

The Christian's Confidence from God's Promises

Scripture: John 15:26–27

Code: 43-87

You can turn in your Bible to John 15, verses 26 and 27. I have been convinced for a long time that the most ignored, the most misrepresented, the most dishonored, the most insulted, and the most abused person in the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. That is a very serious thing to do because that is a form of taking the Lord's name in vain, which is a violation of one of the Ten Commandments. The Holy Spirit is regularly spoken of with irreverence, foolishness, and flippancy. People ascribe to the Holy Spirit things that He has no part of, and they fail to honor Him for His true work. All of that is a lack of worship, and a lack of worship is sin.

It's extremely severe to violate the law of God, as God warned His people in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, what would happen to them if they didn't worship according to truth. The modern evangelical church shows very little interest, or limited interest, in the glory of the Holy Spirit, third member of the Trinity. Pragmatism doesn't need Him, worldly ministry doesn't want Him, and emotionalism dishonors Him with folly. The true glory of the Holy Spirit is very often dismissed and unknown. That is, again, a tragic failure in worship. The text before us – just two verses really – opens up our understanding to the true ministry of the Holy Spirit so that we can glorify Him, worship Him in a way that He deserves. Before I read that text, I want to set the scene for you a little bit.

John, starting in chapter 13 and running through chapter 16, provides for us a revelation from the Holy Spirit of what Jesus said to His disciples on the last night before His arrest and crucifixion. This was Passover on that final week of our Lord's life and ministry. They had met in the upper room for the Passover. Judas had been dismissed to go and do his dastardly deed and betray the Lord. And later on that night, He would be arrested; He would be pushed through an illegal trial and crucified the next day.

But on this night, our Lord spends hours with the eleven remaining disciples. He spends a great portion of that time in the upper room, and then leaves the upper room at the end of chapter 14; and what we have in chapter 15 and 16 is the instruction, the teaching that He gave them while they were walking through Jerusalem, deep into the night, on their way to the garden of Gethsemane where He would be arrested. All of this is profound truth. It is the legacy of Jesus to His disciples, and beyond them to all of us. We know that because all these promises extend past those eleven men to all believers.

In chapter 17, we have the record of our Lord's prayer to the Father that same night; and in that prayer, He declares that He wants the Father to fulfill all that He has promised, not only for the eleven, but for all who will believe in the future. So these are the promises that the Lord has given to all believers through all time. It is because of that, a very, very precious portion of Scripture to us.

Now it started out, as you know, as a night of love. That's how it began, chapter 13, verse 1: "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the max." He loved them infinitely as only God can love. And in the opening two chapters, the emphasis is on the gifts and the promises that that love generates, and so we have been saying it was a night of love. It was a night in which the Lord lavishes His love on His own by making promises that are staggering in and of themselves. And we have been going through those amazing promises that belong to us all through life and all the way into heaven where He's prepared a place for us. It was then a night of love.

However, we saw in chapter 15 and verse 18 the word "hate," and that word then begins to be used many times in the subsequent verses down to verse 25. And it turns into a night of hatred – from love to hate. Love is the expression of God toward His own. Hate is the expression of the world toward those who belong to God.

We told you the last couple of weeks that we live in those two worlds. We live in the world of God's kingdom. We live as children of God, and God's love for us causes Him to lavish us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. We are loved infinitely by God, and we are blessed with the expressions of that love, the fulfillment of all His promises. At the same time that we are loved by God, we are hated by the world. We are hated by the world because we're not of the world, and the world belongs to Satan. We're hated because they hated our Lord before they hated us. We're hated because they don't know God. That's what our Lord said in verses 18 to 25.

So on the one hand, we are lavishly loved by God and we are strongly hated by the world. God pours out all blessing on us; the world pours out all its anger and persecution on us, even to the degree where believers through history are killed. And I was telling you last week that currently as we speak, there are about 100 million professing Christians in the world today under some form of persecution; most of it from 41 Muslim nations, but there are others as well. This is not surprising; this is not new. We're not even surprised when persecution begins to develop in our own country, because the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one.

The evil one hates God, Christ; hates the Bible, hates the gospel, hates believers. Now our Lord is saying to them, "I'm leaving you. I'm pouring out promises. I'm warning you about hostility and persecution –" and there'll be more about that in chapter 16 "– and I'm going to leave you now. I'm going to leave you." And that raises the question then, "How will those promises be fulfilled? And how will we be able to reach the hostile, hating, persecuting world with the gospel, which is our mission?"

