

Book of Acts Series - Part 19 | Our Ancestors

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faithfulness to the message of the gospel and humility in our lives, as demonstrated by the examples of Paul and Barnabas in the book of Acts.

Duration: 34:09

Scripture: Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:38-39, Acts 14:15, Acts 20:21, Acts 20:24

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of sharing the message of Jesus with others. He encourages believers in various settings, such as college, high school, and the business world, to proclaim the good news of Christ. The speaker also emphasizes the need to walk humbly and draw attention to Christ rather than oneself. He highlights the faithfulness of Paul and Barnabas in preaching the gospel wherever they went, and urges pastors and Christians to study the sermons in the book of Acts as a guide for sharing the true gospel. The sermon also touches on the response of the crowd to Paul's preaching and the importance of turning from idols to the living God.

Transcript

We're gonna pick up where we left off last week. Paul and Barnabas are on their first missionary journey. This is now the focus of Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, and he's tracing the steps of Paul and Barnabas as they spread the good news of Jesus Christ in the country of Turkey, called Asia in the Bible, but to us it would be Turkey.

So we found out that when they started out from Antioch in Syria, they went into the Mediterranean and they went to the island of Cyprus, then they headed north toward Turkey, and they went to Antioch in Pisidia, a different Antioch, and we learned what they did and what are the lessons for us. Then they went to a place called Iconium that we talked about last Sunday in one of the services, and now they are gonna go to a place called Lystra, and it's gonna be so easy now in Lystra. What we're gonna do is the way we should read the Bible all the time, you read a passage, and then you say, why did God put that in the Bible? Well, it has history, so it tells us what happened.

He said, she said, they said, that's what happened. Now you have to go back, step back, and say, extrapolate. How do I extrapolate what the Bible says for a living lesson to us? Why did God put it in the Bible? Just to tell us about Paul and Barnabas? Or is there a lesson in there for us, something we can be inspired by and blessed by? So let's pick up the story here in Acts chapter 14.

In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking in a synagogue, and Paul looked directly at him. The word there mean he kind of gazed at him in an unusual way, and he saw that he had faith to be healed.

That's very interesting. Notice how spirit-filled, sensitive Paul was and how open to God that he could perceive these things. He wasn't just looking physically at the person.

He had spiritual discernment, and he saw that he had faith to be healed. So he called out, stand up on your feet. At that, the man jumped up and began to walk, and when the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Kaonian language, the gods have come down to us in human form.

Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Zeus, by the way, was the macho god, and it seems like maybe Barnabas had a very manly physical bearing to him, and since Paul was the speaker and Hermes was the god of speech and eloquence, they called him that. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls, animals, and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

They wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas because they said they're gods. Nobody could do this but a god, but when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes as a sign of frustration and sorrow and rushed out into the crowd shouting, men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things.

What worthless things? Those idols to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them. He had been preaching the gospel, obviously, in the synagogue. In the past, Paul says, he let all nations go their own way, yet he has not left himself without testimony.

He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy. Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium to two towns where they had been before and they won the crowd over and they stoned Paul. This is the one time he was stoned and dragged him outside the city thinking he was dead, but after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day, he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. And then they returned, making a U-turn now and backtracking to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. Now, no matter who you are today and where you were born, what color you are, every one of us has a family tree.

Every one of us has ancestors. You might not like them, you might love them, you might not even know about them, but every one of us has ancestors. I knew my mother's mother, my grandmother on my maternal side and I knew my grandmother on my father's side.

I know nothing beyond that except that my great grandmother was a poor woman in a poor part of Poland. I know nothing about my grandmother's, my great grandmother on my father's side. But just think, if you could go back, where were your ancestors, what did they look like and what were they doing 200 years ago? And through them, one married the other and now you're here and now you have children or grandchildren.

Every one of us has a family tree. Before my grandmother on my mother's side died, one of my mother's brothers who has gone now to be with the Lord, he sat down with grandma and he said, tell me everything about your childhood. Tell me everything about Poland where you were born.

