

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

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Psalms

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1

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Stunned By Injustice

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 73



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Well, it is great to see you Providence. It's always great to seeing with you. I just want to thank the team behind me as they're walking off. Our team here at Providence, who lead worship in all the rooms, they're so skilled and just so incredibly grateful for all of you. Thank you so much. It's great. Yeah, you can thank them, for sure. It is so good to see each of you here this day. It's a fantastic day that's in front of us. If you brought a Bible, if you want to turn with me Psalm chapter 73. If you didn't, there should be one in a chair near you. If you don't have one at home, we would love for you to take that Bible home as a gift and read it. We believe that inside that book ... God created us, he loved us, he instructed us, and he places instructions within that book. It's so good for us. What we see over and over and over again in scripture is his love for us, his love for people who are in need.

That segues into just one thing I need to share with you. That is, we're in need right now at Providence. In fact, this happens every year, the first Sunday in August. If you've been here for a long time, you probably know what I'm about to say. We're in need of a bunch of people to help with children in the next year of ministry, which starts in September. We have over 500 children at Providence under sixth grade, which is a lot of kids. They're also the next leaders. In fact, 20/30 years from now, they will be the ones that are leading us. God has offered us such an amazing gift to have such influence over so many young ones, many of whom right now don't know him. We've been talking a lot about sharing our faith and to see what God has done to be amazed at that and share with others. One of the places that you could do it is with our children. If you would pray about that, I would simply ask you to do that. We're in need of about 90 more people starting in September. If you can help with that, if you want to head back to next steps after we're done, there's some folks back there who can help you find that place.

It's a joy to see what the Lord is doing in your hearts. My inbox is a delight to read these days. You see the fact is that even for myself, right, is I envision the possible harvest of what could take place if we really give ourself, as a church family, to planning our lives in the church, in the Gospel, in our city, and churches in the world. It really creates in me a kind of joy that makes me serious. It's the kind of joy that is really perfected and modeled for us when Jesus ... when it says that for the joy set before him, he endured the cross. Most of us, we don't normally think of being crucified with the word joy. Yet what he's saying there is this is that in front of him was placed a vision of redemption, of rescue, where God, the Father, would be glorified, where we would be rescued, that where we would be brought back into our right relationship with him, where we would spend forever with him in heaven. That vision that was set before him created such joy within his heart that he became very serious. He set his face toward a cross and gave himself to that in order to rescue us.

What's cool to me is that as this joy, obviously not at that level with Jesus, it's an imperfect joy right now in my own life, that makes me serious though about how I'm living and how I'm sharing and how I'm giving and how I'm seeking to go and to pray. It's an exciting time for me and my inbox bears witness that a lot of you are also experiencing some joy that leads you to seriousness. That's a really, really great thing. There's some who have said, "I never tithed my entire life, I've never actually given to the church or what God is doing in the world and I started doing that and man ... God is changing my heart through that." It's exciting to read those. I've read so many. This last month, we looked at sharing our faith with others. We had a five-week series. It's just been a great delight to hear of the stories. For me, these success stories, it's not when someone comes to faith, it's when we were faithful to put ourselves out during the work through fear and to say, "This is what God has done in my life." I just want you to know, I am so grateful.

I'm also very aware as a pastor in this body, and as someone who prays for you frequently, is that a lot of the language over the last several months has been synonymous with going and advancing and telling and progress and advancement and storm the castle sort of language. The fact is I'm aware that while we're shouting, "Hey, let's go. Let's move," is that there's some people, in fact there's a lot of people, in our own congregation that do not feel emotionally or spiritually fit to storm a castle. The fact is it's really, really hard to talk about the goodness of God toward us when we're not happy with God. Some people in our body, that's where they're at. For some, it's stress, it's anxiety, it's guilt. There's a lot of things that when it's time to move and time to advance, sometimes we find ourselves not emotionally fit to move forward because of something that happened internally, even though we look at the commandment when Jesus says, "Go make this [inaudible 00:05:55]." Well yeah, I'm supposed to be doing that, but I just can't do that right now. I recognize there's a lot of people at Providence right now where that's the case. God knows that as well. I think that's the comfort is that God knows it's really, really hard to storm the castle when our heart is in a sling. And so, God gave us the book of Psalms.

