

God Is a Good God

by Zac Poonen

God is a good God, and His goodness is the best part of the Good News.

Duration: 50:37

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 25:14, Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Character Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding and proclaiming that God is a good God. He highlights how often we can have a self-centered perspective, only focusing on how things affect us. However, the preacher encourages the audience to have a deep conviction in their hearts that God is good, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. The preacher also mentions the negative impact of jealousy, selfish ambition, and competition among believers, and how it hinders the demonstration of God's goodness to the world. Ultimately, the message is to proclaim God's goodness and trust in Him, even when we don't understand everything that happens in our lives.

Transcript

Well, it's a real joy, brothers and sisters, to be with you again, to share the Word of God to brothers and sisters who are eager, hungry and responsive. That makes the preaching of the Word so much easier. You know, we call the Gospel the Good News, that's what it really means, Good News.

And I have come to see more and more that the best part of the Good News that we have to proclaim is that God is a good God. So often we can center the Good News on ourselves, because we are such self-centered creatures as children of Adam, that we relate everything to ourselves. How does it affect me? And if it helps me and it blesses me, well, then it's okay.

Well, that's all right in the beginning stages, and God accepts us like that. The prodigal son came back home, not because of a great desire to honor his father, he came back home because he was hungry, he wanted food, and the father accepted him on that basis. But I'm sure he didn't stay in that home only for food, I'm sure as he came back he began to appreciate the goodness of his father.

And a Gospel which is only centered in myself, what God can do for me, and how I can be happy and I can be blessed, it's not the full Gospel. I believe what we have to proclaim throughout this land and in every land is that God is a good God, and the more we yield ourselves to him, we can only become better, like him. Jesus spoke about the son that God has created.

He makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil alike. He makes the rain to fall upon the righteous and the unrighteous alike, and he said, you must be like that, then you are sons of your father in heaven. So I believe our calling is to proclaim this wonderful news that God is a good God, that everything he does is for our very best, and that if we love him, he will make all things work together for our very best, every single thing.

And for you to proclaim that when things are going comfortably for you, when you are living comfortably and you have money and ease, that doesn't mean anything. But if you can proclaim that when things are going wrong in your life, I mean humanly speaking wrong, when you are under pressure and trial and testing, and if you can still proclaim that God is a good God, he never does anything wrong, he never makes a mistake, that is a tremendous testimony to the glory of God. And that's what God wants from each of us, because we know, even though many of you are young, you've already experienced that the world is not an easy place to live.

Jesus himself said that Satan is the ruler of this world, and he's got a lot of things that he can do, God has allowed him to have a lot of power. But it's in the midst of this evil world, with all the evil that Satan does, and all the way in which evil people can make life difficult for you, if in the midst of that, if you can stand up and proclaim that God is a good God, he never makes a mistake, and that because of that fact, you never lose your joy, you never lose your peace, you never lose your faith and confidence in this good God who has planned everything perfectly, that is a living testimony to the fact that the gospel is good news. And that's why it's very important for you young people, right from the beginning of your Christian life, to be established in one truth that you can never be shaken from, and that that is God is a good God.

There may be many things that you can't understand. We're not asked to understand everything, we're not asked to explain everything. We don't even have to explain things to unconverted people who ask us questions.

It's not important, I'm not ashamed to tell people I don't know the answer to that, but it doesn't make a difference. I know that God is a good God, I don't need to know the answer as to why God allows certain things before I know his goodness. See right at the beginning, when Satan tempted Eve, he could not make her sin until he at first very cleverly put this little thought into her mind that God did not really want to give her the best.

And do you know how many times the devil comes to us with such thoughts? And from Genesis 3 we can learn one thing, that the ultimate purpose with which Satan puts that thought into our mind is to make us sin in some way. See what the devil told Eve was, if God were a good God, why wouldn't he allow you to eat from that tree? I mean that tree is so attractive, it makes your mouth water and in every way so good. Why would a good God not allow you to eat of it? You see he is trying to reach Eve at the level of a reason.

Now the Bible says, we must live by faith. Proverbs 3 says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your reason or your understanding. That means that your understanding can lead you away from trusting in the Lord.

