***No Excuse for the Heathen, No. 2
RO08-01***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 1:19-20. This is the second segment. Our subject is "No Excuse for the Heathen."

You'll remember that verse 19 teaches that the existence of God may be known apart from the revelation of the Bible. There is a way that a human being can come to an awareness that God is out there, and that He exists. The word "known" in verse 19 implies a knowledge which establishes a relationship between the learner and the object of the information. In this way, man can come to God-consciousness. It is possible through normal capacities of our souls, which covers the heathen. Everybody has these normal soul capacities. It is possible through those alone to come to an awareness of the existence of God. So, all normally functioning souls have a mind that's capable of doing this. Only infants and morons are incapable of coming to God-consciousness.

**God-Consciousness**

When we speak of God-consciousness, we're referring to that point in time that every human being comes to where he is now accountable for his evil. His evil is of two kinds, as we showed you. All evil coming from the old sin nature will be either sins or human good, both of which he will be held accountable before God, and for which Christ died and made provision. But God-consciousness simply brings you to the realization that God is there. Therefore, there is a decision for you to make relative to that information, and to the conviction of evil that He will give consequent to that awareness. God-consciousness, in other words, is not salvation. But it is the step that, through positive volition, leads to receiving the gospel information which God will bring to that person.

It is not possible for a person to escape the lake of fire to go to heaven simply on the basis of the fact that they know God is out there. He must have that awareness, but he must be positive toward it, and then he must also receive Christ as personal Savior, upon being brought the information of the gospel. So, this is no way to indicate that creation somehow will enable a person to go to heaven: so that you don't need missionaries; or, so that you don't need Christians witnessing. That isn't what is implied here at all.

**From Creation**

What is it exactly that a person can come to know about God from creation? That's what verse 20 deals with, and we begin with that now. Paul says, "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen; being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." Romans 1:20 begins with the word "for." This is the Greek word "gar." This little word "gar" is a signpost. It indicates that an explanation is now to follow – this explanation having to do with what was said in verse 19.

**The Invisible Things**

Verse 19 gave us this principle: "God-manifested it unto them." Verse 20 is going to tell us what it is that God has made known to every human being. What is it that God has manifested, and for which a human being can be held responsible? The thing that He has manifested are, first of all, described as "the invisible things." The Greek word is "aoratos." "Aoratos" simply means "unseen." It is the subject of this sentence. So, it actually goes with "clearly seen." The invisible things are clearly seen. That's the idea here in this sentence: "For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen. Connect those two together. "Of Him," of course, refers to God.

**The Attributes of God**

Now, what are the invisible things that every normal human being can understand concerning God – an understanding of such infinite value that it will establish a personal relationship between you and the living God? Well, "the invisible things" refer to the attributes of God (the qualities of God) which cannot be seen. We shall see here in a moment that these refer specifically to His eternal power and to His divinity. These are things that we cannot see. Therefore, these are things that, through the senses, we cannot directly come to. We cannot directly (since God is invisible – God is spirit) come to recognize His great eternal power; nor, can we recognize and come to know any of the rest of His attributes.

**Creation**

So, God must sovereignly choose to reveal Himself to man, and to reveal Himself in some way that man can grasp the information. There is some information about God that we can simply take in through the mind via the senses. But there is other information that must come as a direct revelation of the Word of God. "For the invisible things (the attributes – the character qualities of God) from the creation of the world." The phrase "from the creation of the world" begins with the word "from" which is the Greek word "apo," indicating direction away from. And the word "creation" is the Greek word "ktisis," and it really means an act of creation.

What he is speaking up here is specifically the act of creation which is described in the book of Genesis – that period of six 24-hour days where God restored the original creation. This is an act of creation having to do with what he calls "the world." The Greek word is the word "kosmos." "Kosmos" refers to the universe, but it looks at the universe as an orderly system – all that constitutes the universe as having an orderly relationship with each part to another. That's the idea of "kosmos" here. It's not something in any disorderly fashion. It is an orderly arrangement that is the result of the work of God. This is grammatically, in what is called an objective genitive, which means that it's the result of the creating activity of God. "Kosmos" is the result of what God is doing. Creation is not the result of the "Kosmos" itself. There could be a different kind of genitive which would indicate, as evolution teaches, that the world is creating itself.