You see, the book of Psalms ... 20-year-olds, they treasure James because James said, "This is what you need to do." 50-year-olds, 40-year-olds, 60-year-olds, 70-year-olds, they treasure Psalms because this is says, "This is who you're to love." We stop thinking about everything we need to accomplish in life. We need to start thinking about everything we need to be and want to be in life. Psalms is so real. It's so transparent. In fact, Psalms, if there's one picture that I think of when I think of Psalms, it's of the ocean. It's that place in the ocean where all of the waves of our emotion and all that churning collides with the unsinkable, unmovable, truth of God's Word. Over the month of August, what we're going to do is we're going to look at four different Psalms where someone's dealing with the real-life strain upon their heart that's prohibiting them from doing the very thing they know God has called them to do. What we're going to find is this is that if we'll sit under these Psalms and allow them to teach us that our emotions, like those waves, they'll crash into God's truth. Those emotions that are out of place is that they'll begin to break up and our heart will begin to bend and both will be healed.

Let's pray together as we get started. Father, we love you. We need you. We're grateful for you. We acknowledge you and pray God that in every place where we find ourselves physically, whether it's in this room, whether it's in the fellowship hall, whether it's in prisons, whether it's in a living room, a hotel room, whatever it is ... God, as we read Psalm 73 this morning, I pray that you would open up our eyes and help us to see amazing things within your Word. God, we don't deserve it, but would you serve us by helping us to believe and love what we read. Would you prepare our hearts even as we prepare to take the Lord's supper this morning. God, would you help us to process the emotions that we so frequently feel even with you. We need you. I pray that you would speak through weakness and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

Psalm 73 is the first one, and Psalm 73 deals with those stunning emotions that we feel when we see injustice. When things in the world aren't as they should be, we know they aren't as they should be, it creates within us some pretty strong visceral, physical emotion. It's interesting that injustice comes in two flavors. Okay. They both taste really bad. Okay, one is when bad things happen to good people. We look in the world and we see a family who loves God. They love Jesus. They're seeking to walk with him and all a sudden someone in their family has a car accident. Perhaps, someone's lost. There's tragedy. Someone in a family has cancer who loves God deeply and we look at that and we go, "That just doesn't add up. Why in the world of all the people, why that person? That person's trying to honor God. That person's trying to love God with all of their heart." That's a bitter taste.

There's another injustice that we don't enjoy and that's the injustice that we really find here in Psalm 73. That's when good things happen to bad people. When we look out at people who make it a hobby to disobey God and find creative ways in doing that. It looks like their life is blessed. It looks like that they're provided for and they have great health, sometimes even better health and cooler toys than the people who love God. We think, "God, what gives? Why in the world?" Sometimes these feelings they create such a storm within our heart that we start finding it very difficult to want to talk about the goodness of God to other people. We become silenced.

If you've ever considered or felt like taking a step back from God because of his allowance of unfairness in the world that you see, then I invite you to listen carefully to Psalm 73. It says it's the Psalm of Asaph. That's who wrote it and this is what he says. He says, "Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had narrowly slipped, for I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have pangs until death, their bodies are fat and sleek. They're not in trouble as others are. They're not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace, violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness, they're hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice. Loftily, they threaten to oppress. They set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue struts through the earth. Therefore his people turn back to them and find no fault in them and they say, 'How can God know? Is there knowledge in the most High?' Behold these are the wicked, always at ease. They increase in riches.

“All in vain, have I kept my heart clean and wash my hands in innocence. For all the day long, I have been stricken and rebuke every morning. If I had said, ‘I will speak thus,’ I would have betrayed the generation of your children. But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a weariness task until I went into the sanctuary. Then I discerned their end. Truly you set them in slippery places and make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment swept away by terrors. Like a dream when one awakes, oh Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brooding and ignorant. I was like a beast toward you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You guide with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold those who are far from you shall perish. You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell of all your works.”

