

Are you a Christian,
or
Just Religious?



**“But I have prayed for you,
that your faith should not fail.”**

Luke 22:32

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Preface

This booklet has been written at the request of Larry, an inmate of long incarceration. His perseverance in the faith has brought him to see freedom in the riches of Christ. He has blessed our small assembly with his letters, sharing the struggles of “*earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*” (Jude 1:3).

Also, because of the misunderstanding on the part of many people regarding what the biblical gospel is, there is a need for a biblical gospel apart from the feel-good gospel and the many other erroneous gospels (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). This booklet has been put together for all who desire Jesus, as He is revealed in the Scriptures, and is known by the Father and the redeemed. Jesus is the Saviour who is pure grace and pure truth (John 1:14).

“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

1. Are you a good person, or a sinner without hope?

“...For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13).

Many in today's world believe that the Creator will accept them if they don't do anything wrong and are good to others. This is prevalent thinking throughout the world, and in churches as well. The reason: Man by nature eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This means do good and don't do evil. Man believes that favor with God is within his own ability to achieve. He thinks surely God will not judge a person who is doing what is good and right (in man's eyes).

Scripture reveals to man the mind of God on this most important subject:

“The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned

aside; they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Psalms 14:2-3).

From these verses, it is evident that God does not see righteousness as man does. God made man, Adam, perfect and without fault. This man, Adam, sinned and became corrupt. This corruption became inherent in his offspring. Man may attempt to do good but his very nature is flawed and sinful. This nature is what God sees in man to judge man's rightness; man has no righteousness before God.

“God is love” (1 John 4:8) and because He is, He sent His Son into the world to seek out those who agree with the Creator that they are sinners (Matthew 9:13).

“For I did not come to call the righteous but sinners, to repentance (Mark 2:17).

Scripture directs or points man to God's mind concerning man's righteousness. *“There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).* We can see from this Scripture that, before God, man has no

acceptance on the merits of his own works and life. Jesus did not come to call the righteous, because there aren't any. Self justification and self righteousness is all that is in those people who think they are righteous. They believe that God will accept them on the Day of Judgment because they are more good than bad. Those same people did not listen to Jesus, in His day. In fact they called Him a friend of publicans and sinners (Matthew 11:19). In their standard of righteousness rather than God's, Jesus was a sinner too.

Jesus did not come to bring salvation to such people because they would not receive God's only righteous Man. Their self righteousness kept them from receiving God's righteousness in the Saviour.

Evidence of True Repentance, Bringing True Faith to Salvation

The woman who anointed Jesus' head with oil and washed His feet with her tears understood who He was. She knelt before the Saviour who was

about to die in her place for her sins (Luke 7:36-50). She put her faith in Him entirely for her salvation, and He told her that her faith in Him saved her (verse 50).

Zacchaeus was another person who recognized his unrighteous state before Jesus (Luke 19:1-10). Zacchaeus was known as a sinner by his community. Upon his faith in Jesus, his life changed. He had a new life in the Saviour. He gave up his life and ways to follow Jesus. He said *“Lord, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four-fold”* (Luke 19:8), Zacchaeus’ words of repentance and faith were backed up with action through faith in his Saviour.

John the Baptist preached the same words when he said to self-righteous people who claimed to believe, *“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance...”* (Luke 3:8)

Jesus went to the cross as God’s sacrificial Lamb to die for sinners, ungodly people who knew what

they were, and saw their need of a Saviour (Romans 5:6-8).

2. Jesus is only seen and heard with eyes and ears of the heart.

“For blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matthew 13:17).

Man has been created with five senses in the body. Two of these are eyes and ears. Without these, man’s physical existence is greatly hampered. The same is true of his spiritual condition. If he does not spiritually see and hear from a heart that sees and hears as his Creator does, he will be spiritually destitute. God is a spirit (John 4:24) and for man to see and hear his Creator, he must have spiritual wisdom and understanding.

The question then arises, how does a person get spiritual wisdom and understanding?

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding” (Proverb 4:7).

Scripture gives the answer to this question:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalms 111:10).