How will that happen? If You're not here, who will deliver to us all the promises? If You're not here, who will empower us in the world that hates us?" The answer to that, our Lord has given several times already. The answer is the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

If you go back to chapter 14, He says in verse 16, "I will ask the Father, He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever. That is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it doesn't see Him or know Him. But you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." Who is going to be the one who will fulfill all the promises? None other than the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, who will come to you and be with you forever. In fact, not just with you, but in you.

In verse 26 He says it again: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." They were asking, "Who is going to help us to distill all the truth you've given us, and be able to understand it, and remember it, and preach it, and teach it?" and He says, "The Holy Spirit will do that." And He did that, of course, by inspiring the writers of the Scripture to write it down so that every generation has His teaching and His Word accurately recorded.

And over in chapter 16, I would draw your attention to verse 7: "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away. It is to your advantage that I go away. If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." What He's saying is, "It is better to have the Holy Spirit in you than to have Me with you. It is better to have the Holy Spirit in you than to have Me with you."

And what will be the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Go down to verse 13 – chapter 16, verse 13: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will deliver it to you, disclose it to you, reveal it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said He takes of Mine and will deliver it, or deposit it, with you." That is an amazing, amazing statement that sums up the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to take all that the Lord promised to us and deliver it to us; that is His ministry. All that the Lord promised to give, all the blessings that He pledged to provide, the Holy Spirit will dispense, the Holy Spirit will bring, the Holy Spirit will give. Even uses a verb *anaggell*, which means to bring back again, as if, "I'm leaving, but the Spirit's coming to bring back again to you everything that heaven has promised." You catch the reality of those words, because that defines the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes all the promises of God through Christ in salvation and delivers them to us; that's His ministry.

For example, in chapter 14, we remember that the Lord said he was going to heaven to prepare a place for us. He was going to heaven to make a room for us in the Father's house, and the question

is, “How will we be sure that we will get to heaven?” and the apostle Paul writes, “Because He’s given to us –” 2 Corinthians 5:5 “– the Spirit as a guarantee, the Spirit as a pledge.”

In chapter 14, verse 12, our Lord promised greater works – not greater in kind, but greater in extent – that His people would do greater works in terms of volume and extent, than He did in three short years in the land of Israel. “But who will provide the power for that, who will empower us to do those greater works since the Lord is leaving?” In Ephesians 3, He says that He will fill us with His Spirit, in verse 16, and then in verse 20, so that we’ll be able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. Again, the promise is of greater works, and the power comes from the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 14 also, in verses 13 and 14, our Lord promised that heaven would release all its treasure in response to our prayers in the name of Christ. As we pray in the will of God, all our needs will be met. “How is that going to happen? Who is going to provide that for us?” The answer comes in Romans 8: “The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, from within us, with groanings that cannot be uttered, so that all things are working together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” Again, this is praying in the Spirit, as Ephesians 6:18 designates it.

In chapter 14 again, verses 18 to 23, the Lord promised divine presence. Jesus said, “I will be with you.” Jesus said, “The Father will be with you.” How is that going to happen? How is that becoming a reality in our lives? It is becoming a reality because the Holy Spirit is coming to dwell in us: the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God. He brings the Trinity to us. Romans 8:9, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He’s none of His.” “You are the temple of the Spirit of God,” 1 Corinthians 6.

First Peter 4:14 lays it out this way: “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” In chapter 14, He promised us peace; in chapter 13, He promised us love; and in chapter 15, He promised us joy.

Who is going to deliver the love? Who is going to deliver the peace? Who is going to deliver the joy? And the answer comes in Galatians 5: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.” The Holy Spirit then is the one who delivers to us all the promises of heaven, all the promises of God and Christ.

So are you getting the truth? The Holy Spirit will take all the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ and make them real possessions that operate in the life of the believer. That is why we are told in Galatians 5:16 to walk in the Spirit. In other words, live our daily lives in the sensitivity to the Spirit of God. If we do that, we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

The Lord then gave us the Holy Spirit to make His promises personal, to bring all the blessings of heaven down to us. They might have been wondering because He had given them commands. He had commanded them to obey Him in chapter 13. He commanded them to obey Him in chapter 14.

He commands them to obey Him again in chapter 15. And you can ask the question: "Where is the power going to come from so that we can be obedient?"

