

The Sin of INGRATITUDE

INGRATITUDE—why is it so prevalent today? The gratitude and thankfulness exhibited in previous generations has all but disappeared! Why? And what can you do to make sure YOU are grateful?

INGRATITUDE IS AN INTEGRAL part of society. If you ask most people if they are ungrateful, they will probably reply, “Of course not!” However, this attitude is so ingrained in their lives, they cannot openly admit—or even realize—that they are ungrateful.

But how can you tell if *you* are ungrateful? Are there things that identify ingratitude? And if so, what can you do about it?

Webster’s Dictionary defines “Ingratitude” as: “Forgetfulness of, or poor return for, kindness received.” It can also be defined as not appreciating or valuing what you have, or have been given. *Unexpressed* gratitude is also ingratitude!

In today’s fast-paced world, most people seem to not have time for thankfulness. Work, traffic, family, soccer practice, doctor appointments, and countless other things are their main priorities. They seem to have no time to thank others.

But consider the following. Have you ever given someone a gift and not received thanks for it? Have you ever been in a grocery store or restaurant and were not thanked for your business? Have you ever felt unappreciated by family or friends or at your workplace? If so, how did it make you feel? Probably not very good.

Have you ever thought about *where* this mindset of ingratitude comes from? This is vital to understand before one can *overcome* this problem.

Past to Present: One Nation—Ungrateful

If you live in America or any other nation descended from ancient Israel, you live in one of the most abundantly blessed lands in the world. This country enjoys plentiful food, shelter, electricity, running water, wealth, air conditioning, heating, transportation, sanitation, and many other blessings. If you live in one of these countries, take a moment to look around and fully take in all of the many blessings.

However, these lands are filled with chronic grumblers and complainers. Although there are *countless blessings*, there seem to always be countless things to *gripe* about—be it traffic, the economy, food prices, problems at work, difficulties with family, desire for additional material possessions, ill health, etc. Never before in the history of man has the world shown this horrible characteristic as it does today!

The Bible records the experiences of another nation—the ancient nation of Israel—who also constantly complained and murmured. No matter what God did for them, it was *never* enough.

After 430 years of slavery to the Egyptians, the Israelites, through God’s miraculous intervention, were released from bondage. As they left Egypt, God allowed them to collect riches, cattle, food, gold, jewels and supplies. God performed many miracles as they traveled through the wilderness. He selected them as His people, promising to take them to a land “filled with milk and honey.”

Notice God’s plain words to the Israelites: “And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a *good land* and a *large*, unto a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:8).

But this was not *enough* for them!

Upon approaching the Promised Land, the Israelites were instructed by God to send spies to survey the land. It was located between other nations that were enemies of Israel.

After forty days of spying the land, they returned. And presented to Moses, Aaron and the congregation of Israel the fruit from the land, saying, “We came unto the land whether you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey... Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great” (Num. 13:27).

Caleb, one of the spies, asked Moses for permission to take the land. But the other spies—except for Joshua—lied to the people, claiming that it was infested with strong, powerful giants.

Notice the reaction of the crowd: “And all the children of Israel *murmured* against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt!...

“And wherefore has the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt” (Num. 14:2-4).

Israel was so blatantly ungrateful that they wanted to go back to Egypt—where they had undergone many hundreds of years of brutal slavery. They did not appreciate the astounding blessings that God provided or the many powerful miracles He performed for them.

Notice God's response to their attitude: "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people PROVOKE Me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them..." (Num. 14:11-12).

However, Moses reasoned with God, prompting Him to change His mind.

Numbers 14 continues, "And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to your word...Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles...have not hearkened to My voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that *provoked* Me see it..."

"How long shall I bear with this EVIL CONGREGATION, which *murmur* against Me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against Me.

"Say unto them, As truly as I live, says the LORD, as you have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcases shall fall in this wilderness...you shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein...But your little ones, which you said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised...and the people mourned greatly...saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD has promised: for *we have sinned*" (Num. 14:20, 22-23, 27, 29, 31, 39-40).