The foundational wisdom of God as to how He relates to man is found in the words of Jesus, *“But I will show you what you should fear; fear Him who, after He has killed, has the power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (Luke 12:5).*

God has declared that all men are sinners and under the judgment of God (Revelations 20:11-15). All men, because of sin, are under the sentence of eternal death. *“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).*

“He that has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9).

When a man comes to recognize that he is a lost sinner before a Holy God - and that his own will,

strengths and abilities cannot change his plight nor what he is (God has said, “...*by reason of strength shall no man prevail*“ 1 Samuel 2:9), and that his spirit is in agony from his lost state, he has heard. What can a man do who hears these things in his heart? This wisdom which he has acquired from understanding what God sees, will give him eyes to see.

“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22)

“There is no other God beside me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me (Isaiah 45:21).

When a person begins to look to the Creator for the answer to his sinful state, he is beginning to see. The more he takes to heart the Creator’s words and pursues His words to man, the more he will see.

3. God's answer to those who desire eyesight, faith in the Saviour through the gospel.

“And Jesus said, for judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind” (John 9:39).

Man by nature is blind to the Creator's intentions toward man. In a great many people, religion is the element that has blinded them. This was the case with the Pharisees, the religious Jews in Jesus' day. They were convinced that they had spiritual eyesight. Because they did not recognize that they were sinners, they did not receive all of God's word. Jesus said of them *“Every plant which My Father has not planted will be uprooted. Leave them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch”* (Matthew 15:13-14).

If a person clearly sees his state before God, and desires truth that God has established through His

Son, he will receive Him. The truth comes through the gospel. A clear explanation of the gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 for a person to become saved. *"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He arose the third day according to the Scriptures."*

Believing this gospel from the heart (Romans 10:9-10) is the true path to be saved and to gain spiritual eyesight. Giving mental accent to this gospel, without following the voice of the Saviour, does not bring salvation. When a person is saved, they become like the blind man in John 9, to whom Jesus healed and gave sight. The blind man said to those Jews who questioned him, *"One thing I know; that though I was blind, now I see"* (John 9:25).

When Jesus asked this man if he believed in the Son of God, he said *"Lord, I believe!"* And he worshiped Him (John 9:35, 38).

The Christian Life

When a person becomes saved, he becomes a member of the body of Christ, the Church. “*For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones*” (Ephesians 5:30). The Church in Scripture is the bride and wife of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (Revelations 19:7-9).

A man and woman who marry are a picture of Christ and His bride, the Church. Jesus loved and died for each and every member of His body, the Church. Scripture commands the wife to submit to (obey) every word of her husband (Ephesians 5:22,24).

The position that a wife has to her husband is the position that a Christian has to the word of Jesus, who is the Word of God (John 1:1). A wife who loves her husband does not pick and choose which word of her husband she will be subjected to, and which one she will not. If she does, she does not

love her husband; she loves herself more. So it is with the Christian. Jesus said, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word...*" (John 14:23). This does not mean some of His words, but every word of God (Matthew 4:4). These instructions and commandments to the Christian and the church are found in the epistles, starting in the book of Romans on through to Jude. The Revelation gives further commands and understanding, including prophetic truth. The book of Acts shows examples of the practices of the apostles and the history of the foundation of the church as the Holy Spirit built and enlarged it into being. The four gospels, Matthew through John, show Jesus proclaiming the kingdom of God to Israel. The gospel of John shows clearly that Jesus is the divine Son of God, i.e, God came to earth in human form. It also shows the intimacy that Jesus has with those who believe and follow Him.

A true follower of Jesus does not pick and choose which words of Jesus he will follow, and which

words he will disregard. This is what the Pharisees did (Mark 7:6-13). The true follower may fall down and fall many times in his/her Christian walk, but there is grace for those who belong to Jesus. The book of Acts shows examples of the practices of the apostles and the history of the foundation of the church. The Saviour's words to him does not change. "*My sheep hear My voice, and they follow me*" (John 10:27). They do not change His words into something He did not say. The Scripture is the clear voice of Jesus.

