

(Ephesians) Blessings Through Christ

by Brian Brodersen

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, and we can experience this blessing by being chosen, predestined, and redeemed through the work of the Trinity.

Duration: 45:25

Scripture: Psalm 103:2, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Ephesians 1:3, Philippians 4:19, James 1:17

Topics: "Gods Grace", "Christian Salvation"

Description

In this sermon on Ephesians, the speaker begins by introducing the background of the apostle Paul and his role as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The speaker then emphasizes the importance of praising God and how it is not just a warm-up to the Bible study, but a way to communicate our gratitude for God's blessings. The speaker shares a personal experience of being in awe of God's grace and salvation, leading to a heartfelt response of thanksgiving. The sermon concludes by highlighting the concept of grace as God's unmerited favor and how it has made believers accepted in Christ.

Transcript

Verses 1 and 2, we considered them in our first study of Ephesians. Paul basically introduces himself to those that he's writing to, and we looked at this man, Paul, we looked at his background, we considered his history prior to coming to Christ, and then we looked at him a bit as an apostle of Jesus Christ. And so as we come now to verse 3, Paul really launches into this epistle on a note of praise.

He bursts forth with praise, really, to God for all the wonderful things that God has done. And beginning in verse 3, on through verse 14 in the Greek, you have one unbroken sentence, one long sentence where the apostle just continues to write those things that are coming to his mind, those things that are a blessing to us who are in Christ Jesus. And so he begins, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

So Paul begins by praising the Lord, that's really what he's doing here. Blessed be God and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Or he could have said, praise the Lord, praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the purposes in studying God's Word is so that we can come to a better understanding of who he is and of what he's done in order that we might praise him. You know, our time that we spend together in praising the Lord, as we were just doing a few moments ago, that's not just a warm-up to the Bible study.

You know, some people treat it that way.

Some people have, you know, observed us and sort of accused us of having sort of a warm-up time, you know, through the time of praise, and then we're getting into the important thing, the Bible study. Well, of course, the Bible study is important because this is where we're trusting that God is speaking to us. But the time that we spend singing together is important as well because we're praising the Lord.

We're communicating back to God a blessing because of the good things that he's done for us. And so we need to make sure we understand that. And when we are gathered together and someone is leading us in song, that we realize that this is a time to really just express our love to the Lord, express our thanks to the Lord, express our praise to the Lord, the praise that, of course, is so due to him because of his goodness toward us.

So Paul is praising God for blessing us with every spiritual blessing. God has blessed us with everything that we possibly need. He hasn't withheld a single thing that is beneficial to us as his people.

We're not lacking anything as God's people. If we're falling short in any way, then it's because we haven't really appropriated to ourselves what God has done for us. God has done it all, and that's what Paul is saying.

He's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Now, notice that the blessings are spiritual, and I think here it's in contrast to material. Now, that's not to say that God doesn't bless materially, for he certainly has blessed us materially in many ways.

But the material, of course, isn't the most important thing because that which is material is temporal. That which is material is passing away, and that which is material can never really satisfy the deep spiritual longings of man. Under the Old Testament, the emphasis when it came to blessing was primarily upon the material.

The whole of the Old Testament was very much an external covenant. It had to do to a large degree with outward things. And so the sign of God's blessing upon the people was their inheritance of the land and their prosperity in the land, the blessing upon the crop, and the blessing upon their bodies physically, the health and the fruitfulness of the womb, and their blessing in business, and those sorts of things.

Those were all a part of the Old Testament covenant. And the blessing was, to a large degree, under the Old Testament material. But when we come to the New Covenant, we find that there's a shift from the material to the spiritual primarily.

We do not have a plot of land like Israel did. Our home is in heaven, and the fruit that we're looking for is not the fruit of the field, but it's the fruit of the Spirit working in our lives. The blessing that we're looking for is a spiritual blessing.

