

God of Grace and Glory

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing and understanding God's character, specifically His grace, glory, and providence, which gives us hope, joy, and peace in the midst of suffering and adversity.

Duration: 51:43

Scripture: Hebrews 4:14, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Grace Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses a group of young and immature Christians who have lost everything for their faith. The Apostle Peter has reminded them that their difficulties do not only come from political enemies, but also from the enemy, the devil, who is seeking to devour them. The preacher emphasizes the need to resist the enemy and hold firm to their faith in Jesus, who is their great high priest. He encourages them to draw near to the throne of grace and find mercy and grace in their time of need. Ultimately, he assures them that God will restore and strengthen them, and that knowing God will enable them to do great things even in the midst of suffering.

Transcript

I would like you to turn with me, if you will, to the first epistle written by Peter, to chapter 5, and we will focus upon the word of the Lord as it is found in verse 10. 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 10. The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

To him be the power forever and ever, or as some would have it, his is the power. We do not concede it to him. It is his.

His is the power forever and ever. Amen. Now, in a sense, the message laid upon my heart this evening is related to the message of last Sunday evening when we were looking at the verses that precede our text tonight, and we were looking at the enemy, the devil, prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, the enemy whom we are called upon to resist.

But so also is the word laid on my heart a continuation of the message of this morning. When we were meditating on those great words at the end of Hebrews chapter 4, seeing that we have such a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firm our profession and let us draw nearer to the throne of grace that we may find mercy and receive grace in our time of need. This

evening, I would like us to focus all our thoughts and all our eyes on God alone.

The Apostle Paul said, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. And it is very possible for those of us who are preaching to intrude from time to time, God have mercy upon us, and for some reason or other to call attention to ourselves. Tonight, by the grace of God, I trust I can be as far from the scene as anyone can imagine.

What I would like to leave with you is the picture of God that we have here. As you and I are summoned to draw near to the throne of grace whereon our great high priest sits at God's right hand to intercede for us and to make mercy and grace available for us, as you and I engage our enemy who is pledged to our destruction, we need one picture to be hanging on the walls of our imagination, day and night, year in, year out, alone and in company, wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we need one picture and it's the picture of God. As revealed in his word, generally and perhaps very especially, the little crisp statement that we have in our text tonight, bringing out three aspects of the being of God that we need for our courage and encouragement.

Peter says three things very especially. He speaks of God as the God of all grace. He speaks of God as the God of eternal glory.

And he speaks of God as the God of an invincible providence. And I suggest, my friends, that if you and I are to show forth in our lives the hope and the joy and the peace which is our privilege to know in Christ by his spirit, we must walk with this composite picture ever in our mind and in our imaginations. Now, let's bear in mind that the apostle Peter is addressing a particular situation here.

In detail, of course, it will not apply to us, but in principle it will. The folk here are going through very difficult times. They've lost everything for the cause of Christ and they're reasonably young Christians, reasonably young at any rate, perhaps very young and very immature.

Even so, the apostle Peter has reminded them that all their difficulties do not come from the state and from the enemy, the political enemy. There is, as we've seen in the verse preceding our text, there is the enemy, the lion walking around seeking whom he may devour. Then he has told them of the grim reality of a fiery trial that is looming on the distant horizon, whatever that is, in chapter 4 and verse 12.

And to add fuel to the fire, he has been very frank with them and he has told them that the time is coming, indeed it has already arrived, when judgment must begin in the house of God. How dare this apostle, as the shepherd, the under-shepherd of Christ, the good shepherd, how dare he expose all these evil tidings and possibilities to such young Christians already being persecuted for Jesus' sake. What antidote has he to fear and pessimism and gloom? Brothers and sisters, there is only one antidote, and that is God.

Before he comes to the end of his epistle, he will emboss upon their minds this amazingly composite image of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the knowledge of this God and the image of this God, they have the answer to every problem. He's not afraid to tell them the very worst. He will open every book that speaks of the future, he will open all its pages, and as far as he can, he will tell them everything.