A Life of Repentance and Faith

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"
(1 John 1:7).

When a person becomes a Christian who intends to follow Jesus and His every word, he has entered into a war zone. Satan is the prince of darkness in

this world and the Christian is a reflective light of Jesus. To fight this war, which is directed at the sons of light, he must use the armor of God for protection and the weapon God has supplied, the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God), (Ephesians 6:10-17).

He must realize fully that in this world he represents the kingdom of Christ and not himself.

If he does not do this, he will lose many battles, and find much discouragement. However, to win battles, he always needs to be aware that he died with Christ 2000 years ago.

“...or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death—knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him...” (Romans 6:3-4,6).

The believer died with Christ and now is a dead man. His old man (the adamic nature) was crucified with Jesus on the cross.

“...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, certainly we also shall be the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5)

The believer, still in this world, died with Christ and was raised with Him from among the dead in resurrection life. In other words, the believer is a dead man, raised from the dead and given a resurrected life. He is a dead man with a new life, a life given by the power of God through the Holy Spirit.

This new life becomes a reality and is put into action by His faith in Christ. Faith in Christ, through receiving the truths in the Scriptures, energizes this new life. His old-man life is dead and no longer to be followed. He develops in the Christian life as he turns away from the old life (a life without faith)

and embraces his new life in Christ. As he does this, he is not fighting the powers and entities of darkness on his own power and strength. He now has the power of a divine resurrected life within him.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ...” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

As the believer pursues his new life in Christ, his old life becomes a distant memory. And in his new life he is able to set his mind on the things above, *“...where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1).*

4. Man chooses God, or did God choose man?

Jesus said to His disciples, “You did not choose Me, but I have chosen you...” (John 15:16).

In the heart of man is the thought that, ‘I have decided to be a Christian.’ This way of thinking is common among people in explaining their testimony, and on the surface it may seem reasonable. However, when we look at the process of becoming a Christian in Scripture, we see something very different. For example, in the following Scripture it is seen that one becomes a Christian by receiving what is offered to him. It is God's decision to see that eternal life is offered to the one He has pre-chosen.

“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God (Christian), to those who believe on His name: who were born not

of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13).

A. They did not receive Him: they did not receive Jesus as their Messiah, Saviour, or the Redeemer of their sins. However, many did receive Him as a prophet, worker of miracles and son of David, which could not save them.

B. But to those who did receive Him, He gave the right (power) to become children of God, to those who believed on His name: to receive Him means, to receive into the heart of the believer, the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10).

C. Born of blood: no one becomes a Christian because they are born of a father, mother, or grandparents who are Christian. Blood heritage does not make a person a Christian.

D. Will of the flesh: no one becomes a Christian because they have decided to be one. A person does not have the power in his flesh (adamic body) to do a divine work, which means to produce a divine life within himself; it is not possible for any human being. Only God can do a divine work (Titus 3:5).

E. Will of man: No human being has the power to make another person, or himself, a Christian. Nor by the works of any person can this be done - for example: being water baptized, drinking the cup and eating the wafer, joining a church, giving money to a church, being an avid pew sitter, speaking in tongues or following a preacher.

F. But of God: The only way a person becomes a Christian is by being reborn spiritually by a work of God. Becoming a Christian is entirely a work of God, performed within that person. God has given that person grace and a gift of faith (Romans 12:3) to receive the gift of God in Jesus Christ. When his

faith is exercised to receive Jesus Christ, God baptizes him into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

A person believed and received Jesus Christ into his heart because God has elected that person to receive eternal life (Acts 9:15; Romans 8:28-30; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:1-3).

Jesus told His disciples that they were His disciples because He chose them (John 15:16). The choosing and electing of a person is of God, not man. Again Jesus said, *“All that the Father gives to me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out”* (John 6:37).

All those whom the Father gives to the Son will come to Him. Believing the gospel of Christ in the heart is the means by which the Father gives the one who believes, to the Son (1Corinthians 15:3-4). The evidence that a person is chosen of God is not words from his mouth, but whether the Spirit of Jesus lives in him (Romans 8:9). The evidence of the Spirit indwelling a person is, *“He who is of God hears God’s words...”* (John 8:47).