Tell me everything and he wrote page after page after page after page. He duplicated, I ended up with a copy. Very interesting because it tells about my grandmother's upbringing and what her mother and father were like.

Now all of us not only have biological ancestors, as Christians, we have spiritual ancestors. We're not the first Christians. There have been Christians for 2,000 years.

And one of the purposes of the book of Acts is not only to tell us how the church was born and started and how the church operated so we could learn and try to be like them. Another purpose of the book of Acts is to remind us of how great our spiritual ancestors were. How did our spiritual ancestors who brought the gospel to the next generation, it went down to the next generation, it went down to the next generation, then it went down over 2,000 years.

But we're part of that line, that spiritual line. And you can't dismiss it and say, no, we're the first Christians and we're gonna do what we wanna do. We don't care what anyone else did.

That's very silly and arrogant. We wanna learn from the people who went before us. And Luke was inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us the book of Acts so that we could learn how did those early first Christians act and are we acting like that? Or what lessons can we learn from them? How can we be inspired? I'm not the first pastor that ever lived.

Billy Graham's not the first evangelist who ever spread the gospel. So what can we learn from the book of Acts about them and specifically today as we focus in on Paul and Barnabas in Lystra, then to Derbe, and then backtracking to Lystra, Iconium, and then Antioch, and then they went south and sailed back, as we'll learn, back to the church that sent them out. And they gave a report on everything God had done through them.

Just want you to notice three little things. That's our study for today. First of all, I am impressed, aren't you, by the faithfulness that Paul and Barnabas had to the message of the gospel.

Every place they go, they do not care what anyone wants to hear. They are gonna tell you about Jesus. Every place they go, any place they stop, any synagogue they open their mouth in, any place on the street that a crowd gathers, they are gonna tell you the good news of Jesus Christ.

Not join the church, not a West Indian gospel, not a Caribbean gospel, not a white Caucasian American gospel, not a black culture gospel, not an African gospel, not a Latino gospel, not a prosperity gospel, not any of the perversions and mixtures that we have today. If you study the book of Acts, you find out that they gave the pure good news of Jesus everywhere they went. They were faithful.

They never got tired. They never got discouraged. They never counted the cost in this sense.

Wow, if we preach this, we could get in trouble. They never thought about it. Just they kept opening their mouth and telling people, God loves you, and he sent his son into the world as a sacrifice for your sins.

If people didn't know what sin was, they would explain what sin was. And if you would put your faith in that Jesus Christ who died for you, and if you would have a relationship with him, you will have all your sins forgiven, which the law of Moses could never do. You can preach the law and that God is holy till the cows come home, but that won't forgive you for your past sins.

Only the lamb and the blood that was shed by the lamb of God can provide forgiveness of sin. Every sin is gonna be answered for as part of the gospel. We'll either answer for it personally or by putting our faith in Christ.

God has provided for an atonement, a covering of all our sins. How many as Christians today are so happy every sin you ever did has been covered and washed away? Not only washed away, but forgotten. As far as the east is from the west, God said, I've separated you all because of Jesus.

That's what they preached. Not Moses, Jesus. Not join the church, Jesus.

Not try to live a good life, Jesus. Not God does miracles, Jesus. God does miracles, but they focused in on Jesus.

They were so faithful. And the history of the Christian church is that a lot of people have not been that faithful. They have changed the message.

They have fallen away from the message. It's given birth to nominalism. Nominalism is all over the world.

What's nominalism? Nominalism is you're Christian in name only, but you don't have a relationship with Jesus. You think by going to church or by going to mass or by getting sprinkled or dedicating your baby that that will be fine. No, you must be born again.

You must be born again. You must have a personal relationship with Jesus. He must be the center of your life.

He can't be an addition to your life. He can't be a compartment that you pull out on Sundays. He must be your Lord and your Savior.

You can put your faith in him and know that you have the gift of life. And the fact that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and should we die today, and Christians are dying every day. I was just notified that this morning, they just told me now, that two suicide bombers just went into a Christian church in Pakistan this morning and blew themselves up and killed 60 Christians.

