

The Plea of Faith

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes that true faith rests solely on the promises of God's Word, urging believers to know, trust, and boldly claim God's promises as the foundation of their spiritual life.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:25, John 5:39, Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 7:6

Topics: "Faith", "Scripture", "God's Promises"

Description

In "The Plea of Faith," C.H. Spurgeon passionately exhorts believers to ground their faith exclusively on the promises of God's Word. He highlights the neglect of Scripture reading as a root cause of division and error, and encourages Christians to boldly claim God's promises in prayer. Spurgeon's devotional message calls for a simple, confident faith that trusts God's Word above all else, leading to spiritual growth and assurance.

Transcript

"Do as thou hast said."—2 Samuel 7:25.

NATHAN had been giving to David, on God's behalf, sundry exceeding great and precious promises. David expresses his gratitude to God for having so promised, and he says, "Now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said."

It is a prayer to God. Those words naturally flowed from his lips: after hearing such precious promises, he was anxious for their fulfilment. Such words will be equally in place, if they shall be adopted by us in these modern times, and if, after reading a promise, on turning to God's Word, we should finish by saying, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," it will be a practical application of the text, "Do as thou hast said."

I shall not commence my sermon to-night by endeavoring to prove that this Bible is what God has said; I do not come here to give you arguments to prove the inspiration of Scripture; I assume that I speak to a Christian congregation, and I assume, therefore, at starting, that this is God's word and none other. Leaving that matter, then, altogether, permit me to proceed at once to the text, understanding by what God has said, the Scriptures of his truth; and I trust there are some here who will be led, to-night, to cry to God in behalf of some promise made to their souls, "O Lord, do as thou hast said."

I. Our first remark shall be HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KNOW WHAT GOD HAS SAID, for unless we know what God has said, it will be folly to say, "do as thou hast said." Perhaps there is no book more neglected in these days than the Bible. I do verily believe there are more mouldy Bibles in this world than there are of any sort of neglected books. We have stillborn books in abundance; we have innumerable books which never see any circulation except the circulation of the butter shop, but we have no book that is so much bought, and then so speedily laid aside, and so little used, as the Bible. If we buy a newspaper, it is generally handed from one person to another, or we take care to peruse it pretty well; indeed some go so far as to read advertisements and all. If a person purchases a novel, it is well known how he will sit and read it all the way through, till the midnight candle is burnt out; the book must be finished in one day, because it is so admirable and interesting; but the Bible, of course, in the estimation of many, is not an interesting book; and the subjects it treats of are not of any very great importance. So most men think; they think it is a very good book to carry out on a Sunday, but never meant to be used as a book of pleasure, or a book to which one could turn with delight. Such is the opinion of many; but no opinion can be more apart from the truth; for what book can treat of truths one-half so important as those that concern the soul. What book can so well deserve my attention as that which is written by the greatest of all authors, God himself? If I must read a valuable book with attention, how much more ought I to give my mind to the study of that book which is invaluable, and which contains truth without the slightest admixture of error? And if books upon my health, or books which only concern the doings of my fellow creatures occupy some of my time, and deservedly so, how much more time should I spend in reading that which concerns my everlasting destiny; which reveals to me worlds hitherto unknown; which tells me how I may escape from hell and fly to heaven? But I must remark, that even among Christian people, the Bible is one of the least read books that they have in their house. What with our innumerable magazines, our religious newspapers, and our perpetual controversies about the Bible, it is too seldom that people read the Bible. There certainly is not that reading of it that there used to be. Our predecessors, the ancient Puritans, would scarcely read any book but that; and if a book was not concerning the Bible, they did not care about reading it at all. Perhaps therein they may have been too strait and narrow, and may somewhat have cramped their minds; but I would rather have a little truth, and have a mind filled with that, though that mind should only be as large as a nutshell, than have the most gigantic intellect, and have that crammed with error. It is not the greatness of our intellect, it is the rightness of it, that makes us men in this world, and right men before God. I beseech you, therefore, you who are members of Christian churches, if you have but little time, do not expend it in reading ephemeral books, but take your Bible and read it constantly; and I promise you one thing, that if you are already Christians, the more you read the Bible the more you will love it. You may find it hard, perhaps, at present, to read a short passage and meditate upon it all day; but as you proceed you will see such depths unfathomable, such heights beyond your ken; and you will discover such unutterable sweetness in this precious honey-comb dropping with drops of honey, that you will say, "I must have more of it," and your spirit will always cry, "Give, give;" nor will it be content until you can have God's statutes upon your mind daily, to be your songs in the house of your pilgrimage.