John answers that, 1 John, chapter 3, verse 23: "This is the commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us," which is John's way of saying, "We know we're believers because we keep His commands, and we keep His commands because the Spirit is in us, empowering us."

The 4th chapter, verse 11: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." Everything that happens in the Christian life is energized by the divine Holy Spirit, by the divine Holy Spirit.

Now the question was raised in verses 18 through 25, "What about all the world's hatred? What about all the animosity? What about the persecution? How are we going to confront that successfully? How are we going to preach the gospel to a hating world? How are we going to witness to the glory of our Savior to a world that wants to shut us up, silence us, and even kill us? How can we fulfill our calling to tell the gospel to the world if they hate us? How can we have any success? What hope do we have?"

The sinners of the world are blind and dead, in the dark; double-blinded by Satan, alienated from the life of God; hopeless, helpless, unable and unwilling to believe. They don't seek after God; they can't understand the truth; their minds are blinded; and on top of that, they hate us. So how can we have any success? Again, the power that breaks through that hatred is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Look at chapter 16, verse 7. I'm going to read it to you again. "I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away. If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. If I go away, I will send Him to you." And listen to this: "He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, concerning sin because they do not believe in Me, and concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me, and concerning judgement because the ruler of this world has been judged."

Listen, the promise is this: the world is hostile, the world hates, the world is blind and dead and hopeless and helpless, but the Spirit comes, and the Spirit moves in the blind and dead sinner, to bring about conviction concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. We couldn't do this on our own. This, again, is the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And our part, the witnessing part: what about that? Acts 1:8, “But after that, the Holy Spirit comes upon you. You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the whole world.” It’s the Holy Spirit doing the convicting in the heart of the sinner, and it’s the Holy Spirit doing the empowering of the message in us. Heaven comes down and operates in the world in behalf of believers and unbelievers by means of the Spirit of God. This is the true work of the Holy Spirit.

First Corinthians 2:12 says, “We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, so that we may know the things freely given to us of God.” All that God has for us, all that God promises to us, all that He provides for us is dispensed to us by the Holy Spirit. We live and move in the Holy Spirit. And there’s something additional to that.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, we read that while all of this is going on, “And the Holy Spirit is bringing the promises to us, and the Holy Spirit is empowering our witness, and the Holy Spirit is doing all those kinds of things that fulfill the promises of God. He is at the same time, at the same time, making us like Jesus Christ,” the end of 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18. We are being transformed into the glory of the Lord, from glory to glory, from the Lord, the Spirit. This is the true work of the Holy Spirit.

Now with that as a background, let’s look at our text. That has, I hope, informed you about what’s in this text that we’ll look briefly at. Verse 26: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you’ve been with me from the beginning.”

Where is the power for your gospel witness coming from? Where is it coming from? It’s coming from the Holy Spirit. The world hates, the world is hostile, the world persecutes, the world even takes the life of believers.

How are we going to penetrate that? How are we going to overturn the darkness? How are we going to dispel the blindness? How are we going to awaken the dead? The Holy Spirit does the work. “The one who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you’ve been with Me from the beginning.” This is about testimony. This is about testimony.

The theme here is the world, okay, the world. We’ve been reading about the world since verse 18: “The world hates you, the world hates you. The world hated Me. The world doesn’t know My Father.” That we have covered very clearly.

So the question rises in verse 26: “How do we hope to have any success?” And the answer is, “Because the Helper comes, you will testify, and you will testify, empowered by the Holy Spirit.” This is a powerful and wonderful promise. And, again, it’s kind of the capstone on the reality that all that heaven sends down to us is dispensed to us, dispersed to us, revealed to us, empowered in us by the Holy Spirit, by the Holy Spirit. This is His ministry.

Now, I want you to think about the flow of thought in these simple two verses. Let me just break it down. Number One: Christian witness is to the world. Christian testimony is to the world. That's the whole point here when He talks about testifying in verse 26, testifying in verse 27. We need to be reminded that He's talking about the world: the hostile, godless, Christ-rejecting, Christian-hating, world. That is the subject here. This promise, in verses 26 and 27, is embedded between two passages about their hostility; 18 to 25 talk about persecution; 16, 1 to 3, talks about persecution, and even martyrdom.

In the middle of that comes this promise that "you will testify also." And that was true; the disciples did. All but one of them were martyred, gave up their life as a sacrifice or testimony. The world hates; the world kills. The world lies in the lap of the evil one. The world, essentially, is the kingdom of darkness. They're under the power of the prince of the air. They are the children of Satan. But our responsibility is to "go into all the world and –" do what? "– preach the gospel."

