

9. Offensive Weapons of the Believer

If God Is for Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

In the last study, we looked at the defensive armor of God that He has given us. In this study, we will look at three offensive weapons of the Spirit of God the believer is able to use when in warfare against our evil enemy. There are two that Paul mentions in his letter to the Ephesian church, and one that I see elsewhere in Scripture that also causes chaos to the unseen realm of evil spirits. These three weapons are the Word of God, Prayer, and Praise/Worship. We will look at the sword of the Spirit first, which is the Word of God.

1. The Sword of the Spirit

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote to the believers from Rome while he was chained to a Roman soldier. This soldier's task was to guard Paul during his house arrest. I believe that, as Paul observed the Roman soldier's armor, he was inspired to think of the armor God gives us for our battles. Paul is inspired by the very person and the very situation that keeps him captive, which in itself proves the power of God to use all things to His glory! I imagine Paul looking at this Roman soldier as he pens these words:

¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:17-18).

The sword attached to the soldier's belt clearly served as a metaphor for the Word of God. The kind of sword Paul mentions is the *machaira*, the short, double-edged sword, usually only eighteen inches long, razor sharp, and very light. It was most effective in hand-to-hand combat. This type of weapon was most useful when confronting your enemy at close range, which we, as believers must do, as we sometimes find it necessary to "wrestle" with a very real enemy (Ephesians 6:12). This sword was used to parry every sword thrust by an adversary, but also used as an offensive weapon in the hand of the Roman soldier. We have our Lord Jesus Christ as a model in using this weapon as a defensive and offensive tool against the enemy. When the Holy Spirit led Christ to battle with Satan in the wilderness, in each of the three temptations we are told that Jesus used the sword of the Word of God to parry each attack of the enemy. The Word of God can be used not only in a defensive mode as we block every thrust against us but also as an offensive weapon.

Do not make the mistake of underestimating the power of this weapon. First of all, it is not a weapon of your own making. It is not, for example, the "sword" of Keith Thomas (you may enter your own name here), but the sword of the Spirit. Think about that! Unlike an ordinary weapon, this weapon is divine. It is powerful in the hands of the believer. It does not depend upon your own strength or ability, but in the power of the weapon itself. This power is directly connected to the King we serve, and He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! His words used in His name carry His authority. Under the Spirit's direction, the Word of God applied to a specific situation in which you find yourself has great power. God's Word is powerful. Period. He can give you a word for a specific time, which comes to you when you need it. It is Spirit breathed for the instant you need it.

For instance, in my early twenties, I had given my life over to selfish living, just following my own impulses and desires. Out of nowhere it seemed, thoughts about eternity started to surface. (I now understand from where these thoughts came, for it became evident that people were praying for me at this time!) I started to question all sorts of things, e.g. what was my life about? What was I to accomplish while I am here? I would try to deal with these thoughts by brushing them aside as they were troubling to me back then. I tried my best to ignore them. It was not that these thoughts were not important to me, but rather, it was frustrating because I had no answers that satisfied me.

Then one day, I discovered a book which spoke about the last days, something in which I was highly interested. God used my curiosity to open my heart to His reality. In that book, the writer was describing the return of Christ, and the separation of believers from unbelievers. I thought that, because I was born in a “Christian country,” I was a Christian, but the writer used one Scripture that hooked me in the heart. It was, **“He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not, scatters” (Matthew 12:30)**. The writer explained that there is no fence for us on which to sit. You are either in God’s Kingdom, or you are outside of it. There is no middle ground. All of a sudden, I saw that, when Jesus would come, I would not be in God’s kingdom, for I did not know Christ Jesus. I was like a fish caught on a hook of Scripture. No matter how hard I tried, I could not get off of that hook! God used that Scripture in my life to prod me to seek the truth, and the Lord did not let me have peace until I finally gave my life to Christ. The truth of God’s word through that Scripture woke me up and caused me to continue to search. It literally changed the course of my life.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, had a similar experience with the Word of God stuck in him. He had read the Scripture, **“The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17)**, but the church at the time believed that a person could enter into eternal life by his own good works. While on a trip to Rome, as a religious work to earn peace and forgiveness, he was told that he would get peace inside his heart by climbing on his knees the twenty-eight white marble steps of the Lateran Staircase. As he moved from step to step, the Spirit would not let him go, but at each step the thought came to his mind, “The just shall live by faith.” He heard this in his mind, repeating with each step, “The just shall live by faith!” He saw that justification [God’s act of removing the guilt and penalty of sin] was by faith alone and not by a man’s works. This flew in the face of everything that was being taught at the time, and he was being called by God to raise the banner of truth over the traditions of men. This was a turning point for him, and in turn, for those who would hear his words as he returned to Germany a changed man, ignited with a fresh revelation of the Word of God.