So, this is describing what Psalm 8:3 refers to, where the psalmist says, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained." This is referring to an act of God's creation. This is something which He has done. The "kosmos" is the result of the creative work of God. It is not something that performed a work of creation itself.

**Clearly Seen**

From the time of God's work or creation, described in the book of Genesis, the universe has testified to the existence of God, and to His invisible attributes. This is what creation tells us. We'll see this a little more exactly as we go along. Right now, understand that Paul is saying here that the creation reveals something about God. As a matter of fact, he says, "It reveals it clearly." He says, "These things are clearly seen." The word "clearly seen" is the Greek word "kathorao." The "kath" is from the preposition "kata," which indicates a complete, perfect condition. It is what we call a perfective force – a perfected idea. So, we say it is not just seen (not just discerned), but clearly discerned, because the universe is not just the so-so declaration that there is a God out there. The Bible says that the universe is a very clear declaration of the handwork of God. And it is a deliberate, willful, negative reaction that cannot see that the universe declares a God out there who has meant this.

For example, in Psalm 19:1-3, the psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork; day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard." There just is no place on the face of the earth where the testimony of the handiwork of God in creation is not seen, and clearly seen. That's the point – clearly seen. This verb is in the present tense, which means that, since the time of creation, the presence and the invisible things about God (His attributes) have been manifested. It is passive, which means that the visible handiwork of God is automatically manifested out there in creation. It is indicative, indicating a statement of fact.

**"Unseeable"**

Here is something that maybe we can convert into English. In the Greek Bible, it is an interesting play on words to emphasize what God the Holy Spirit is referring to and is revealing here. It's a play on these words: "aorata," which we've said means unseen, and this word "kathorao," which means clearly seen. They both come from "horao," which means "to see." So, it says, "On the one hand, "aorata;" against, on the other hand "kathorao." To convert this into English, we might say: "His unseeable attributes are clearly seen," coming from the verb "see" again – "see" here in "unseeable" as "see" in "seen." And that's what, in reading the Greek, a similar play on words as in this English sentence: "His unseeable attributes are clearly seen," which is seemingly like a contradiction – that something which is unseeable, God should make clearly seen. But that's the point. That's the punch of this thing by putting these words against one another.

**Being Understood**

"For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen; being understood." "Being understood" is the little Greek word "noeo." It means to perceive, but with the mind – to understand something with your thinking. That is the critical factor here. This is why every human being is guilty before God of his evil – because of the fact that he has a mind that functions, and therefore, he can grasp certain things: certain things that God is making clear. It explains "clearly seen." Why are these things clearly seen? Because something is understood. Thus, what cannot be known about God through the senses (His invisible essence) yet can be known in mental conception (in mental ideas). What we cannot grasp by seeing, we can grasp by thinking.

So, the functioning of the mentality of the heathen, in reference to the things that are made, will reveal to them the attributes of God.

"The things that are made" is the Greek word "poiema," from which we get the English word "poem." And "poiema" is in the dative case, so it means "by means of" – "by means of what is made." You relate it to "being understood:" "Being understood by means of what is made." We can translate it: "Understood by means of the things that are made;" that is, creation.

So, what we have seen Paul saying so far is that there are some things about God that we cannot see with our senses. But we clearly see these things about God from material things that we can enter into with our senses; namely, the world of creation. These things, about God's invisible things, are therefore clearly seen to us, because we understand them as the result of the things that are made – the works of creation.

This word "noeo" is present tense. We always can perceive this. It is passive. It's by the natural working of our minds as a result of what we see. And it is a participle. It is explaining a principle of perception.

