

FAITH
NO. 107

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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”
Hebrews 11:6.

The old Assembly’s Catechism asks, “What is the chief end of man?” and its answer is, “To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” The answer is exceedingly correct. But it might have been equally truthful if it had been shorter. The chief end of man is “to please God,” for in so doing—we need not say it, because it is an undoubted feat—in so doing He will please Himself. The chief end of man, we believe, in this life and in the next, is to please God his Maker. If any man pleases God, he does that which conduces most to his own temporal and eternal welfare. Man cannot please God without bringing to himself a great amount of happiness for if any man pleases God, it is because God accepts him as His child.

It is because He gives him the blessings of adoption, pours upon him the bounties of His grace, makes him a blessed man in this life and insures him a crown of everlasting life, which he shall wear and which shall shine with unfading luster when the wreaths of earth’s glory have all been melted away. While, on the other hand, if a man does *not* please God, he inevitably brings upon himself sorrow and suffering in this life. He puts a worm and a rottenness in the eve of all his joys. He fills his death pillow with thorns and he supplies the eternal fire with firewood of flames which shall forever consume him.

He that pleases God, is, through Divine Grace, journeying onward to the ultimate reward of all those that love and fear God. But he who is ill-pleasing to God, must, for Scripture has declared it, be banished from the Presence of God and consequently from the enjoyment of happiness. If then, we are right in saying that to please God is to be happy, the one important question is, how can I please God? And there is something very solemn in the utterance of our text—“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

That is to say, do what you may, strive as earnestly as you can, live as excellently as you please, make what sacrifices you choose, be as eminent as you can for everything that is lovely and of good repute—yet none of these things can be pleasing to God unless they are mixed with faith. As the Lord said to the Jews, “With all your sacrifices you must offer salt.” So He says to us, “With all your doings you must bring faith, or else without faith it is impossible to please God.”

This is an old Law. It is as old as the first man. No sooner were Cain and Abel born into this world and no sooner had they attained to manhood than God gave a practical proclamation of this Law, that “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Cain and Abel, one bright day, erected an altar side by side with each other. Cain fetched of the fruits of the trees and of the abundance of the soil and placed them upon his altar. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and laid it upon his altar. It was to be decided which God would accept.

Cain had brought his best but he brought it without faith. Abel brought his sacrifice but he brought it with faith in Christ. Now, then, which shall best succeed? The offerings are equal in value—so far as they themselves are concerned they are alike good. Upon which will the Heavenly fire descend? Which will the Lord God consume with the fire of His pleasure? Oh, I see Abel’s offering burning and Cain’s countenance has fallen, for unto Abel and unto his offering the Lord had respect but unto Cain and his offering the Lord had no respect.

It shall be the same till the last man shall be gathered into Heaven. There shall never be an acceptable offering which has not been seasoned with faith. Good though it may be, as apparently good in itself as that which has faith, yet, unless faith is with it.

I. God never can and never will accept it, for He here declares, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

I shall endeavor to pack my thoughts closely this morning and be as brief as I can, consistently with a full explanation of the theme. I shall first have an exposition of what is faith. Secondly I shall have an *argument*, that without faith it

is impossible to be saved. And thirdly I shall ask a question—Have you that faith which pleases God? We shall have, then, an exposition, an argument and a question.

The old writers, who are by far the most sensible—for you will notice that the books that were written about two hundred years ago by the old Puritans have more sense in one line than there is in a page of our new books and more in a page than there is in a whole volume of our modern divinity. The old writers tell you that faith is made up of three things—first knowledge, then assent and then what they call affiance—or the laying hold of the knowledge to which we give assent and making it our own by trusting in it.

1. Let us begin, then, at the beginning. The first thing in faith is knowledge. A man cannot believe what he does not know. That is a clear, self-evident axiom. If I have never heard of a thing in all my life and do not know it, I cannot believe it. And yet there are some persons who have a faith like that of the coal miner, who when he was asked what he believed said, “I believe what the Church believes.”

“What does the Church believe?”

“The Church believes what I believe.”