We have a further example of the power of the Word of God in Scripture. On the Day of Pentecost, after the resurrection of Christ, as the disciples came out of the Upper Room where they had been filled with the Spirit, the several thousand Jews outside had the Apostle Peter speak the Word of God to them: **“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ ” (Acts 2:37)**. The Word of God spoken by Peter was like a sword that cut to the inner core of their hearts.

Question 1) Has there been a Scripture that the Spirit of God has used in your life? Share how this happened and how you responded to it.

Do not underestimate the power of the Word of God that is at work in and through the believer in Christ:

¹²For the word of God is living and active. *Sharper than any double-edged sword*, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12 Emphasis mine).

In nineteenth century America, God touched the life of Charles Finney. He was a man that gave himself to prayer and the ministry of the Word of God. The Lord used him greatly in preaching from church to church. The presence of the Spirit was on him to such a degree that people that heard him would come under great conviction of heart and feel cut to their very inner being. On one occasion when Finney was preaching in a school house, “Suddenly an awful solemnity fell upon the assembly and the congregation fell from their seats, crying for mercy.” Finney said, “If I had had a sword in each hand I could not have cut them off as fast as they fell. I think the whole congregation was on their knees or prostrated in two minutes.” The crying and weeping of the people was so loud that Finney’s exhortation of Christ’s mercy could not even be heard. “Finney seemed so anointed with the Holy Spirit that people were often brought under conviction of sin just by looking at him. When holding meetings at Utica, New York, he visited a large factory. At the sight of him, one of the workers, and then another, and then another broke down and wept under a sense of their sins, and finally so many were sobbing and weeping that the machinery had to be stopped while Finney pointed them to Christ.”¹

When we wield the sword of the Spirit, the presence of God, the Word of God, and the authority of God is behind God’s Word, and it inflicts terrible damage on Satan and his demons. As disciples, we are ambassadors of Christ, and the authority of the government of God is behind us. We all have people around us, e.g. spouses, family, friends and co-workers, that over time have steeled themselves against our biblical world view. They are under the deception of the enemy and have a veil over their hearts: “The god of this age **has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light** of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Be open to the Spirit of God. He can give you a word that will “pierce” through all the lies, which blind you from the light of God’s truth. The Spirit of God knows people’s inner-most thoughts and defenses. He knows their needs and their unanswered questions. Ask Him for His inspired words to get past the defenses that the enemy has set up! His words can pierce these defenses and bring them the light of His truth. The more you spend time in the word of God and soak up His words, the easier it will be to have the Spirit of God bring these words to your remembrance. Jesus said: “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

We need to be acquainted with the Word of God. When Satan came saying, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread” (Matthew 4:3), Jesus replied by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, “It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Just as the physical body needs bread, the staple diet of the Israelite, so the believer in Christ needs to be sustained by daily meditation on the Word of

¹ Taken from: <https://hopefaithprayer.com/prayernew/charles-finney-intercessors/>

God to be spiritually strong and overcome the evil one. The Word of God is heavenly bread for our spirit.

2. Prayer in the Spirit

We could be tempted to think that Paul only mentions one offensive weapon, but I believe that his second one cannot be typified by any part of a Roman's armor, so he mentions prayer without making an analogy to the Roman soldier. Here is Paul's second offensive spiritual weapon:

¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:18).

Question 2) What do you think is in Paul's mind when he instructs us to pray in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests?

There are some among the Church worldwide who would say that Paul is talking about praying in an unknown tongue. They would remind us of two verses from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers:

²For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.

¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:2, 14).