What is it that God reveals to the reason? What is it that God revealed such that He says is so important and so vital that a person can actually be condemned justly to the lake of fire because he has this information – that God will hold him accountable for this? Well, here it is. The last part of verse 20 identifies the specific, invisible things of God which condemn every heathen. This is a very limited area of information that a person can secure through natural revelation, but it is enough to condemn him. Beyond this, we have to have the revelation of the Bible. If you do not have the revelation of the Bible to add to the revelation of what you see in the universe, then you will wander off into making guesses; speculations; assumptions; conjectures; and, monumental credulity. The things that people believe about religious matters that are absolutely unbelievable and unfathomable, to anybody that knows anything about the Bible, are because they are operating outside of the information of the Word of God.

You don't have to talk very long to the average unbeliever (to the man on the street) to realize how incredibly naive he is as to the things that he will believe and express concerning God; concerning sin; concerning himself; and, so on. All of this is the result of the fact that people who do not go beyond the revelation of nature come to a dead end. It's a brick wall. And from then on, they wander off into a morass of ignorance.

So, all that creation reveals is that there is a person out there who is supreme – God as a Supreme Being.

So, the latter part of verse 20 begins: "Even His eternal power." The word "even" is not in the Greek Bible. There is this little particle "te," and it indicates that what is now going to follow is closely connected with what precedes. It's even closer than our usual word for "and" ("kai"). This shows a very close connection between the two. It is a deliberate word that the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, put in there in order to make clear why it is that people can be condemned for this information – because they get some very important information concerning God from nature.

**Eternal Power of God**

This is described, first of all, as eternal power of God. The word "eternal" is the Greek word "aidios." This word stresses the idea of permanence and unchangeableness. It excludes the idea of an interruption. Actually, to translate this more accurately into English, it would be "everlasting." "Everlasting" conveys the idea that a thing never is interrupted. That's what this word "aidios" means – that there is something about a power that God has which is never interrupted.

**Everlasting**

In English, we do have the word "eternal," but this is a better translation of another Greek word "aionios." This word is used in 2 Corinthians 4:18: "While we look not at things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." "Aionios" describes the idea of "no end in the future." It just simply means that there's never going to be an end out there to something. But it might be interrupted along the line. However, "everlasting" means that it's never going to be interrupted. That is the word which Paul uses here in Romans: "aidios" ("everlasting").

**A Power**

This uninterrupted thing is called "a power." It's the Greek word "dunamis," from which we get our English word "dynamite." This is power in an inherent sense. It is power in the inherent abilities. It is power, in this case, for God to produce a creation such as the universe we live in, and then to keep it going. When a person who is not a believer, in the dark jungles of someplace, looks out upon creation, he can immediately see that it took some kind of monumental power to put all this together; to bring it into being; to put it in an orderly relation (a "kosmos" order); and, then to keep this thing functioning – to hold the whole thing together.

Well, the Bible tells us that exactly. It tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the force which is keeping all of the atomic structure of matter together. He holds it together. The scientist still today says, "Well, we can tell what's related to what, but we cannot tell you why this atom hangs under onto this electron, and why this neutron holds on here. There is some kind of a magnetic, electrical force, and what causes it, we can't explain." Well, it's the force of the Lord Jesus Christ who is holding these things together.

Now, a heathen can come to that piece of information – a tremendous power. There is somebody out there of such magnificent power that He can make all this, including me, with the capacities that I have that are so different from animals. Therefore, he must reflect something infinitely more than I am, because if I am what I am, in the way of a material and immaterial being, then He's not just a dumb idol made of gold or wood or stone.

So, there's a power out here, and a power which is everlasting (uninterrupted), because all of this keeps moving, and all of this keeps organized. Nothing is in a disorderly way.

Now, the heathen does not know the scientific things that we know. The heathen does not know what would happen to the earth if it did not continue rotating at the speed at which it does rotate. There are tremendous things that would happen immediately if it were slowed down just a little bit. All he knows is from what he can see with his senses, and that's impressive enough. When we have the scientific facts that we know, then we can even more readily appreciate the power that God has.