But in the knowledge of God, they may yet overcome. Now, however feebly, I pray that God will do that for us this evening. You remember the prophet Isaiah does that in the Old Testament.

I have a kind of feeling that Peter is being a sort of second Isaiah here, that is a New Testament Isaiah, and he's following in the footmarks of his Old Testament predecessor. You remember in that great 40th chapter, Isaiah says, Behold your God. Take a good look at your God.

Haven't you known these things? He says, Didn't anybody tell you all this about God? And then he comes to the very end of it and he says, They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary.

They shall walk and not faint. Men and women, he says, you need to know your God. And if you know your God, you will do exploits, even in an evil day.

That's exactly what Peter is doing. Now, let's come to it. First of all, God is the God of all grace.

Brothers and sisters, this excites me. And I hope it excites you. And we may go out into a very evil, mischievous, devilish world and society.

And we may meet the most perverse behavior and perverse of people. But God has grace to save to the uttermost. He has every grace.

He's the God of all grace. Now, grace is the biblical term which describes God's good pleasure whereby he is disposed to shower his most priceless and eternal benefits upon the most undeserving and unworthy. It is integral to the divine nature and it expresses itself in a holy delight that welcomes the prodigal with open arms, that embraces the outcast, that rescues the guilty, and that elevates the heirs of a just condemnation from the very gate of hell to be seated with his own glorious Son in heavenly places now and at last to dwell with him at grace.

Peter bids us along with his first readers to see the God of grace for ourselves. He is the deity who was offended by our sin, whose majesty was slighted by our rebellion, whose image we have marred a thousand times so that it is unrecognizable in our lives. He made us and he made us for himself and he embossed his image upon us and we've turned it to shreds.

He is the one whose son we slaughtered on a cross, we human creatures. He's the God who came to seek and to save us in his sons, in his Son, to heal our wounds and to forgive our sins by the very blood that we ourselves had drawn. That's grace.

And God is not only the God of grace, he's the God of all grace. I like to underline some words and I've underlined that for my own benefit, but I say it for yours as well as my own. God is the God of all grace.

Being himself thus gracious, then God expressed his grace in a myriad ways over the course of human history toward the undeserving. In fact, what this text really tells us is this. There is not a conceivable need in human life.

In the life of the most wretched sinner or saint, but that God has a corresponding grace to meet it. You mentioned the need, God is the corresponding grace and he's the God of all grace and he keeps on adding, he gives more grace. Strike the sum, strike the total, add it up and when you've come to the end and you've got your number, he giveth more grace, says James.

Still there's more to follow. Oh, wonderful God of grace. My dear struggling, buffeted, perhaps utterly bewildered friend, you're here tonight and you have needs.

You know them, but perhaps there is one thing that you have been tending to forget, that God has grace to meet your need. And when you receive it, it will be like a suit that has been custom made. It will just fit your need.

He's the God of all grace, grace to begin life and to end life, and grace for all the exigencies between the end and the beginning. He's the God of all grace, all the time. It's no wonder Wesley cried for a thousand tongues to sing his great Redeemer's praise.

The wonder is that we can be so silent about it. As the first aspect of this composite picture of God that you and I need to carry around with us. He's the God of all grace.

What kind of people have you been meeting this last week? Liars, hypocrites, evil men in business, wicked men, arrogant men, difficult, adulterers, fornicators. What kind of people? Oh my dear friend, how this day of ours would be transformed if you and I going out into each new day went out with this picture in our minds, my God has all grace for all kinds of needs. That's what Peter says, and it's true.

And if you and I have any other concept of God that is less than this, we do not rightly represent the God of the Bible. He's the God of all grace, but Peter adds he's also the God of eternal glory. Now I'm leaving the application of this until we get a little later on, but you take it from me there's a very practical application to all this.

And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, the God of eternal glory. I wonder whether some of us are a little bit ashamed of God. Ashamed when we've seen going to his house on the Lord's day, ashamed when we speak of him, ashamed that we pray to him.

If we do, I trust we do. The apostles ultimate aim is very practical, but let's look at this. What does it mean the God of glory, of eternal glory? The God of glory.

