

When I Became a Man - a Call to Christian Maturity

by Joe Root

The sermon calls listeners to put away childish things and become men and women of God, characterized by a strong Christian character and a willingness to stand firm in faith and conviction.

Duration: 1:22:54

Scripture: Luke 11:29

Topics: "Christian Character"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses a vision of an army of young men and women who have a strong faith in Jesus Christ. These individuals have repented of their past sins, been baptized, and are committed to living a life of godliness, love, purity, humility, and Christian service. They are unashamed to separate themselves from the values of society and are dedicated to prayer and the study of God's Word. The speaker emphasizes the importance of courage, childhood, conversion, character, and courage in the lives of these young believers.

Transcript

Two generals stood face to face across a pool of water. They both had their armies behind them, and there they were. It was a moment of reality.

It was a moment of confrontation. But one general looked across at the other, and he put out a challenge. He said, Let the young men arise and play before us.

And the other general said, Let them arise. The Bible says, I believe it was twelve young men on each side grabbed their swords while the armies watched, while the generals watched, and they engaged in battle, and they all died. Each one thrust his fellow, and they all died.

And those words have often rang in my ears that Abner cried to Joab when he said, Let the young men arise and play before us. And how many times, my brother and sister, has Satan cried out, Let the young men arise and play. And only too late, they realized that it was the game of life that they were playing.

It's a sobering illustration we have in God's Word. If I read that account right, there were no survivors. And after that, Israel and Judah engaged the battle further.

Tonight, I'm thinking about those words, and you keep them in the back of your mind. Let the young men arise and play before us. Let the young women arise and play before us.

But just remember that you're playing more than just a game. This is the game of life. Turn with me to the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians chapter 13. I imagine there are a number of you who could quote this chapter tonight. But I'm especially thinking of the latter part, where the Apostle says in verse 9, For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. He goes on in verse 11, and I want you to think about this tonight. The Apostle says, When I was a child, I spake as a child.

I understood as a child. I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things.

The title of the message tonight is, When I Became a Man, A Call to Christian Maturity. When I became a man, a call to Christian maturity. I want you to look with me for a little backdrop of this message, at the third chapter of Isaiah.

As I reminded you last night, this week is aptly called Bible School. YBS, I think you call it. Youth Bible School.

So we have that word youth, but as we talk about Bible School, we're interested in this book. We're interested in the unchanging Word of God, the Bible. And so tonight, we want to hear that sound of rustling pages as we glance at a few passages of Scripture.

My favorite way to preach the Word is to just expositionally go through a passage of Scripture. But tonight, and in some of these messages this week, we're more looking at subjects and glancing at some various themes from different passages of Scripture. So if you can practice that fast draw that we talked about last night with the Word of God, sometimes you can jump and find where we're at.

If you would look with me now at the third chapter of Isaiah, I want you to read with me the first few verses of Isaiah 3. Follow along. For behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water, the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet and the prudent and the ancient, the captain of fifty and the honorable man and the counselor and the cunning artificer and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes and babies shall rule over them.

And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor. The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient and the base against the honorable. In this passage of Scripture, as a backdrop for the message tonight, we see a dearth in Israel of godly men.

God says, I'm going to take away from Israel the men because your hearts have turned away from me. He says, I'm going to take away the mighty man and the man of war and the cunning artificer and the eloquent orator. I'm going to remove Israel of men.

There will be a dearth of men. But tonight, as we look around in America today, I believe we can say there is a dearth of mature men. But I think you have gathered this week because you desire something different than that.

You desire to be men of God. That's why tonight we're looking at this subject. When I became a man.

A call to Christian maturity. I want to say that this call is also to the ladies that are here as well. In the 8th chapter of the Song of Solomon, you can look there if you'd like.

Beginning about verse 6. I'm just going to quote and perhaps paraphrase it a little bit. We have a question of a young lady there as to whether she's mature or not. And remember, tonight we're talking about a call to Christian maturity.

And there's a question whether this woman is mature. And there are some people who say, we have a little sister and she's not mature. She's just a baby.

But that young lady answered with courage and with confidence. She said, I am a wall and I am a woman. I am mature.

I am a wall. And I am a woman. Indeed, she was a palace.

So tonight, as we consider this call, we're thinking about a call to men and women. To Christian maturity. When I became a man.

When I became a woman. Most of you know what this is. There was a time that I called some young men and some young ladies forward in front of an auditorium.

And I said, I'm going to give each one of you something. And you do what you know would be expected to be done with this. And I handed each one of them a blanket and a pacifier.

Just a little baby blankie and a pacifier. And they turned a little bit red and they looked a little bit foolish. And they squirmed a little bit, but they did respond.

And each one of these young men and young ladies, in their 20s probably, they put the pacifier in their mouth and they held on to the blanket. And they stood there wondering what was going to happen next. And they did look a little bit silly, I'll have to admit.

But just for the illustration, I wanted them to realize, and I want us to realize tonight, that sometimes we look about that silly. Sometimes we grapple with the same immaturity. It just is inappropriate.

Yes, there's a place for this instrument. It's a blessing for a little child. There's a place for that little blanket to comfort a little child.

But tonight, God is calling us to Christian maturity. And the Apostle said, when I became a man, and we could say when I became a woman, I put away childish things. Some years ago, emotions were stirring in my heart.

Concern was mounting in my own heart. I was looking at some of the situations in my own setting. And I began to write.

And I wrote these words, and I'm going to read them to you again tonight. I have a vision of an army of hundreds and thousands of young men and young women who have a living faith in Jesus Christ, who have repented and been set free from their past sin, and have boldly been baptized into Jesus Christ, and are glad to be a part of His kingdom. Who are not ashamed to step out in sincere biblical separation from

this sinful American society, and who are amazing examples of godliness, love, purity, humility, and unselfish Christian service.

Who lock arms and hearts in prayer and in love for the Word of God, and will not compromise with watered-down doctrine. Who sound out loudly with hymns and lives of joy and devotion and praise as they march toward victory. That burden is on my heart yet tonight.