And the devil comes to us through our reason. And if you live by your reason, you are doomed. It's not because faith is against reason, it's not because faith is unreasonable, no.

Faith is beyond reason, not against it. That's why you can't understand some things. It's like a second standard mathematics student looks at his older brother's tenth standard mathematics book and says, boy, some of these things must be wrong.

Why does he say it's wrong? Because he can't understand it. But the tenth standard mathematics is not against second standard mathematics, it's just much higher. And if you are in second standard, you won't understand it and you'll think it's wrong.

That's the reason why people who live by reason get confused. Faith is not against reason, it's much higher than reason. And I've discovered that many, many things which I did not understand forty years ago when I first became a Christian, I understand today.

Because my reason has understood a little more of God's ways. And after forty years of being a born-again believer, I can say to you one thing. God is a good God.

Everything he does, everything he has planned for your life, comes out of a heart of goodness. I wish you could believe that, my brothers and sisters. It would change your life.

It would make your life so secure. It would remove the spirit of competition from you. It would remove jealousy.

Two of the biggest problems that many, many people in Christian work face and fall into, two sins that they fall into, are selfish ambition and jealousy. A desire to be a little higher than that other servant of the Lord, or a jealousy of someone else's ministry which appears to be better than yours. It starts even at your young age.

You can be jealous of one another. You can begin to compete with one another in a selfish way. And there's a verse in the Bible which says, in James chapter 3, that wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder, James 3.16, and every evil thing.

Where does every evil thing originate from? Jealousy and selfish ambition. And why does jealousy come? Because you feel God has given him something more than he gave me. And I want that.

The first person we read in the Bible who was jealous was Cain. He was jealous of his brother Abel because he felt God accepted him and he has not accepted me. If only Cain had believed that God was a good God, he would not have sinned.

There is sin in Genesis chapter 3. There is sin in Genesis chapter 4. Both sins came because a person did not believe that God was a good God. Eve sinned because she believed the devil's lie that, yeah, that's possibly true. God's not a good God and that's why he's withheld this thing from me.

He feels God knows that I'll be like him and he doesn't want me to be like him. So she reached out and ate and discovered that Satan was a liar. And in the next chapter you read about Cain seeing Abel blessed and doubting God's love and killing Abel.

Every evil thing originates from jealousy and selfish ambition. And it comes because we cannot believe that God has made me exactly like he wanted me to be. He has given me the ministry which he wants me to have.

If you can believe that, you'll never be in competition with anybody else. Just like the members of this body. No member in this body is in competition with another member.

No member is jealous of another member. Because each member believes with all its ability that God placed it exactly right. Whether it's the little finger or the heart or the liver or the kidney or the eyes or the ears.

Everyone is quite happy. There is no desire to show that I'm better than another. There is no competition.

There is no selfish ambition. That is what we have to proclaim to this world. What is the testimony of Christianity in our land over these past many years? I'm sorry to say it has been the exact opposite of that.

It has been full of jealousy, selfish ambition, competition, putting down the other person, climbing on top, showing that I'm better and all this. We have not demonstrated to this land that God is a good God. And that is because we are not convinced in it ourselves.

And I hope in this new generation, that you people will be so convinced about it in your own hearts, that wherever you go, you will proclaim this, even if you can't understand everything that's happening in your life. Even if it looks as though, humanly speaking, everything is going wrong. With your dying breath, decide that you will proclaim, God is a good God.

I can't understand 101 things that happened to me, but God is a good God. Nothing is going to shake my faith in that. That is the message we are to proclaim.

And all the evil in the world has come from Satan. God never does anything evil. Never.

We must be convinced about that. I want to show you this verse in Jeremiah chapter 29. Jeremiah chapter 29, the Lord says, these are words that he spoke to Israel, but we can apply that to our lives too.

The Lord says in Jeremiah 29.11, I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans for your welfare, and not for your calamity. Why does God have to say such a thing? Does my father have to tell me, listen son, I don't have any plan for your calamity.

