

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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Add-Ons in Their Proper Place

Your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God." *"The gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes."* *"Moreover brethren, I declare to you the gospel...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."* *"God was (and still is) well pleased through the foolishness of the (gospel) message preached to save those who believe (it)."* *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* - 1Cor. 2:5; 15:1-11; 1:21; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17. The gospel of Christ is the wisdom of God. Man would have never thought of the gospel. No where else than the gospel do we see clearer proof of Isaiah 55:8-9, *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are My ways your ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*

Man never would have thought of the gospel. In the world you do not get anything unless you work for it but God's way is to humble yourself and freely receive the grace of God.

In the world you do not get anything unless you work for it. But God's way is to humble yourself and freely receive the grace of God. The gospel is the power of God to those who believe because it is the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It would be powerless if it was the person and work of mortal men. It is only in

humble submission to God's gospel as revealed in His Word that man can be saved. God says, *"But on this one I will look: On him who is humble and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word."* - Is. 66:2b. Man has a need to take God's gospel in His Word seriously. Man only receives the benefit of God's Word when, instead of judging it, he allows God's Word to sit in judgment on himself. When man is not content to simply let the matter be settled with what God has said, his tendency is to form and mold God's Word to his own thoughts and ways by adding his own "wisdom" to it. But, if your faith rests on the wisdom of men, you can have no rest because God has declared that no flesh shall glory in His presence. The wisdom of men has been weighed in the balance with God's wisdom and found so severely wanting that it has been condemned. Let him who glories glory in the Lord, including His Words to us in the Bible - 1Cor.1:29-31.

The wisdom of God as divinely placed every matter of His revelation to man in its proper place. To the Jew, the Gentile, the believer, and the unbeliever, He has revealed His will in His Word. Great confusion results when man takes a divine truth (which is of course perfect and holy, divinely given and divinely placed) out of its God appointed place. This is as bad as and sometimes worse than removing it all together. What God applies to the believer, who has new life from God, man should not apply to the unbeliever. To avoid wrongly interpreting God's Word, always ask yourself as you read it, "Which group of people is God speaking to or about?" Out of its God appointed place (wrongly interpreted and wrongly applied) God's Word can not accomplish its divine purpose and can even result in great confusion and harm to unbeliever and believer alike. For example, in Romans 7:25 we see that the Law is holy. In Exodus 20-34 we see that the Law is divinely given. Yet, in Galatians 3 we see that when, in man's wisdom, it is added to the gospel as a means of salvation, no man will be justified. It does not get more

tragic than that. One thing Paul does to clear up the confusion of those who were trying to pluck up the Law from its God appointed place and plant it in the gospel is to instruct the Galatians on the Law's proper place in God's revelation to man. God has placed the Law outside and before the gospel so that the gospel would have its full effect. Man put it in the gospel, thereby making the gospel of no effect. Ouch! So, Paul instructed the Galatians that the Law was not given as a means for man to earn righteousness but rather to reveal man's unrighteousness and alert him of his utter helplessness to meet the holy demands of God. By this the Law would lead man up to Christ, who died for sinful man, taking on himself the very penalty the Law demanded for the Law breaker. Therefore, the Law is said to bring us to Christ so that we will be justified by faith. Christ is the end or goal of the Law for righteousness because Christ has become righteousness for us - Gal. 3:19-24; Rom.10:4; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21. Do you see the importance of divine truth having a divinely appointed place and purpose for man and that man must be content to leave it in its place, especially careful and sober to not add anything to God's gospel? If God did not put it in the gospel, man should not add it. Rather, we should tremble at His Words, divinely given, divinely placed.

In the Captive's Corner, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?*, it was shown that men are still adding things (the Add-Ons as I have called them) to the gospel which can have the same effect as in Galatia almost two millenia ago. It was also shown that the gospel is the Person and work of Jesus Christ, that man must only believe on Him to be saved, and that nothing (whether things in God's Word or not) should be added to the gospel. We are justified by faith, not works. Knowing that Add-Ons have no place in the gospel, in this paper their proper place in Scripture will be shown. As we put each one in its proper place, it will also be shown that some Add-Ons have no place in Scripture.