“And pray what do you and the Church believe?” “Why we both believe the same thing.”

Now this man believed nothing except that the Church was right but in *what* he could not tell. It is idle for a man to say, “I am a Believer,” and yet not to know what he believes. But I have seen some persons in this position. A violent sermon has been preached which has stirred up their blood. The minister has cried, “Believe! Believe! Believe!” And the people on a sudden have got it into their heads that they were believers and have walked out of their place of worship and said, “I am a Believer.”

And if they were asked, “Pray, what do you believe?” they could not give a reason for the hope that was in them. They believe they intend to go to chapel next Sunday. They intend to join that class of people. They intend to be very violent in their singing and very wonderful in their rant. Therefore they believe they shall be saved. But what they believe they cannot tell. Now, I hold no man’s faith to be sure faith unless he knows what he believes. If he says, “I believe,” and does not know what he believes, how can that be true faith? The Apostle has said, “How can they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach except they be sent?”

It is necessary, then, to true faith, that a man should know something of the Bible. Believe me, this is an age when the Bible is not so much thought of as it used to be. Some hundred years ago the world was covered with bigotry, cruelty and superstition. We always run to extremes and we have just gone to the other extreme now. It was then said, “One faith is right, down with all others by the rack and by the sword.” Now it is said, “However contradictory our creeds may be, they are *all* right.”

If we did but use our common sense we should know that it is not so. But some reply, “Such-and-such a doctrine need not be preached and need not be believed.” Then, Sir, if it need not be preached, it need not be revealed. You impugn the wisdom of God when you say a doctrine is unnecessary—for you do as much as say that God has revealed something which was not necessary—and He would be as unwise to do more than was necessary, as if He had done less than was necessary. We believe that every doctrine of God’s Word ought to be studied by men and that their faith should lay hold of the whole matter of the Sacred Scriptures and more especially upon all that part of Scripture which concerns the Person of our all-blessed Redeemer.

There must be some degree of knowledge before there can be faith. “Search the Scriptures,” then, “for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of Christ.” And by searching and reading comes knowledge and by knowledge comes *faith* and through *faith* comes *salvation*.

2. But a man may know a thing and yet not have faith. I may know a thing and yet not believe it. Therefore assent must go with faith—that is to say, what we know we must also agree unto, as being most certainly the verity of God. Now, in order to faith, it is necessary that I should not only read the Scriptures and understand them but that I should receive them in my soul as being the very Truth of the living God. And I should devoutly with my whole heart receive the whole of Scripture as being inspired of the Most High and the whole of the doctrine which He requires me to believe to my salvation.

You are not allowed to halve the Scriptures and to believe what you please. You are not allowed to believe the Scriptures with a half-heartedness, for if you do this willfully, you have not the faith which looks alone to Christ. True faith

gives its full assent to the Scriptures. It takes a page and says, “No matter what is in the page, I believe it.” It turns over the next chapter and says, “Herein are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable do wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their destruction. But hard though it be, I believe it.”

It sees the Trinity. It cannot understand the Trinity in Unity but it believes it. It sees an atoning Sacrifice. There is something difficult in the thought but it believes it. And whatever it is which it sees in Revelation, it devoutly puts his lips to the book and says, “I love it all. I give my full, free and hearty assent to every word of it whether it be the threat or the promise, the proverb, the precept, or the blessing. I believe that since it is all the Word of God it is all most assuredly true.” Whosoever would be saved must know the Scriptures and must give full assent unto them.

3. But a man may have all this and yet not possess true faith. For the chief part of faith lies in the last head, namely, in an *affiance* to the Truth—not the believing it merely but the taking hold of it as being ours and in the resting on it for salvation. Recumbency on the Truth was the word which the old preachers used. You will understand that word, *leaning* on it—saying, “This is Truth, I trust my salvation on it.” Now, true faith, in its very essence rests in this—a *leaning* upon Christ. It will not save me to know that Christ is a Savior. But it will save me to trust Him to *be* my Savior.