I don't make any plans to ruin you. When does a father have to say such things to a son? It's when the son is unbelieving, doubtful, why is dad asking me to do such hard things? And the dad has to say, listen son, it may be tough, but I tell you, trust me, it's for your good. There are many fathers who have to say that sometimes to their children, because children are small, they don't understand.

That's why God says here, let me tell you, the plans that I have for your life, are plans for your very, very best, not for calamity, and to give you a future, and a hope. God is a good God. He never does a single thing to harm us.

And every plan that He has made for our life, is to lead us to express our potential to the maximum. You know, it's like giving your money to some first class investment manager who can make the best of that money and give you the maximum profit out of it. A sensible person would give his money to such a person if he could trust him.

And that is exactly the way in which God calls us to give our lives completely to Him. Jesus demonstrated during His earthly life that the will of God was the best thing that any human being could ever do. And that's why He always said no to His own will and did His Father's will.

There was never a question of Jesus doing His own will. He said in John 6, 38, I came from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. I want to ask you young people, do you have a great passion in your life to find out what is God's will for me and to do it? If you believed that God had plans for you which were for your very best, for good, you would desperately seek to know that plan God has for your life.

It's based on knowing that God is a good God. His plans are for my welfare, to give me a future and a hope and to get the maximum potential out of my one life. And just think if you can be gripped by that truth when you are young, you can be the most useful servant of God in your generation if you are gripped with it when you are young.

That's the great passion of my life, to get young people to be gripped with this one truth when they are young. God is a good God, my brother, sister. He doesn't hate you.

He loves you intensely. The Bible says in Zephaniah 3, amazing words which I believe we must look at frequently. It says in Zephaniah 3, verse 17, The Lord your God is in your midst, the victorious warrior.

He will exalt over you with joy. He will exalt over you. Exalt is a word which is beyond joy, beyond rejoicing.

It's like He will leap for joy. God will leap for joy when He looks at you. He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

You know something like a married couple that never had any children, say, for 15 years? Consider Abraham and Sarah. After a hundred years, when he is a hundred years old, he has a son. Sarah is 90 years old and she has a son.

Can you imagine the tremendous joy that they both had when they held that baby Isaac in their hands? Something like that. It says, God will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. I want to believe that.

I know we are all sinners. We may have come out of the gutter. It doesn't matter.

But the blood of Jesus has so cleansed you, has so cleansed me from all the guilt and filth and rubbish and muck of my past life that today God rejoices over me with shouts of joy and over you too. And you must believe that. I tell you, I believe that is a million times more important for you to serve the Lord than even a four-year Bible school education.

To be convinced of this one truth, that God rejoices over me, one who was in the gutter when Jesus found me. You may feel like that. But He has done such a tremendous work in cleansing you that He rejoices over you today.

And you must never lose that understanding. And what happens when you sin? When you fall? God is not angry. He is sad.

Do you know the difference between somebody being angry with you and being sad with you? The Bible says in Ephesians 4, don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Do you know the difference between saying don't grieve the Holy Spirit and don't make the Holy Spirit angry? It doesn't say don't make the Holy Spirit angry. It says don't bring grief.

Grief means sorrow. Don't bring sorrow to the Holy Spirit. That's what happens when you sin.

God hates the sin, but He doesn't hate you. He feels sad. He feels sad because you are going to miss out on something that He has for you.

You are going to miss out on something wonderful that He has for you because of your sin. He feels sad for you. He doesn't lose anything when you sin.

That's the intensity of His love for us. Just like a mother will feel sad when a child is sick, God feels sad. Let me turn to Ephesians 1. One of the things that Paul prayed here was that the eyes of these Ephesian Christians may be open to one truth.

He says in Ephesians 1 verse 18, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling and the second part is what I was thinking of. What are the riches? You've got to pause here. You can't rush through this.

Think of the words used here. What are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints? Now don't confuse this with your inheritance in heaven. We read about that in 1 Peter 1 that there is an inheritance incorruptible reserved in heaven for us.

If you are a faithful child of God, there is an inheritance reserved incorruptible for you in heaven. This is not talking about that. You know what the word inheritance means? If your father is a very wealthy man, when he dies, you get an inheritance.