So none of them knew when they got up this morning in Pakistan, this was their last day. And none of us know when our last day is. This was all part of the good news of Jesus.

Death, where is your victory? Grave, where is your sting? I overcome you through faith in Jesus Christ. So that's the good news. That's the good news.

No different message for Gentiles, no different message for Jewish people. I don't care where you put them, you squeeze them and Jesus is gonna come out. That was their message.

I was representing up in Toronto along with the singers this week to hundreds and hundreds of pastors, and then a public meeting encouraging the people up in Canada, representing the Billy Graham Association who asked me to do this. And that was something about Dr. Graham. He's at the end now and

mostly bedridden.

But I don't care where you put Dr. Graham, I don't care what sermon you hear him preach in what decade, it's gonna be about Jesus. I don't care where he starts in the Old Testament or New Testament, it's gonna get to Jesus. It's gonna get to the cross.

It's gonna get to his sacrifice for our sins. We have to be faithful as a church. We have to be faithful as pastors to never change the message.

And I've been challenging pastors all over the world to do what I did some years ago, much to my own shame and repentance is to study every sermon in the book of Acts because that's the gospel that is the power of God to salvation. And I tell pastors, Peter in Acts 2, Peter in Acts 3, Peter in Acts 10, Paul in Acts 13 and 14, Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 and then when they almost kill him in Jerusalem, study every sermon, pastor, Christian, study every word of every message, every sentence, what's the subject, what's the verb, what's the object. That's the gospel.

Maybe you didn't hear it growing up in Brooklyn or Antigua or Jamaica or Trinidad. Maybe you heard something about Jesus, but maybe it wasn't the pure gospel that God gave us in the word. They were faithful to the message.

God, help us to be faithful. Help us to be faithful. When we open our mouth, let it be about Jesus, not the Brooklyn tabernacle, not where we were born and how special our place of birth is or worse, our race, which is an accident of our birth.

Why would you want to brag on being white or black or anything? It's not like you chose it. You just woke up and that's what you were. Why not talk about the name that's above every other name? Come on, can we say amen to that? The name of Jesus.

Notice two other things. Number two, do you see how humble they were? They not only were faithful with the message, but notice how humble they are. God permits them to do a miracle with this lame person in Lystra who was lame from birth.

When they do it, the people are so out of it and so superstitious. They go off and they start screaming in the Lycaonian language. The gods have come down to earth.

The gods have come down to earth. It's not Paul and Barnabas. It's Zeus, it's Hermes.

And they start bowing down and worshiping them and shouting their name. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple is on the outskirts of the city, he brings some big old animals. They're gonna kill him as a sacrifice to these two men.

And they bring wreaths to put around their neck so they can be worshiped and celebrated as some great deity. Think of the temptation of that. Somebody calls you a god.

You could ask him for money. You could take advantage of them in a thousand ways. You could strut around like you're somebody.

You could say, hey, this is not bad. I kinda like Zeus. It's better than Barnabas.

Hermes is nicer than Paul. We could just set up shop here. Imagine the money and influence that they could have.

No. They run out and say, what are you doing? What are you doing? In the Greek language, here's what they said. We're men made just like you.

We have the same temptations. We're weak just like you. We're not gods.

You don't worship us. We came to tell you the good news of Jesus, that you could turn from these worthless things and you could serve Jesus and have the gift of eternal life. What humility.

When you read through the book of Acts, you see this over and over again. They were followers of Jesus in this way. Jesus was a humble lamb.

Jesus was meek and lowly. Come unto me, all you that labor and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, for I am meek and lowly. Take my yoke upon you.

And his followers were meek and lowly, not full of themselves. You know, if you're full of the devil, it can be cast out. But if you're full of yourself, that's another whole problem.

How many say amen? I've met people who are full of the devil, and that's one thing. They're few and far between. But then people who are full of themselves, oh my goodness.

It's all about us. Worse among preachers, especially if God gives them any blessing or success. They walk around like, I just read about some minister that if you have him come to you, either that gospel singer or minister, you have to fly them first class, and you have to have sushi or something waiting for them in the hotel room with their entourage.