I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that His atonement is sufficient but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge and my all. The essence, the *essence* of faith lies in this—a casting oneself on the promise. It is not the lifebuoy on board the ship that saves the man when he is drowning, nor is it his belief that it is an excellent and successful invention. No! He must have it around his loins, or his hand upon it, or else he will sink.

To use an old and trite illustration—suppose a fire in the upper room of a house and the people gathered in the street. A child is in the upper story—how is he to escape? He cannot leap down—that were to be dashed to pieces. A strong man comes beneath and cries, “Drop into my arms.” It is a part of faith to know that the man is there, it is another part of faith to believe that the man is strong—but the essence of faith lies in the dropping down into the man’s arms. That is the *proof* of faith and the real essence of it.

So, Sinner, you are to know that Christ died for sin. You are also to understand that Christ is able to save and you are to believe that but you are not saved unless in addition to that you put your trust in Him to be your Savior and to be yours forever. As Hart says in his hymn, which really expresses the Gospel—

*“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude.
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

This is the faith which saves. And however unholy may have been your lives up to this hour, this faith, if given to you at this moment will blot out all your sins, change your nature and make you a new man in Christ Jesus. It will lead you to live a holy life and make your eternal salvation as secure as if an angel should take you on his bright wings this morning and carry you immediately to Heaven. Have you that faith? That is the one all-important question. For while with faith men are saved, without it men are damned.

As Brooks has said in one of his admirable works, “He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, be his sins ever so many. But he that believes not in the Lord Jesus must be damned, be his sins ever so few.” Have you faith? For the text declares, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

II. And now we come to the ARGUMENT—*why* without faith, we cannot be saved.

Now there are some gentlemen present who are saying, “Now we shall see whether Mr. Spurgeon has any logic in him.” No, you won’t, Sirs, because I never pretended to exercise it. I hope I have the logic which can appeal to men’s hearts but I am not very prone to use the less powerful logic of the head when I can win the heart in another manner. But if it were needful, I should not be afraid to prove that I know more of logic and of many other things than the little men who undertake to censure me. It were well if they knew how to hold their tongues, which is at least a fine part of rhetoric.

My argument shall be such as I trust will appeal to the heart and conscience, although it may not exactly please those who are always so fond of syllogistic demonstration—

*“Who could a hair divide
Between the west and north-west side.”*

1. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” And I gather it from the fact that there never has been the case of a man recorded in Scripture who did please God without faith. The 11th chapter of Hebrews is the chapter of the men who

pleased God. Listen to their names—“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice,” “By faith Enoch was translated.” “By faith Noah built an ark.” “By faith Abraham went out into a place that he should afterwards receive.” “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise.” “By faith Sarah bare Isaac.” “By faith Abraham offered up Isaac.”

“By faith Moses gave up the wealth of Egypt.” “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob.” “By faith Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph.” “By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel.” “By faith the Red Sea was dried up.” “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.” “By faith the harlot Rahab was saved.” “And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak and of Samson and of Jephthae, of David also and Samuel and of the Prophets.”

All these were men of faith. Others mentioned in Scripture have done something. But God did not accept them. Men have humbled themselves and yet God has not saved them. Ahab did and yet his sins were never forgiven. Men have repented and yet have not been saved, because theirs was the wrong repentance. Judas repented and went and hanged himself and was not saved. Men have confessed their sins and have not been saved. Saul did it. He said to David, “I have sinned against you, my son David.” And yet he went on as he did before.

Multitudes have confessed the name of Christ and have done many marvelous things and yet they have never been pleasing to God—from this simple reason—that they had not faith. And if there is not one mentioned in Scripture, which is the history of some four thousand years, it is not likely that in the other two thousand years of the world’s history there would have been one, when there was not one during the first four thousand.

2. But the next argument is faith is the stooping grace and nothing can make a man stoop without faith. Now unless man does stoop, his sacrifice cannot be accepted. The angels know this. When they praise God they do it veiling their faces with their wings. The redeemed know it. When they praise God, they cast their sorrows before His feet. Now a man who has not faith proves that he cannot stoop. He has not faith for this reason—because he is too proud to believe. He declares he will not yield his intellect, he will not become a child and believe meekly what God tells him to believe.