And I thank God, though I don't know very many of you, I believe that you are here because you're desiring. To lay this aside and accept the call to put away childish things and become a man. A man in Israel.

A warrior in America today. Or wherever you live. Some of you live in Canada.

Some of you live in Mexico. Some of you live in China. Some of you live in Bolivia.

Some of you live in, I think, another country or two that I can't remember. God bless you, each one. Wherever you are at, the Lord is calling you to Christian maturity.

Jesus Christ gave a cry one time. This was the text of the first sermon I ever preached 20 years ago. I still think of it tonight.

Jesus looked out on the men of Israel in His day and His generation. And Jesus, remember, He was a man. I say recently, the last three or four years in our home congregation, I've been preaching through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Just finished sermon number 50 and not nearly done. But the inspiration for that message was a recognition that in Paul's letter to Timothy, he says that there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus. And Jesus Christ was a man.

Did you know that? Our brother said already that He was the example of the, I forget just how he put it, the model man, the perfect Christian man. The man, Christ Jesus. Did you know Jesus chose as He came down and took upon Him humanity? He chose to be one of us.

He took not on Himself the nature of angels. He took upon Him the seed of Abraham. He became one of us.

He knows what it's like to be a man. And I believe in His perfect and complete experience, He can understand fully what it is to be mankind, whether man or woman. He grew up in a family.

He was the oldest boy. Had at least six siblings. Did you know that? The Bible speaks, names His four brothers, James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, I believe.

And it says, and His sisters, are not His sisters with us? They're not named, but there had to be at least two. So He had at least six younger brothers and sisters. Do you know what it was to grow up? You know, the Bible stops the record of Jesus Christ when He was 12 years old.

And we have an 18 year gap until Jesus began to be about 30 years of age. An 18 year gap. What do you think happened in those 18 years? Remember when He was 12 years old? He was kind of lost in the company and His mother and father couldn't figure out where He was at.

So they went back to Jerusalem and they finally found Him after searching and searching. He was sitting among the lawyers there, both hearing them and asking them questions and visiting with them there. And His mother came up to Him and said, My good son, why have you thus dealt with us? Your father and I have sought you sorrowing.

Jesus gave a very profound answer to that 12 year old young man. He said, how is it that you sought me? Wished you not that I must be about my father's business? Mary knew who His father was. Joseph knew who His father was.

Mary said, because Joseph certainly was His parent, His earthly parent, although He was not His actual biological father, that was God. This was a man like no other man. This was the God-man.

100% God and 100% man. The man Christ Jesus. And so Mary said, your father and I have sought you sorrowing.

But Jesus said, but I must be about my father's business. But the Bible says He went home with them and was subject unto them. The Bible has something to say about Jesus.

It says something very similar about John the Baptist. This was even when he was younger. It says, and the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Oh, what an incredible testimony of two young men. So we have an 18-year gap in Jesus' life after 12 years old. You know, Jesus, I believe with all my heart, went through puberty.

He became a man. He began to develop. I think His voice changed.

I think Mary noticed as He began to sing with a little deeper voice. Jesus was 14, 15, 16. Imagine 16-year-old Jesus.

17, 18. What do you think He did when He was 18? 19, 20, 22, 24, 26. The Bible's silent in those years.

We know from the biblical record that Jesus knows what it was to be tempted. Scripture tells us He was tempted in all points. I don't know what all you've been tempted with, brother and sister.

I can assure you tonight that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was tempted in all points. Like as we, yet without sin. Wherefore, Hebrews goes on to say, He is able to save them to the uttermost to come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Praise God for that tonight. The man, Christ Jesus. Well, tonight as we consider this call to Christian maturity, I want to consider four areas with you.

First of all, I want to think about childhood, just a little bit. Secondly, I want to think about conversion, just a little bit. Third, I would like to think about character.

And fourth, I would like to think about courage. Childhood, conversion, character, and courage. Let's think of those areas a little bit together tonight.

May we bow our heads for a word of prayer. O Lord, our Heavenly Father, in the precious and powerful and most worthy name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come together tonight. Lord, You know that Your servant is feeling pretty weak tonight.

I pray that You would fill by Your Holy Spirit. You would take words from Your Word. And that You would fuel and empower and inspire them by Your Holy Spirit.

In the heart of each one tonight, Father. And call us, call this generation, Lord. Call this generation to Christian maturity.

Open our hearts to Your Word. Speak to us by Your Spirit. Exalt Your Holy Name.

In Jesus' name, Amen. I spoke just a little bit to you about this man, Christ Jesus. But I never got to that cry that He gave.

And so now I want to tell you that cry that Jesus gave early in His ministry. It was the text that welled up in my heart over twenty years ago. The first time I ever stood in a church building and gave a sermon.

And it was these words. Jesus, recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, said this. As He looked out at humanity, He said this.

Where unto shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? I think that's a good question for us to consider tonight. As we think about this call to Christian maturity. Look at your generation.

Couldn't we have a little bit of a generation examination? You know, the Bible calls us in 1 Corinthians 11 to self-examination. Examine yourselves. Let a man examine himself.

But I think it's appropriate tonight, as we think of those words of our Lord Jesus, to have a little bit of a generation examination. Where unto shall I liken the men of this generation? Jesus wondered about the men of His generation as He looked out in Israel 2,000 years ago. He said, what are they like? If He could ask that then, can we ask it tonight in 2017? Here in eastern Pennsylvania.

Where unto shall we liken the men of this generation? Let's come down a little closer to right in this building. You, men. What about your generation? Ladies, what about you? What about your generation? Jesus asked that question.

What should I compare this generation to? I think it's a good thing to think about. He went on to say, in His day, He said, they're like children sitting in the marketplace. They're saying to their fellows, we've piped unto you and you have not danced.

And we've borne unto you and you have not wept. And He goes on to explain what He meant by that. Because He said, John the Baptist came, neither eating bread nor drinking wine.

And they said, ah, he has a devil. And the Son of Man came, eating and drinking. And they said, behold, a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.

And He went on and said, but wisdom is justified of all our children. In other words, if I could translate that down to us tonight, He's just saying, what's it going to take? He said, John the Baptist came in the stern, strict, separate life of a Nazarite. And he had a commission and he had a ministry.