Sounds a lot like Jesus, doesn't it? And another recently I heard of, and I think it's confirmable because three people have told me, there's one gentleman walking around who the security people and his entourage tells him, don't talk to him unless he talks to you. And don't make eye contact. That sounds so much like Jesus, doesn't it? And if he walks in a room, we suggest everybody stand when he walks in the room.

But that's in all of us. Left to ourselves, we all get full of ourselves, am I right? Come on, don't I get an amen? Pride, you don't have to teach pride. There's no classes in kindergarten for pride or in college.

That comes naturally, you have to teach humility. Because the human nature is selfish, and we want the honor, we wanna be called Zeus. We wanna be known as the best at what we are, or our island is the best, or our country is the best.

To walk meek and lowly like Paul and Barnabas, we need the grace of God. They were faithful in the message, and they were humble in their comportment of themselves and the way they just walked and acted, always humble. Remember what Jesus said? The Son of Man has come not to be served, but to serve others.

The idea of people bowing and kissing a minister or a religious official or his ring or bowing down before him, that is so far from Jesus that it's just sad, isn't it? The ministers are supposed to bow before the people and shine their shoes. We Christians are supposed to serve one another. You know who the greatest Christian is here in the building, don't you? Oh, I'll tell you, you didn't know who the best Christian

was in the whole place? I can't give you the person's name, but I can tell you it is, the biggest servant of all.

Jesus said that. In the world, he says, everyone wants to be the boss and say, hey, waiter, come over here. I don't like this thing.

Would you please get it fixed? What's wrong with this guy? He said the world loves that, to boss people around and have a title. He said, not among you. No, the one who is the lowest is the highest.

I'm not getting a lot of amens, but this is very good, very good sermon. The lowest, the one who serves the most, that's why the best Christians in heaven, when we see the rewards given out, we're not gonna even know their names because they were working behind the scenes as servants. They were in keepers of God's house.

They were in the prayer band. Not the big-name preachers, necessarily so. It's whoever serves.

Not to walk around bossing people, but serving people. Not dictators, servants. Not full of ourselves, full of Jesus, who took off his garment and washed the disciples' feet.

So what have we learned today from this? They were faithful in giving out the message everywhere they went. They were gonna give you Jesus, let us do the same. And they were humble, they were humble.

By the way, before I give you my last point here, do you ever notice, did you notice in this story why you can never trust people? Did anybody pick up what's in this story? Yo, listen, they were like, yo, Barnabas, Paul, you are now Zeus and Hermes. We wanna sacrifice to you, we bow down before you. And then some people come from the other towns where Paul and Barnabas were, and they turned the crowd against them, and then they stoned them.

They went from worshiping them to trying to kill them. Aren't there people like that in the world? And some of them we count as friends. But they're only friends to a point.

But in the body of Christ, we should always stick with each other. We don't turn because someone turned. If you ever meet someone who tries to turn you against another person, stop that person and rebuke them.

Why would you wanna turn me against my Christian brother or sister? Why'd you talk dirt? Why are you giving me this garbage about them? What's your motivation in this? It's not what Christians do. That's what the world does. Notice the crowd.

They were gonna sacrifice an animal and put wreaths around him, and now they hear some trash from someone, and now they're gonna kill him. Boy, you can't put your trust in people and the crowd, because the crowd is very fickle, isn't it? One minute they love you, the next minute they're gonna get rid of you, right? And there are people like that we know in life. As long as you stroke them the right way, they stroke you the right way.

The minute you do something that they take offense with, they'll throw you under the bus. Am I right or wrong? Amen. Ah, but among the body of Christ, as we're gonna close here, the body of Christ, we should be different.

We should always be protecting each other. Never let anyone put down another Christian. I had someone a couple years ago come in my office and said, I just feel you need to know this.

What do I need to know? Well, you need to know about a member of the church, because I saw them in a certain situation. Did you go to them? What do you mean? I said, let me try it again. Did you go to them? No, I didn't go to them.