He is too proud and he cannot enter Heaven, because the door of Heaven is so low that no one can enter in by it unless they will bow their heads. There never was a man who could walk into salvation erect. We must go to Christ on our bended knees. For though He is a door big enough for the greatest sinner to come in, He is a door so low that men must stoop if they would be saved. Therefore it is that faith is necessary, because a want of faith is certain evidence of absence of humility.

3. But now for other reasons. Faith is necessary to salvation because we are told in Scripture that *works cannot save*. To tell a very familiar story and even the poorest may not misunderstand what I say—a minister was one day going to preach. He climbed a hill on his road. Beneath him lay the villages, sleeping in their beauty, with the corn fields motionless in the sunshine. But he did not look at them for his attention was arrested by a woman standing at her door and who, upon seeing him, came up to him with the greatest anxiety and said, “O Sir, have you any keys about you? I have broken the key of my cabinet and there are some things that I must get directly.”

Said he, “I have no keys.” She was disappointed, expecting that everyone would have some keys. “But suppose,” he said, “I had some keys, they might not fit your lock and therefore you could not get the articles you want. But do not distress yourself, wait till someone else comes up. But,” said he, wishing to improve the occasion, “have you ever heard of the key of Heaven?” “Ah, yes,” she said, “I have lived long enough and I have gone to Church long enough to know that if we work hard, if we get our bread by the sweat of our brow and act well towards our neighbors, if we behave, as the Catechism says, lowly and reverently to all our betters and if we do our duty in that station of life in which it has pleased God to place us and say our prayers regularly, we shall be saved.”

“Ah,” said he, “My good woman, that is a broken key, for you have broken the Commandments, you have not fulfilled all your duties. It is a good key but you have broken it.” “Pray, Sir,” said she, believing that he understood the matter and looking frightened, “What have I left out?” “Why,” said he, “the all-important thing. The blood of Jesus Christ. Don’t you know it is said the key of Heaven is at His girdle? He opens and no man shuts. He shuts and no man opens.” And explaining it more fully to her, he said, “It is Christ and Christ alone, that can open Heaven to you and not your good works.”

“What? Minister,” she said, “are our good works useless, then?” “No,” he said, “not *after* faith. If you believe first, you may have as many good works as you please. But if you believe, you will never trust in them. For if you trust in *them*

you have spent them and they are not good works any longer. Have as many good works as you please but still put your trust wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not, your key will never unlock Heaven's gate."

So then, my Hearers, we must have true faith, because the old key of works is so broken by us all that we never shall enter Paradise by it. If any of you pretend that you have no sins, to be very plain with you, you deceive yourselves and the Truth is not in you. If you conceive that by your good works you shall enter Heaven, never was there a more fell delusion. You shall find at the last great day that your hopes were worthless and that, like sear leaves from the autumn trees, your noble doings shall be blown away, or kindled into a flame within and you yourselves must suffer forever. Take heed of your good works! Get them *after* faith but remember, the way to be saved is simply to believe in Jesus Christ.

4. Again—without faith it is impossible to be saved and to please God because without faith there is no union to Christ. Now, union to Christ is indispensable to our salvation. If I come before God's Throne with my prayers, I shall never get them answered unless I bring Christ with me. The Molossians of old, when they could not get a favor from their king, adopted a singular expedient. They took the king's only son in their arms and falling on their knees, cried, "O King, for your son's sake, grant our request."

He smiled and said, "I deny nothing to those who plead my son's name." It is so with God. He will deny nothing to the man who comes having Christ at his elbow. But if he comes alone he must be cast away. Union to Christ is, after all, the great point in salvation. Let me tell you a story to illustrate this—the stupendous falls of Niagara have been spoken of in every part of the world. But while they are marvelous to hear of and wonderful as a spectacle, they have been very destructive to human life, when by accident any have been carried down them.