I want to show you three things that are true about God Almighty and then a few applications for our life if we seek to practice them. The first is this is that God endures our doubts about his justice. He endures our doubts about his justice. One thing you can't ever forget when you read Psalm 73, or ones like them, is that God also can read them. He knows what Asaph's heart was like and he knows that he was on the other side of the fence of Asaph's conclusions. It's a very, very personal thing. Oftentimes, we read Psalm 73 and we only think about the human perspective. What I want to show you is that there's a divine perspective to this as well. He sees things happening also. We start with man, right. Asaph, his name, he begins actually with his conclusion. Meaning, he's gone through this enormous storm in his life. God's rescued him out of that storm and now he wants to teach the people of Israel something and it's this.

Surely, God is good to Israel and he's good to those with a pure heart. But then he says, “You know what? The fact is I'm not always felt that. I'm not always believe that. I want to tell you a little story about my own life.” Verse 2 he says, “Let me tell you about it. As for me my feet almost slipped and stumbled,” and the reason is because Verse 3, “I looked out, I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of people who were wicked.” Here's what he's saying. He's saying, “I started thinking, God you created us and you instructed us how to live on your world. I'm trying to obey, and that guy over there is trying to disobey. He's the one with a mansion at the beach. We both go to the doctor's office. I come home needing to take a bunch of pills and he comes home with a smile on his face. God, I just don't get it.” This is what he's saying. What he does from Verse 4 all the way to Verse 12, he says, “This is what I see God. This is what doesn't make any sense to me. All these people are so wicked,” and it says, “First of all is they have no pangs.” Meaning, they don't have any health crisis. They're pretty healthy people until they die.

Verse 5 it says that they don't face the troubles that I face. Verse 6 says and they brag about it. They say the pride becomes their necklace because they look around and says, "You know what? I'm not walking with God and look at this house I get to live in. Look at that pathetic little house you live in." They become arrogant about the things that they enjoy perhaps. Verse 7 he says that they lack wisdom. Verse 8 it says that they lack kindness. He says that they literally speak with malice. He saying, "Wait a minute God, you created all these people in your image. You're the ultimate protector and defender and yet you have some people on the earth who are wicked people, who do not love you. In fact, they profess to not loving you. Intentionally disobey you, they treat people made in your image poorly and you don't do anything about it."

It gets worse, he goes, "God, I just don't understand this one. You gave them a mouth to worship you. You literally cut a channel in their face, gave them lungs, lips, and a tongue to form syllables so that they can worship you. Instead of worshipping you," Verse 9/10/11 says, "They scoff you. They mock you. They say, 'We're doing all this without God.'" He doesn't know what to do, and so in Verse 12 he says, "Look, this is what I see. They're always at ease and they're always increasing riches." Then Verse 13 really describes a tremendous crisis, he says, "All in vain I have kept my heart clean." What he's saying is this is, Providence, sometimes in this world, it's the thieves who live in the mansions. It's the sex traffic kingpins who enjoy the best health. Sometimes it's the bully who gets the prettiest bully. Sometimes it's the racist who gets the promotion and the raise. Asaph's looking around and he goes, "How can I sing or tell anyone about your goodness when you allow all this to take place on the earth?" Asaph looked at his life and he looked at their life and he envied their life. He says, "I want his lake house. I want to enjoy those kind of parties. All I have is you."

Years ago, I mean, I was a kid. My dad planted a church in Southern California. When you dad plants a church in Southern California, you meet in a school, it means that you're on the setup team. Okay. We'd get up really early. We'd load into the van and we'd go every day. Every Sunday, we'd have to go and set everything up. Then everyone would come for church and think, "Wow, look, it's all just setup so nice for us. This is amazing." They would sit down, everyone worship, they go home, and then I was on the tear down team as well because I was the pastor's kid. Every Sunday, we had some neighbor next to us on the other side of the road. While we're packing up the van to go to church, they're packing up their truck and trailer with all these four-wheelers and dirt bikes to go out to the sand dunes. I remember many, many Sundays thinking, "I am in the wrong vehicle right now. We have chosen the wrong path." Some of us, in fact there's a lot of people who made that decision this morning are not here. There is a better path.