**Infinite Wisdom**

So, this is power to create and to sustain. The heathen sees this. It reveals a universe in which there is an uninterrupted force. If the Supreme Being's power is everlasting, then that tells the heathen something about the One who has that power. He too must be everlasting. He too must be eternal. This power indicates an infinite wisdom. It really took some know-how and thinking capacity to put all this together in such a relationship.

Again, when the astronomer gives us his information; when the biologist gives us what he knows; and, when all the various disciplines and studies from all fields of learning tell us what they know – well, we are even more impressed with the design and the thinking and the wisdom that was behind all this. Obviously, it's pretty hard for us to swallow the evolutionary concept that this is all chance. The ultimate ignorance of the chance concept is expressed in such a question as you have probably had posed to you: which came first: the chicken; or, the egg? You go around and ask people that question, and what you will discover will be a puzzled look on their face. They will say, "Let's see: which would have come first anyhow: the chicken; or the egg?" And that'll tell you a great deal about how often they go to Sunday school, as well as any number of other things. But that is an expression of the ignorance (the limitations) of what we can see. It takes indeed the information of the Bible. Nevertheless, it does show what is out there – that there is wisdom.

So, whoever that person is out there, He's got infinite wisdom. It also shows His goodness. This world is a magnificent place to live. One of the things that the astronauts continue to be impressed with, when we started going out into space, was that the earth, as they looked back upon it, was a colorful, beautiful gem set there in the universe. And as they'd looked at other things in the universe, out in the blackness of space, they saw nothing else that had the beauty and attractiveness of planet earth.

Well, just to live on this planet, and just to travel around it, to see the magnificent things that God has put together in the world of nature, as well as what it will produce, as well as the mineral wealth that God has put into it that means so much in a sophisticated, advanced civilization like ours in the way of a standard of living, and the things we make from these minerals that God has put in the earth. It's a very impressive goodness indeed. This person (whoever made this) is recognized even by the heathen as being a good person.

Also, the power includes the ability, of course, to create man, not the least of which the heathen observed is that he himself is there, and: "Somebody made me. He made me different, obviously, than animals. So, this is one thing. One thing the heathen is going to be sent to the lake of fire for is because he looks out there, and he recognizes that there is an uninterrupted power: a power that is good; a power that is great wisdom; a power that is somehow to be reckoned with; a power that can make him; and, a power that can sustain, and now he's responsible to do something with that information. He will do one of two things. His mind may say, "I'd like to know Him," and that is what we call positive volition to God-consciousness, as the result of being aware of the power of someone out there as the result of this universe.

They even can even be held guilty of realizing that it's a personal power – a person who's out there, because you are a person, and if He made you, and you are a person, then He too must be the person. He would not make something higher than Himself.

**Divine Power**

There's one other thing that we are told the heathen will discover from the world of nature. This is described as Godhead – His eternal power and Godhead. The word "Godhead" in English you will find in the King James Version twice. It is used only two times in the Bible in the English translation, but it is two different Greek words, as so often happens in the King James Version. Both of these Greek words are significant. One of them is significant because Paul did not use it; and, the other one, therefore, is all the more significant as to why he used it. The word that he uses in Romans 1:20 is the Greek word "theiotes." "Theiotes" comes from another word "theios," and "theios" means "divine." "Theios" is describing the power of deity. When the word "theios" is used, it indicates divine power. It is dealing with an attribute.

**Godhead**

So, in other words, the word from which our first word for "Godhead" comes from is a word that connotes attributes of God. You have this used, for example, in 2 Peter 1:3 – this word "theios." Peter says, "According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." Here it is translated as "divine." It is a power that provides for human needs. It is also used in Acts 17:29. I'm talking about the word from which the word "Godhead" comes from. Paul is speaking to the philosophers at Athens, and Paul says, "For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like gold or silver or stone carved by art and man's device. Here it is translated "Godhead." The word "Godhead" actually has two Greek words, but it is also used to translate this word "theios," which is related to "theiotes." Here he talks about the Godhead, and what he is referring to here is supreme powers.