Stephen in the discourse that was to mark the end of his earthly life said that it was the God of glory, you remember, that appeared to Abram in Mesopotamia. Tradition has it that Abram's father was a maker of idols. Now I don't vouch for that.

I can't tell you that it's absolutely true, but it's a fairly well-established tradition, very ancient one. And that if that is the case, Abram would have been brought up in a home where his father made idols and sold them, all dead non-entities. But there appeared to Abram the God of glory, God with luster, God with excellence, a God whom you could praise, to whom you could attribute certain characteristics that made you admire him, even worship him, and obey him, and even step out and walk a thousand miles up the Euphrates valley, not knowing where you're going, but knowing this great God of glory has called you to go with him, and because of his glory you must.

Originally, the Hebrew word for glory conveyed the notion of weight. It thus became commonly used in a sense not dissimilar from our contemporary habit of saying so-and-so is a person of substance. We say that, don't we? I don't know that I've heard it here, but we do use it, don't we? Yeah, a person of substance, weighty, a person who can be depended, substantial in character, and so forth.

In due course, glory became more and more closely associated in men's minds with that which is honorable, and the movement is not all that great. It's a movement into the moral realm, that which is honorable, weighty in the sense of honor, whereas glory found in people requires respect of a special kind. Glory in God requires worship.

Now it became fairly evident from a perusal of scripture, it becomes fairly evident from a perusal of scripture, that glory is not something that simply belongs to God. Just as I would say that my car belongs to me, or my umbrella belongs to me, it's a little tattered now, but it belongs to me, God's glory doesn't belong to him as something that is his property, that he holds in his hand, neither is God's glory something that he dons for special occasion, as we would put a robe on. Our choir is robed, and I was robed this morning, I don't know why I'm not tonight, never mind.

But it's not something that God puts on for special occasions and then puts off again, it's something that he cannot put off, because it is intrinsic to his very nature, he cannot be other than glorious. What is this glory of God? What is this excellence of God? Well, theologians tell us that we should probably look upon it as the excellence of all his attributes functioning together in perfect harmony, balance, and equipoise. And I like that.

His goodness, his mercy, his justice, his holiness, go through them all, all the attributes of God functioning in perfect balance and equipoise, in perfect harmony, and all exuding this sense of moral excellence that makes us ashamed of ourselves, that wants us to withdraw like Isaiah of old, and feel that we are cut off as leopards alongside of him. You remember the psalmist tells us in Psalm 19 that the whole earth proclaims the glory of the Lord. It's a remarkable statement.

And Isaiah in chapter 6 says that the seraphim incessantly proclaim the same truth, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. Even so, there are high peaks even unto the glory of God.

He was glorious in the exodus, we read of that many, many times in the Old Testament, he manifested his glory in the exodus from Egypt. He manifested his glory on Mount Sinai when he gave his law and ratified his covenant with ancient Israel. And you'll read the story and you'll see the picture of the mountain dancing and the glory of God upon the mountaintop.

And yet all that pales into insignificance alongside the great glory that blazed in upon our world when God became incarnate in Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you remember how John says it? The word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, he says.

And then he goes on to say, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father full of grace and truth. Now it is impossible to know everything that John meant by that, but he seems to have meant this at any rate. That such glory was encased within the person of Jesus of Nazareth that it seemed as if it could have all the glory of the Father must have been brought together in one and only Son.

There is such glory in him as could hardly be envisaged as diffused. God's glory then is essential to his being. It radiates from his every attribute.

All the colors of the rainbow have each its own glory, but the glory of the rainbow is not the glory of one color, it's the glory of the whole. Such is the moral excellence of God. But listen, what Peter goes on to say is this, that God is a God of eternal glory.

His glory does not diminish. His glory never becomes tarnished. His glory cannot be faulted.

And when the years have rolled by, the glory of God will remain exactly what it was from eternity in the past. Ineffable, sublime, unspeakable, and there are no words to explain it and express it. It cannot wane.