And they wouldn't listen to Him. They mocked Him. I came and I sat down with publicans and sinners.

And I related and I ate with them and received that criticism. And they said, ah, we won't listen to Him either. Jesus said, what's it going to take? We've piped and you haven't danced.

We've mourned and you haven't wept. But wisdom is justified of all our children. We tend to justify our own understanding, our own wisdom, don't we? Tonight, God bless you, I'm not here to look down or to criticize.

Rather, I'm here to inspire and encourage and call you to Christian maturity tonight. And I feel like I can do that. And I don't feel like you're going to refuse to dance when we pipe and refuse to mourn when we weep.

Because I think you're interested in that too. That's why I have the courage to stand here. I trust I would even if that were not the case.

But when I became a man, I put away childish things. A call to Christian maturity. Let's take a look at these four areas this evening.

Number one, tonight we want to talk just a little bit about childhood. Just think with me a little bit about childhood. There's so much that could be said.

The Bible has a lot to say about childhood. Childhood is a tremendous blessing. It's a joy to see children here tonight.

I always say to the parents, we've got lots of young children in our congregation. I think I counted a while back and among those that normally come through our doors at church, I think I figured from the age of 16 and under, there's around 60 children. And more on the way, praise God.

It's a blessing when there are children. In fact, the Bible says again and again, when it speaks about God's curse or a great distress of a nation, it talks about no sound of children in the streets. So I love that sound of children tonight.

Those little noises we hear from the children. I often tell the parents when a mother is maybe turning a little bit red and heading out the back door, I say the Bible calls that perfect praise. We're singing, we're praising, we're worshipping, but the Bible calls that perfect praise.

Isn't it written, out of the mouth of babes, thou hast perfected praise. The Lord loves that sound and so do we. Childhood.

It's a beautiful thing, the blessing of childhood. Even a child, the Bible says, is known by his doings. Whether his work be pure and whether it be right.

Childhood. Already, character begins to form in childhood. And I just have just a few little snatches of thought as we think about childhood.

You know, we often hear this phrase, or maybe you've seen this written on a poster, a billboard, something like this. That the difference between men and boys is the price of their toys. But is that really true? Is that really the difference between men and boys? No, it's not.

There's more to manhood than more expensive toys. We're talking about a call to Christian maturity tonight. And Abner faced Joab and he said, let the young men arise and play.

But the price of their game that night was 24 lives. It was the game of life. So my brother and sister, as you arise and play, just remember, it's the game of life.

And we're playing for keeps. And the Lord God is calling us to Christian maturity. We're thinking about childhood a little bit more.

You know, there was a boy, just a young boy, I'm thinking about childhood. He was just a youth. And the Lord had seen a man that was a great, big, tall, strong man.

The Bible says he stood head and shoulders above everybody else in Israel. And he started out such an humble man that when they wanted to ordain him king, the Bible says they finally had to go find him and he was hidden among the stuff. Saul became proud and Saul began to walk away from God.

And the Lord said, it grieves me that I've got Saul. He told Samuel the prophet, I want you to go ordain another king. I've got a king.

You go to Bethlehem, you go find Jesse. I've got a king among his sons that I want to anoint. So Samuel went to Jesse and Jesse was a little nervous when Samuel got there.

But Samuel said, bring your sons. And so Jesse brought his sons one after another. And the Lord kept telling Samuel, no, not this one.

No, not this one. No, it's not him. And young men would come.

Men, strong, noble looking men. And the Bible says Samuel thought, surely this is the Lord's anointed. And God said, no, it's not him.

It's not him. Finally, the boys ran out. And Samuel had to ask Jesse, he said, is there anyone else? He said, well, yeah, there's David.

He's a younger boy. But he's just a youth. He's out there with the sheep.

Samuel said, call him in. We won't do anything until he comes in. This young man, a boy, a youth came in.

God said, rise up and anoint him. He's the one. He's the one.

You know, David's brothers looked down on him as he began to grow, as he began to mature. Remember when he went out to the battle? His father, he was obeying his father, said, you take these cheeses, some clumps of figs and raisins and some things, and you go take it to your brothers and see how the battle's doing. And David went out there.

And one of his brothers said, what are you doing coming out here? Who did you leave those sheep with, little boy? I'm paraphrasing. David said, what have I now done? Is there not a cause? He was a young man after God's own heart. He was looked down on by his brothers, but not by God.

Remember, each of those boys went by and God said, no, no, no, yes. It's that young one has a heart toward me. David wasn't a perfect man, but he was a man with a heart toward God.

Thinking about childhood, I remember when I was a boy, these words stuck in my mind. I can remember a man, and I was with an older man, and there was this other man who was involved in our church at that time where I lived. I grew up in California.

And I just remember hearing an older man kind of shake his head and say, you know, he's just a 35-year-old kid. Just a 35-year-old kid. And this man had trouble not spinning his tires when he went around a curve.

And he had trouble not just acting like a child. He was 35 years old. And he had a wife and he had some children, but he didn't have maturity.

A 35-year-old kid. Childhood. Childhood.

You know, I'm thinking about this call to Christian maturity. I picture tonight two pictures that I've seen. I'm going to try and describe them to you.

Ladies, you can think about this one. In the town I live in today, Melanie and I moved to Ellensburg, Washington 25 years ago. Right in the center of the state of Washington, there's a small city there.

And in that city, one of the big events of that city every year, we live outside of town a ways. One of the big events in that city is a rodeo. It's kind of a western town.

There's kind of a mix. There's a university there, but there's also a very agricultural cowboy-type community. And so there's a rodeo in Ellensburg, and it's in the pretty high circuit of rodeos.

It's working its way down toward the finals. I know very little bit about that. I've never been to that rodeo in 25 years, but it's there.

And I do see, as I go around town, and they're getting ready for the rodeo, they have posters up. And there are pictures of young ladies, and they're getting ready to choose the rodeo princess from our local city of Ellensburg. The rodeo princess for the year.