God called the Israelites an "evil congregation" for their sinful ingratitude. To God, an ungrateful attitude is sin—evil—which provokes Him to anger! Although God did not strike Israel with pestilence at that time or disinherit them, He did cause them to wander in the wilderness for 40 additional years, until those that demonstrated this attitude died! Their murmurings and unthankful attitude condemned them from ever seeing the Promised Land!

Most are familiar with the phrase, "Those that do not learn from history are

doomed to repeat it." This applies to the modern-day descendants of Israel—the United States, Britain, Australia and other democratic, primarily English-speaking people scattered throughout the world. These nations are foretold to relive history—and experience many soon-coming horrific events for much the same reasons as ancient Israel!

Reaping Curses

Deuteronomy 28 has been called the "Blessings and Curses" chapter. It records a sobering warning to those who will heed it. This prophecy, given almost 3,500 years ago, recounts what is foretold to happen to proud, arrogant and *ungrateful* nations!

The first 14 verses describe the many wonderful blessings that are to be poured upon the nations that obey and worship God. The remaining part of the chapter lists the countless curses that are reaped for *disobeying* God:

"Because you serve not the LORD your God with *joyfulness*, and with GLADNESS OF HEART, for the *abundance* of all things; therefore shall you serve your enemies which the LORD shall send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon your neck, until he have destroyed you.

"The LORD shall bring a nation against you from far, a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of your cattle, and the fruit of your land, until you be destroyed..."

"And he shall besiege you in all your gates, until your high and fenced walls come down, wherein you trusted, throughout all your land: and he shall besiege you in all your gates throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you" (Deut. 28:47-52).

Ingratitude is just one of many sins that the people of this country have committed—and will be led into captivity for! This is the warning from the pages of your Bible! Under captivity, all the grumbling, murmuring and complaining that consume people's lives will be of no importance.

Ingratitude is a DEADLY SIN! The consequence for this sin is grave—and *not* to be taken lightly!

Ingratitude in Christ's Day

Most are familiar with the many Bible accounts of Christ's miracles. He walked on water, turned water into wine, fed thousands of people from a small amount of food, cast out demons and healed many people. But, although He healed many, how many do you think actually came back to thank Him? You will be surprised.

Luke's gospel records one such miraculous healing. In this account, Christ healed ten lepers. Verse 12 records, "And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice *glorified God*, and fell down on his face at His feet, *giving Him thanks*: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give *glory* to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go your way: your faith has made you whole" (Luke 17:12-19).

Of the ten lepers, only *one* returned to thank Christ. Think of that statement. Only *one* of the ten thanked God for healing them of an awful disease!

Notice Christ's rhetorical question. Understanding the characteristics of human nature, He perfectly understood why the others had not returned to thank Him.

But *why* is mankind so intrinsically ungrateful?

The Most Common Sin

From television commercials, programs, movies, shopping malls and homes, a widespread attitude of SELFISHNESS is sweeping the nations of this world. Adults, children and teens are becoming more ungrateful each day.

A main accelerator of this ingratitude is *commercialism*. Society has been caught up in the "you-work-hard-so-you-deserve-a-new-car-and-a-vacation-

in-Barbados” mentality. This, in turn, has caused many to believe the ideology that, if they do not *acquire* these extravagant luxuries, life is somehow treating them unfairly.

Before calling for a national day of fasting, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln stated, “We have been the recipients of the choicest blessings of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation ever has grown; BUT WE HAVE FORGOTTEN GOD! We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.”

This is a tremendously powerful statement! Since the time President Lincoln gave this speech, the wealth, prosperity and peace experienced by the United States is far greater—along with the attitude of pride, selfishness and ingratitude.

But if this same speech were given today, there would be quite an uproar!

The apostle Paul wrote, “This know also, that in the *last days* perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, UNTHANKFUL, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (II Tim. 3:1-4).

These attitudes are becoming increasingly evident in these “last days.” (By these verses, even an atheist can recognize that we are living in these days by simply turning on the television!)