We don't love the world. If anybody loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. We don't love the world. James said, "Friendship with the world is hostility toward God." So we are aliens in this world. We're not a part of the world, we don't love the world, we aren't a friend of the world; and by world, I mean the system of evil that dominates the falling world.

We, rather – as we've been saying – are the conscience of the world. We are the conviction of the world. We are separate from the world. We are alien to the world. We indict the world. We speak of sin to the world, and we speak of righteousness to the world, and we speak of judgment to the world. And it would be hopeless for us to do that were it not empowered by the Spirit affirming that in the heart of the sinner. The world is our mission field, and the world is, John said, passing away.

Will we be penalized, I guess you say, for our testimony in the world? Lots of people have been through all of history. We could be penalized relationally, we could be penalized economically, we could even be penalized in terms of our very existence. That's happened through all the years of Christian testimony.

Will the world retaliate in anger? Yes. Will we suffer slings and arrows and abuse? Yes. But we can't lick our wounds in self-pity and withdraw into the safety of just the community of believers, because in Romans 10, it says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how will they call on one of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear unless somebody tells them?" God does the saving through the power of the Holy Spirit, but not apart from the message preached. In Acts 1:8 again, "You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world."

That's what the church does corporately. But even as an individual, the reason you're not in heaven now is so that you can be a witness here. The Lord puts your perfection on hold and tolerates you and me, just so we can do what we need to do here, which can't be done in heaven: tell the world the gospel. So our testimony is to the world. We know it's hostile, we know that; but we also know that they can't be saved without the truth, without the gospel; and we also know that the Spirit does a convicting work in the hearts of those whom God chooses. So Christian witnesses to the world.

Secondly, Christian witness, Christian testimony is of the Son. Jesus says, "I will send the Helper to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father. He will testify about Me, and you will testify also because you have been with Me from the beginning." Starting with the apostles and going beyond the apostles, the message is Jesus Christ: "You will testify about Me."

So Christian witness is to the world of the Son, to the world of the Son. The world's hatred is focused on Christ, and yet He is our message. "They hate Him without a cause," it says back in verse 25. The world on its own has no interest in Christ. "They love darkness rather than light, that's why they don't believe," back in John 3. They don't believe the gospel because they love their sin, they love the darkness.

But we don't change anything. We can't alter the message; we can't water down the gospel; we can't shift it off of Christ. It's not a social message about living a better life, or reforming, or helping poor people, or feeding hungry people, or stopping sex trafficking, or whatever other things are thrown around by all kinds of folks who think they're fulfilling the Great Commission, but are not. All of those things in themselves are good things, but that's not our calling. Our message is the Son of God. Our message is Jesus Christ.

So, you must know about His eternal deity. You must know about His humanity. You must know about His virgin birth, His sinless life, His substitutionary death on the cross, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His exaltation, His coronation, and His triumphant return. Christ is our testimony. We give testimony to Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, the only hope, the only hope.

I remember years ago when there was a popular song and I would hear it sometimes sung by Christians. It was called *My Sweet Lord* and it would refer to Jesus, and then it would drift into Krishna. There is still lack of clarity in the world about who Christ is.

In fact, to address that – not this Shepherds' Conference this year, but in 2017, which is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Luther pinning his thesis on the door of the church at Wittenberg and launching the Reformation – for that 500th year celebration, we're going to have a great convocation, a great conference like we did on inerrancy, only it's going to be on Christ; and we're going to establish clarity for the whole world on, "Who is Jesus Christ?" We're going to be bringing people who will serve us well, proclaiming Christ. He is our message. The name of Jesus: a common name,

common word. The knowledge of who His is, not so common.

When you come to the very end of Scripture, you wind up at the book of Revelation, and you are reminded as the book of Revelation starts, of the subject of our testimony. Listen to how John begins Revelation: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His slaves, the things which must soon take place,” and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His slave John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ. Those go together because the testimony of Jesus Christ is contained in the Word of God. That’s where we know about Christ.

In the same chapter, Revelation 1:9, John ends up as an exile on the Isle of Patmos verse 9 says, “Because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” It was his testimony of Jesus that got him exiled. It was the testimony of the other apostles concerning Jesus that caused them to be martyred.