As each Add-On is addressed, you will likely find that in some cases you have heard an interpretation of God's Word which is not accurate. Yet, you have believed it all of your life, unknowingly resting on the wisdom of men. In other cases you may see that you have heard and received doctrines from men as divine truth, yet they are no where to be found in God's Word. You received them as the Words of God even though they were the words of mere men. Hopefully, this will

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have a sobering affect, and you will learn to tremble at His Word, to give His Word the reverence due it. This means to give it the time due it, the obedience due it, and the properly handling/interpreting due it. Scripture is not a matter of ones own interpretation because it is not man's word but God's Word. God, Who spoke the world into existence, has spoken to us directly in His Word. Therefore, it is utter foolishness and a sure recipe for a troubled and unfulfilled life if we

have any higher priority than knowing and applying what He has said to us. It is to be read, studied, meditated on, rightly interpreted, obeyed, stored up, and passed on (sharing what we learn with others after we have applied it to our own life).

God's Word should have your heart as its home. We are to "hold fast the pattern of sound Words, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" - 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13. God's truths are revealed to us as a pattern of sound words in Scripture. This is

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very important because Scripture is meant to be interpreted in light of Scripture (the whole of it) not apart from it. By this (the only proper method of interpreting Scripture) we can see the pattern of sound words. When someone plucks up a verse from Scripture and pours their own meaning into it, a strange and harmful doctrine is born, one which is not in the faith once and for all delivered by the apostles and prophets. It is then

passed on as divine truth simply because it has a Scripture reference attached to it (although the verse is out of its proper place without the illumination of Scripture as a whole to reveal its God given meaning) - 2 Pet. 1:20; 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1:13; 2:2; Ezra 7:10; Psa. 119. We must simply hear what God says and conform our thinking and ways to it, not pour our own meaning into it, conforming it to our natural or fleshly ways.

One key to seeing the proper place of many of the Add-Ons is to see that new life from above is required to do them. Spiritual life is required for spiritual action. Natural man can not receive the things of the Spirit much less spiritually act on them - 1 Cor. 2:14. And the only way to get spiritual life is to believe on Jesus Christ - Jn. 1:12-13; 3:3-18, 36; 5:24; 20:31. Therefore, if spiritual actions (which in Scripture are only meant for those who have already been given new life in order to perform them) are required of the sinner inquiring about salvation, obviously confusion is the result. May God grant us to know more fully the true importance and value of not moving God's truths from their divinely appointed place as well as to know more fully the true place and value of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has said to us in His Word.

Following the next paragraph is a brief address of each of the things that many in the church are resting on and even telling other they must do to be saved. These are the Add-Ons listed in the Captive's Corner, *What Must I Do to Be Saved?* Considering the number of them and their wide use, it is no surprise that there is such doubt, confusion, and uncertainty in much of the church. It is also hard to distinguish the church from the world in many cases. For each Add-On I will briefly show that it is not given in Scripture as a means of salvation. I will also show its proper place in Scripture if it has one.

The list of Add-Ons naturally divides into two groups with a few left over. The first group relates to prayer. One of the fatal flaws of this group being added to the gospel as a condition to receive salvation is that one does not have access to God as Father to ask, confess, pray, etc. without first being reconciled to God and receiving God's Spirit. Access is granted along with every spiritual blessing when we put our faith in Christ - Eph. 1:13; 2:18; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6. With the Spirit of God comes new life, which manifests itself in dependent prayer toward the Source of that life. Saying a prayer and praying are two totally different things. A self-righteous Pharisee can excel in the former but only a saved soul by new life and the Spirit can participate in and enjoy the latter. Saul of Tarsus is a perfect example. Doubtless, as a Pharisee he had said many long prayers. Yet, not until he passed from death to life does Scripture say, "Behold, he is praying" - Acts 9:11. So the place of prayer in Scripture is clearly for those who are saved, not those who are desiring to be saved. Therefore, none of the following should be required of the sinner desiring salvation. Believing into Christ is for those who do not have life but want it. Prayer is for those who have life because they have already believed on Christ for it. This is God's appointed place for prayer.