Well, why'd you come to me? The Bible says if you see somebody sinning, you go to them. Try to help them. Are you with me here? Say amen.

Number two, you're telling me something that I don't know is true. How would I know that what you're saying is true? I wasn't there. And sometimes it's worse.

They tell you something they heard from somebody else. Who heard it from their titi chino or their cousin or somebody. Where does this end? So I said, well, you go to that person.

Oh, no, no, I don't wanna get involved. You don't wanna get involved. You just blackened that person's name to me.

You denigrated them, you slandered them, and now you're gonna tell me you don't wanna get involved. Well, isn't that nice? We shouldn't do that, brothers and sisters. We should be loyal to each other and defend each other.

Because we're the only family we got. You're the only family I have. Christians are the only brothers and sisters I have.

I have a brother and a sister, and they're both Christians, so they'll be with us all in eternity. But you are my family. I don't wanna meet anyone important.

I just wanna be with my family. So how brave and bold were our ancestors? They were not only faithful and kept giving Jesus. So whether you go to college, high school, you're in the business world, you teach in a school, tell people about Jesus.

Number two, as we learned there, walk humbly. Don't try to draw attention to yourself. Draw the attention to Christ.

Tell people you're just like them. There but for the grace of God goes me. Am I right or wrong? Left to ourselves, what sin wouldn't we commit? Given the right circumstances? Oh my goodness, we're capable of anything except for the grace of God.

Lastly, how brave were they? First of all, Paul got trapped and he got stoned. So they took off a derby because he somehow survived the stoning. Then they decide we can't go back to the home church that sent us out.

We gotta go back and strengthen the disciples in the cities where we've been. So they're in derby, they have a great evangelistic effort there and they win many to Christ. And now the thought comes up, let's go back and backtrack to the cities where we were so we can strengthen the believers.

Remember, there's no New Testament. You don't leave any reading material that hasn't been written yet. They don't have access, many of them, if they're Gentiles, to the Old Testament.

So it's verbal teaching about Jesus. But let's go back and strengthen them. Make sure they're praying together, loving each other.

Let's tell them more about Jesus. Paul, what are you talking about? You're gonna go back to Lystra? Yo, they stoned you there. You're gonna go back to Iconium? You just escaped by your whiskers out of there.

And then you wanna go back to Antioch where you had to shake the dust off your sandals because they were saying such abusive things about you? No, let's go to like a town where no one knows us. No, we gotta go back for the believers. Gotta strengthen the spiritual children.

How courageous are they? And there's no police that's gonna protect them. There's no security detail. There's nothing, there's nada a la Pakistan.

There's people there that just wanna do mayhem to them, but they're so bold, they're so strong. Our spiritual ancestors, we're here today because somebody was brave. We're here today because someone passed down the message, no matter what, we should be more bold.

We should ask the Holy Spirit, make me more faithful in spreading Jesus. Holy Spirit, give me more humility so I don't get full of myself, that I point people away from me. I tell pastors this, and even, maybe there's a visiting pastor.

Listen, so you take it in. It blessed me 20 something years ago when I first read it. I wrote it in the Bible I was studying from then.

You can't come across clever or great and have Jesus wonderful at the same time. You can't come across clever and wonderful and draw attention to yourself and have Jesus wonderful. Either you're gonna go down and he's gonna go up, or you're gonna go up and he's gonna go down, but you can't have both of you there.

And that's a good thing for us to remember. Let's go down so Jesus can be great. People ask about us, we can tell, I'm a sinner saved by grace.

No, no, you have a PhD. Yeah, but that's, anybody can get a PhD. I'm a sinner saved by grace.

Best thing about my life is Jesus has come in and forgiven me. Come on, let's say amen to that. He's pardoned me.

I'm a child of the king. And lastly, let's ask God for that boldness. We complain about someone looking cross-eyed at us if we mention Jesus.

You know, it's rough. The media's against Jesus. This is against Jesus.

You can't mention Jesus. You can go on TV and say you're a Buddhist. You can say anything and they'll listen to you.

