

ANGELIC PROTECTION IN APPOINTED WAYS

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“For He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways.”
Psalm 91:11.

OUR subject this morning was the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb upon the lintel, and the two door-posts of the houses of the children of Israel and Egypt. As soon as that was done, and the lamb had been eaten, they had to start upon their journey to Canaan. They knew that they had to go, and they were prepared to go. They had their loins girt, and each man had his staff in his hand, and his sandals on his feet. After being prisoners so long, they were set free in order that they might become pilgrims to the land which the Lord their God had given to their fathers.

We who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, are in a similar condition to theirs, for the Lord has redeemed us, and we can sing the new song, “He has brought us up out of the house of bondage, and with a high hand, and an outstretched arm He has made us free.” And now we are pilgrims and strangers in this world, for we are on our way to a better land than the earthly Canaan ever was—a land that flows with something richer than milk and honey, and where there is an eternal and abounding portion appointed for each one of the redeemed! We are pressing on, through this great wilderness, towards the land into which the Lord will surely bring us in His own good time. Our text is a promise to pilgrims. It most appropriately follows the text of this morning—“The blood shall be to you for a token.” You have set out upon the road to heaven. You have entered the narrow way by Christ, who is the gate at the head of the way, and now you are wondering how you will get on while you are on the road, and whether you will be proved in the right way so as to endure unto the end. This promise comes to you with much of real heart-cheer—“He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

I. My first remark is rather by way of implication from the text than in direct exposition of it. It is this—THERE ARE SOME WAYS WHICH ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PROMISE because they are not our ways, and they are not God’s ways. They are ways into which we may be tempted by Satan—and which we are to jealously avoid.

You know how, when the devil professed to quote this text to our Lord, he left out the latter part of it, “to keep you in all your ways,” because it would not have suited his purpose to mention that proviso. We, however, will begin with the words which the devil omitted, since the very fact of his omission of them seems to show how essential they are to a right understanding of the meaning of the text! O Christian, if you keep to the King’s highway, you will be safe! But there are byways, and, alas, crooked lanes which you must not go down. If you do go there, you will go at your own risk. He who travels on the King’s highway is under the King’s protection—but he who takes to byroads must protect himself—and the probability is that he will meet with robbers who will make him rue the day that he ever turned to the right hand or to the left!

So, first, we must take care that we never go *in the ways of presumption*. This is what Satan would have had Christ do. “Cast Yourself down,” he said, “for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You.” This temptation to presumption is by no means an

uncommon one. I have heard of it from the lips of men who were evidently not the children of God, or they would have resisted the temptation, and not have yielded to it as they did. They have said, “Well, we are God’s children, so we may do as we like. We are saved, therefore we may live as we please”—a dreadful inference from what, to other men, might be a precious truth. O dear friends, beware of tempting the devil to tempt you! Beware, too, of tempting the Lord, your God, as some do who venture a long way into evil company, or into doubtful paths under the mistaken notion that they are so prudent, that they will not be overtaken as others might be—that they are so sage, and withal so experienced, that they may go where young people must not venture, and may do a great many things which less-instructed Christians had better not do. Where you think you are perfectly safe, there you are often most in danger! Horses frequently fall just at the bottom of the hill, when the driver thinks that it is unnecessary to rein them up any longer. When you are so foolish as to say, “Now I am out of the reach of temptation,” you are in the very midst of temptation! And when you think you are not being tempted at all, you are being tempted the most by the very fancy that you are not being tempted!