" Asking for forgiveness to be saved "

No where in the New Testament are we told we must "ask to be forgiven." Rather, we are told to repent and believe on Christ to be forgiven of sins (past, present, and future) - Acts 10:43; 17:30-31. The issue of sin's guilt in your life forever has

been settled by the blood of Jesus. No asking required, only believe, and the blessings flow - Is. 43:25; Col. 2:13-14.

" Ask to be saved" or " Ask for salvation"

This is the same as asking for forgiveness. You need not ask a question He has already answered in His Word to us. This question was settled forever at Calvary. He died to answer this question. "... Whosoever believes in Him will be saved" - Jn. 3:16. To ask is to ignore or deny the answer already given. The phrases in Scripture such as "You have not because you ask not," " Whatever you ask you will receive," " Ask and it will be given you," etc. all apply to those who are already children of God asking their Father in heaven, not the one desiring salvation. See 1 Jn. 3:22; Matt. 7:7-11; Jas. 4:2 for some of these phrases. Do you see what I have been saying? Verses meant for believers should not be applied to unbelievers who need to be saved. If they are, confusion results. The Add-Ons distract the one inquiring of salvation from the Person and work of Christ who alone will save him and be his true ground and assurance for salvation.

" Invite Him in" or " Ask Him into your heart or life to be saved"

Usually this "method" of receiving Christ is attributed to Revelation 3:20. Yet, again, if you read chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, it is clear that Jesus is speaking to seven different churches not unbelievers. In 3:20 Jesus is outside His sinful, distracted by the world church, desiring their fellowship once again. This is a picture of the church today, entertained by the world and, therefore, having no time for Christ and His Word, cooperating with the flesh. If the church repents, agreeing with God about and turning from their sin, fellowship is restored - 1 Jn. 1:9. This fellowship in Revelation 3:20 is pictured as dining together with the Lord Jesus. See also Luke 22:14-20.

" Asking for mercy to be saved "

Again, the question of mercy is already answered in the cross-work of Jesus. God has decided that the ground of the crucified and risen Christ is the place of mercy for every sinner. The cross infinitely displayed his mercy before you were ever born. God's wrath is satisfied with the death of His Son and, therefore, He freely gives salvation to everyone who believes in Him - Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-11. You need not attempt to move Him to mercy by asking. Only His Son's shed blood could do

God has placed the Law outside and before the gospel so that the gospel would have its full effect. Man put it in the gospel, thereby making the gospel of no effect. Ouch!

this and has done it. The tax collector in Luke 18:9-14 said, "God, be merciful to me." He said this before the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus. When he said it, he was near the temple where sacrifices for sin were offered daily. The tax collector saw the smoke ascending from the animal sacrifice for sin, and

he was asking God to be satisfied with the substitute of the animal in his place of judgment. Now, as I said, Christ is our once and for all Substitute, the Just for the unjust. And God is so forever satisfied that He freely forgives all those who believe on His Son. We know He is satisfied because God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His right hand - Heb. 10:5-18. Animal sacrifices before Christ were to be a reminder of sins and a type of Christ to prepare Israel to receive Him as their once and for all sacrifice for sins. John the Baptist said as Jesus approached him, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away (not reminds us of) the sins of the world."