The errors of this present age have sprung from a non-reading of the Bible. Do you think, my brethren, that if we all read the Scriptures with judgment, and desired to know them rightly, there would be so many sects as there are? Heresies and schisms have sprung from this; one man has gone a little astray upon a point; another man, without referring to Scripture, has endorsed all he has said; another one has added something else to it; and then another one, being cunning, full of subtlety of the devil, has twisted passages of Scripture, and has woven them into a system, which has been fashioned in the first place by mistake, has accumulated and become more colossal by sundry other mistakes which naturally accrued to it, and at last has been perfected by the craft of designing heretics.

And, again: bigotry, ill feeling, and uncharitableness, must all be traced, in a large degree, to our want of reading the Bible. What is the reason why yon man hates me, because I preach what I believe to be right? If I do speak the truth am I responsible for his hating me? Not in the least degree. I am sometimes told by my people that I attack certain parties very hard. Well, I cannot help it; if they are not right, it is not my fault—if they come in my way, that I am compelled to run over them. Suppose two of you should be driving in the road to-morrow, and one of you should be on the right side of the road, and some accident should occur, you would say, “Sir, the other man ought to have pulled up, he must pay the damages, for he had no business there at all on his wrong side.” And it will be the same with us if we preach God’s truth; we must go straight on; if the greatest ill-feeling in the world rise up we have nothing to do with it. God’s truth will sometimes bring about warfare; Jesus Christ, you know, said himself that he came to put warfare between man and man; to set the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against mother-in-law; and that a man’s foes should be those of his own household. But if there be ill-feeling, if there be clamouring of sects, to whom is it due? Who is responsible for it? Why, the man who makes the new sects, not the man who abides fast and firm by the old one. If I am safely moored by a good strong anchor of fundamental truth, and some other shall strike my vessel and sink himself, I will not pay the damages. I stand firm: if others chose to go away from the truth, to cut their cables and slip their moorings; then let them. God grant that we may not do the same. Hold the truth, my friends, and hold it as the easiest method of sweeping away heresies and false doctrines. But now-a-days, you know, you are told, “Oh, it does not matter what you believe; doctrines are nothing;” and they have tried lately to make a very happy family of us, like the happy family near Waterloo Bridge, where all kinds of creatures are shut up together; but they are only kept in order by a lath which the man, when we turn our heads, applies between the bars of the cage. Just so with denominations; they want to amalgamate us all. We differ in various doctrines, and therefore some of us must be wrong, if we hold doctrines which are directly hostile to each other. But we are told, “It does not signify; doubtless, you are all right.” Now, I cannot see that. If I say one thing, and another man says another, how, by all that is holy, can both speak the truth? Shall black and white be the same colour? Shall falsehood and truth be the same? When they shall be, and fire shall sleep in the same cradle with the waves of the ocean, then shall we agree to amalgamate ourselves with those who deny our doctrines, or speak evil of what we believe to be the gospel. My brethren, no man has any right to absolve your judgment from allegiance to God; there is liberty of conscience between man and man, but there is none between God and man. No man has a right to believe what he likes; he is to believe what God tells him; and if he does not believe that though he is not responsible to man, or to any set of men, or to any government, yet mark you, he is responsible to God. I beseech you, therefore, if you would avoid heresies, and bring the church to a glorious union, read the Scriptures. Read not so much man’s comments, or man’s books, but read the Scriptures, and keep your faith on this,—“God has said it.” If you cannot make all God’s truths agree, yet remember God has not made two sets of truth opposite to each other; that were an impossibility which even God himself could not accomplish mighty though he be. My brethren, always stand by what God has said, and do not be turned aside from it by all the arguments that can be brought to bear against you. “Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Christ.”