In talking about offensive prayer (Ephesians 6:18), it is my personal belief that Paul is talking about all kinds of Spirit-led and empowered prayer that breaks down every demonic stronghold, not only in people but also in territory that is dominated by demonic spirits. Some of this may be individuals who are led to pray in an unknown tongue, but do not discount praying in your own language, as you are led by the Spirit. Paul is very clear when he writes that not all Christians speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30). The Corinthians were a very gifted group of people, but I can't see him telling the believers in Ephesus that praying in the Spirit was to pray only in tongues. The Body of Christ is a multi-faceted spiritual organism that uses the gifts and talents of us all to pull down spiritual strongholds through many different kinds of prayer. Spirit-led prayer is always backed up by the authority of God and the presence of the Spirit.

We have an example of this type of prayer in Acts 4:23-31 after Peter and John were put in jail by the Jewish leadership for the "crime" of healing the lame man at the gate called Beautiful. When they were tried the next day, Peter, under the control and influence of the Spirit, spoke fearlessly and told the Chief Priests, Scribes, and leaders that they would not stop speaking about Jesus. They were released after many threats. Notice what the believers did after they were threatened:

²³When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴And when they heard *this*, **they lifted their voices to God with one accord** and said, "O Lord, it is you who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, ²⁵who by the Holy Spirit, through the

mouth of our father David your servant, said, ‘why did the gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? ²⁶‘the kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against is Christ.’ ²⁷‘For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. ²⁹‘And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, ³⁰while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.’ ³¹And when they had prayed, **the place where they had gathered together was shaken**, and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:23-31).

The early disciples saw that their fight was not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces. How did they respond to this demonic persecution? They prayed passionately with voices raised to God. They didn’t take turns to pray; they all prayed out loud in unison in various kinds of languages as the Spirit led them. In this instance, the very place where the believers were joined together was shaken after they raised their voices to God in Spirit-empowered prayer. The result of this kind of prayer was that the room where they were gathered was shaken under the power of the Spirit as again, the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the message of God with boldness.

We have a modern-day example of Spirit-led prayer overcoming demonic strongholds over a city in Argentina. In the book by C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, pages 30-34, there is the story of a strategy to reach the city of Resistencia in the northern province of Chaco, Argentina. Ed Silvano, an Argentinean evangelist, initiated a three-year plan to change the spiritual atmosphere over the city so that people could hear and respond to the Gospel. As of the beginning of 1990, fewer than 6,000 of its 400,000 population were evangelical believers, a mere 1.5 percent. He moved members of his Harvest Evangelism team into Resistencia and for over a year laid a foundation of prayer, spiritual warfare, and leadership training. They had Cindy Jacobs, a lady gifted with intercessory prayer, lead two seminars on warfare prayer. The people responded well and wanted to take authority over their city the next morning.

Silvano writes,

A group of 80 showed up and marched into the Plaza de Mayo of Buenos Aires, praying for five hours of intense battle against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. Among other things, the group sensed a spirit of witchcraft and a spirit of death in the Ministry of Social Welfare building where President Peron’s notorious warlock, Jose Lopez Riga, had maintained his office. When the group left the plaza, they felt a sense of victory. The principalities and powers had not been destroyed, but warfare prayer had in some measure begun to weaken the evil hold on Argentina. Over the city of Resistencia, the people all knew the names of the spirits that were ruling over the city. San La Muerte, the spirit of death, was perhaps the most powerful.

A large number of citizens of Resistencia were so devoted to San La Muerte that they had tiny bone images of his idol surgically implanted under their skin or under their nipples,

believing the false promise that this will assure them of a “good death.” Other spirits of equal rank turned out to be Pombero, a spirit of division who brought terror, especially to children during the siesta time and at night; Curapi, a spirit of sexual perversion, the Queen of Heaven, a religious spirit, who had perverted the true character of the traditional church; and the spirit of Freemasonry, a cleverly disguised form of occult power. Surprisingly, the images of these spirits and their activities were clearly depicted on several large folk art murals in the central plaza of the city.