In contrast to Lincoln’s day, or even to fifty years ago, today’s ungrateful attitude is worse by far. If that generation *forgot* God, and the many blessings He provided for America, then this *de-generation doesn’t even know God exists!*

In this world of being obsessed with what’s “in”—from the newest fashions, to the latest songs and to absurd political correctness—GRATITUDE HAS BEEN ALL BUT DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL!

To find the source of this attitude, one must look in the pages of the Bible to find the most selfish, proud, arrogant, self-centered and ungrateful being that ever existed—Satan the devil.

Before his rebellion against God, Satan (first named Lucifer) was a perfectly created archangel. The prophet Isaiah records, “How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High*” (Isa. 14:12-14).

Lucifer’s heart was lifted up with arrogance—vanity. He was *ungrateful* to God for giving him life. Neither was he grateful to God for creating him so perfectly. Instead, he rebelled against God, choosing to believe that he was *better* than his Creator—that his way was *greater* than God’s Way.

As the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), he broadcasts this same attitude into us.

How to Be Grateful

It has been said that ingratitude is the most common sin. Although it is a part of our nature, there are ways that you can avoid being one of the many that commit the sin of ingratitude.

Below are just a few simple ways to show your gratitude toward God and fellowman:

Thank God daily: God commands us to go to Him in prayer with praise and thanksgiving. Do you thank Him daily?

The Bible is filled with examples of God’s servants showing their gratitude towards Him.

I Chronicles 29 records King David being deeply moved at the people’s generosity in preparing God’s Temple. David was inspired and expressed his earnest and sincere gratitude in honor of the great God. He exclaimed: “Blessed be You, LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD,

and You are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of You, and You reign over all; and in Your hand is power and might; and in Your hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of You, and of Your own have we given You” (vs. 10-14).

Paul writes, “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks” (I Thes. 5:16-18).

Psalms 92 records a special Sabbath psalm used to praise God: “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto Your name, O most High: to show forth Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night...For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work: I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O LORD, how great are Your works! And Your thoughts are very deep...You, LORD, are most High forevermore. For, lo, Your enemies, O LORD, for, lo, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered” (vs. 1–2, 4–5, 8–9).

You should never run out of things to thank God for! Go to Him in prayer and continually thank Him for all the blessings He has provided you!

The Bible records God’s faithful servants continuously doing so. We also find that the Bible commands us to always give thanks and praise to God.

Why? Why does God command that we praise Him with thanksgiving? Does He require this because He needs our praises?

NO!

This command is repeated throughout the Bible because WE need it! In order for us, as Christians, to be more like God—the most thankful Being in the universe—WE need to learn to be thankful and give praises every day!

Another vital way to demonstrate gratitude towards the great God is through tithes and offerings. The prophet Malachi records God’s words: “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me, even

this whole nation. Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:8-10).

Although God provides absolutely everything that we have, He promises to provide more—through pouring out blessings from heaven—if we merely do our part by paying tithes and offerings! Through our heartfelt dedication in supporting His end-time Work, He promises us much more than we can possibly desire!

Say "Thank you" often: Many people fear thanking others. They often fall into the mentality that, by thanking, they are somehow in debt or owe something to that person. But the truth is far from this!

Throughout history, great men have been known for specifically thanking others. It is not a sign of weakness—it is a sign of MEEKNESS!

Think of the things that people do for you—from opening a door for you, to giving you a ride to the store, or providing a kind and reassuring word. We live in an age when common courtesy and politeness are all but extinct!

Say "thank you" and "please" often. You should never run out of people to thank. You would be surprised how happy those little words can make others feel!

Count your blessings, not your worries: Look around you. When was the last time you lost a loved one to starvation or rampant disease? When was the last time you gave up eating to make sure your children had food? When was the last time you had to sell your children because you did not have the money to survive or even provide for them? Chances are you have never experienced these things. Unfortunately, these are grim realities that many around the world face each day. Thank God each day for all the terrible things that you have not had to endure!

It is common to fall into the routine of constant "grumbling" and complaining about problems and worries. When you find yourself complaining about finances, traffic, problems at work, family issues,

car troubles, or whatever other difficulty or trial you may be experiencing, remember that everything God does and allows is for a reason. Although difficult, it is for a greater good—if you overcome them!