And so Paul here makes the contrast. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, not to say that there isn't a material blessing, but that's not the main thing under the New Covenant. It's a richness of soul and spirit that God has poured out upon us through His grace.

And so he says, in the heavenly places in Christ, or you could just translate it in the heavenlies. And what he's really referring to here is spiritual blessings in the spiritual realm. You know, there is a spiritual realm.

There is a realm in which there is spiritual activity that's occurring even now. And later on, Paul is going to talk about the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places. When he talks to us about spiritual warfare, he tells us in the realm of the Spirit, there's a battle going on.

He tells us that we're seated with Christ in that spiritual realm. And he tells us here that the blessings, all the spiritual blessings are available to us within the spiritual realm, the realm of the Spirit. It's not something visible.

It's not something tangible in the material sense, but there is this realm of the Spirit where we experience God. We have an encounter with Him that's a spiritual encounter. So God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

Now, what Paul is going to do as he moves on here is he is going to begin to highlight those blessings that he's referring to. And of course, when he says God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, he doesn't go on and enumerate each and every spiritual blessing there is, but he does give us a list of several. And that's what he spends the remainder of this long sentence on is sort of a highlighting of the spiritual blessings that God has given to us.

But before we look at that, I want you to notice that the blessings he said are in Christ. The blessings are in Christ. Everything that God has for man by way of spiritual blessing is found in Christ.

Therefore, if a person is in Christ, then they are going to be blessed. If a person is not in Christ, then of course there is no blessing because the blessings are in Christ. And every person is either in Christ or outside of Christ.

There's only two possible places that a person can exist. You can exist in Christ or you can exist in Adam. If you are in Adam, you are part of a fallen race that is under the curse of God, under the judgment of God.

If you're in Christ, you're part of a new humanity that is under the blessing of God. And so every blessing comes through the person of Jesus Christ. So those who are in Christ are those who are outside of Christ are not blessed.

But the wonderful news is that you can come from outside of Christ into Christ. And all of those who are in Christ were formerly in Adam. But by an act of the will, by a choice that was made, by a decision to surrender to Jesus Christ, they've come into that place now of blessing.

And that place is available to each and every person. It's there for the asking. All someone needs to say is, God, I want to be in Christ.

I don't want to be in Adam. I don't want to be part of this fallen, sinful human race that's under your judgment. I want to be in Christ.

I want to be part of this new humanity. I want to be part of your family. I want to be part of your kingdom.

And by receiving Christ, that's how we come into that position of being in Christ. Now, let's read verses 4 through 14, and then we'll touch on a few of the points that Paul makes here. So, he's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him.

In love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he has made us accepted in the beloved. In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us. In all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in him.

In him also, we've obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory. In him, you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the holy spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchase possession to the praise of his glory. Boy, that sentence is packed full of profound spiritual truth, the blessings that Paul begins to list for us.

Notice there, we are chosen. Blessing number one, we are predestined. Blessing number two, we are redeemed.

He says we have been forgiven. And then he says that we have been enlightened to understand the will of God. And then he says we've been sealed by the holy spirit of promise.

And there in verse six, he says, and I think in a sense, you know, it sort of sums everything up. We have been accepted in the beloved. We've been accepted by God.

Notice as we go through these verses, if you will, notice that the three persons of the trinity are all referred to here in verses four through six, we have a reference to God, the father and his activity in our salvation in verses seven through 13. We have a reference to God, the son and his part in our salvation. And then in verse 14, the latter part of 13 and verse 14, we have a reference to the holy spirit.

So we see that God, the father purposed our salvation. God, the son wrought our salvation when he died for us upon the cross and God, the holy spirit draws us and applies to us the salvation that God purpose and the son provided. So here, Paul lays out the work of the triune God in our redemption.

One of the things that becomes crystal clear in this epistle to the Ephesians is the doctrine of grace. Later on, Paul will remind us for we are saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man boast.

And as you look at these verses here, four through 14, that's what you see. It's all the Lord. God has done it.