It is positively a deity in all his excellence, and we haven't got a conception of it. We can only pick up the crumbs as we have them, and we are like children trying to wade into an ocean when we try to take it in. Nevertheless, it is a picture that we need to carry in our minds in as much as we are able to carry it.

You see, we are creatures that change, and even when we become Christian, even when we become morally good by the grace of God, we so often lose our luster. We not only are prone to lose our name and lose our character, but we lose the luster that some of us had at one time. And you know what happens? We are looked upon as worthless, unfaithful, unworthy.

Here we are dealing with a God of all grace and of eternal glory, and it cannot diminish, and it does not change. With us there is variableness. With him is no variableness, nor shadow caused by turning, says James.

Whereas we humans are at best unstable like water, to quote Genesis, God's counsel like himself is immutable. He cannot promise and not fulfill. He cannot purpose and not achieve.

He cannot begin and not end, for that would take away from his glory. But his glory abides and remains undimmed, and it will for all eternity. Now come with me to the third picture.

The God of all grace, the God of eternal glory, the God in whom you will never find a fault, the God to whom you can never attribute a wrong motive, the God who is altogether perfect in glory. Now come and look at this. He is also the God of an invincible truth, and the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ.

After you have suffered a while, will, notice God is active, will do something. What will he do? He will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. What a remarkable statement to these suffering saints.

What a remarkable statements to those sheep in the good shepherd's care who are being harassed by the lion that is roaming, looking ahead beyond the vicissitudes of this present life with its vast variety of problems, pains, and privations caused by human or satanic agencies. The apostle announces the ultimate and eternal profit and glory of the saints. Just imagine it.

The God of all grace and eternal glory will sooner or later call a halt to the suffering, a halt to the vicissitudes of this life, the pains, the problems, the satanic roaring, the threats, and whatnot. He will call a halt to it all, and he will, says this apostle Peter, he will himself restore you, make you strong, make you firm, make you steadfast. Now this is a segment of divine revelation that you and I simply cannot afford to overlook.

It's the spinal column of the Christian faith. This is what binds the whole plan of biblical revelation into one cohesive and essentially optimistic whole. This is what gives the good news its vindication and its validation, making it incomparable.

In short, it is the fact that none less than God, even the God of all grace and of eternal glory, has promised his saints that one day their sufferings will be over, he will step in and he will even use the strands of their sufferings along with everything else to work for their good. And he will re-emboss his image upon them so that it is fixed forever. The doctrine of God's providence is the most important one in scripture.

The providence of God is the way in which he governs everything wisely. First for the glory of his own name and then for the good of his people. Now you see, you can only attribute this kind of action to an almighty, an all-gracious and glorious deity.

It is the way in which God governs everything wisely, first for the glory of his own name and second for the ultimate blessing of his children. Clearly the providence of God is so closely connected then with his goodness, and indeed it is, but it involves the power of God and the wisdom of God and the infinite grace of God and the glory of God in his actions with his hands upon everything. Now you can see this picture if you want to have a good look at it.

I suppose that the best way is to read the whole Bible through. Very few people do that, unfortunately, and we miss so much. But the best way to see the providence of God is to get the overview.

Short of that, take some of the great characters of scripture and see how God makes the dark threads in their lives meaningful in the end. Take some of them, you're familiar with them. Think in the Old Testament of people like Joseph, for example.

Oh there were dark threads in Joseph's life, and they didn't seem to make any sense whatsoever. But you see, God in his providence was at work, and he was holding the reins all the time, and he was causing the mixture to be in accordance with his perfect will, to fulfill his perfect plan until at last. Think of David.

Yes, even David. Think of Daniel. Think of Naomi in the book of Ruth.

She went out full, she came back empty. But God made all things work together for good. This is what we mean by the providence of God, that in his grace and in his glory, he's got hold of all the strands all the time.

Nothing is ever out of control, and he works them together into a perfect tapestry. Now that is stated very specifically in Romans 8.28. We read from Romans 8 tonight, and we could very well look upon that particular passage if time permitted, but we won't do that. The thing I want to stress is just the fact that God is the God of an invincible providence.