O beloved friends, beware of presuming! Some have been so favored in the dispensations of providence, so prosperous in everything they have undertaken, that they have thought they might speculate as far as ever they pleased, and at last—well, they’ve had very shady characters at the end of their lives. They have done once what they never ought to have done, and because it succeeded, they have been tempted to do it again, and yet again. But, I pray you, sirs, never gather from the success of a wrong action, that God is willing for you to repeat it! Rather say, “God was very gracious to me in not punishing me that time, but I will never run such a risk as that again.” I do not believe that Jonah, after having been once thrown into the sea, and been cast forth upon the shore by the whale, ever wanted to be flung into the sea again! He might not have felt certain about another whale coming along to carry him to land! If you have been miraculously delivered once from the great deep, do not put yourself into such a position again. If you do, you may find that the next great fish is a shark—not a whale—and instead of being brought to land, you may be destroyed. In brief, beware of all presumptuous ways, for God has not promised to keep you there.

And, brothers and sisters, you scarcely need to be told that you cannot expect to be preserved *if you go into sinful ways*. I trust that you watch against the coarser and vulgar sins to which others are prone, and that you will not be allowed to fall into them, but there is such a thing as falling little by little. Mind, I pray you, the little evils. A man never falls into the great, unclean sins of lust all at once—it is usually by a long series of little familiarities that he reaches that terrible end. He is indecorous first, indecent next, and then at last, criminal! Oh, keep back, keep back from the beginnings of evil! If you keep back at the very first, you will go no further. But if you slide just a little, you will find that this world is such a slippery place that you will surely fall, and fall frightfully, too! I trust that no Christian would practice dishonesty in his business, yet you know that it is very easy for one to do a wrong thing because it is “the custom of the trade.” “They label this 100 yards, though it is only 90—but if I label it so, I will not sell it, and in the next shop it will probably be marked 110—so I must label mine a little more than it is.” Well, if you do, remember that you are a thief! Though it is the custom of the trade, you are a liar if you conform to it, and you cannot expect God’s blessing upon you in doing it! Do you think that in the Day of Judgment, God will say to men, “You are not guilty, for that deception was the custom of the trade”? By no means! What does the Lord care about the customs of your trade? Do right, at all costs! If you do wrong, you do it at your peril, for you have no promise from God that He will keep you in such a way as that. I need not enlarge upon this point because you know as much about such things as I do; and, therefore, you can make the application to your

own particular case. But, O Christian, do keep altogether clear of every evil way! May God's grace preserve you from straying into Bypath Meadow!

The man who professes to be a Christian must not expect God's angels to keep him if he goes *in the way of worldliness*. There are hundreds, and I fear thousands, of church members who say that they are the people of God, yet they appear to live entirely to this world. The great aim is moneymaking, and personal aggrandizement—just as much as it is the aim of altogether ungodly men. The kingdom of Christ, the needs of His Church, and the needs of perishing souls have a very slender place in their hearts—they live wholly for themselves—only they try to conceal it under the plea of providing for their families! “Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,” is a text from which we need to preach to professing Christians throughout London, and throughout the whole world.

There is also the *way of pride* which many tread. They must be “respectable.” They must move in “Society”—with a big “S”—and everything is ordered with a view to display. To be great, to be famous, to be esteemed, to keep up a high repute—it is for this that they live! And some grow very strong, in a Christian sort of way, in that line. They profess to have attained to a “higher life” than ordinary Christians ever reach. I am not at all anxious to get up there, for I do not believe there is any higher life in this world than the life of God which is given to everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ! The highest life I aspire to is to live as Jesus Christ lived, and to walk as He walked—and that is the lowest kind of life with which any Christian ought to be contented! When we get such fine feathers as these, they do not make us fine birds.

There is also *the way of willfulness* which I have known some follow. Very grievous is it to see some whom we really think to be good men, shift their quarters apparently without any reason. They were doing very well, yet away they rush, for they cannot let well enough alone. Some brothers seem to be afflicted with a kind of perpetual fidgetiness. They are rolling stones and gather no moss. They move from one position to another, not because there is any need for them to move, but just because they cannot stay still! They go away from their nest, and away from their home—and very often act in direct opposition to the order of God's providence! Oh, beware of that spirit of willfulness! We may get to be so very strong-headed that we may have to suffer there! It is often wise, as the old saying puts it, to take advice of our pillow. He who does not sleep upon a thing may have to weep upon it. Better look before you leap. Always follow the cloud of God's providence—don't run before it, for if you run before it, you may find it hard work to get back again. Many have acted thus to their cost, and of course have had no blessing resting upon them in doing so.