He purposed to save us. He came and did what was necessary to save us. And then he works to draw us to himself, to apply that salvation in our lives.

Salvation is from the Lord. And this is why Paul began with that burst of praise as he thought about that. And think of Paul.

Paul is not writing as some disengaged theologians sitting in some ivory tower somewhere. Paul is writing this as a sinner who was saved by grace himself. Paul is writing this as a man who has experienced this great salvation.

You know, one of the problems in many churches today is you have people preaching the word of God who have never experienced the word of God themselves. There are many preachers in pulpits today who are not converted. They're not saved by grace.

And so they don't really have anything to say about it. They might get up and, you know, having read some commentaries or something, they give some sort of an exposition, but it's not coming from their own personal experience. Paul, as he's writing this, as he's bursting forth in praise to God, he's bursting forth in praise to God because he's experienced it himself.

These spiritual blessings, he knows them firsthand. And so he himself is just he's pouring out to the saints in Ephesus and then to all the believers throughout history who would read this letter. He's pouring out the truth of God by a man who's experienced it in his own life.

That's a wonderful thing. That's a glorious thing. We have got to experience God ourselves if we're going to communicate God to other people.

That's why I'm not all that excited about evangelistic programs or, you know, the sorts of things where you go and you work your way through some sort of a book on evangelism and you learn the technique and you learn how to apply it and you learn how to respond to this question or that question. Then you go out and you put into practice what you read in the book. How much better to go out having had Christ touch your life powerfully and just say, hey, this is what happened to me.

Or let me share a verse with you. I read this and man, this just blew my mind. This changed my life right here.

You know, it might not be pretty, but hey, it's effective. You might have all your eyes dotted and your T's crossed, but you know, you come across like someone who just, you're just passing on information. You just learned it in a seminar.

Man, when somebody comes out with this is my experience. This is what happened to me, man. I was lost and Jesus came and he met me and boy, that's, you know, evangelism to me.

It's not something that you teach. It's something that just is the result of the work of God in a person's life and the Spirit of God just moving. It doesn't mean to say that we can't prepare ourselves for it.

Of course we can, but we've got to have that living experience and Paul had that and he's writing from that place there of having that experience, knowing the blessing of God in his own life. So we want to look at each one of these that Paul mentions here and let's just see how far we can get here this evening. Just as he chose us in him, first spiritual blessing chosen by God from Paul's statement here that God chose us, we have what is known as the doctrine of election, God electing us to salvation.

And the doctrine of election sometimes is troubling to people. People have, I think, drawn the wrong conclusion from the doctrine at times, but rather than trying to understand it, you know, philosophically, I think the best thing to do when you're face to face with the doctrine of election is to just thank God for it. God chose me.

I don't know why he did that, but I am so glad he did. Someone says, well, why didn't God choose that other person? Well, you know, we're never really told exactly why God chose us. You know, sometimes we speculate about that.

We say things like, well, you know, God looked down the corridor of time and he saw those who would respond to his gift. And so those are the ones he chose and, you know, maybe, but that's something that we're reading into the text that we're never really told that we're just simply told that God chose us. Some people say, well, if God chose some to be saved, then he must have, you know, not chosen others.

And that's not really fair. And these people are lost. And, you know, how could God do that? How could he not choose them? And some people have implied that God did choose in such a way as to just leave certain people out of this equation of salvation.

I personally do not believe that. I believe that if a man ends up outside of the kingdom, it's his fault, not God's fault. It's not because God didn't choose him.

It's probably more because he chose not to be chosen. What I want to always stay away from is implying somehow that if a man is lost, it's not his own fault. I think the scripture clearly indicates that if a man is lost, it's his own fault, not God's fault.

It's not because God didn't want him to be saved. We're told that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Therefore, my conclusion is if someone's not saved, it's not because God didn't want them saved.

It's because they did not want to be saved in the end. But moving on from that, he chose us. Here's the wonderful reality.

And we don't really know why. We're never really told why apart from the good pleasure of his will. It just was his good pleasure to do it.