He has his hand on things, and he will sovereignly cause all things to work together for good to them that love him. And the good is that we should be conformed to the image of his Son. It is nothing less, it is nothing else than that.

And the image of his Son is the image of himself. It is glory. Now, let me just conclude by making two or three statements, all of which have a practical bearing.

One, the God of all grace has resources enough to deal with every conceivable exigence in the life of a Christian, anywhere, any time. The God of all grace has both pardoning and perfecting grace. He has it for an individual, he has it for a congregation.

Oh, good people, let us remember this. God is the God of all grace for me as an individual, for you as an individual, for this congregation, and any other congregation in this world. Secondly, the God of eternal glory cannot go back on his affirmed and covenanted promises.

Why cannot he go back? Well, because he's the God of eternal glory, he would lose his glory. See, if I promised you something, and then I were to come to say to you, well, I'm not going to do that, or I'm not

going to say that, or whatever, and I were to change my mind, now that would mean either that I had been unwise in the promise I made in the first place, or that I was unable, or that I didn't care about keeping my word, or maybe one or two other things. But you see, you can't attribute any of these things to God, because he's the God of eternal glory.

If God makes a promise and doesn't keep it, God is no longer the God of eternal glory. You see what Peter is doing? He's undergirding the saints with assurance, with a basis of certainty and hope concerning things unseen as yet. Brothers and sisters, you and I need to remember this.

God being the God of eternal glory, as well as the God of all grace, is the sole guarantee of our glory as of our salvation. Our assurance rests not in ourselves, but in God, in his grace, in his glory, and in his providence. It's all in God.

And I do like the way Peter puts it here, God would not be God if he did not keep his covenant promises. Don't you sometimes talk to yourself and wonder, how on earth is God going to make me like his glorious son? Of course you do. You may not use that language, but you're bewildered by the sin that remains in the life of a saint.

I'm sure you're bewildered by your own weakness from time to time, by your lack of spirituality. I am. At mine, when I say to myself, what hope is there of glory for me? Then I remember, he's the God of all grace, and he's the God of eternal glory, and he's the God who's got his hands on the workings of providence, and he can't go back upon his word, he loses character.

He'd no longer be the God of eternal glory, and I see that he's made it impossible for me to doubt. Thirdly, the God of all grace and eternal glory has guaranteed the ultimate victory envisaged here in 1 Peter 5.10 by the fact that our entire calling is here as elsewhere described as being effective in Christ. Now those two little words are not put in here as a kind of philip.

They are very meaningful, and they're very relevant. They're very necessary. You see, we are called one into the presence of God's glory at last, and we are called to be to be made like God in his glory at last, both of which are impossible viewed humanly.

How can it take place? How can a sinner be transformed to enter God's presence, either here and now in prayer and fellowship, or there and then when we leave this tabernacle of our bodies? How is it possible? Well, the answer of the New Testament is this, it's only possible in Christ. What does that mean? God deals with the human race either in Adam, the first Adam, or in the second Adam, and you are either dead and condemned and lost in the first Adam, or you are redeemed in the second Adam and the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ. What does that mean? What it means is this, God chose his Son to be our Savior.

He chose his Son to be the mediator of the new covenant benefits for sinners, and he came, and he the blessed Son of God, the mediator of the new covenant, came and lived a life like our life, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, and he laid down his life as our substitute and representative in death. And the New Testament tells us that those of us who are linked to him by faith and hope and love died in his death. So, in the death of Christ, we died.

In our representative Adam, we died. So, our sins have been condemned. Our judgment has been borne.

It was borne on Calvary's cross. He died in our place. Not only that, he rose again on the morning of the third day, and with him, we rose to newness of life.

We share in his resurrection. That's why we can be regenerates and have a new life, a risen life, a resurrection life, an eternal life. Have you been raised with Jesus Christ? Do you know the new life of Christ? Then you're in Christ.

That's how you've got it. God has incorporated you in him. He's taken you out of the Adamic stock, and by his infinite grace, he has implanted you in the last Adam.