Some years ago, two men were being carried so swiftly down the current that they must both inevitably be borne down and dashed to pieces. Persons on the shore saw them but were unable to do much for their rescue. At last, however, one man was saved by floating a rope to him, which he grasped. The same instant that the rope came into his hand a log floated by the other man. The thoughtless and confused bargeman instead of seizing the rope laid hold on the log. It was a fatal mistake. They were both in imminent peril but the one was drawn to shore because he had a connection with the people on the land, while the other, clinging to the log, was borne irresistibly along and never heard of afterwards.

Do you not see that here is a practical illustration? Faith is a connection with Christ. Christ is on the shore, so to speak, holding the rope of faith and if we lay hold of it with the hand of our confidence, He pulls us to shore. But our good works having no connection with Christ, are drifted along down the gulf of fell despair. Grapple them as tightly as we may, even with hooks of steel, they cannot avail us in the least degree. You will see, I am sure, what I wish to show to you. Some object to anecdotes. I shall use them till they have done objecting to them.

The Truth is never more powerfully set forth to men than by telling them, as Christ did, a story of a certain man with two sons, or a certain householder who went on a journey, divided his substance and gave to some ten talents, to another one. Faith, then, is an union with Christ. Take care you have it. For if not, cling to your works and there you go floating down the stream! Cling to your works and there you go dashing down the gulf! Lost because your works have no hold on to Christ and no connection with the blessed Redeemer!

But you, poor Sinner, with all your sin about you, if the rope is round your loins and Christ has a hold of it, fear not—

*"His honor is engaged to save
The mean of His sheep.
All that His Heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."*

5. Just one more argument and then I have done with it. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," because it is *impossible to persevere in holiness without faith*. What a multitude of fair-weather Christians we have in this age! Many Christians resemble the nautilus, which in fine smooth weather swims on the surface of the sea in a splendid little squadron, like the mighty ships. But the moment the first breath of wind ruffles the waves, they take in their sails and sink into the depths.

Many Christians are the same. In good company, in evangelical drawing rooms, in pious parlors, in chapels and vestries, they are tremendously religious. But if they are exposed to a little ridicule, if some should smile at them and call them Methodist, or Presbyterian, or some name of reproach, it is all over with their religion till the next fine day. Then when it is fine weather and religion will answer their purpose, up go the sails again and they are as pious as before.

Believe me, that kind of religion is worse than irreligion. I do like a man to be thoroughly what he is—a downright man. And if a man does not love God, do not let him say he does. But if he is a true Christian, a follower of Jesus, let him say it and stand up for it. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. The only thing to be ashamed of is to be hypocritical. Let us be honest to our profession and it will be our glory. Ah, what would you do without faith in times of persecution? You good and pious people that have no faith, what would you do if the stake were again erected in Smithfield and if once more the fires consumed the saints to ashes?

What would you do if the Lollard's tower was again opened? If the rack were again piled, or in event stocks were used, as they have been used by a Protestant Church as witness to the persecution of my predecessor, Benjamin Keach, who was once set in the stocks at Aylesbury for writing a book against infant baptism? If even the mildest form of persecution were revived, how would the people be scattered abroad! And some of the shepherds would be leaving their flocks.

Another anecdote now and I hope it will lead you to see the necessity of faith, while it may lead me on insensibly to the last part of my discourse. A slaveholding American on one occasion buying a slave, said to the person of whom he was purchasing him, "Tell me honestly what are his faults." Said the seller, "He has no faults that I am aware of but one and that one is, he will pray." "Ah," said the purchaser, "I don't like that, I know something that will cure him of it pretty soon."

So the next night Cuffey was surprised by his master in the plantation, while in earnest prayer, praying for his new master and his master's wife and family. The man stood and listened but said nothing at that time. But the next morning he called Cuffey and said, "I do not want to quarrel with you, my man, but I'll have no praying on my premises—so you just drop it." "Massa," said he "me canna leave off praying. Me must pray." "I'll teach you to pray, if you are going to keep on at it."