That's the why. If you want to know why God chose people to be saved, it's because it pleased him to do it. That's what we're told here specifically.

But he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, before God ever created the world. God, of course, created the world with the full knowledge of what was going to transpire. Some people say, well, then why did God create the world? Well, you know what? I don't know.

But I'm actually glad he did. I'm glad to be here and I'm glad I'm going to heaven. And if he wouldn't have done it, we wouldn't be here.

But he did. But he knew full well everything that would transpire. And before he actually began that work of creation, he chose us to be in Christ and to be holy and blameless before him.

What an amazing thing. What an incredible thing. These are the kinds of things that are profound spiritual realities that we actually need the assistance of the Holy Spirit to even begin to comprehend.

I can't comprehend this. Before the foundation of the world, God chose me. God chose you.

And he chose us to be holy and without blame before him. Now, that's an amazing thing because we were born into this world in sin. Our very life itself was an affront to God.

We were anything but holy. We were unholy and we were anything but blameless. Oh, there was so much that God could blame me for.

But yet today I have a standing before him of blamelessness. I stand before him blameless. Nothing to charge to my account.

What an amazing thing. What a glorious thing. These are the kinds of things that we need to think about more.

You know, we need to ponder them. We just need to just as much as it hurts to strain our brains, we need to do it. It's good for the soul.

I was having a conversation with my youngest children this week. And it was one of those, you know, deep conversations about time and eternity and things like that. And my youngest son, Brayden, he just kept, oh, I just can't get that.

Oh, you know, it was hurting his brain to think about it. I could tell. You know how that is? It's just where you get to a point where it's like, oh, it's just beyond me.

It hurts to think that hard. But it's good to think that hard. We need to press ourselves in that direction to think about this glorious reality that he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him.

Now, there's something in this statement that really greatly encourages me. And what it is, is really the confidence that if God has chosen me to be holy and blameless, I am going to be holy and blameless. There's tremendous security in this statement for the believer.

You see, because God chose me to this very thing. God did not choose certain people. Who did he not choose? He did not choose those who would not be holy and blameless before him.

But those that he did choose, he chose them to that very end. So that means to me, if God chose me to that end, I'm going to attain it. I'm going to get there.

I'm going to make it. I'm there already, actually. Why? Because I'm in Christ.

And Christ, of course, is holy and blameless. And because I am in Christ and because you are in Christ, we have a standing before God tonight. We are holy and blameless.

God has nothing against me tonight. God has nothing against you tonight if you're in Christ. You might say, oh, but you don't know what I did today.

No, I don't. But that has not taken you out of Christ, whatever it was. It didn't remove you from your position in Christ.

You're still holy and blameless. You might need to go home and apologize to your wife or your kids or ask God to forgive you for that particular thing. But you're still in Christ.

You're still holy and without blame because you're in him. And so, number one, spiritual blessing chosen. I don't understand it.

We'll never understand some of these things. But just embracing it as a reality, that's where the blessing comes. Now, he says, in love having predestined us.

Predestination, oh, that's another word that scares some people to death. I remember preaching in a church many years ago in Eastern Europe, and I had no idea that they were a very rigid Pentecostal denomination that was very strong, Arminian group theologically. And if you know what Arminianism is, it's the opposite of Calvinism.

Calvinism teaches predestination, but extreme Calvinism takes it to an unbiblical conclusion. But these Pentecostals there, these people who were really committed to the Arminian position, they were so against Calvinism that they rejected the idea of predestination at all. And I came into their church having no idea what their background was, and I actually taught Ephesians chapter 1. And right here in these verses, predestination is mentioned twice.

And they were so upset that I actually, I even said the word predestination. And I told them, look, it's right here in the Bible. I'm sorry.

I just was reading the text. But they had become so convinced in their theological position that they did not believe that predestination was a biblical idea. They thought it was an aberrant Calvinistic concept.