And so, in him, you've died. In him, you're risen again. Wait a moment.

This is breathtaking. In him, we are ascended into the heavenly places and are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's what Paul tells the Ephesians.

God, in grace, raised us from the dead, elevated us in his Son, and we're there already. Now, we're back to where we were this morning. You see, our Lord Jesus Christ is our great High Priest.

Can you see him going in with the blood of atonement into the Holy of Holies? Do you see the ephod on his breast? Do you see the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on his shoulders, on the ephod? He's a representative person, and he bears the blood, and he sprinkles the mercy seat, and he makes atonement, not simply for his own behalf. He's done it for himself before that, but this is the representative act. Our blessed Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, he lived and died and rose again and ascended and took heaven as the God-man, and you, believer, are in him.

That's why our citizenship is no longer down here, but up there. We're only pilgrims here. We're only passing through here.

We've got a work to do, and the days and the hours are important, and we are to redeem the time, but brothers and sisters, we don't belong here. We're on our way there, and our hearts should be set on things above where the Christ in whom we've been brought to life is seated at God's right hand. Now, how do we get into this glory? In Christ.

One day, the Christ who has already brought us there positionally will consume it and finish and bring to perfection the work that he has begun in us. God in Christ will perfect what he has begun, will bring to a conclusion what is already in progress, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and when we shall see him, we shall be like unto him. He was pledged to bring many sons into glory, and that's the only basis upon which you and I can ever anticipate and hope this, but this is a firm basis, and that's why the New Testament so often speaks of the Christian as anticipating glory.

What is the gospel? Paul tells the Colossians, well it's Christ in you, the hope of glory. It's not just the hope of a little bit of peace here and now, it's the hope of glory. Men and women, do you ever think of glory? You are destined for glory.

And so your hearts and your minds should be on glory, not on the dust of earth and the things that are transient and passing and have no lasting luster, but on glory. We rejoice, says Paul. I wonder how true this is of us here tonight.

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, do we? Do we? What joy do you exude from day to day, brother Christian, because you hope one day to be in the presence of God's glory and made like unto him. See, the apostles expect us to be sure of this, otherwise they couldn't write like this. Indeed Paul goes on in his second letter to the Corinthians, we are being transformed into his likeness, he says, with

ever-increasing glory.

We are being changed from one degree of glory to another. He's going on now, says Paul. And then he adds this, we do not lose heart, though our outward being, sorry, though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day, for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

And writing to the Thessalonians, he says, we ought always to thank God for you brothers, loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. How can we ever possibly get there, brothers? God, God is the answer.

You and I need to know God as the Bible represents him, as he's seen especially in his Son, and we need to take this kind of cluster of truths, this compass-like picture that we have here, and carry it around with us and feed our minds and our souls upon it. Is he your God? My dear people, as we gather here on this Lord's Day evening, are you and I honestly known by our fellows as men and women who know their God and who exhibit something of the thrill of knowing that he's the God of all grace, of eternal glory. We've got confidence in him that he will never change, he can never be bettered, and he will never lose his dignity and his glory and his excellence.

And all the time, in all the black seasons of life, as well as in the glorious moments that we rejoice in, we know that he is causing everything to work together to this end, that one day he will bring us, even us, even, even me, to glory. If you're not trusting him, my friend, come to him this evening. Rest your weary soul in him.

This is the meaning of the Lord's Day in part, that we should be able to tell men and women that he receives sinners still. And that we should prepare ourselves the better to go out into the world on the Monday morning and back to work with our fellows, representing the God of all grace and eternal glory and of an invincible providence, with a confidence that only such people can have in a world that is disintegrating, a world that without God is lost. Let us pray.

Oh God, our heavenly Father, forgive our feeble notions of yourself. Even when they are correct, they're so feeble, so inadequate, and so unclear. And even sometimes when they become clearer, they are not potent, and they do not make much difference in our living, only in our thinking.

God save us. Oh Lord, God of grace and glory, penetrate these souls of ours with a shaft of your mighty word and almighty spirit, and transform us all into the image of yourself, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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