One other way in which a Christian ought not to go is *the way of erroneous doctrine*. I know some professors who, as soon as a new heresy comes up, want to have taste of it. I confess that I never felt much temptation in that direction. I do not suppose if you went into a chemist's shop, you would say to him, “I have heard of somebody being killed at Norwood by taking such-and-such a poison—I would like a taste of it.” You would not ask him to take down his big bottles, and to give you a taste of all the deadly poisons he had in stock. “Oh, no!” You say, “We are in our right senses. We would not do such a foolish thing as that.” Yet I know people who as soon as ever there is any teaching spoken of as being erroneous, say, “We must have a look at that. We must have a taste of that”—never satisfied except when they are tasting poison! There is a period in life when a Christian should obey Paul's injunction to the Thessalonians, “Prove all things”—but let him get that done as quickly as he can, and then let him get to the second part of the injunction—“Hold fast that which is good.” Never hold anything fast till you have proved it to be good—but do not be everlastingly proving it! Some things do not need *any* proving—they bear upon their forefront their character. But others need to be proved, and so, having proved the right

things to be right, and the true things to be true, hold them fast and turn not aside from them! About every six weeks there is a new doctrine promulgated. Sometimes there is a new sect started. It is simply because there is somebody away up there in his study who is sorely troubled with bile or dyspepsia. He never went out to try to win a soul. He never did any practical work for Christ. But he edits a newspaper, or he writes for a magazine—and out of that wonderful brain of his, which is full of cobwebs, he excogitates a new doctrine! And as there are certain people who are always waiting for such novelties, straightway they run off with it, and spread it wherever they can! These false-doctrine makers and their disciples are the curse of the age in which we live! I implore you, my friend, to abide in the good old paths! What you know to be true, that hold fast! Forsake not your father's God, and your mother's God. As for the truths of God which God has taught you by His own Spirit, grapple them to you as with hooks of steel, for, if you go in the way of error, you cannot expect divine protection!

II. Now, secondly, **THERE ARE WAYS IN WHICH SAFETY IS GUARANTEED.** I shall only have time to mention them very briefly.

There is, first, *the way of humble faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* You know that way, brothers and sisters, so walk in it! Oh, to be nothing, and to let Christ be everything—to confess our own guilt, and to be clothed in His righteousness! Keep to that safe road, for it is the King's highway of which it may be said, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up there; it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there."

There is, next, *the way of obedience to divine precepts.* Do what God tells you, as God tells you, and because God tells you, and no hurt can come to you. The Lord told Moses to take by the tail the serpent from which he fled. He did so, and he was not bitten, but the serpent stiffened into a wonder-working rod! Obey the Lord in all things! Mind the jots and the tittles, for whoever will break one of the least of Christ's commandments "and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Oh, to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, step by step, and to keep closely to His footprints! It is in such ways that angelic protection will be afforded to us.

There is, also, *the way of childlike trust in providential guidance.* Happy is that man who always waits upon God to know what he shall do—who asks the Lord to always guide him, and who dares not lean upon his own understanding. Watch the Lord's providential leadings. Wait for divine guidance. It is far better to stand still, than to run in the wrong road. Pause a while, and pray for direction—and do not move until you hear the voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk you in it." In such a road as that, angels will certainly guard you!

There is, too, *the way of strict principle and stern integrity.* Travelling along that road will often involve a good many losses and crosses, much reproach and sometimes it will even appear to destroy your usefulness. But I charge you—young men especially—never violate any principle which you profess to hold! I believe that it has been a lasting blessing to some whom I know, that they have scorned to trim their sails, even in the smallest degree, to please any living soul. Do the same. "Be just and fear not." Keep to a cause that is despised if you believe it is a right one, and love it all the more because it is despised! Ask not what it will pay. Care not for the flatterer's smile. Pursue truth even though she may go along very rough roads—she will always repay you in the long run. Cling to her, and win her smile—then the frowns of the whole world need not cause you a moment's thought! The way of principle is the way of safety. God's angels will keep you if you keep to that road.