He speaking to the Greek philosophers of Athens, and he's telling them that all human beings are the offspring of one supreme power. And what he is stressing here again is the attribute. Paul used the word "theios" instead of the more common word that we know for God "theos." I'll show you why in a minute. But all the Greek philosophers, when they spoke about a powerful divine being, they would use this word "theos." So, Paul, at that point, was simply speaking to them of a power which is reflected in the nature of man.

So, he say, "The power that has made us is not a power which is like gold or silver or stone carved by man's abilities. That power has to be personal."

So, "theiotes" looks at the Godhead in terms of the attributes of God. It does not look at God as absolute deity. It does not look at Him as a person. Creation cannot reveal God as a person to you. That's the point. When Paul says, "You can learn something from creation," what you can learn is about the attributes of God, which he called "the invisible things." You can't learn about God as a person. You will never come to know God as a person until somebody comes to you and introduces you to the Lord Jesus Christ. Only the Bible reveals God to us as a personal being as absolute deity.

This world is a vague word, and it is different from this other word for Godhead, which is "theotes." Now you will notice that the difference between "theotes" and "theiotes" is simply one letter, the Greek letter "iota" (the letter "i"). That makes the difference between the two, but there is a world of difference between these two words. You have this one used in Colossians 2:9, where Paul says, "For in Him (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Now "theotes" comes from our normal word for God: "theos." "Theos" simply means deity in terms of a person. It refers to God in the absolute sense of deity. This is not a reference to the attributes. That's what "theiotes" refers to. But "theotes" refers to absolute deity.

You can see what Colossians 2:9 says, and why it uses this word, that in the Lord Jesus Christ, there was a physical body. There was a man in whom dwelt all the absolute deity – all of God. He was true God – 100% absolute deity. That is very important. It would have been very bad had Paul used this "theiotes," because that would have simply that Jesus Christ was a good man who had a spark of divinity in Him. Now that is what the liberals say. They look upon Jesus Christ as having a spark of divinity. That is why we notice in the writing of the early church fathers (the Greek fathers) that they never refer to the Lord Jesus Christ by "theiotes," because that simply would have meant that he was a man with a spark of divine quality. They always spoke of Jesus Christ as "theotes," meaning absolute deity.

So, we may translate Colossians 2:9 in this way: "For in Him (Jesus Christ) there is continuously and permanently at home all the fullness of absolute deity in bodily fashion;" that is, in the God-man Jesus Christ (in His physical body) there resided absolute deity – no mere spark of divinity. He was God before His incarnation. He was God (absolute and perfect) after His incarnation.

So, "theotes" is not used in Romans 1:20. You will not learn God as absolute deity from nature. You will not come to know God as a person. But from nature you will find "theotes" (His attributes). You will learn the invisible things about Him. We should probably translate the word "theotes" by the word "divine," and "theiotes" by the word "deity." That's why it is not a good idea to talk about the divinity of Jesus Christ. Always speak of the deity. This is one of the tricks that they liberals do. They speak about the divinity of Jesus Christ. If you know these two words for "Godhead," you'll immediately catch what they're doing. They're using this Greek word "theotes" which speaks of attributes.

So, some of them will go so far as to say that all of you have the spark of divinity in you, meaning that all of you have some kind of a spark of God that's already there, and all somebody has to do is fan it into furor and a fire, and you're okay. Whereas, the Bible tells us that we're completely dead in trespasses and sins, and we need a whole new act of regeneration to get a fire going.

Now let’s go back to Romans 1:20. The things that creation shows us are God's eternal power and Godhead in terms of attributes (the invisible things) concerning Him. Now we come to what this is all about. What was the point of all this on the part of Paul?

"So that." This is the Greek word "eis," indicating a result. We may translate it as "resulting in" – the implication of all this information through the senses from creation: "So that they are." "They" is referring to the heathen. This is the Greek word "eimi." It is present, so it's always true. It is active voice, which means by God's provision, but it is infinitive. Here it is indicating a result which was God's purpose. Infinitives can show result and purpose. This is more, perhaps, to be looked at as a result, but it indicates what God' purpose was: "Resulting in their being" is the way that we can translate it: "Even His eternal power and His godhead (His attributes) resulting in their being without excuse."