No, some extreme Calvinists have taken it beyond what the Bible says about predestination. But predestination is biblical. We find the word right here.

We find Paul using it again in his epistle to the Romans as well. And notice what it says, in love, having predestined us. Now, the extreme view of predestination is that, well, of course, predestination means to choose in advance or to ordain in advance.

And so the extreme view on it is that God chose some to go to heaven, and he chose others to go to hell. The Bible never says anything close to that. So that is not a biblical idea at all.

That is where logic might take you. You figure, okay, well, if God predestined these things, well, maybe he--and that's what's happened. Taking logic to its obvious end, people have come up with this idea.

But it's not a biblical idea. As a matter of fact, when the Bible refers to predestination, it never really even uses it in the context of salvation primarily. Paul, in Romans 8, 29, listened to the context there.

Whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Didn't say he predestinated them to go to heaven. It says he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of their Son.

Notice here, in love, having predestinated us to what? To adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself. So predestination is never even used in the context of some people going to heaven and some people going to hell. Predestination is always applied to believers who are already saved, of course, and their conformity to the image of Christ, their attaining to the full blessing of God upon their life.

And that's what Paul's talking about here. He says, in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself. Now, the term adoption that Paul uses here and in other places could actually be translated, placing as a son.

That's the literal translation, actually. But here's what it refers to. It refers to a child coming of age and entering fully into the inheritance that the parent has laid up for them.

And so when we talk about adoption, we're not really talking about being brought into a relationship with God. That happens through conversion or regeneration is a theological term you could use. Adoption doesn't have anything to do with salvation.

It has to do with really the ultimate outcome of our salvation, which is entering into the full and complete inheritance that God has for us in Christ. Actually, in the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul says that the adoption is the redemption of the body. So it's being freed from the sinful nature and entering into the glorified state.

That's what adoption really refers to. It refers to entering into the glorified state. And so when I enter into the glorified state, then I enter into the full and complete blessing of my salvation.

You see, right now we're children of God and he's adopted us. But the full implication of the adoption hasn't come to us yet. It's going to come to us in the future.

It's going to come to us when our bodies are redeemed. So now I'm a child of God today. I've been born of his spirit.

I'm related to him. I'm a partaker of the divine nature. But there's coming a time when I'm going to experience fully and completely what it is to be a son of God.

And that is going to be the adoption in its completed sense. Remember, Paul wrote in a Roman context. And a Roman citizen, a man, might have a number of children.

He has a wife. He has a mistress. He has other relationships through which children have been produced.

He has an estate as well. But not just any one of those children have access to his estate or can really receive the inheritance. What he does is he chooses those children.

He brings them to the forum there in Rome and he publicly adopts them. And there they become the heir of this man who is actually their father. But up until that point, they had no benefit from the relationship.

So when Paul uses the term adoption and he's writing in a Roman context, these people understood what he was talking about. He said, oh, he's talking about entering in. He's talking about receiving the full blessing.

And so here Paul is rejoicing in the fact that in love, he predestined us to adoption. So once again, just as with choosing us to be holy and blameless, so he's predestined us to be adoption. In other words, he's predestined us to that place of glory.

Just like he said in Romans 8 29, he's predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son. Now, I do not believe that God would predestine me to something that he wasn't going to get me to. It's a contradiction.

You see, the fact that we've been predestined means that we're going to get there. We don't have to worry about not making it in the end. Some people live under that fear, that dread all of their Christian lives.

They, for some reason or another, they haven't been able to grasp hold of the grace. Others grasp hold of it well and rest in it. I thank God I've never struggled with the grace of God.

I knew I was a sinner when God saved me. I did great. I'm resting in that.

But I know people, and perhaps you know people, and perhaps you're one of those people who, for whatever reason, you're just always worried. You're always thinking that somehow when it all comes down, you're going to end up short of salvation. You will not have made it.

You didn't do enough or whatever. You see, all of that is contrary to grace, and it's all contrary to what we're told here. He chose us to be holy and blameless.