And, dear brothers and sisters, I am quite sure that *the way of consecrated service for God's glory is another of these safe ways.* It is well when a man says, "I choose my path by this rule—how can I best serve my God? Having judged whether there is any principle involved, and having a fair choice between this and that, I say to myself, 'In which way can I hope to be the more

useful? In what course of life can I best glorify God?” That is your way to heaven, Christian—the way in which your Master can get the most glory out of you! And if you walk in that way, you may depend upon it that you will be protected by His sovereign power!

And once again, *there is the way of separation from the world, and close walking with God.* No man ever suffered any real injury through keeping himself aloof from the ways of ungodly men, and on the other hand, no man ever failed to be a gainer by close and intimate fellowship with God. “Enoch walked with God” and he gained not only escape from the pangs of death, but also the testimony that “he pleased God.” O Christian, could not more of us choose this blessed path, and walk in it continually? If we did so, we “would have the fulfillment, in its deepest meaning, of the promise of our text, “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

III. But I must pass on to note briefly, in the third place, that THESE RIGHT WAYS WILL LEAD US INTO DIFFERING CIRCUMSTANCES.

Sometimes *the right way will lead us into very stony places*, positions of great difficulty—yet here is the promise to meet that emergency, “They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” A way is none the less right because it is rough. Indeed, often it is all the more sure to be the right way because it is so displeasing to flesh and blood.

Sometimes, also, *the right way may be very terrible with temptation.* If your path is so beset, do not, therefore, imagine that it is a wrong way, because the psalmist goes on to say, “You shall tread upon the lion and adder.” Lions and adders will come to you—temptations will threaten to devour you even while you are in the right road—but then, you are promised that as long as it is the right road that you are in, you shall get the victory over the lion and the adder. The temptation may be of so mysterious a character that you cannot understand it. It may be like a dragon, but if so, here is your comfort, “the young lion and the dragon shall you trample underfoot.”

And remember, beloved friends, that even if the road is not stony, and if no lion attacks you, *you will be kept from the perils of the smooth and easy roads.* You will always need divine and angelic keeping, for God would not have charged His angels to keep His people in all their ways if they did not need protection in all their ways! Some of you are just now prospering in business, but your way is not any safer than the way of the man who is losing his all. Indeed, yours may not be as safe as his! To you who are in robust health, I venture to say that your path is more perilous than the path of the man who is always ailing. And to all of you I say, pray for angelic keeping. Ask the Lord to guard you with His celestial hosts, or else, in any of your ways, be they rough or smooth, you will fall to your serious hurt.

IV. Now we come to the fourth point which is this—WHILE WALKING IN ALL RIGHT WAYS, BELIEVERS ARE SECURE. “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

O Christian, if you have not violated your conscience. If you have not forsaken the path of communion with your God, think what high privileges are yours! First, *God Himself concerns Himself about you!* He charges His angels to take care of you. David, when his soldiers went to battle against his rebellious son, Absalom, especially charged their leaders to deal gently with the young man, Absalom, for his sake. But he charged them in vain. In a far higher sense God charges His angels to guard His saints—but He does not charge them in vain! This is not a mere general command. It is a sort of imperative personal charge that God lays upon His angels—“Take care of My children. They are on My road—the King’s high road of rectitude. Watch over them, and do not allow them to be hurt.” So you have God personally charging His angels to take care of you!