There is the chilling word: "anapologetos." Anapologetos" means "without excuse." This is a legal term. This is a term used in a court of Greek law. And it is a term which meant that there was no legal defense. It's a beautiful word – no legal defense for any heathen on the face of the earth who dies, having come to a point of accountability as the result of what he saw in nature, and then did not respond positively to it. The heathen all come through creation to God-consciousness. There was never one who lived who did not. He sees the eternal uninterrupted power to create and sustain. And he sees the invisible divine attributes of God. From what is visible to his senses, a functioning mentality will realize that God exists. This places every heathen under divine indictment. So verse 19 can truly say: "God has shown it unto them." And verse 20 can justifiably say: "They are without excuse."

So, that's the state of the heathen. Science has many examples of the same thing, where unseen things are evidenced by things that are seen. There are different ways that scientists can show you the movement of atoms, but you can't ever see the atoms. You just see the effects. All of nature reflects the effects of the invisible attributes of God, and thus of His existence, in the same way. You can't see His attributes, but you can see the effects of His attributes.

If you were a student in a college physics class, and you insisted that you didn't believe atoms existed because you couldn't see them, and your professor proceeded to give various class demonstrations where effects were taking place, and you could see what was happening, he would say, "You see, this is an atom doing this. Do you see this streak here through this cloud chamber? That's an atom shooting through there; and, so on." You might say, "Well, I can't see the atom. I don't believe it." And when you talk like that on the exam, you'll fail the course. And you might come and say, "But, professor, I can't see the atom. I can't tell you these things. I can't answer this question like that. Show me the atom, and then I can answer the question the way you want them answered." The professor will say, "Get lost. You are without excuse." Why? Because the invisible atom has been demonstrated to you by the things you could see.

That's exactly what a genuinely wonderful God has done for all of us. Ignorance of God is a result of deliberate negative volition toward the testimony of creation. So, there's no excuse and no escape.

What should your response be? Recognize the evidence concerning God as true, and seek to know Him. The true physicist; the true astronomer; and, the savage in the forest – whatever you are, recognize that He is there. God's fuller revelation will then come to you in the form of the gospel. And you may exercise positive addition to that. But the old sin nature within you will want to be a rebel to reject the information and the evidence of creation.

We are constantly being entertained with ideas of the heights to which mankind can rise. That's a satanic notion. Mankind, as you will see, as we get into the rest of Romans 1, started up high, and then he evolved downward. Don't expect any great heights for humanity. Only expect things to go downhill. Therefore, do not find confidence in yourself. Recognize that all that you are is the grace of God in operation.

However, one day, God's patience is going to be at an end, and the God who is love is going to become a God who exercises wrath. So, don't use your natural capacities to reject Him, because he's going to hold you accountable for what you use your natural capacities to do. If you reject the evidence that has been given to you for His existence, you will be held accountable for it. Don't push Him away, but rather welcome Him. And then you will indeed have the beginning of days in spiritual things.

Romans 1:19-20 is very wonderfully summed up in the words of an early 18th century writer, Joseph Addison, set to a melody by Franz Haydn. I'll read you the words. Incidentally, as I read these, this is an example of hymns that have literary quality. Sometimes we wish that we could write some better words for some of our hymns. Sometimes people try to write hymns, like him, but they come out sounding like Russian propaganda literature. Russian literature is tilted from the beauty of literature that it once used to produce in pre-communist days. Russian literature is tilted because it's trying to get a message through to propagandize for the great, wonderful woman who gets up in the morning; takes her children to the nursery; and, puts in a wonderful socialist day of work. Now, it's pretty hard to put that kind of stuff into words that have literary quality.

However, Joseph Addison took some scriptural truths (some great, marvelous truths) out of Romans 1:19-20, and he put it together in a very magnificent way:

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue, ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim:
The unwearied sun from day-to-day,
Does His Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth:
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move around the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine,
Thy hand that made us is divine.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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