An inheritance is a sudden lot of wealth and property which will make all normal people excited. That I suddenly got something very, very valuable. And here it says that when God got you, He got an inheritance.

Do you believe that? It's unbelievable. I tell you a lot of things in the Bible are unbelievable but they are true. Who would ever think that God would love the world so much to send His Son to die for a wicked world? It's unbelievable but true.

And here is another one of those unbelievable things but true. And I want to confess it to the devil all the days of my life that when God got a wretched sinner like me and cleansed me in the blood of Jesus, He got an inheritance. God became rich, richer when He got me.

That's not arrogance. That's faith. Believe it.

And it will give you confidence in your life when you face the devil. It will lift you up in the moments of depression and discouragement. If you can believe, Paul says, I can't explain this to you.

He doesn't say, read it ten times and you will understand it. No. He says, I can only pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit that you will see this.

Get before God and say, Lord, show this to me. Convince me of your goodness. I have believed the lie of the devil so long that God is a very strict Father who is always very demanding, reaping where He did not sow.

You remember that man who buried his one talent in the ground or in a handkerchief? When the Master came back and said, Why didn't you do anything with this one talent? He said, I knew you were a hard and strict man, reaping where you did not sow. When you have that type of concept of God, you will end up burying your talents. You will waste your life.

That is one message from that parable. If you think God is a hard and strict man, reaping where He has not sown, the end result in your life will be wasted talent. How is it the other man who had only one talent produced ten? It is because he did not think his Master was a hard, strict man.

You see, it is your concept of God that is going to determine how fruitful your life is going to be. Not just your Bible knowledge. The people who know their God will be strong.

Not the people who know their Bible will be strong. The people who know their God, Daniel 11.32, the people who know their God will be strong and do exploits for Him in the last days. And if you read that passage in Daniel 11, he is talking about the last days, the days of the Antichrist.

And Jesus said, this is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God. And I believe one of the major ministries of Jesus to His disciples and wherever He went in Israel, was to get people to understand that God was a good God. That He only wanted to do good for them.

That is why the apostle Peter, when he spoke about Jesus' ministry in Cornelius' house, he said, he went about doing good. Everywhere he went about doing good. I am greatly encouraged by the fact that there was not a single case in the Gospels where a man came to Jesus with faith, with a problem, where Jesus said, I am sorry, that is too much for me.

I don't know how to solve that one. Not one case. It greatly encouraged me to read the Gospels like that.

To see that whatever the problem was, if a man brought it to Jesus in faith, the Lord always, always, always solved it. Unless your problem is the fruit of your own covetousness. You know, there was a case of one man who had a problem.

He said, my brother is not dividing the property with me. Lord, can you solve it? I trust you. I have faith in you.

The Lord said, sorry. If your problem is caused by your covetousness, the Lord is not going to solve that one. No, He didn't come to feed our covetousness.

He said, be careful of covetousness. He told that man. But, if it is a problem that has come into your life, as you have sought the glory of God, not a single problem that any man ever came to Jesus with that he could not solve.

Tell me one. Show me one example in the four Gospels. What does it prove? It proves God is a good God.

Why is it we find so many believers today going around, scratching their heads, wondering how to solve this problem and how to solve that one? Discouraged. Depressed. You could not get the Apostle Paul depressed even when he was locked up in a prison.

He would keep praising God till the doors flew open. That's how those early Christians lived, because they felt there is nothing God cannot handle. God is a good God.

And Paul sat there and said, I don't know why he has locked me up here, but that doesn't change the fact he is a good God. That was the Gospel they proclaimed in those days. And that's the Gospel we need to proclaim in our day too.

To demonstrate to this country God is a good God. To believe what we read here, that when God got you, he became rich. He got an inheritance.

I believe that. I believe I am valuable to God. And I want to say, my dear brothers and sisters, this is absolutely foundational.

You must believe that you are valuable to God. With all your defects, with all your weaknesses, maybe you can't preach the word of God like me, it doesn't make a difference. I was valuable to God before I could preach the word of God.

I didn't become valuable to God after I was anointed or gifted. No! He loved me when I had nothing. I was valuable to Him when I was useless.