Listen to Revelation 12:17; talks about Satan and his attack on Israel, and it says, “He will make war with those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” This is basic, but it needs to be reiterated. Our message is Jesus Christ. Paul said, “I’m determined to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I don’t come to you with words of human wisdom. I have no other message.”

Revelation then concludes, or close to concludes in chapter 19, verse 10, with this: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Let me say that another way. “The testimony of Jesus is the content of preaching, it is the content of preaching.” Our message is not political, it is not social, it is not relational, it is not moral: it is Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again. This is the apostles testimony. And, again, Acts 1:8, “You shall be witnesses to Me, to Me.” We stand up in this world and give testimony to Christ, who He is and what He has done. Christian testimony is to the world of the Son.

Thirdly: Christian witness or testimony is from the Father. “When the Helper comes, whom I will send you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.” This whole thing starts with God the Father. We witness to the world of the Son on behalf of the Father. The Father gave testimony to the Son in all throughout the Old Testament revealing that He was coming. The Father gives testimony to the Son in the New Testament by the record of His arrival and His person and work.

The Father gave verbal testimony: “This is My beloved Son; listen to Him. This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” at His baptism and at the transfiguration. It is the Father who sent the Son, and it is the Father who sends the Spirit to give testimony to the Son. So when you give testimony to the Son, you are repeating the testimony of the Father. You are honoring God. Nothing is more honoring to God than for you to proclaim Jesus Christ as His Son: “This is My Son.”

Eternal generation by the Father launches the mission of the Son on earth; the Son fulfills His mission, the Spirit then proceeds from the Father to proclaim the Son, first to the apostles and their associates who wrote it down in Scripture; and then through the church through all ages until He returns. So Christian witness to the world: to the world because that's the mission field, of the Son because He's the subject from the Father. This is God's testimony, and God has placed His testimony through the Spirit into the Scripture.

We were discussing that in the Inerrancy Conference. If you deny the Inerrancy of Scripture, you strike a blow against the integrity of God the Father. You can't have an error in the Bible. You can't have an erroneous Bible and God is true. If the Bible is in error, then God could not sustain truth, could not maintain truth. But God has spoken truly; He spoke in His Son through His Spirit. We have no higher calling than to support the Father's testimony to the Son. Christian witness is to the world about the Son, from the Father, fourth, through the Spirit, through the Spirit. Now we're getting to the real issue – through the Spirit. He is the instrument of witnessing. He is the one who empowers us to give the gospel. He is the one who works in the center to bring about life out of death. He is the one – here's the most important part – who inspired the Bible, which is the content of the message. Scripture is the content of the message. "So when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me," and He did that in the writing of Scripture, in the writing of Scripture – the Spirit of truth who inspired the writers to write an inerrant, authoritative word.

First John 5:6 says, "It is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is truth." The Spirit is truth, the Son is truth, the Father is truth, and therefore, what They produce is true. We have a true God, and a true Son of God, and a true Spirit, and therefore, the product is a true word. So the Holy Spirit has placed in our hands the truth, and that's the final point, and that's where it comes down to us as it should. Christian witness is to the world, of the Son, from the Father, through the Spirit, by the believers – verse 27: "And you will testify also, you will testify also." Those who had been with Him from the beginning, the eleven, were actually the ones the Holy Spirit used to write. Along with their associates, they wrote the New Testament. But all of us beyond them are called to the same thing: to be those who testify concerning Christ. It's really an amazing thing to think about, what the Spirit's work is: to give to us everything that heaven promises and pledges; to empower us for evangelism in the world; to preach to the world, of the Son, from the Father, through the Spirit, and in us. That's why we're here. We're the last link. We're the last link. "How will they hear without a preacher?" This is what we're called to do. This is a high and holy calling.

Listen to 1 John 4:14, "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." That's what we do. We testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. We tell that to the world, and we go in the power of the Holy Spirit in us, the power of the Holy Spirit who has given us the revelation of truth that reveals the Son, with the confidence that the Spirit

of God is even working to convict the sinners of righteousness, judgment, and sin. This is our calling. We come to the cross; we love to celebrate the cross. That's just the beginning. The rest is a life of faithful witness.

Father, we are so thankful again for the truth: the Word. Help us now to think about the cross, not as something only in the past, but something that propels us, that propels us into the future, as we take the message of the cross, the word of the cross – Jesus Christ and Him crucified – to the ends of the world. Lord, may we, as we remember the cross, have a new commitment to the proclamation of that glorious cross for Your honor. And we pray in His name, amen.

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