" Confess your sins to be saved "

This comes from 1 John 1:9. The confusion of adding this as a requirement to be saved is easily cleared up by seeing who this verse applies to or is being addressed to. 1 John is written to believers (who are already in the family of God), not to the lost. The subject is family fellowship. Notice the reference to the intended reader as "little children" and "children of God." 1 John addresses the sin of a believer. Once he agrees with God about His sin (confesses) in the presence of His Father, He can be comforted by seeing right there by his Father

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his precious Savior Jesus (his and our Advocate) who has removed his sin. By the blood of Christ He is back in agreement with His Father and, thus, in happy fellowship with and enjoyment of his relationship with God, his Father, once again. Confessing sin is for the child of God to maintain happy fellowship. Again, believing is for those who need to be born into the family of God.

" Saying the sinner's prayer to be saved"

This may involve all the above. Many times a gospel tract or pamphlet will have a prayer at the end that a person is to pray if they would like to be saved. This method is also followed in many churches and evangelistic ministries. This results in doing something to be saved, but by no work will man be justified. Salvation is by faith in Christ alone - Rom. 4:4-5. In directing the inquirer to pray if he would like to be saved instead of believing on Christ to be saved puts the focus on self doing and off of Christ having done it all. This is in addition to what has already been said above. Prayer to be saved is out of place. Prayer because you have believed and are therefore saved, possessing new life, is natural and commanded. Of course, once you see He has saved you, you are grateful, so you want to thank Him. Your new life of giving thanks to God has begun ☺ - 1 Thes. 5:18; Eph 5:20.

" Confess with your mouth" or " Call on" or " Publicly confess Christ to be saved"

This comes from doing exactly what has been discussed earlier in this paper regarding taking a verse out of its context. Away from the light Scripture as a whole shines on a verse, its intended meaning can be lost and confusion result. In

their context Romans 10:9-10,13 are saying that confessing Christ is the result of salvation not a means to it. It is by the Holy Spirit that Christ is confessed, and He only dwells in or abides in those who have believed on Christ - 1 Cor. 12:3; Eph. 1:13. As Paul said, "*We believe and therefore we speak* (about Christ)." - 2 Cor. 4:13. See also 1 Jn. 4:12-16. In Matthew 10:32 it is the apostles (who are already saved) who are exhorted by Jesus to confess Him before unbelieving Israel. Israel was rejecting Jesus, so His disciples were sure to meet opposition. Therefore, Jesus explained to them that

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suffering for Him in this life would be honored and rewarded in the life to come. See also Matthew 10:28-30. It is worth noticing here that the disciples were not told to take a message of "Confess Christ or call in order to be saved." Romans 10:14 says, "How can one confess Christ *unless* he has (already) *believed*?" The sinner who believes is saved, receives God's Spirit, and can thereby confess "Jesus, my Savior, died for me." The Captive's Corner, *The Sinner Who Believes Is Saved* further addresses these verses.

The next group of Add-Ons consists of things that many in the church believe they can do or are doing to earn acceptance with God. You will not find these so much in a gospel tract, but sadly, large portions of the professing church are depending on these things to go to heaven. Some are actually teaching this. But in many ways, it is not a matter of teaching, but the mode by which things are done clearly implies that these things earn favor with God and, therefore, can be depended on to gain entrance into heaven. However, simple matter of fact though is that without faith it is impossible to please God. All

of man's works are as filthy rags to God and can have no value toward salvation - Heb. 11:6; Is. 64:6. Therefore, to depend on the following is to be condemned, not to be saved. Our works cannot save. The work of Christ has saved us, and by faith we receive it - Rom 3:20; 4:5.