This is where Asaph was at. You recognize that this is something that's very familiar to all of us. He says, "All in vain I kept my heart pure." In other words, what he's saying there is, "Maybe I'm wasting so much pleasure for purity in order to honor God who isn't there or doesn't care. Maybe this purity thing is really not the right path." This is where he was at. Here was one of his central problems, right, Asaph had a big problem. That was his job.

His job was he was the worship pastor for all of Israel at the temple. In other words, throughout the week he'd have to sit down and have to pick songs that he was struggling to believe. He had to stand up and sing and look engaged in front of everybody. "Everybody, let's worship. Here we go. This is all great." His heart is like, "I just wish I was not here."

You see, leaders face the same battles as you. Then he says to make it worse, he was trapped because he couldn't tell anyone. Verse 15 says, "If I would speak thus, if I would share with people what's actually happening in my heart right now, I would betray a generation of your children because they're looking up to me. They're trying to follow me. They think I'm the model to follow. And so, I have to fake it. I don't want to sing. I don't want to share. I don't want to give. I don't want to go. I don't want to go to life group. I don't want to do any of it. But I'm a leader, so I've got to be there. If I would ever tell people what was really happening in my life, it might destroy someone." Some of you, you're there. Some you say, "If I would tell people what I doubt, people would not think very highly of me and might even hurt this body of believers." Psalms are real, aren't they? They get right up in our face. You see Asaph, like many people here, was silenced from sharing about the goodness of God because at a time he just didn't think he was all that good.

Before we talk about the solution there, let's talk about an application here. I just want you to remember that God is the one who is enduring all this. He's listening to a worship pastor say, "I don't think purity is worth it." Well, he's on the other side of that statement. He listens to everything we say, everything we say. He knows everything we think. Isn't it amazing that he endures with us so patiently and lovingly? The application that I thought of when I was thinking of this is let's be careful how we talk about God in our pain. You see, God placed Psalm 73 and allowed it to be within the scripture not to affirm the accuracy of Asaph thoughts because all of them were not accurate. It's not true that every non-believer is at ease and increases in wealth. I know people who don't love God who are very poor also. You do too. It's not here to validate the accuracy of every single one of his thoughts, it's here to affirm his love for us when our life empathizes with the normalcy of the thoughts that are expressed here. When we read this and we go, "Yes, this is what I feel," God says, "I still love you then. I'm still for you. I'm still going to be patient with you."

You see God does not need me to defend them, but I would just encourage you to remember that God is always the one who's standing on the other side of what seems to be impersonal accusations. Every doubt lands on the wall of God. He knows all of them. It becomes a very personal, and I would just encourage you to try when you go through life to not just look at injustice from your perspective but maybe to look at from God's perspective. Think about it like this, maybe it'll help us feel his sorrow a little bit more. Think about this for a second. God in all of his goodness creates a good world for us and gives us accurate good instructions on how to live in that world and we all sinned and fell short of his glory. Instead of crushing us, he makes a plan to crush his son. He could deal immediately with the injustice in the world by saying, "If you sin, I'm wiping you out." There would be know arguments or accusations about God being unjust.

One of the reasons that Asaph had such a hard time is because he forgot that there are no good people on the earth including himself. There was no sinless person. All of us have fallen short of the glory of God, and yet God loved us so much that he did the one thing that he could do to bring about justice in the end. That is, that he would send his son who came, he lived perfectly in love and righteousness, and yet he went to a cross to pay for our sin. He was buried in a grave, he rose from the dead, and he says, "If you'll believe me and believe in me in what I've accomplished, I'll forgive you of all of your sin. I'll bring you in to fellowship with me. I'll reconcile you to me." My point is simply this Providence, the next time injustice grabs your neck and in response you want to grab his neck, imagine how he grieves the mess that we've made of his world. I readily confess and I'll understand a lot of things that happen in this world and God's ways in them.