Next, *you have mysterious agencies to protect you.* “He shall give His angels charge over you.” We speak of dragons, but we do not know much about them. And we do not know much about angels, but we feel sure that angels can overcome dragons, for they are more than a match for devils! And if mysterious temptations come to you, there shall also be mysterious defenders to thrust them back! You have more friends, poor Christian, than you know of! When you are fighting the battles of God, you may hear a rush of angels’ wings at your side if you only have your ears divinely opened. If all men forsake you, God can send His angels, though you see them not, to strengthen you in some secret manner that I cannot fully explain. “Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha,” the prophet who dared to be true to his God, and to serve Him faithfully. God would sooner empty heaven of all the angelic host, cherubim and seraphim included, than allow any *one* of His people who has walked in His ways, to suffer defeat. He charges all His angels to take care of His saints, and to keep them in all right ways.

And as angels are on our side, *so are all things, visible and invisible.* Why believers, the very stones of the field are in league with you, and the beasts of the field are at peace with you! Wherever you go, you have friends ready to help you. It is true that you have enemies among the wicked, but their weapons shall not prevail against you. And wherever there is a messenger of God—be it wind, or storm, or lightning, or hail—it is your friend! The very stars in their courses fight for you! The forces, terrific and tremendous, which at times shake the world, are only your Father’s flaming swords unsheathed to protect you! If we are walking in the ways of God, we can truthfully sing—

***“The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above.”***

Sing then, you saints of the Lord, for everything is on your side! “You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

What a very sweet thought is suggested by the word, “you,” in our text! It teaches us that *each one of the saints is personally protected.* “He shall give His angels charge over *you*, to keep you in all your ways.” God takes a personal interest in every traveler along the right road, and charges His angels to keep them. Perhaps you say, “I do not read the text, sir, as referring to me.” Well, I think you should. When you read the precept, “You shall not steal,” do you suppose that it refers to you? “Oh, yes!” you say, “I would not like to suggest that it did not mean me. I would not plead exemption from the precept.” Well, then, my dear brother, do not seek to be exempted from the promise! Just as you feel sure that the precept applies to you, so, as a child of God, feel sure that the *promise* applies to you—“He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”

This protection is perpetual as well as personal. God’s angels are “to keep you in all your ways”—in your ups, and your downs, in your advancement, and your retiring—to keep you when you are asleep and when you are awake—to keep you when you are alone, and when you are in company—to keep you if you have to preach, and to keep you if you have to hear—to keep you if you have to serve, and to keep you if you have to suffer. You always need keeping, and you shall always have it, for the angels are charged “to keep you in all your ways”!

And how beautiful it is to remember that *all this keeping brings honor with it*. “He shall give His angels charge over you.” Notice that—“He shall give His angels”—the very angels that wait upon God, and see His face! The very angels that are the bodyguard of the Eternal! “He shall give His angels charge over you,” “Mark you,” says the Lord to Gabriel, or Michael, or whatever the angel’s name may be, “I charge you to take special care of that poor girl, for she is a daughter of Mine. Take care of that poor man whom so many despise, for he is a prince of the blood imperial. He belongs to Me—he is an heir of God, and joint-heir with Jesus Christ.” Oh, what amazing dignity this promise puts upon the very least and lowliest of the followers of the Lamb!

Note just one more point, that *all these privileges come to us by Jesus Christ*, for Christ is that mystic ladder which Jacob saw, up-and-down whose wondrous rungs the angels came and went! The commerce between the saints and heaven is kept up by way of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what joy is this! If Christ is yours, angels are yours, and all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places will delight to take care of you!

Now, if anyone here is going home to a lonely room, I should like you to feel that you are not going there alone! Father and mother are away in the country, perhaps, and some of you young people feel quite alone in London. But, if you are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not alone, for the Lord of all the holy angels is with you, and an innumerable company of blessed spirits is round about you! Take comfort from this glorious truth! God’s mysterious angelic agency, which you see not, and hear not, but which is most true and real, will form a cordon round you to protect you in the midst of the temptations of this great city! And if you are but faithful to Him, and keep in His ways, nothing shall hurt you between here and heaven! There may be many darts hurled at you, but the great shield of faith shall turn them all aside, or quench them forever! You will have to encounter many temptations and trials, but you will be preserved amid them all. I heard a Primitive Methodist minister speaking last Friday night, make use of a very strong expression while describing what a man could do by faith. He said, “He can not only overcome a legion of devils, but he could kick his way through a lane of devils if he did but rest in God.” I have had that idea in my mind ever since I heard him use that expression—and I am sure that it is true, for some of us have already had to do it! Those devils are great cowards. So when God once takes entire possession of a man, he need not fear even though all hell were let loose upon him! One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep! And one man whom God makes strong, can put to route all the hosts of hell—and he need not fear all the trials of life whatever they may be! “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