**" Keeping the 10 commandments;
Doing your best;
Leading a good life &
Doing good works to go to heaven"**

All of these are about the same. The gist of the problem is that unless your life is perfect forever you are condemned by these methods of getting to heaven. If you break one Law you are guilty of all - Jas. 2:10. The wages of sin is death - Rom. 3:23. The Law was not even given for the purpose of giving life by keeping it - Gal. 3:21. "*Cursed is everyone who does not keep the Law perfectly*" - Gal. 3:10. The Law brings wrath not life - Rom. 4:15. It is simple. Even man's best is tainted with sin, and it can not change the heart - Jer. 17:9. Apart from the Law and by faith in Christ only are we declared righteous. The believer has died to the Law and is now under the authority of Christ, not the Law - Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 10:5; Matt. 28:20; Eph. 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:21. Once we receive new life by faith we are commanded to engage in good deeds and do good works in keeping with and living out our new life within. The believer is rewarded for good works, but they have no place in Scripture for anyone to earn salvation. Those who meet the Lord on any ground other than the finished work of Christ are judged by their own deeds and, thus, they are therefore condemned into the Lake of Fire - Rev. 20:13. So no one can have hope of heaven by these methods - Titus 3:1-8; Eph. 2:8-10; Rev. 22:12.

" Church membership and attendance"

At Pentecost, God's Spirit formed the church (the body of Christ), putting all believers in union with one another and with Christ, their Head in heaven. Every believer is now likewise joined and becomes a member of the church when he believes. Faith in Christ is the only means of membership - 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3-4; Acts 2; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:1-6. It is one of the many blessings of God's grace found in Christ. Therefore, you can see from what true church membership is that its proper place has nothing to do with being a means of salvation. We are told to receive one another as Christ receives us (on the basis of faith in Christ) - Rom. 15:7. Therefore, no other criteria should be used for receiving a person into the fellowship of a local assembly of the body of Christ (the church).

It is the life of Christ that all believers have in common. It is the Spirit of Christ that joins every member. And it is our Head, Christ, Who directs the whole body, which includes each member, by His Spirit - 1 Jn. 5:11-12; Jn. 17:3; Eph. 4:1-6; 1:22-23. Therefore, obeying God's command to not forsake assembling together (church attendance) should be a joy and only natural for those who really do have the life of Christ in common. Hebrews 10:24-25 and Ephesians 4:8-16 make it clear that we can not mature apart from the body because God has

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equipped every member to be the agent by which we are built up. So the proper place of church attendance is for the believer who possesses new life because it is natural, commanded, and required for maturing in Christ. It is not a means by which someone seeking salvation can earn any favor with God or get to heaven.

" Water Baptism "

This is thoroughly addressed in the Captive's Corner *The Meaning of Baptism*. I would just say here that when we believe on Christ, God's Spirit puts us in union with Christ, So by union with Him we have died and have been buried with Christ so that through His resurrection we may live in newness of life. Water baptism symbolizes this death and burial. So it has no meaning for the one who has not believed on Christ and, therefore, has not died and been buried with Christ. Baptism is an expected and commanded result of receiving new life in Christ. Its proper place is for the believer, not the unbeliever - Rom. 6:3-4; Matt 28:18-20.

" Holy Communion "

Jesus said, *"Do this in remembrance of Me."* Since communion is a remembrance of Jesus' sacrificial death until He comes, I would say that one can not "do in remembrance" what he has not believed in. And one does not gather to celebrate an accomplished salvation which he has not trusted in. Obviously, the proper place of holy communion or the Lord's supper is for those who are saved. It is not a work done to earn favor with God in order to get to heaven - Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:2, 23-32.

" Speaking in tongues "

Tongues was not spoken by everyone who was converted in Acts. In Acts 2 its purpose is to proclaim the gospel to Jews from foreign countries gathered for the Jewish holiday. In Acts 10 it has the purpose of showing the Jews that Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit just as they had, and, therefore, the Gentiles are their brothers in Christ in one body, the family of God, where there is no distinction - Acts 10:44-48; Eph. 2:11-22. To further see the Scriptural place of tongues read the Captive's Corner *Tongues*. Some in Acts who received God's Spirit by believing on Christ spoke in tongues. However, tongues were obviously never a means to receive the Spirit of God.

If your faith is in Christ alone and not anything you have done or are doing, you have received Christ. If you have Christ, you have all! Every blessing of God is received through our union with Christ by His Spirit - Eph. 2:8-9; 1:3, 23; 1 Jn. 5:11-13; Col. 3:11.