5. Living and walking as a new creation, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

“For if you live according to the flesh (the adamic or natural nature), you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Romans 8:13-14).

The person who has believed the gospel from the heart, God has placed into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). This kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). It is a spiritual kingdom of light, and Christians are children of the light. They are in this world the reflective light of Jesus (Matthew 5:14). For anyone to be this reflective light by their own will, desire, good intentions or works is not possible. It is only accomplished by the Spirit of Jesus living within the believer.

“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

The believer’s faith in Jesus activates the Spirit within him so he is able to walk in that light (Galatians 3:14). The believer, through his faith in Jesus, has been given power through the Holy Spirit to make him a new creature.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This new life is not of man's natural inclination or will, but of God's spirit. The believer who walks in the Spirit (believes God's word and puts faith into exercise) will be transformed into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28-29).

This new life will produce the fruit of God's Spirit within him. *"But the fruit of God's Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. Against such there is no law"* (Galatians 5:22-23).

This transformation in the believer from his old life (adamic nature) to his new life in Christ is brought about by a new Spirit within and a renewed mind (Colossians 1:21-22).

This new life in the believer, exhibits the life of Jesus in him and is seen by all people, because as he grows in Christ, he is an epistle of Christ, read of all men (2 Corinthians 3:2-3). His life has been brought

into the kingdom of God, to live unto God. He is no longer a slave of sin and this world (John 8:34; Romans 6:6); he has been made a new creation to live unto God (Romans 6:10).

This new life is not a life of self effort. It is a life of being free to follow the voice of Jesus. The renewing of the mind is continual growth through rightly dividing the Scriptures. The believer's mind, which is in a constant state of renewing, has only the person of Jesus and the Scriptural truths directing his priority of life.

“And you He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience”
(Ephesians 2:1-2).

6. The Christian life in Christ, what is it?

The new life a Christian receives has brought him into the kingdom of God and endowed him with the riches of Christ. These riches involve spiritual gifts, privileges, adoption as sons of God, promises of God to the Christian, having a high priest in heaven, revelation of the kingdom, and entering into the holy of holies in heaven above - through his prayers and solicitations and many such prerogatives. Following is a list of the inheritance of God's riches given to a son of God.

1. Gift of God: this gift is Christ in you, the believer: Scripture calls Him an indescribable Gift (2 Corinthians 9:15).

2. God is your Father: Jesus told His disciples that God is your Father, because they were sons of the Father, as are all Christians (John 20:17).

3. Jesus Christ is your Saviour: Jesus Christ has saved every believer and became their Saviour (Titus 3:4-6).

4. Holy Spirit is living within You: The follower of Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit (Jesus) indwelling him (Romans 8:9).

5. Chosen by the Father and given to the Son: The Father has chosen every believer and given that person to the Son (John 6:37).

6. Chosen before the foundation of the world: Every believer has been chosen by the Father, to be given to the Son before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5).

7. Predestined to an eternal inheritance: God has determined ahead of time that every person He has predetermined will live in heaven with God forever (Acts 13:48).

8. Elected (appointed) to eternal life: Those whom God has appointed to eternal life will believe the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:4).

9. Redeemed by the blood of Jesus: The believer has his sins (past, present, future) totally judged, and God put them on Jesus at the cross of Calvary; He paid for them by His efficacious spilt blood (Ephesians 1:7)

10. Reconciled to God: A believer was an enemy to and of God; now he is reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Romans 5:10).

11. Promises of God are the believers forever: All the promises of God are “yes” and “amen”! God does not lie or take back His word (2 Corinthians 1:20).

12. Favor of God given is forever: The believer has complete favor with God through Jesus Christ, because he is in Christ (Galatians 3:26-27).

13. Imputed righteousness of Jesus: The perfect righteousness of Jesus; God has reckoned to, or imputed into the believer (Romans 4:3-5, 23-25; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

14. Forgiveness of your sins forever: Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins for all time; then He sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12).

