of Christ's resurrection. In Song of Songs He is likened to a gazelle or a young hart leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills (2:8-9). He is the mountain-leaping and hill-skipping Christ, the One who is able to overcome all obstacles and barriers so that He can transport us into Himself as the crucified Christ. By the power of Christ's resurrection to bring us into oneness with the cross, we can abide in Him so that He can abide in us for the building up of His Body and the preparation of His bride.

Abiding in Christ by Abiding in His Love

We can abide in Christ by abiding in His love. In John 15:10 the Lord said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." First John 3:23 and 24 say, "This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, even as He gave a commandment to us. And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And in this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us." The way to abide in His love is to keep His

commandments. Note 1 on 1 John 3:23 in the Recovery Version says,

All the commandments are summarized in two: to believe in the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another. The first concerns faith; the second, love. To have faith is to receive the divine life in our relationship with the Lord; to love is to live the divine life in our relationship with the brothers. Faith touches the source of the divine life; love expresses the essence of the divine life. Both are needed for the believers to live a life that abides in the Lord.

Furthermore, we know that we abide in Him and that He abides in us by the indwelling Spirit as the anointing, which He has given to us. First John 2:7 and 8 say,

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard. Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

How do we explain an old commandment in verse 7 becoming a new commandment in verse 8? Note 1 on verse 8 in the Recovery Version provides us with a marvelous answer:

The commandment regarding brotherly love is both old and new; old, because the believers have had it from the beginning of their Christian life; new, because in their Christian walk it dawns with new light and shines with new enlightenment and fresh power again and again.

In John 13:34 and 35 the Lord gave the disciples a new commandment to love one another, even as He loved them. He then said that by this shall all men know that we are His disciples. When we abide in the Lord's love, His love for the brothers abides in us. This love for the brothers is expressed in our shepherding and feeding them. After Peter denied the Lord three times, the Lord restored him by asking three times, "Do you love Me?" (21:15-17). When Peter answered in the affirmative three times, the Lord said to him, "Feed My lambs," "shepherd My sheep," and "feed My sheep" (vv. 15-17). In order to feed and shepherd God's children, we must cherish them and nourish them (Eph. 5:29). To cherish others is to make them happy and make them feel pleasant and comfortable, not in a natural way but by the Lord's loving presence. To nourish others is to feed them, according to their need, with the unsearchable riches of Christ (3:8). In order to carry out this "labor of love" (1 Thes. 1:3), we must be people who live in the Lord's presence as the

Spirit in our spirit and who are constituted with the living truths of God's eternal economy (Eph. 3:9). We must also be daily constrained by the love of Christ so that we may no longer live to ourselves but to Him who died for us and has been raised (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Paul is a pattern to us of one who was abiding in the Lord by abiding in His love that is evidenced by his remarkable conclusion to Romans 8:35-39, which says,

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we have been accounted as sheep for slaughter." But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As believers who have been organically joined to the Lord as one spirit, we must maintain this organic union by abiding in Him so that He can abide in us. This mutual abiding is the practical realization of our organic union.

As believers who have been organically joined to the Lord as one spirit, we must maintain this organic union by abiding in Him so that He can abide in us. This mutual abiding is the practical realization of our organic union, which protects us. When we abide in the Lord, He is our protection from all the enemy's attacks and schemes. This abiding brings us into and keeps us in the divine light through His divine word, which becomes the teaching of the anointing. In such a condition of abiding, the Spirit is neither quenched nor grieved, the cross is continually applied, and the Lord's commandment to love becomes new in our experience of its application and enjoyment. If we would be those who abide in the Lord and who let Him abide in us, the reality of our organic union with the Lord will become practical to the uttermost. **LFC**

Works Cited

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