In closing, there are two or three thoughts which I think are worth remembering. The first is this. Dear brothers and sisters, we see, from this text, that *the lowest employment is consistent with the highest enjoyment*. The angels are our nurses—“they shall bear you up in their hands,” just as nurses hold up little children who are not able to stand by themselves. Those angels continually behold God’s face, and live in the perfect bliss of heaven, yet they condescend to do such humble deeds as these! Dear brother, be like the angels in this respect—teach an infant class in the Sunday school, yet keep your face bright with the light of God’s countenance. Give away tracts, go and visit among the poor, look after fallen women, or do any other work for the Lord that needs to be done. Never mind what it is, but remember that the employment is all the more honorable because it appears to be so commonplace. Never was Christ grander, I think, than when He washed His disciples’ feet. Certainly, never are we more like He than when we, also, are willing to wash their feet, or render any lowly service that they may need.

The next thought is *as angels watch over us, how cheerfully ought we to watch over one another!* How gladly you, who are older in the divine life, ought to watch over the younger ones of the Lord’s family! If God enables you to have any of the joy of angels over repenting sinners,

mind that you take some of the care which angels exercise over those who walk in God's ways. What can I, the pastor of this huge church, and my brother, and all the elders, do by way of watching over 5,000 of you? You must pastor yourselves to a large extent! Watch over one another. "Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Visit each other in their sickness. Seek to bring back to Christ and the church all the backsliders whom you can find. Labor for the good of one another, for, in only this way can our task be done—and you shall be like the angels if you bear up the feeble ones in your hands lest they trip up and fall to their grievous hurt.

Then next, *how safe and happy we ought to feel when we know that God has charged the angels to take care of us!* Do not be nervous, my dear sister, the next time there is a little storm, or even a great storm. Do not be afraid, my dear friend, when sickness comes into your house. Do not be alarmed, as perhaps you are, when you hear that there is fever next door to you. Remember the promise that precedes our text—"Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." But suppose it should seem right to the Lord to let the plague come to you? And suppose you shall die of it? Well, you will the sooner be in heaven! Therefore comfort one another with the reflection that all is well with you as long as you keep in the way of duty.

And, lastly, *how holy we ought to be with such holy beings watching over us!* If the angels are always hovering round you, mind what you are doing! Would you, my dear friend, have spoken as you did when you were coming in at that door, yonder, if you had seen an angel standing by your side, listening to what you were saying? Oh, no, you are wonderfully decorous when there is somebody near whom you respect! How often your glib tongue is checked when there is some Christian man or woman whom you highly esteem within hearing! How many a thing is done that would not be done under the eyes of one whom you love! It is not only true that "a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which has wings shall tell the matter," but it is also true that there are angels always watching over us. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that a woman in the public assembly ought to have her head covered because of the angels—a certain decorum was due because of the angels who were there. And I am sure that I may use the same argument concerning all our actions. Whether we are alone or in company, let us not sin because angels are always watching us. And, remember, the angels' Lord is also watching us!

May He graciously keep us in His holy way; and if we are so kept, we shall be preserved from all evil while we are here, and at last, we shall see His face with joy, and live with Him forever! I would to God that all who are now present were in that holy way. I remind you once more that the entrance to it is by a door that has the blood-mark upon the lintel and the two doorposts—"The blood shall be to you for a token." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

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