"Massa, me must keep on." "Well, then, I'll give you five-and-twenty lashes a day till you leave off." "Massa, if you give me fifty, I must pray." "If that's the way you are saucy to your master, you shall have it directly." So tying him up he gave him five-and-twenty lashes and asked him if he would pray again. "Yes, Massa, me must pray always, me canna leave off." The master looked astonished. He could not understand how a poor saint could keep on praying when it seemed to do no good but only brought persecution upon him. He told his wife of it.

His wife said, "Why can't you let the poor man pray? He does his work very well. You and I do not care about praying but there's no harm in letting him pray if he gets on with his work." "But I don't like it," said the master, "he almost frightened me to death. You should see how he looked at me!" "Was he angry?" "No, I should not have minded that. But after I had beaten him, he looked at me with tears in his eyes and as if he pitied me more than himself." That night the master could not sleep. He tossed to and fro on his bed. His sins were brought to his remembrance.

He remembered he had persecuted a saint of God. Rising in his bed, he said, "Wife, will you pray for me?" "I never prayed in my life" said she, "I cannot pray for you." "I am lost," he said, "if somebody does not pray for me. I cannot pray for myself." "I don't know anyone on the estate that knows how to pray, except Cuffey," said his wife. The bell was rung and Cuffey was brought in. Taking hold of his black servant's hand, the master said, "Cuffey, can you pray for your master?" "Massa" said he, "me been praying for you ever since you flogged me and me mean to pray always for you."

Down went Cuffey on his knees and poured out his soul in tears and both husband and wife were converted. That Negro could not have done this without faith. Without faith he would have gone away directly and said, "Massa, me leave off praying. Me no like de white man's whip." But because he persevered through his faith, the Lord honored him and gave him his master's soul for his hire.

III. And now in conclusion, THE QUESTION, the vital question. Dear Hearer have you faith? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart? If so, you may hope to be saved. Yes, you may conclude with absolute certainty that you shall never see perdition. Have you faith? Shall I help you to answer that question? I will give you three tests, as briefly as ever I can, not to weary you and then farewell this morning.

He that has faith has renounced his own righteousness. If you put one atom of trust in yourself you have no faith. If you place even a particle of reliance upon anything else but what Christ did, you have no faith. If you trust in your works, then your works are anti-Christ and Christ and anti-Christ can never go together. Christ will have all or nothing. He must be a whole Savior, or none at all. If, then, you have faith, you can say—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to the Cross I cling.”

Then true faith may be known by this—it begets a great esteem for the Person of Christ. Do you love Christ? Could you die for Him? Do you seek to serve Him? Do you love His people? Can you say—

*“Jesus, I love Your charming name,
‘Tis music to my ear.”*

Oh, if you do not love Christ you do not believe in Him. For to believe in Christ begets love. And yet more—he that has true faith will have true *obedience*. If a man says he has faith and has no works, he lies. If any man declares that he believes in Christ and yet does not lead a holy life, he lies.

While we do not trust in good works, we know that faith always begets good works. Faith is the father of holiness and he has not the parent who loves not the child. God’s blessings are blessings with both His hands. In the one hand He gives pardon. But in the other hand He always gives holiness. And no man can have the one unless he has the other.

And now, dear Hearers, shall I get down upon my knees and entreat you for Christ’s sake to answer this question in your own silent chamber—Have you faith? Oh, answer it—Yes or No? Leave off saying, “I do not know,” or “I do not care.” Ah, you will care, one day, when the earth is reeling and the world is tossing to and fro. You will care when God shall summon you to judgment and when He shall condemn the faithless and the unbelieving. Oh, that you were wise—that you would care now and if any of you feel your need of Christ, let me beg of you, for Christ’s sake now to seek faith in Him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission and who, if He has given you repentance, will give you remission, too.

Oh Sinners who know your sins! “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.” Cast yourselves upon His love and blood, His doing and His dying, His miseries and His merits. And if you do this you shall never fall but you shall be saved now and saved in that great day when not to be saved will be horrible indeed.

“Turn you, turn you. Why will you die, O house of Israel?” Lay hold on Him, touch the hem of His garment and you shall be healed. May God help you to do so. For Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

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