Believe that. Then only can you go forth into a useful ministry for God. That He values you.

And it says in Ephesians further, in chapter 1, Ephesians 1, and verse 3, Paul says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Is there anything greater than that? He doesn't say He will bless us in the future. That itself, if it had said like that, that itself would have been a wonderful thing.

But it says, He has already blessed us when we are in Christ. The day I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, God already blessed me. I may discover those blessings and claim those blessings and experience those blessings over the next fifty years.

That's another thing. But it's already put into my bank account that very first day. That's what you need to understand.

It was put into your account. He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. That means every blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Many people are seeking in these days for the blessing of the Holy Spirit. It says here, it's already yours in Christ. You've got to ask for it and take it.

That's all. He has already blessed us with every blessing of the Spirit in the heavenly places. The Holy Spirit gives us grace to overcome sin.

It's already yours. You've got to claim it. In the moment of temptation, you can claim it.

It's yours. What is it that makes the difference between one believer and another? It's that one claims those blessings and the other doesn't. That's the essential difference.

It's not that God has given more to one and less to the other. Think of ten beggars sitting on the roadside. All poor with their tin cans.

A millionaire comes by and says, I'm going to give you ten million rupees in each of your accounts. And he puts that money into all their accounts. Most of them sit there and they don't believe it's true.

They don't believe that such good fortune could come their way. But one man says, well, what do I lose by going and finding out? And he goes to the bank and he discovers that it's there. And he claims it.

And he builds a house. And he lives comfortably. Another person feels, well, maybe a little bit is there.

I'm not sure if that much is there as he promised. And he writes checks for small amounts. Maybe just enough to feed himself every day.

And supposing these ten beggars claim different amounts from the bank. They live at ten different levels. But their bank account, what was put into their bank account was exactly the same.

That is the reason why there is a difference between believers. Some claim every spiritual blessing. They say, Lord, it's mine in Christ.

Others claim less. And what you are today is determined by how much you have claimed of what God has already given you in Christ. This verse, Ephesians 1.3, applies to all of us equally.

But all of us haven't claimed all that is mentioned in this verse. Because we've been doubtful, hesitant. Maybe the devil has told us so many lies and we're not sure whether God loves us.

We're always, I find lots of believers are always unsure. God angry with me? Is He unhappy with me? There are so many things wrong in my life. And this false idea of humility.

Oh, I'm such a wretched person. I'm good for nothing. That's exactly what the devil wants you to confess all your life.

But what does the Bible say? He has blessed me with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. He got an inheritance when He got me. I believe that.

I'm not asking you to confess positive things like people in the world say. I'm asking you to confess what God's Word says. Because that is the truth.

The Bible says, we believe in our heart and we confess with our mouth. With the heart man believes and with the mouth he confesses unto salvation. I believe it will make a tremendous difference in your life.

If you can believe some of these scriptures and say, I believe from today onwards and I'm never going to doubt it, that You are a good God. Everything You plan for me is for my welfare. To give me a future and a hope so that my life can be useful to You on this earth.

He goes on to say here in Ephesians 1.4, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Before the worlds were created, God existed. Before there were any angels.

Before there was anything at all. Heavens, earth. Nothing existed.

God was there. Only God. And at that time, it says, in God's mind was Your name.

My name. I believe that. It has made such a tremendous difference in my life to know this.

That God chose me in Christ not the day I accepted Him, but long before I was born, long before my parents were born, long before He created Adam, way back in the beginning, even before there was a devil and even before the angels were created. God looked into the future and saw me. He saw you.

And He chose us. So, it's not that when He discovered that you accepted Christ, He chose you. He chose you before.

And it says He chose us with one purpose that we might be holy and blameless before Him. And He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ Himself. There are many, many verses like this that God uses to prove to us one truth that He rejoices over us.

He's got a plan for your life. He planned it before you were born. He worked out every little detail.

And He is sad whenever you don't yield your will. He's sad whenever you don't surrender and say, Lord, I want Your will more than I want my own will, more than I want anything else. I believe You are a good God.

I believe that everything You plan for me is the very best. Now, what's going to be the result of this? We read in Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12.