And then afterwards, you'll see the posters of, this was this year's rodeo princess. And a few times I've known the father. It'll be on the door of a business as you're going in and out, and you see the rodeo princess for this year.

I don't know who the rodeo princess for 2017 was. But they have a crown on their head, and they're dressed and trying to make their appearance very beautiful. And they're crowned, and it's considered a very honorable thing.

But I see that scene, and I see that picture. And a couple of years ago, I was thinking about another picture. It's a picture, it's a drawing, it's a lithograph in the martyr's mirror.

And it's two young women. And usually when they show the rodeo princess, they'll show the princess and then the runner-up. They'll show two girls crowned, two young ladies that are crowned.

We're thinking about childhood tonight. But I'm thinking about what martyr's mirror tells us about two young ladies also in the city of Bomberg. I believe it was in the year 1550.

And these two young girls were captured because they were Christians. And they were persecuted, and they were tortured, and they were tormented. And they tried all kinds of things in prison with these two young ladies.

And they tried other kinds of ungodly ways to talk them out of their faith. Or offer them some amazing and magnetic fleshly offers to see if they could get them to renounce their faith. And these girls would not budge.

Finally, they were taken out to be killed. And the martyr's mirror says that as they led these two girls out, these two young ladies. Now picture the rodeo princesses with their crowns.

And then picture back in 1550, these two young girls being led by a rope. And martyr's mirror says they wove a crown, a wreath of straw, and put it on these girls' heads for mockery. And those girls, even their enemies recorded that their courage was incredible.

They said, our Lord was crowned with a crown of thorns. Surely we can be crowned with a crown of straw. But do you know that soon we're going to have a glorious crown that shall not be taken away.

In my own words, you read the account. Now which crown tonight do you want? Our city has a glamorous, popular, appealing crown. But God is calling you to a much more beautiful, eternal crown.

And let the world laugh and call your crown a crown of straw. You know that you have a crown that fades not away. Reserved in heaven for you.

Childhood. Childhood. You know, the journey from infancy to adulthood is a journey of learning unselfishness.

Little children are naturally selfish. You don't have to teach a child how to be selfish. You can watch little children.

Little children can come from the best home or from the worst home. But when they're little children, they have to learn how not to be selfish. They'll grasp a hold of that toy.

And if another child comes and grabs that toy, I just heard it the other day again. You hear, I heard a blood curdling scream that I thought there must have been a terrible accident that happened. And I turned and I realized all it was, was the toy got taken.

Childhood. And we train and we teach. But sometimes we don't lose that selfishness like we should.

And sometimes children enter into adult life and others experience that difficulty. And they experience that difficulty and that problem that came with not responding to the call for Christian maturity. You know, I think about even marriage.

The Bible says, therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife. But sometimes it's a child. Even though he might be 20 or 30 years old.

Or 40. He might still be a child. When I became a man, the Apostle said.

And we're talking about a call to Christian maturity. You know, David prayed for his kingdom. He wanted a powerful kingdom.

And he prayed, you can read this passage in the 144th Psalm. I like to read through the Psalms my pattern of daily reading for many years. I like to read something out of the Old Testament.

A chapter out of the Old Testament or a passage. Sometimes more, sometimes maybe a little less. And a chapter, a passage out of the New Testament.

And then also something out of the Psalms or the Proverbs. Or the Ecclesiastes or the Song of Solomon. One of those poetic wisdom books.

Something out of each of those each day. I like to have. And often I've read this 144th Psalm.

You know, there are 150 Psalms. And as you get toward the end, there are some very interesting Psalms there. But in Psalm 144, David was praying for a strong kingdom.

And he said, rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children whose mouth speaketh vanity. And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. And then he had a prayer.

He said that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth. And that our daughters may be as cornerstones polished after the similitude of a palace. That is Christian maturity.

David, who had been, remember, he had been that young man. Who had a mature vision from the time he was young. And he now wanted that in his kingdom.

He said, oh, that our sons could be like plants that are grown up in their youth. And that our daughters could be like cornerstones that could be literally translated corner pillars. Look at these big pillars.

Like beautiful corner pillars. Polished after the similitude of a palace. David longed for maturity.

Childhood. Childhood. It's a beautiful time.

But we don't want to remain there. We want to move on and be called into Christian maturity. Let's talk briefly now about conversion.

Our brother this morning in the first message gave us an excellent discourse as he spoke about conversion. I recommend you review that and consider that. But I just want to highlight a couple of things.

Maybe just share a couple of thoughts as we think about going from childhood to conversion. Thinking about each of you. I believe that you that are here, you came because you've been converted.

You have a desire for something different. You've been called into the kingdom of Christ. You're walking with Him.

You desire to learn more. You desire discipleship. That's a very wise desire.

God bless you. Let's think a little bit about this thing of conversion. It's a call to conviction of sin and the need of a Savior.

All of us are familiar there in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. When there were 120 people there in that upper room. Probably the upper room owned by John Mark's mother.

And they were gathered there and they were waiting. Remember Jesus had said, you tarry in Jerusalem. Don't go out yet.

You tarry in Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high. The Bible tells us in the second chapter of Acts as those 120 men. That was the 11 disciples.

It says with the women. Probably it included the 70. Maybe some others.

I don't know who all was there. 120 folks in that room. And they waited.

And they prayed. The Bible says in the second chapter of Acts those thrilling words. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come.

They were all with one accord in one place. You know powerful things happen when we're with one accord in one place. The Bible says and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.

And it filled all that house where they were. And cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them. And you remember how the apostles began to preach.

And the people outside began to gather. There were thousands, perhaps many thousands gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Jewish proselytes from many different countries.

And they sat there and they marveled. They said aren't these men Galileans? How do we hear every man in his own tongue? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and dwellers of Mesopotamia and Libya and around Cyrene. And all those nations that mentioned these Jewish proselytes were there for that feast.

And they were hearing in their own tongue. But Peter was preaching and conviction fell upon that crowd. They began to realize that they were guilty before God.

Tonight we're thinking about conversion. I want you to think about the simplicity of conversion. The crowd finally began to cry and they said, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved? Peter had a simple answer.