What was the outcome? Ed Silvano reports that the growth graphs of the churches in Resistencia took a decided turn upward beginning in April when the group prayed in the plaza. In one public event, 250 people were baptized in portable pools. Crowds of almost 17,000 packed into an open field for evangelistic meetings where objects used in occult rituals and witchcraft were burned in a fifty-five-gallon drum each night. Hundreds were healed physically and delivered from demons. At least eighteen new churches were started. Most significant of all, the evangelical population of Resistencia virtually doubled in the calendar year of 1990. Perhaps, a weakening sign of the territorial spirits over Resistencia was the tragic fate of the high priestess of the cult of San La Muerte, the spirit of death. Two weeks before the massive evangelistic thrust and after the time of prayer in the center of the city, her bed caught fire. For some reason the flames seemed to be selective. They consumed only the mattress, the woman, and her statue of San La Muerte!²

Now, I certainly do not advocate any single person taking on spirits in this way. These believers were over eighty people in one accord and Spirit-led in what they were doing. I am using the story to illustrate the fact that these things are real and that Jesus has won the victory over them at the cross. When the Body of Christ works together under godly inspired leadership, whole towns and cities can be won to Christ. Are you a part of a solid expression of Jesus Christ in your town or city? If not, begin to seek the Lord to show you where you are to fellowship. We need each other. It has always been the pattern. Something special happens when God’s people stand together in unity. It is important that you have other believers in Christ around you. Being accountable somewhere is a strong defense to you as a believer. It keeps you from being isolated and, therefore, more vulnerable. If you are not yet a believer, perhaps today is your day. The Bible says that today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Why not reach out to Him with all your heart today?

Question 3) If the leaders of the church in your city or town called for massive intercessory prayer, such as that spoken of above, would you go? Would you be reluctant to pray out loud? What would it take to move you to a place where you could cry out to God in prayer with others as described in the above passage in Acts?

God is honored as His people lean on Him in difficulties and dependence. He longs to show us that He is our Father and well able to answer our heartfelt Spirit-led prayers. I don’t know about you, but I sense the winds of difficulty blowing this way more and more, and we should be prepared by taking time out of our day to practice impassioned and Spirit-led prayer.

3. The Weapon of Praise.

² C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, Regal Books, Pages 30-34.

Although Paul does not mention this weapon of the Spirit in his letter to the Ephesians, I think there is a case for bringing it into view when talking about the weapons of the believer.

¹Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).

In this case, worship is not used as a weapon but as a means of drawing close to God and dialing down their hearts to listen and expect to hear what the Spirit would say to the Antioch church. How few churches there are today that take time out and genuinely want input from the Spirit of God as to the direction that the church should go! Jesus said, “**I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail**” (Matthew 16:18). Do we ask the Spirit of God to speak and lead and for the Lord to build His church? In this instance in the Book of Acts, worship and prayer took place to get God’s mind on how to build. We should not abandon this method in favor of “big business models.” Many pastors have been disappointed to find that what works in one church, does not work for them. God has a strategy for your city, town, village. He is all you need. Yes, He does use men, He can give you tools and insight. He also wants to lead you by His Spirit! He wants to show you. Join together, and humble yourself. Pray. Listen. Work in unity. He will act.

Worship was certainly a weapon that was used against a demonically inspired attack on Israel by a huge army formed by a union between the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites in 2 Chronicles 20. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah at the time, gathered all the people to Jerusalem, and they all began to cry out to the Lord in impassioned prayer, confessing their inability to defend their families against the attack. God spoke prophetically to them while they were fasting and praying to God for deliverance.

Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. ¹⁶Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you (2 Chronicles 20:15-17).

What was God’s plan? The direction that they were given was to have their army have the worship team lead them against the enemy. They were not to fight this battle—God was going to fight for them. Under the direction of the Spirit, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and praise Him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army:

²²As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. ²³The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to

destroy one another. ²⁴When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, **they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped** (2 Chronicles 20:22-24).

What does this teach us? At the Lord's direction, Spirit-inspired worship took place with the result that demonically inspired attack was broken down by God moving on the behalf of His people, not requiring them to physically fight at all. They were not to fight in their own strength, but they relied on His power. We are told that the Lord set an ambush for Israel's enemies and that the enemy fought against one another and completely destroyed themselves.