It's interesting in places like Ezekiel 16, God confesses the not understanding our desire to sin in his world. He writes there, "Wait a minute, you're mad with me? I'm the unjust one? I took you out of the grave and showed you kindness. Any time I say, 'Stop living,' a person stops living." We look at God and we shake our fist and we say, "How could you?" Just think for a second from the perspective of being in heaven. When you look back down, you go, "Wait a minute. But how could you?" In all the realness of this relationship and the affirmation have even allowing these kinds of emotions to sit within scripture, just don't forget on the other side of that is a person named God who feels sorrow and grief and joy and who loves you dearly.

How does God bring him out of this? Well, the second thing that God reshapes our perspective with his presence. Notice what it says in Verse 16/17. He goes, "All this was a wearisome task until something happened," and he says, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God." In other words, once I came into the sanctuary of God and saw God in all of his glory, that his Word was credible, that he was merciful, that he was kind, that he was loving, all the sudden things began to make sense. There was two things that became clear in his life, and this is what always happens when we come to worship gathering, when we open up the scriptures, when we come to him in prayer, we get before him in his sanctuary. In front of his presence, two things always happen. The first thing is this is that we grieve the future of the unbeliever. You see when Asaph entered God's presence, he was able to discern the future of all mankind. Instead of envying the wicked, he recognized that this wonderful dream with all these wonderful colors and experiences was going to end in an eternal nightmare. He's like, "How in the world could I ever envy a life that's going to end in a nightmare?"

You think about people sitting on the deck wishing they could be on the Titanic, wishing that they could be a part of something that was so special and envying the people who were on there. I just wish I had a ticket. I just wish I could be there. The fact is they didn't know what was going to happen. What if God had allowed them the foreknowledge of seeing what would take place? Isn't it true that not only would they not envy the people on there but they would also plead for the people to get off of there? Asaph's basically asking this question, "How in the world could I envy somebody whose life is going to end in a perpetual eternal nightmare? I can't." Don't think that made him happy. He's not saying, "Yeah, God's going to get him." He's saying, "What a tragedy?"

There's another thing that takes place when we see God in his presence and is this as we realize we possess the greatest treasure. You see he says, "When I was down in the goodness of being pure," he goes, "I was like a beast." This is what he says in Verse 22. "I was broodish and ignorant. I was like a beast towards you." In other words, I was eating grass and my face was down in the dirt and I was just thinking that God doesn't know and God doesn't see and purity's not a good thing. All the pleasure that I'm missing out. He's saying, "Wait a minute. Then all of the sudden I came into his presence and instead of looking at grass, I was able to look at the sky. I was able to look up. I was able to look out and see all the blessings that God had actually given me. Instead of viewing this much grass, it was immediately underneath my nose. I can see all the blessing that he had actually provided for me." He says, "I couldn't have been more wrong and the reason is this," he goes, "I'm continually with you, and you guide me throughout this life. Then when it's over, afterward, you lead me and receive me to glory. You're going to bring me to heaven."

This question is one that I've always asked myself, and it's one that I've always ask you, anytime I'm talking about this very thing. Here's the question: If you could live forever in heaven enjoying all of its benefits and Jesus was not there, would you be satisfied? What I want you to know is this, if you answer affirmatively, you've not only missed the point of heaven but you will live the rest of your earth life with envy. You see in 1 Peter 3:18, it says, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to," heaven? No. Forgiveness? No. Gold streets? No. God. All the other blessings, there only good so long as they bring us to the greatest treasure and that is God. This is what he sees, he goes, "Wait a minute. I'm finally seeing it. It's God ... is the treasure of the redeemed. He is the prize." That's why he says this, he goes, "All right, look, whom have I in heaven but you? You are what makes heaven heaven. If you weren't there, it wouldn't be heaven." Then he brings it to the earth, and he goes, "Wait a minute. The fact is that there's nothing on the earth that I desire besides you, for you are my portion."