It's still true tonight. I believe you have responded to that answer. Maybe there's someone here that has not.

But he said repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ. For the remission of sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off. Even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Conversion.

It's not complicated. Believe. Repent.

Be baptized. Receive. Continue steadfastly.

It goes on in the latter part of that second chapter of Acts. It says, and they continued steadfastly. In the apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers.

Conversion. We move from childhood to conversion. In Colossians chapter 3, beautiful passage of scripture.

I recommend you memorize this chapter. It says, if you then be risen with Christ. We're talking about conversion now.

If you then be risen with Christ. Remember, Colossians speaks earlier about being risen through faith of the operation of God. You know, people sit down with, they lay down on a hospital bed when they have some tumor or some situation.

And they're counting on the surgeon to perform an operation. But beloved, tonight you know that God can perform an amazing operation. And you have faith in the operation of God.

Who raised Jesus from the dead. And raised each of us up by faith in His name. As we confess His name.

Faith in that operation of God. Risen with Him. And so Colossians goes on to say in Colossians 3. Again, I recommend you memorize it.

If you then be risen with Christ. Seek those things which are above. For Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

We talked about this last night. Set your affection on things above. Not on things on the earth.

For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ and God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear. Then shall you also appear with Him in glory.

And it goes on. Conversion. Risen with Christ.

When Christ, who is our life. Isn't that beautiful? The urgency of putting on Christ. Galatians 3 says.

As many as have been baptized into Christ. Have put on Christ. Put on Christ.

Conversion. What a blessing. So I want to say tonight.

If there is anyone that is not clear in conversion. The 13th chapter of Romans says this. Knowing the time.

That now it is high time. To awake out of sleep. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent. The day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness.

And let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day. Not in rioting and drunkenness.

Not in chambering and wantonness. Not in strife and envying. But put you on.

There it is. The Lord Jesus Christ. And make not provision for the flesh.

To fulfill the lust thereof. High time. That word in Greek is hora.

H-O-R-A. I don't know how you pronounce it in Greek. Some of you here are from Mexico I noticed.

And I can't speak much Spanish. I am trying to learn. But I know that the word hora.

Is right now. It is right now. And that word in Greek means it is already an hour.

It is now high time. It is already time. In other words it is like saying you are late already.

I remember so well. A few years ago I was flying home. From somewhere back east here.

I can't remember. And we had a plane change in Chicago. And I got out in Chicago.

And I did something you shouldn't do. I laid my Bible down by the chairs. There where we were waiting to get on our next flight.

And went and got something to eat. And I was kind of relaxing. And I left my Bible there.

And it was my responsibility. It was on a Saturday evening. And I was preparing to preach at home.

Back in Washington the next morning. And it was going to be a late night. And we got on that plane.

And we were all buckled in. It looked like everyone had pretty well got on. And it hit me.

I left my Bible. And I looked at the flight attendant. And she was a merciful woman.

She saw the panic in my face. I said, Ma'am, I have left my Bible. Can I go off? Can I get off and get it? She looked at me and she said, Hurry.

You hurry. She said, You don't have much time. So out I went.

And I went down that, I forget what you call it. Down that jetway. Thank you.

The jetway that lets you back into the terminal. And I went and ran. And I found the cleaning ladies.

And I said, Have you seen a Bible? And they said, No, we haven't seen a Bible. And I went and looked where I thought I had been. And it wasn't there.

And I kept looking. And I didn't find it. And finally I realized it's getting late.

I've got to go get back on the plane. And so I ran. And they were already pulling the jetway back from the terminal.

And my wife, Melanie, was sitting there on the plane. And there was an empty seat on that back plane. And I wasn't on it.

And I was sitting in Chicago on a Saturday night. And the jetway was pulling back. And I thought, If I ever thought about it being high time and I'm late, I ran up and I said, Sir, I'm supposed to be on that plane.

And the flight attendant had came out. Actually, she was kind of like the clerk. She wasn't actually one of the stewardesses or the flight attendant.

She was actually more like the clerk that was coming on the plane. She's the one who let me off. And she was there.

I came running up to that man. He said, I'm sorry, sir. It's too late.

We've already pulled the jetway back. And I said, I need to be on that plane. And the other woman was there.

She saw me. She saw the situation. She said, You have to let him because his carry-on baggage is on there.

And it's illegal for the plane to fly with his carry-on baggage on there and him not on the plane. And the man was frustrated. But he reversed and the jetway came back.

And I got on that plane without my Bible. Fortunately, I called the Chicago airport. And I called their lost and found.

And after a few days, guess what? They found my Bible. And they FedExed it to me. And what a blessing.

But that was one of the most panicky late moments I ever felt when I saw that jetway with my wife in the jet on Saturday night in Chicago moving away from the terminal. And I couldn't jump that far. And I couldn't get through there.

But it's high time. That's the point. It's already an hour.

Ahora. Right now. Knowing the time.

Beloved tonight, do we know the time? It's time for Christian maturity. When I became a man, I put away childish things. And God is calling us.

Not next week. Not next month. Not next year.

But right now. It's high time to put away childish things. And to accept the call to Christian maturity.

Conversion. If you're not converted tonight, come to Jesus. It's not complicated.

Jesus isn't playing hard to get. Whosoever will, let him come. That's the heart of your Savior.

Do you know what the Bible says about our God? It says as God looked down on this globe. It says for God so loved the world. I love that two letter word so.

It doesn't just say that God loved the world. It says God so loved the world. I don't know if there's anyone here discouraged tonight.

Or feeling a little bit worthless. Or a little bit like, I've blown up pretty bad in life. I want you to know that that still applies to you.

When God looks at you and at your life. He so loves you. So loves you.

That he gave. He gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish.

That's the heart of your God. Should not perish. He doesn't want.

It's not his will that any should perish. But that all should come to the truth. Anyone just about to walk away.

Struggling. Backsliding. Feeling valueless.

Feeling impossible. You don't know my situation. God does.

God doesn't just love you. He so loves you. Take courage tonight.

Childhood. Conversion. No.