The power of praise is also illustrated by an incident told by David Wilkerson in one of his books. According to the story, in the early part of his work among the gangs in New York City he encountered a group of boys on a street corner. As he approached them, there were signs that they were preparing to attack. Looking to the Lord for guidance, he continued his advance. At the instant they seemed poised to strike, David suddenly clapped his hands and shouted "Praise the Lord!" According to the account, the entire gang broke ranks and fled. The only plausible explanation for their action is that these boys were activated by evil spirits who panicked at the shout of praise. But the story which, in my opinion, dwarfs all others in this category concerns a well-documented incident which took place near Holton, Indiana. According to the account, an evangelist had come to the local church for a series of evangelistic services. In order to be alone for prayer and meditation, the minister went out into a nearby field. He did not know that a dangerous bull was in the area until the attack was under way. When he saw the bull charging it was too late to run to safety. He did not know what to do. He thought he had come to his end. But just before the enraged animal reached him, he shouted, "Praise the Lord!" The bull halted in its tracks, immediately turned, and fled.³

At different times in my life, I have sensed God pushing me into situations where I have had to look to Him to take the controls and for me to stand behind Him and watch Him control the situation. I remember the time when Sandy, my wife, and I went on a mission trip to Israel with a return ticket that enabled us to come back after a year. When Sandy became pregnant with our daughter, Anna, we came back after staying just over seven months. Our mission in going was to love the people of that beautiful land. We did not have money for the entire stay, but enough to begin, and God asked us to trust Him. We knew that He could and would provide for us. We were not disappointed! It was a time of testing, learning, and growing in our faith. God met us supernaturally in so many ways, day by day. We lived by faith, trusting God to meet our needs just as He promised in His Word (Matthew 6:31-33). God uses our difficulties and trials as a way of forcing us to look to Him and trust Him.

While in Israel during the early stages of Sandy's pregnancy, the life of our child, Anna, was threatened. Early bleeding and other symptoms caused us to seek out a doctor in Bethlehem. He had all the latest equipment, and he used ultrasound to listen for a heartbeat. However, he was convinced that there was no heartbeat, that it was, in fact, a tumor. An operation was scheduled, and we went home in shock, not knowing what to think. The confusing part was that we had felt that we had a word from God telling us the name for this baby! She was to be called "Anna,"

³ Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, Bethany House Publishers, 1975, Page 127

after Anna, the prophetess, mentioned in Luke 2: 36-38. Why would God give us this word, this hope, only to take it away and replace it with what seemed like a stone? We thought that we had received a blessing from God, only to be faced with a “mountain” of a problem! Sandy and I called our friends at the church that we attended. They all stood with us in prayer. We were given the Scripture from Zechariah. I will quote from the King James version as that is how it was given to us at the time; “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone of it with **shoutings, crying Grace, grace unto it**” (Zechariah 4:6-7).

Now, I am fully aware that this Scripture speaks of a specific time and a specific act in Scripture. However, this is the marvelous thing about God’s word. Somehow, He can take a word like this and ignite your heart for a particular situation, and that is what He did. We all took hold of the words, “Grace, grace!”

In obedience, we all lifted up our voices and declared “Grace, grace!” to this situation. We lifted up our voices together in praise and proclamation. Afterwards, we felt a peace and proceeded with our appointment at the doctors. I do not know what the doctor made of the situation when we returned to his office. He expected to proceed with the operation, which would have removed what he thought to be a tumor, but what, in fact, was a baby! We asked him to check by doing one more ultrasound before proceeding with the operation. The doctor had not planned on doing this, but he could see that Sandy was visibly very distraught, so he agreed. He was astounded to hear the heartbeat, and see the amniotic sac, something that was not visible before. I do not know if the doctor was wrong the first time, or if this was a creative miracle. All I know is that we were given hope through God’s word, and our daughter was a miracle to us!

Not every story in our lives has had a triumphant answer like this one. Sometimes, we suffer and do not understand why. In everything, God can be glorified, and in this, there is always victory. When we understand that He sifts everything that comes to us through His own hands, we can trust in His love. Our victory is the victory He has already won for us. His strength is our strength; His armor is our armor. He does not ask us to fight this battle by ourselves. He offers us His own strength at all times. He offers us peace in the midst of the storm. The battle truly does belong to the Lord.

*We named our daughter Anna Grace. Anna is a Latin form of the Hebrew name Hannah. It means “favor” or “grace.” We had settled on the name “Anna” before this experience as we chose it from Luke chapter 2 before Sandy even became pregnant. That is why we chose the middle name, Grace, so that her name, in its meaning would be “*grace, grace.*” It reminds us of how He gave us grace in this situation.

Prayer: Thank you, King Jesus, for being the Captain of our Salvation, our High Tower, our Fortress, and our shelter in the storm. For all that You are and all that You do on our behalf, we thank You and give You praise!

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