" Penance "

This has no place in Scripture. It is an effort to balance the wrong done with good in an attempt to earn God's favor. This is obviously impossible since our works are filthy rags to God - Is. 64:6. Penance is sometimes confused with repentance. You can read the Captive's Corner *Repentance Toward God and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ* for an understanding of repentance.

" Confirmation Class "

As a child I graduated from confirmation class with flying colors, making all of my family very proud. Although my friends and I were supposed to learn in class that we were justified by faith in Christ, it was clear that everyone assumed that everyone who graduated by answering the questions properly was now going to heaven. But, God looks at the heart. Faith in His Son to be saved, not performance, matters to God. This took me many more years to learn by God's grace. One may put his faith in Christ while reading a gospel tract and saying a prayer or while attending a church service or going through confirmation class, but to be crystal clear, it is only by faith in Christ that we are saved, not by completing the class or church attendance. Once we do believe on Christ and, therefore, are saved, we should, of course, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. This requires church attendance, classes, bible study. because the body of Christ is empowered and gifted to edify us - 2 Pet 3:18; 1 Sam 16:7; 2 Tim 2:15.

" Tithing "

This is really an Old Testament principle which relates to Israel, not the church and even more so not to earning favor with God - Malachi 3:10. Tithing reminded Israel that God owned all and was the source of every good thing. For the New Testament believer, God requires 100% of our whole being because we have been purchased by the blood of Christ - 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 12:1-2. There is further information on this New Testament principle in the Captive's Corner *Today's Priesthood and Its Sacrifices*. All we are and all we have is now to be to the glory of God. We are His, and He is Lord.

" Make Him your Lord and Savior "

Scripture says, *"God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ."* All authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. So, when we first come to Christ, we do not make Him Lord but, we believe on the Jesus Who is both Lord and Savior to be saved. Acts 16:31; 10:36-43; Matt. 28:18; 2 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 14:9. By creation and redemption (purchase) He is our Lord!

" Give Him your heart "

To attempt to give God anything to be saved is a denial of and an offense to the fact that *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"* - John 3:16. In addition, it is our heart that is the problem - Jer. 17:9. We need a new heart and life and God's Spirit from above whom we receive only by believing on Jesus - John 1:12-13; 3:3-18; Eph. 2:1-10. *"He who trusts in his own heart is a fool"* - Prov. 28:26.

" Being born of Christian parents "

Many in the professing church believe that the children of believing parents will also enter the kingdom of God. This is the same mistake that Jesus admonished Nicodemus for making in John 3 and for which John the Baptist admonished The Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3. This mistake was common to Israel. Paul reminded the Galatian Jews that they were sons of God only by faith in Christ, not by being the physical children of Abraham - Gal. 3:6, 7, 26, 29. As a teacher of Israel, Nicodemus should have been familiar with the required new birth from above - Ezek. 36:26, 27. You must be born again by faith in Christ to enter the God's kingdom. *"Flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God"* - 1 Cor. 15:50.

The only true ground for salvation is the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is to this ground that all must move to and trust in to be saved.

If you do not have salvation but want it, God desires you to have it. He has been patient with you for this very purpose (2 Pet 3:9). You should not be another moment without it. It is all ready. Christ has died and risen. The Holy Spirit testifies to us; His Word is clear, only BELIEVE my friend, only BELIEVE.

Therefore, if your faith is in Christ alone and not anything you have done or are doing, you have received Christ. If you have Christ, you have all! Every blessing of God is received through our union with Christ by His Spirit - Eph. 2:8-9; 1:3, 23; 1 Jn. 5:11-13; Col. 3:11. If you

do not have salvation but want it, God desires you to have it. He has been patient with you for this very purpose (2 Pet 3:9). You should not be another moment without it. It is all ready. Christ has died and risen. The Holy Spirit testifies to us; His Word is clear, only BELIEVE my friend, only BELIEVE.

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