Salvation and conversion. When we're transformed by a renewed mind. It allows us to find acceptance.

And security. In Christ Jesus. And when we can find that.

And rest in that. In a proper and biblical way. We don't have to do all the little things that we subconsciously do.

To somehow gain acceptance. And security. From the approval of others.

Childhood. Conversion. My time is moving quickly.

Let's talk a little bit about character. We talk about character. I just want to highlight some things about character.

First thing I want to mention about character. Is responsibility. Remember we're talking about Christian maturity.

We've moved from childhood. Through conversion. Now we're being called into Christian character.

The first thing I want to mention is responsibility. A willingness. Character.

Calls us to a responsibility in life. And responsibility is kind of a rare commodity. Employers will tell you that today.

It's hard to find people who will take responsibility. But responsibility and a willingness to accept responsibility for our actions. For our time.

For our mistakes. For our home duties. For church help.

For hard work in any realm. Responsibility. A responsibility involves a willingness to prioritize.

Responsibility focuses on faithfulness. More than on fun. Responsibility.

It's a rare commodity. God is calling us. As mature men and women.

In 2017. To responsibility. In Christian character.

Responsibility. Brothers calls us to be willing to lead out in devotions. In Bible reading.

In prayer. In spiritual discussion. Character.

Thinking about Christian manhood. You know we need to turn to scripture. Look real quick at Psalm 112.

See how quick you can get to the 112th Psalm. Some of you will probably get there before I do. Psalm 112.

This is a favorite Psalm of mine. I want to point something out in this Psalm. I don't know if you've ever thought about this.

This whole Psalm is a tremendous blessing. It's short. I love to read it to young men.

To young fathers. To young heads of households. But tonight I just want to highlight it for each of you tonight.

Especially young men. It starts out. I'm going to read the first verse.

Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord. That delighteth.

Not casually. Not mediocre. But he delights greatly in his commandments.

This man has a passion for God in his word. It has a lot of good things to say about that man. But I want you to notice something here down toward the end.

In verse 9 it says, He hath dispersed. He hath given to the poor. His righteousness endureth forever.

His horn shall be exalted with honor. Now several times in Psalms in particular, and in the Bible, we find this reference to his horn. The horn.

And that horn is a picture that the Bible gives us of manliness and dignity and authority. And young men, I want to encourage you that your horn would be exalted with honor. And just a couple of weeks ago, I went back in the mountains just outside of the valley where we live with a brother and went up hiking with him on a mountain.

But on our way back in, before that hike, it was getting toward dusk. And it's a beautiful drive back in the mountains there. And right alongside the road was a gigantic elk.

A big bull elk. And he had a rack that was incredible. He had so much horn material.

And he lifted his head. And those are big animals. And he had a giant rack.

And his horn was exalted with honor. He held his head high. A big bull elk.

That's the picture of manliness and dignity. It's talking about the horn. As in the horns of an animal.

Down in the canyon, literally 15 or 20 minutes from our house, there's a canyon. It's a beautiful canyon called the Yakima River Canyon. And the terrain changes very quickly as you leave a farming valley and get into that canyon.

But in that canyon, there are bighorn sheep. And every now and then, I drive through that canyon. And my eyes are always scanning the hillsides.

And now and then, I'm treated with the sight of a bighorn sheep. They have great, big, thick, curled horns. Big, heavy horns.

That's the picture, men, of manliness and dignity. The Bible says that a man who fears the Lord, and who delights greatly in his commandments, it says his horn is exalted with honor. God bless you men.

To be men, men of God, in this generation. Men of character. Oh, the dignity and the beauty of Christian manhood.

Let's go on and think about humility. We've talked a little bit about responsibility. Let's talk about humility.

The Bible says God gives grace to the humble. More than once it says that. God resists the proud.

Beloved, tonight, pride is one of those... I heard a brother say when I was a young man, it's the granddaddy of them all. It's one of the most difficult and destructive and struggling sins. For most men, I've found many men who would agree with this, that the two biggest things they struggle with are lust and pride.

Those two things will cause a man to stay in immaturity and cripple his life. And ladies, it will touch your lives as well. This thing of pride.

And God is calling us to humility. Pride makes a lot of stupid mistakes, can I say? It brings us into a lot of futility. Pride.

And I wrestle with it to this day. It's one of my prayers. Oh God, deliver me from pride.

Humility. It's part of Christian character. You know, God stiff arms the proud.

He resists the proud. But He invites and He pours out grace to the humble. Grace to the humble.

Grace to the humble. The 51st Psalm says, a broken and a contrite heart. Oh God, Thou wilt not despise.

The 66th chapter of Isaiah. I love this passage. The prophet comes toward the end of that beautiful prophecy of Isaiah.

He says this. It's God speaking through Isaiah. Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house that you build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things have my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord. But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. God pours out His blessing, beloved.

He gives grace to the humble. Humility. A great awe of God.

A great awe of God. Gives me a proper perspective of myself. We're talking about character, this third point.

And under this third point of character, we've talked about responsibility and humility. Just quickly, I'm going to highlight a couple more. I want to speak about purity.

Responsibility, humility, purity. A clear, clean heart. Beloved, we won't grow if we don't deal honestly with sin.

I don't know if there's someone here tonight that's still just kind of hiding sin. There's no question in your mind if you are. You know it.

The Spirit of God is that faithful to your conscience. But you won't grow. You can't go on in Christian character if you're still toying with sin.

And if you're committing your life to God with an asterisk. You know what an asterisk is? It says, look down below. I've got a little qualification.

I've got a little hindrance. Purity tonight. A willingness to confess and own sin and put it off.

Proverbs says, he that covers his sins simply will not prosper. But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. You know I think about one time I went steelhead fishing.

Steelhead are like a big giant sea run rainbow trout. There was a brother that had a boat. He wanted me to go steelhead fishing with him.

And I went in the Snake River in his boat. And that day we fished for steelhead. We caught a couple steelhead.

But all of a sudden I caught a steelhead. And that thing fought. And it jumped and it leaped.

And finally I got it in the boat. And to my amazement, it was snagged in the tail. A big heavy fish snagged in the tail.