Paul says here, in verse 21, Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. The world is full of people who when somebody does evil to them, they seek to conquer that evil by doing more evil. Every war that takes place between nations, every fight that takes place between a husband and a wife or between a neighbor and a neighbor or between Christian and Christian is all based on this principle.

You do evil to me, I do more evil back to you and teach you a lesson. Now, when you understand that evil originates with Satan, and all evil comes from Satan, and when you understand that God is a good God, and you also believe that God is more powerful than Satan, then tell me the answer to this question. Which is more powerful, evil or good? What's the answer? Well, on paper we all know the answer.

And we all give the right answer. Good is more powerful than evil. The Lord says, go out into the world and demonstrate that by your life if you really believe it.

When you believe that God is a good God, that He never does evil, and you are called to be His son, you were chosen before the worlds were created to be His son, and you are gripped by this truth, you can never do evil to another person, no matter how much you are provoked. Isn't that good news? That's what the gospel does. If you can be provoked by another person to do evil, I want to say to you, it's because you think, you still think, that evil can overcome evil.

You still think that the devil can fight the devil. You have not understood that God is a good God. When you understand that, you will understand this verse, that evil can only be overcome by good.

That's what Calvary demonstrates. The greatest evil that the world ever did was on Calvary's cross, killing the Son of God. And the greatest good that God ever did was on Calvary's cross, forgiving those people who killed Him.

I pictured it like this. You know, Jesus could have defeated Satan by speaking a word. One word would have destroyed Satan, and Satan would have ceased to exist.

But God sent His Son to overcome Satan by a life of goodness, not by wiping him out with a word. I picture it like this. Two football teams, where one team is playing 100% according to the rules, and the other team is violating every possible rule you can think of.

Kicking people in the shins, adding more people to the team, and bribing the referee. Imagine every possible wrong thing, and God says, Can you trust Me that you'll win? It's difficult to believe it. You know, that's the type of world we're living in.

We're living in a world where as a Christian, we're seeking to follow all the rules. And we live in a world where nobody follows the rules. And the Lord says, Can you trust Me that you'll win in the end? That you'll win this game? That's where our faith is tested.

And I say, Lord, I believe You. I want to believe You till my dying day, that if I follow the rules, if I live in righteousness, and seek Your Kingdom first, I will come out as an overcomer. Good will triumph over evil.

Let people be evil. They will never provoke me to be evil towards them because I believe that evil can never overcome evil. And I believe God is a good God.

He never does evil to people. God is love. And he who dwells in love dwells in God.

That is why, here itself in your younger days, you must be rooted in goodness. Why we need the Holy Spirit's power is so that no one will ever be able to take us out of goodness. That is what it means to be rooted and grounded in love.

And that comes out of a knowledge of God. God is a good God. He is a forgiving God.

And that makes me willing to forgive people no matter what they do. I mean, nobody has ever done such harm to you or me as they did to Jesus. And He forgave them.

The Father forgave them. They don't know what they are doing. This is the gospel we are called to proclaim.

It is such a wonderful message. I don't believe I have done justice to it with my feeble words. I can only say with the Apostle Paul, I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened to see how good God is, to see what a wonderful plan He has for your life, to see how He has called you to live in the midst of an evil world where people don't follow the rules and to demonstrate by a righteous life that good is more powerful than evil.

May God help us. Shall we bow our heads before God? While our heads are bowed in prayer, I want to invite you to respond to the Word of God that you have heard. First of all, ask God to give you a new revelation of Himself, of His perfect goodness, of His great longing to bless you, of His plans for your life, for the future which you cannot see, plans for your welfare, plans to give you a future and a hope, and then say, Lord, give me that nature too.

Help me to partake of Your nature so that I can go and demonstrate to the world around me that the gospel is good news indeed, that good is more powerful than evil. I believe that is the need of the hour. Men and women who are so gripped by it, who can never be shaken from being rooted and grounded in love in the goodness of God.

Heavenly Father, thank You for such a wonderful gospel. I pray it will grip all of our hearts and change our lives. In Jesus' name we ask.

Amen.

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