He predestined us to adoption. We're going to be there. What God has predestined is going to happen so we can look forward to that arrival, that arrival there at the throne of God to enter into that glorious inheritance that he has for us.

We can look forward to the fact that one day we are going to be like Jesus Christ. We're going to be just like him because that's what this whole adoption thing is all about. It's about conforming us to the image of Christ, and that will have taken place finally and completely when we have shed these sinful bodies and have put on that glorious body like his.

Remember how Paul put it in writing to the Philippians. He said our citizenship is in heaven, and it's from there that we look for the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who will take this vile body, and he will fashion it like unto his glorious body. He's going to make us into his image ultimately and completely.

And now again, why did he do this? According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace. He's done it because it pleased him to do it, and he's done it so we could praise him for his grace. That's the response that God's looking for.

When we think of being saved by grace, what God is looking for in our lives is a big thank you. Isn't that amazing? That's all God's looking for. It's just a genuine thank you.

Lord, thank you for your grace. Praise you for your grace to the praise of the glory of his grace, or some translations read to the praise of his glorious grace, that we would be a people just walking around just praising the Lord. Truly, just thanking God for his grace.

And you know, as I was saying earlier, we've got to tune out the world, and we've got to think on these things. We've got to think on these things. And when we do, our minds start to be blown, and our responses praise.

Lord, I thank you. You know, this past few days, I had one of those times where I just, I was able to grasp the fact that I'm saved, and I was able to see clearly that although I was once going to hell, I'm not going to hell anymore. And it was one of those moments where I was actually in awe and amazement of God's grace.

It was one of those times where, you know, even though I've been a Christian for so long now, I just had a flashback on my past. And just the reality of justice justice sending me to hell. And just for a moment, just being able to sort of see it and taste it, and just to realize the horror of such a thing.

But then to know that I'm not going there. I am saved. And of course, the response was just what Paul said here.

God, thank you for your grace. The grace of God. God's riches at Christ's expense, as someone has said.

That's what grace is. We talk about grace as unmerited favor. It's more than unmerited favor.

It's favor against merit, because we've merited hell. We have merited judgment. But God has shown us mercy.

And here Paul says, by which, by his grace, he made us accepted in the beloved. This is the most wonderful statement. Accepted in the beloved.

That's where you are tonight. If you're in Christ, man, you're in the beloved. And because you're in Christ, you are beloved.

And as God looked upon Jesus and said, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. God looks upon you tonight in Christ and says, this is my beloved son. This is my beloved daughter in whom I'm well pleased.

You've been accepted in the beloved. What a glorious thing. What an amazing thing.

This is the salvation of the Bible. This is the salvation of the God of heaven. This is the kind of salvation that you couldn't even dream up.

You can't find anything remotely like this anywhere in the world throughout all of time. Search the religions inside and out, and you can't find anything like this. God saving us simply because it was his good pleasure to do so and accepting us, not in ourselves, not in what we've been able to accomplish, but accepting us in Christ and viewing us just as he views him in the beloved.

There's one other place that this phrase is used in the New Testament. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, you remember, he said to her, he said, hail, highly favored one. That's the exact same phrase that Paul uses here in verse six.

We are highly favored, highly favored by God in the beloved. And so that's just a little taste of the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ. In our next study, we'll go on and look at the blessings that have come to us through the second person of the Trinity, through our Lord Jesus Christ and what he accomplished for us on the cross.

And then we'll look at what the spirit of God has done for us as well. Father, we thank you, Lord, that you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing and Lord, they're ours. Help us to appropriate them.

Help us, Lord, to spend more time thinking on these great things. Even if it hurts our brain, help us, Lord, stretch us, Lord, that we would find ourselves praising you for your glorious grace. And Lord, if there's any among us tonight that haven't yet received that glorious grace, it's there for free.

It's there for the taking. Help them to open their hearts and to receive Christ. In his name we pray.

Amen.

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