Sisters, brothers. Are any of you snagged in the tail? You know the steelhead didn't quite want to take that lure. That shiny lure.

He knew better. He just wanted to flip it a little bit with his tail. Just kind of wanted to bump up against it a little bit.

Knew better than just to go whole hog on this thing. Just wanted to flip it with his tail. Sometimes that's what we do with impurity.

We know better intellectually. We think well there's certain things I wouldn't do. Certain things I won't do.

But I'll just flip it a little bit with my tail. I'll just get a little bit close to it. I'll just kind of toy with this thing a little bit.

And maybe you wouldn't come out and say it. But I'll just kind of mess with it a little bit. And if you aren't careful you'll get snagged like that big fish and he couldn't get away.

Oh he tried hard. He fought hard. But he couldn't get away.

Are you flipping sin with your tail? Purity. We won't grow without purity. I remember one time when a brother came in my office.

A number of years ago. Older than I was. He said I've been hiding something for 30 years.

And I'll do whatever it takes to get free. You know when we get that serious we get help. Praise God.

That brother's a blessing to me. He got help. Too far gone? Absolutely not.

Satan's the one who tells you that. God's a redeemer. God so loves.

Purity. Don't toy with sin. If you're hooked in the tail.

This is a good time. This is a good week to deal with it. And get it taken care of.

Character. Responsibility. Humility.

Purity. I want to mention a couple more before we go to this last area. Respectfulness.

I just want to call you to respectfulness. You know I really believe the foundation of respect is in the fear of God. I remember a father telling me a few years ago in frustration.

He said it seems like the fear of God is gone from this generation. But I'm thankful. I know many men and women.

Many young men and women who do have a wholesome fear of God. And that calls them to a proper and appropriate respect. And that might be an old fashioned commodity.

But I'll tell you it's not old fashioned with God. It's part of Christian maturity and putting away childish things. Respect.

Respect for parents. The Bible says. And I remember my father telling me this.

And I really appreciate this. The Bible says. Children obey your parents and the Lord for this is right.

Many of you probably had to memorize that. Honor thy father and mother. Which is the first commandment with promise.

That it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth. But do you notice something in that verse? It doesn't say. Obey your parents and the Lord for they are right.

They aren't always right. It says obey your parents and the Lord for this is right. This is right.

It doesn't say they're always right. They may make mistakes. But this is right.

To have an appropriate and biblical respect. I totally recognize. There are all sorts of unusual and difficult situations.

I'm not here to address all that. I'm here to address the principle of respect. As part of maturity.

A respect for that position. If nothing else. A respect for the elderly.

You know the Bible says in the Old Testament. Thou shalt rise up before an old man. And stand up before a hoary head.

Old men. White haired old men. Stand up and respect.

And I haven't always had that respect as a young man. But I see that it's part of maturity. It's a willingness to avoid unnecessary offense.

It's a respect for others convictions. Overcoming gossip. It's the courage to go and share instead of talking about someone else.

A respect for others. A willingness to hear rebuke. And to ask counsel of a wise man.

It's a respect for men of God. Respect. It's part of maturity.

Here's another one. Conviction. Think for a moment about conviction.

Conviction is the ability to stand humbly and yet boldly for what is right. Conviction. We're still under this third area of character.

We've talked about responsibility. Humility. Purity.

Respectfulness. Now I'm talking a little bit about conviction. Think about conviction.

The ability to stand humbly and yet boldly for what is right. Conviction is the maturity to realize also that God is able to make others stand. And I so appreciate the maturity I see in godly men and women when they have some personal convictions in their life.

And yet they don't have this self-righteous air that looks down on everyone else who do not do everything just like they do or their family does. Or their church does. We come in this journey of life from different situations and backgrounds.

And I believe it's so good and so biblical to have convictions. Powerful convictions. But part of maturity is having respect for others.

And not looking down your nose at them just because they don't have the exact same conviction that I do. Realize, as Romans says, God is able to make him stand. And yes he is.

Just like he's able to make me stand. Praise God. Conviction.

Conviction is a recognition of responsibility to choose your influences. Conviction will give you that recognition that you are responsible to choose your influences. You're choosing.

You may say, well I just found myself. But you chose your influences. Some of us were talking about that earlier today.

The blessing of immersing yourself in the people of God. And I know God equips men and he sends men out and calls men out at times. But you choose your influences and that's part of godly conviction.

I want to hurry on. Beware, beloved, in conviction. In thinking that I'm standing for something.

That I'm really convicted on this and I'm standing for it. When actually you're just rebelling. Beware of that kind of warped concept of conviction.

We're talking about an understanding and application in practical ways of the word of God in our lives. It's part of character. It's part of maturity to have some conviction.

That is willingness to stand. And to step out in conviction without necessarily looking around and waiting to see what others are going to do. I'll step out in conviction as long as they'll step with me.

And before long, you're crippled. Conviction. You have the Bible.

You have godly counsel. I'm not calling you to autonomy, but I am calling you to godly conviction. May God bless you.

The Apostle Paul said this. I write not these things to shame you. But as my beloved sons, I warn you.

For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel. Find some godly men and pattern after them.

Paul said that. Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Pattern after godly men and build some godly conviction.

But accept the way God has made you. Accept your own gifting. Accept who you are without competition or emulation or jealousy.

Conviction. One last area under this area of character is just, again, a call from maturity. It's a deliverance from self.

We live in a very self-focused society. In fact, there's a magazine. I see it on the rack sometimes called Self.

I thought that would be an interesting magazine. It would get pretty boring. I can't stand myself after a while.

I like to get to know you. I'm boring. I'm frustrating.

But I think people live with that kind of frustration because they're so caught up in self. And we live life with one big selfie stick out here. And it's all about me.

And it's all about me. And I just crash into things because all I'm looking at is myself. Self.

God is calling us to put away childish things and calling us to maturity. I just want to encourage you in this, young man and young lady. I can say this because I don't know you.

But some of you might be just a little bit sensitive. Just a little bit touchy. And you get your feelings hurt easy.

And you get missed pretty easy. God is calling you to maturity. Got a temper.