Consider the following analogy: Each ingredient used in making a cake is not always sweet or good to the taste. By themselves, their tastes can range from bitter, to salty, to sweet, to chalky. But the end result—the cake—is delicious and sweet!

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, recorded, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecc. 3:1).

Although it is difficult to do, when you are experiencing trials, look for the good that God wants you to learn from them. For example, if you are having car problems, and will need an expensive repair, perhaps you are mishandling, or wasting money on other things, and God wants you to re-examine your budget. Many of the difficulties that you encounter can help you realize whether or not you are living properly. You can learn from these experiences!

When people grumble, they are complaining about a situation that God has allowed—and sometimes even caused—them to be in!

Paul admonishes us to "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:14-15).

Finally, consider Paul's example of dealing with trials and afflictions: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Notwithstanding you have well done, that you did communicate with my affliction" (4:11-14). We must learn from experiences—both good and bad!

Things to Be Grateful For

The following lists just a few things which we should show gratitude for.

Upon reading them, picture how your life would be without them:

Loving family and friends: After creating man, God declared, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18).

God created humans with the need for family. If you are married, appreciate your husband or wife. If you have children, appreciate all the fond memories that you are building *together*. Problems and arguments will occur from time to time, but at those moments, imagine your life without your loved ones. Realize how different it would be.

Employment: Without employment, how would you earn a living? How would you eat or feed your family? How would your rent or mortgage be paid? Every day, it seems headlines report some type of corporation "laying off" hundreds, even thousands of employees. Be thankful to God for the job He has provided for you. Although you may experience hardships with co-workers or employers, acknowledge that without your job, you would not have a means to support your family or yourself.

Food, clothing, shelter: Although man has systematically pillaged, destroyed and raped the land that provides the materials needed for food, clothing and shelter, the United States and the other modern-day descendants of Israel have an *abundance* of these great blessings. Other nations, however, do not. Appreciate these things!

God understands that, as physical humans, we need physical substances for survival. Notice: "And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, o you of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?... For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things" (Matt. 6:28-32).

If God cares for and clothes even the flowers, how much more will He provide for those that obey Him? This is what His Word declares.

Are you grateful for this promise? Or do you take it for granted?

God's truth: How much do you appreciate God's Word—the Holy Bible? God has provided a way for us to know and understand His laws through this great Book of Instruction. Notice President Lincoln's statement concerning it:

"I believe the Bible is the best gift that God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated through this Book. I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."

The apostle Peter stated to Christ, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Do *you* feel the same way?

God's Sabbath and Holy Days: How much do you appreciate, and thank God for, His Sabbath and Holy Days? By observing these, you are separate—different—from the world. They help you understand the great Plan of God, and how He has made it available to us.

With God's purpose for the Feast days in mind, this will allow you to better see the "big picture," and be thankful towards God for allowing you to be a part of it!

Christ's Sacrifice: Suppose that you just received news that you only had thirty minutes left to live. How much more would you appreciate your life—and everything in it? You would appreciate *these things*, as the saying goes, "like there's no tomorrow."

But you may have not realized that you are currently on DEATH ROW!

Unless you are baptized, and have been redeemed from under the death penalty—sin—you are condemned to *death* (Rom. 6:23).

Christ—who is perfect and sinless—shed His blood in our stead, dying for *our* sins. He became the Savior for this world and all humanity.

Do you fully comprehend this knowledge? Do you appreciate this great sacrifice? Like an inmate being pardoned seconds before the switch on the electric chair is thrown, you must

be grateful—*truly thankful*—for this redemption!

Without these things, your life would be empty, shallow, miserable—and completely *non-existent!*

Dealing With Ingratitude

One of the most awkward and difficult situations for a person is dealing with an ungrateful person. Someone once said, "The quickest way to earn someone's contempt is to do too much for them."

An example of this was when some who had received food stamps for years, then had their benefits revoked by the government. This caused quite a commotion—many claimed to be victims of injustice. When in reality, they had long *received* something they did *not* earn.

Many times, people find themselves in a position of having done things for others for such a long time, that the other party begins to feel that they deserve it. While there are many principles that can be applied in such situations, there are two basic rules that can be applied to better handle this problem.