Now, all of us have been to a restaurant with a group of people and they bring the food out, and then you conclude that you ordered poorly. You're like, "Wow, that looks good and that looks good and those look good. All right, well maybe next time." When he says, "You are my portion forever," this is what he's saying in life, we do this all the time, we sit down and we have our plate. Here's the question: If the only thing on your plate was Jesus Christ and the guy next to you has a boat and a lake house and great health and no Jesus, do you envy his plate? Is Jesus what we sing? Is he your all in all? Is he the treasure of your life? Here's the thing. If he's not, envy will plague you until you see him. It's just how it works. He concludes, "Surely God is good to the pure in heart." How can he say this? Because when he went into the sanctuary, he learned that Matthew 5:8 was absolutely true when Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Why is purity a good thing? Because the pure people see God. Do you love God?

For application, let's run to God when we feel like running away. It's strange how often our heart feels allergic to the very things we need the most. In prayer, in scripture, in worship, these are the pathways into his presence, but when our heart is stunned, they each appear to be roads that are blocked and shut down. I just want to encourage you that when it's time to be in need of spending time with the Lord even if it feels like somebody has boarded up the road, tear down the boards. Tear them down, and be like Jacob that says, "I'm not letting go God until you bless me." Sit under the scripture until your heart is happy. Be relentless to see him in his sanctuary.

The third thing I want you to see is this, is that God reignites our hearts to share his Gospel. See, not only is he patient with us when we're in this storm and he shows us how he takes us out by placing us in his presence but then notice what he says at the very end. His last sentence is, "That I may tell of your works." You see finally, Asaph's heart is not only ready to sing, he's ready to tell people about what God has done for him. He's ready to tell his story and God's story. You see, when we enter into his presence and enjoy the nearness of God, all the variables add up to a renewed desire to tell other people about Jesus. We look at injustice and we say, "The only answer is Jesus." We looked at the nightmare and we see the only answer is Jesus. We look for the greatest treasure on earth and the only answer is Jesus. Providence, let's look for opportunities this week to talk about Jesus.

One of the ways that God allows us and draws us to himself, to see, to show us that we've already received the greatest treasure, is in something called the Lord's supper, which we're going to do now. For those of you serving us, if you want to head to the back and just get ready to serve us. On the night that Jesus was betrayed, Jesus gave this to his followers. He said to them, "It's going to consist of two things. Bread, which is symbolic of my body, and a cup, which is symbolic of my blood." And he told us to do this regularly for three different reasons. One, he says, "I want to give you something that every time you do it, you're going to remember how much I love you." Second, he says, "I'm going to give something to you that every time you do it, it gives you an opportunity to tell other people that you're believing in my son Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." If you take this this morning and your holding it in your hand, you are publicly declaring to the people who are observing that, "I believe in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of my sins." The third thing he does though is he says, "I want to give you a regular opportunity to force yourself to examine your heart to confess any sin in your life."

For those of you who are here, if you've never trusted Christ, we just ask you to let it pass this morning. We would love to talk with you after, introduce you to Jesus Christ. The next time we do this, you can take this. For those of you who have trusted Christ, we welcome you to the table this morning. As it's passed, I would urge you to take these moments to examine your heart and confess any know sin so that you can take with joy and a clean conscious. Okay.

Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you for your love for us. We thank you for what you have made available to us. And we thank you for the amazing Gospel of Jesus Christ that not only rescues us from the injustice of this world, that we contribute to in our own sin, but God that you place us in your presence and allow us to experience the greatest treasure that there is. And that's you. And so, I pray today for those in the room who've never trusted Christ that you would lead them right now to place their faith in you. And God, I pray for those of us who do know and love you. I pray that you would use this time to search our heart, test us, see if there's any offensive way in us, lead us to confession, and would you forgive us of our sin. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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