Got just a little bit of a sensitive. I didn't like the way he said that or the way she treated me. Rise up to maturity.

Put away childish things. You know, a revival experience, a blessing like this week, can be a great benefit in bringing conviction. In bringing brokenness.

In shaking us up. It's good for me. I'm glad to be here.

I want you to know, I told my wife as we came here, I'm one of the students. I believe God has something to tell me this week. I've already been listening.

I've already had some conviction from the teaching I've heard. I'm thankful to be here. Your lives are speaking to me as well.

God bless you. But these experiences, while they're needed, and God can bring them in a lot of different ways, but these things alone won't maintain a holy life. God is calling us to maturity.

And character takes time. And it takes, shall I say, work. It will not suffice to hope that a potent revival sermon, or one night of passionate prayer, will somehow clean up everything in my life without a resolve.

Yes, it will. God is quick to forgive. I want you to know that.

I invite you to clear and to come to Christ. But I also invite you to do that with a resolve to go forward and to take the long road and realize that God is going to call you to a disciplined life. Well, let's think about this last area of courage.

I want to close with this. We've talked about childhood. We've talked about conversion.

We've talked a little bit about character. Now I want to talk to you about courage. You know, the Bible says of that young man we talked about, David, that he went forward to the giant and he said, I come to you in the name of the Lord God of Israel.

You come with a sword and shield, but I come. And he ran toward Goliath. I love to read that.

Goliath had a gigantic spear like a weaver's beam. I imagine that thing stuck out so far, it would have been hard to get close to Goliath. He could have you speared before you even got close.

Plus, he was strong. There was nobody like him, a big, giant, threatening man. He said, come on, I'm going to give your flesh to the fowls of the air.

Come on, boy. You think I'm a dog? What do you think I am? David, no armor, a sling, five little rocks, not even a sword, ran toward Goliath. Why? How could he do that? Because David knew his God.

David knew God. That gave him courage. David killed a lion.

He knew God. David had been out with a sheep. He rescued a lamb from a bear.

He knew God. He had communed with God in secret. And he was ready to be courageous in public.

David knew his God. And he ran toward the giant. And the giant fell to the ground.

And David took the giant's own sword and cut off his head. Courage. Courage.

In the book of Daniel we read that they that know their God in the last days shall be strong and do exploits. Exploits. I want to call you to courage.

Be careful where you invest your courage. You know, my wife and I just came from Mexico. Our congregation has separated us under ministry in Mexico in the future.

And Lord willing, next year we plan to move to the country of Mexico. We'll still be based there. Come back and forth to Washington from time to time.

But if God wills, we plan to join you sisters from Mexico. God bless you. But there's something I've noticed when we go to Mexico.

And I've got a lot to learn. But when I go to change money, there's all kinds of people. When you first get maybe to the airport or out in the street that are glad to change your money.

They want to take your money and they'll give you some pesos back in exchange for your American dollars. But be careful, my brother and sister, where you change your money. I'm thinking about your life.

Don't give it to the first vendor. Some of them won't give much return. The first exciting ministry or neat sounding opportunity, be careful.

Pray. Seek godly counsel. Love the word of God.

Be courageous. But be careful where you invest, shall I say, your money, your life. Satan would like you to get a low exchange rate.

And there may be good things out there. But they're not going to give you the best exchange rate. If you can allow that illustration.

I encourage you to prayerfully and carefully invest your life. First, at home. Begin at Jerusalem.

In your local congregation. Be a blessing there. Wherever that's at.

In your home, in your setting. Somewhere there, be a blessing. And then watch God expand ministry as he chooses.

Whether locally or elsewhere. God bless you. Well, we need to be a part of a larger vision.

We need others. I'd love to talk more about that. I'd love to talk to you a little bit about the blessing of being a part of the body of Christ.

I want you to know that the New Testament norm is functioning bodies of believers. That's the norm in the New Testament. Be glad to discuss that with you more.

I wrestled through that myself a number of years ago. That's the norm. Now, God works in us in different situations and circumstances.

I'm well aware that our lives come from different settings. And that's not beyond the reach of our God. But just understand that wherever you're at, just know this.

You need others. You need to be a part of something bigger than just yourself. You need a little larger context than just your own ideas and your own plans.

We need to learn to function together and work together. And cooperate with one another. God has designed that.

And he places the solitary where? In families, the Bible says. And so, we've talked a little bit about a call to Christian maturity. What will the history books say about this generation? Jesus said, where unto shall I liken the men of this generation? I'd like to ask that to you tonight.

What will the history say? And I can just picture like some of the Old Testament passages say. I can just picture writing like this. Now it came to pass.

When the men and women who had been young in the first decades of the 2000's. Grew old and well stricken in years that. You fill in the blank.

Now it came to pass. When your generation grew old and well stricken in years. It came to pass that.

What? Will you pick up the torch? Will you run on? Will you be a man? Will you be a woman? And a wall? And put away childish things? I have a vision. Of an army. Of hundreds and thousands of young men and young women.

Who have a living faith in Jesus Christ. Who have repented and been set free from their past sin. And have boldly been baptized into Jesus Christ.

And are glad to be a part of His kingdom. Who are not ashamed to step out. In sincere biblical separation from this sinful American society.

And who are amazing examples of godliness. And love and purity and humility. And unselfish Christian service.

Who lock arms and hearts in prayer. And in love for the Word of God. And will not compromise with watered down doctrine.

And who sound out loudly with hymns. And lives of joy and devotion. And praise as they march toward victory.

May God bless you. Let's bow our heads for a word of prayer. Gracious Father tonight.

I pray Father that you would draw near. To each one in this house. I pray Father that your call.

To Christian maturity. Your call. To be a man.

To be a woman. And to put away childish things. Would ring down in the heart of each one.

Thank you Father for the beautiful countenances that we see. Thank you Father for this group that you've brought together. This week.

This year. In this place. Would you bless them in a mighty way.

Throughout the coming week Father. Bless their lives. Bless their homes.

Bless their future. Lord I pray that you would receive glory. And honor.

And praise. From this generation. In Jesus name we pray.

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