"The Golden Rule": Many millions of professing Christians claim to follow the Bible. But why don't they follow the laws and principles from it? And why, if so many do enjoy being appreciated or treated with gratitude, are there so many ungrateful people?

Matthew records, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (7:12, NKJV). Most know this as "the Golden Rule"—to treat others how you wish to be treated. Many quote this verse, but rarely practice it. Yet this principle is vital in combating the pulls and lusts of "the flesh" (Rom. 8). This *includes* ingratitude.

When someone does something for you, think to yourself, "If I did this for someone, wouldn't I like to receive a 'thank you'?" Chances are, you would. You must fight against your human nature and show gratitude.

Paul records, "For what I would, that do I not; but what I *hate*, that do I" (Rom. 7:15). Paul, who was an apostle and had personal encounters with the glorified Christ, wrote that even *he* had difficulties combating the inner self. This evidences that it is DIFFICULT to wage a war against the wicked, evil and

sinful self! But with humility towards God, and asking for His help, it is *possible!*

The Principle of Cause and Effect: The principle of *cause* and *effect* is all around us. If the floor is wet, someone may slip and fall. If a car runs over a nail, the tire will become flat. This is common sense.

This principle can be described another way: Every *action* has a *reaction*. In examining today's society, many do not recognize that this principle applies in their lives—through more ways than just the physical.

After Lucifer's rebellion, he became the "prince of the power of the air," and the "god of this world." Since then, Satan's way of life—the GET way—has pummeled humanity with his selfish, proud, rebellious and ungrateful attitudes. This is the CAUSE!

The EFFECT is the *attitude* present in society at large. Tuned into "the prince of the power of the air," humanity has had a materialistic, selfish, "me-first" existence. They are following their god.

This is CAUSE and EFFECT!

People always notice when others are rude to *them*—a purely selfish action. They often think, "Look at how rude people are towards *me*...I am not being appreciated...I did not receive a 'thank you' for kindness that I performed."

This is the initial *action* that gets people to *react* in the same rude, ungrateful attitudes demonstrated to them. Although they did not appreciate it when they were on the receiving end, they "dish it out," because they feel that they were treated unfairly.

This cycle has always been in effect throughout mankind's history. After 6,000 years of injustice, misrule and destruction, ingratitude is merely one of the many "effects" mankind has brought upon itself!

The Choice is Yours

Always remember that ingratitude is a *deadly* sin. God directly calls it *evil!* An ungrateful attitude is something that most are unaware that they have, but everyone else sees! It is a deep character flaw. Although few will tell you about it, ingratitude sticks out like a sore thumb.

Often, it goes unchanged and untreated, because of people's ignorance of it.

It is something that, after many years of “perfecting,” needs to be *completely* removed!

Remember Israel’s example. They grumbled, complained and showed ingratitude because they were afraid of being unable to overcome the “giants” that might have kept them from the Promised Land. But in reality, the only “giant” that held them back from enjoy-

ing this great blessing from God was their *ingratitude!* An entire generation—except for two men—died without seeing this land!

Learn from this example. An ungrateful attitude exists in our human nature. But simple steps can be taken to overcome it. By honestly analyzing yourself, and applying biblical rules and principles of etiquette, you can ENSURE

that you are not committing this most common—and DEADLY—sin.

Remember Paul’s three commands for true Christians:

- (1) “Rejoice evermore.”
- (2) “Pray without ceasing.”
- (3) “In *everything* give thanks.”

Do not let this sin keep *you* from God’s many promises! Do not let it steal your happiness. The choice is yours! □

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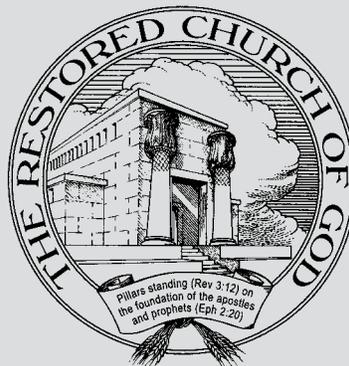
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