You mention Jesus, a lot of times the fur begins to fly. Let's be bold, not obnoxious. Let's be polite.

Let's be kind. Let's be humble, but let's not be afraid. For God has not given us a spirit of fear.

He's given us a spirit of love and power, sound mind, boldness. So there's a lot to learn from our spiritual ancestors. They were faithful, they were humble, and they were brave.

Oh my goodness, were they brave. God help us to be worthy of our spiritual ancestors and of Jesus Christ, who was so faithful, who was so humble, oh, and brave to the point of the cross. Did you notice this last thing? I just use it as my ending here.

So they take Paul outside, they drag him. Imagine this, they drag him. They were just gonna worship him, now they're dragging him.

Never trust people. Trust God, put your trust in God. Don't put your trust in princes.

Don't put your trust in rulers. Don't put your trust in the Democrats or the Republicans. Don't put your trust in everyone.

They can flip in a second. Put your trust in God. So they drag him outside the town and they stone him.

Now the Bible is not clear here, and the commentators have different views. Did they kill him or not? Doesn't say. They thought he was dead.

How did the stones hit him? You know what stoning was, right? They weren't throwing pebbles. They were throwing stones this big and bigger, picking them up and throwing a guy who was then trapped, tied up. And then he's trying to dodge it and they kill him by stoning.

That was our ancestor, Paul. And people tell you if you serve Jesus, you'll never have a problem in life. So it doesn't say, was he knocked unconscious? Did he feign that he was unconscious? They pulled him out and they left him thinking he was dead.

They stoned him and then took him outside the town, left him for dead. Listen to how it ended. And the disciples made a circle around him and he got up.

How did he get up? Was he healed? Did he come back to consciousness? What happened when they made that circle around him? Is this not a beautiful picture? Here's their spiritual father lying, maybe bloodied. And the new believers, because that's all there were, they make a circle around their spiritual father. They must have just, oh God, help him.

Look how brave, he came here for us. You know what? When Christians make circles around people, a lot of good things happen. When you get a bunch of people praying for you, loving you, you can make it through stonings.

You can make it through a lot of good things. That's why, brothers and sisters, we gotta be unified. Folks are going through hell and high water here.

Come on, let's do real talk. People are going through things you can't imagine. I know, they know, because we counsel them.

They're going through unspeakable things. And what are we not gonna give them the time of day? Or should we love them and put a little circle around them? Let's close our eyes. I only want somebody who is near the end.

You just have been so battered and hurt, not by stones, but by life. And you're hurting today. You walked in here with a broken heart.

I don't care if there's just one of you. We're gonna make a circle around you. You get out of your seat and walk up here.

Come down from the balcony or come up to the front and say, pastor, I love Jesus, but it is hard right now. It is hard. It's hard.

Every eye closed. Pastor, I'm coming up because it's hard right now. I've been beat down by life, beat down by the devil attacking me.

I'm hanging by a thread inside, but I know my God is able. I just need someone to stand around me because that's the way it works. The perseverance of the saints is made up of 10,000 new beginnings.

The perseverance of the saints is made up of 10,000 new beginnings. Now, Lord, in closing, we stand around these people like they did Paul in Lystra. And we don't care what rocks have hit them.

We don't care what life has done, what attack of the devil. They are gonna get up and live today. They're gonna get up and serve Jesus Christ.

They're gonna have joy, the joy of the Lord, which is their strength. They're not gonna be depressed and go under. They're going over for they are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

Wipe away the tears like I can't. Heal hearts like I can't. Give strength to their spiritual bones and their physical body.

And we just thank you for Jesus. And we thank you for such wonderful spiritual ancestors who are faithful in speaking the truth in love, humble as they walk before people, and lastly, so bold, so brave. We thank you, Jesus, for your love for us.

Let everybody leave this building full of joy and gladness because Jesus is alive. Jesus is alive. Jesus is alive.

Come on, let's put our hands together as we say the final amen. Jesus is alive. Turn around and hug a bunch of people, everybody.

The Lord bless you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/25/SID25126.mp3>

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