15. Grace of God is now the believers portion: “For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

16. Mercy of God is the believers: “But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

17. Love of God has been bestowed on you as His child: Christ loved the believer and washed him in His own blood (Revelation 1:5).

18. Saved forevermore to be with God: Jesus prayed, “Father I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am ...” (John 17:24). “Thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

19. Born of God by the power of God: The believer became a son of God the instant he put his faith in Jesus Christ (John 1:13).

20. Friendship with God is assured to the believer: The believer, by obeying the gospel, became a friend of God (John 15:14-15).

21. Sanctified, made a saint of God: Every believer is a member of Christ; he is sanctified (set apart) by God to be unto Himself (1 Corinthians 1:2).

22. Justified by God: The believer has been justified (made just) before God through the shed blood of Christ (Romans 5:9).

23. Sealed by God until the Day of Redemption: When Christ Jesus comes to take His own out of this world, God's seal will be opened and the believer's redemption will be complete (Ephesians 4:30).

24. Holiness, God set the believer apart to Himself in this world: God made the believer “ *a new man which was created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*” (Ephesians 4:24).

25. Priesthood, from sinner to priest of God: *You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood - a royal priesthood* (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

26. Heavens, where he is now seated in Jesus:

The believer is no longer an earth dweller. He sits in the heavens, in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6).

27. Bride, in portion, waiting for the Son of God:

The believer has been made a part of the bride of Christ, waiting to be taken to the marriage supper of the Lamb of God (Revelations 19:7-9).

28. Mystery of God's will revealed to him: The believer, by faith following the voice of Jesus, will know the mysteries of God (Ephesians 3:8-12).

29. God's eternal kingdom made known to him:

By following the Holy Spirit, the revelation of the kingdom of Jesus is revealed to the believer (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

30. Conquerors through Him who loved us: The believer has been given these gifts of God to overcome the world through his faith (Romans 8:27; 1 John 5:4).

“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29)

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 37-39).

7. Living and walking in this world

in the gifts of God

Jesus the pattern and example

Jesus answered and said to them, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does....”*(John 5:19-20).

Jesus was totally dependent on His Father. He came into the world, in a subservient place to His Father (Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus, as a man in this world, depended on His Father’s every word. In so doing, He became the example to every believer. His dependence on His Father put Him in the place of not acting on His own, but did only what He saw

His Father doing. The believer's walk in the Spirit, is also dependent on the Father's every word.

The believer has received the Spirit of God into his very being. He has the resurrected life of Jesus breathed into him, (Jesus breathed on the apostles to give them divine authority, John 20:22). In this new life, he is risen from the dead (in his natural life, he was dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1). His new life "in Christ" is his hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). God has moved him from the living dead in this world, into His kingdom where he has life forevermore (1 John 3:14).

To live, walk and grow in the kingdom of God, his life must be a life lived in dependence upon the Father. "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:5). This dependent life is only accomplished by walking in this world in faith to every word of God.

The Spirit is empowered in the believer's life through his faith. The Spirit gives unction (believers have "an anointing from the Holy One") to him to walk in this world as Jesus walked.

"...because as He is, so are we in this world"
(1 John 4:17). The believer may become knowledgeable in God's word over time. However, without living in dependence on the Father through the Son, spiritual growth will not take place, but a religious spirit led by the adamic nature will.

As growth of new life in the believer brings maturity, his dependence on the Father grows as well. In fact, the eyes of his heart see the kingdom of Christ through the renewing of his mind. And in this renewing of his mind, the revelation of the mysteries of Christ become known to him, which the natural mind cannot understand.

A dependent life then becomes more understood and the fruit of the Spirit takes place in the inner man. And he enters more fully into life in the Spirit, which is the kingdom of God; it is *“righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 14:17). The growth in this walk has no end in this life; but as it takes place in the believer, his life reflects the Son of God because he is being transformed by the Spirit into the image of the Son of God (Romans 8:29).

The intention of the Father toward His children is seen in this Scripture:

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

D. Neely

12-26-13

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