II. And now for our second point, ALL THAT FAITH WANTS TO BUILD UPON IS WHAT GOD HAS SAID. “Do as thou hast said.” The only solid foothold that faith has is, “It is written, God hath said it.” When a sinner comes to God he must have nothing else to rely upon except this, “Do as thou hast said.” There is a tendency in most men’s minds to bring before God something which he did not say. Many of you, I dare say, will go and ask God in prayer for something for which you cannot prove a positive promise that he will ever give it to you. You go to God and say, “Lord, do as John Bunyan said, do as Whitfield said, let me have an experience like theirs.” Now, that is all wrong. We must, when we come to God, say only, “Lord,

do as thou hast said.” And then, again, I do believe that many of those who are members of our churches have not put their faith simply in what God has said. If I were to go round to some of you and ask you why you believe yourselves to be Christians, it is marvellous what strange reasons many of you would bring. It is very singular what strange views persons often have as to the way of salvation. It is hard to bring a sinner to God simply with this,—“Lord, do as thou hast said.”

I know some who think themselves to be God's children, because they dreamed they were. They had a very remarkable dream one night, and if you were to laugh at them they would be unutterably indignant; they would cut you at once out of the family of God, and call you an “accuser of the brethren.” They do not rely upon what God has said in the Bible; but they had some singular vision, when deep sleep had fallen upon them, and because of that vision, they reckon they are children of God. In the course of my seeing persons who come to me, I hear every now and then a story like this, “Sir, I was in such-and-such a room, and suddenly I thought I saw Jesus Christ, and heard a voice saying such-and-such a thing to me, and that is the reason why I hope I am saved.” Now, that is not God's way of salvation; the sinner is not to say, “Lord, do as I dreamed, do as I fancy;” but “Do as thou hast said.” And if I have any one here who has never had a dream, or vision, he does not want to have, if he goes to God with this, “Lord, thou hast said Christ died to save sinners, I am a sinner, save me,” that is faith, “Do as thou hast said.” But there are other persons far more rational, who if they were asked the reason for their supposing that they are saved, would speak of some remarkable rhapsody which, on a particular occasion they had when hearing a certain minister; or of a particular text which struck them suddenly, and transported them to the seventh heaven, and they had such thoughts as they never had before. “Oh! sir,” they say, “it is marvellous, I thought my heart would break, it was so full of joy and gladness; I never felt so before in all my life; and when I went out of the house, I felt so light and so ready to run home, I thought I should sing all the way; so I know I must be a child of God.” Well, you may know it, but I don't, because there are many persons who have been deluded by the devil in that fashion, who never had faith in Christ. Faith in Christ never rests in rhapsody; it rests on a “thou hast said it.” Ask faith whether it will ever take its standing on anything but a “thou hast said,” and faith will answer, “No; I cannot climb to heaven on a ladder made of dreams, they are too flimsy to bear my feet.” Faith, why dost thou not march on? Why dost thou not cross that bridge? “No,” says faith, “I cannot; it is made up of rhapsodies, and rhapsodies are intoxicating things, and I cannot place my feet upon them.” Faith will stand on a promise, though it be no bigger than grain of mustard seed; but it could not stand on a rhapsody if it was as large as the everlasting mountains. Faith can build on a “thou hast said it;” but it cannot build on frames and feelings, on dreams and experiences—it only relies on this—“Thou hast said it.” Let me caution my hearers against suppositions, which some of them have as to salvation. Some persons think that the Holy Spirit is a kind of electric shock working in the heart; that there is some mysterious and terrible thing they cannot understand, which they must feel, not only very different from what they ever felt before, but even superior to anything described in God's Word. Now, I beg to tell you, that so far from the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit being a dark thing in its manifestation, it is, because it is the Holy Spirit, a thing of simplicity and light. The way of salvation is no great mystery, it is very plain; it is “believe and live.” And faith needs no mysteries to hang itself upon; it catches hold of the bare naked promise, and it says, “Lord, do as thou hast said.”

My faith can on this promise live; I know that on this promise it never can die. But faith wants neither testimonies of man, nor learning of philosophers, nor eloquence of orators, nor rhapsodies, nor visions, nor revelations. It wants nothing else but what God has said applied to the heart; and it goes to God, and says, “Lord, do as thou hast said.”

III. And now for the third remark. We see that faith is a very bold thing; when God says a thing it goes to God, and says, "Lord, do as thou hast said."

My third remark is, that FAITH IS QUITE RIGHT IN SO DOING. The Lord always meant, when he said a thing, that we should remind him of it. God's promises were never meant to be waste paper; he meant that they should be used. Whenever God gives a promise, if a man does not use that promise, the promise fails in effect to that man, and God's great intention therein is in some measure frustrated. God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money, and I take it and use it. But oh! my friend, do try and use God's promises; nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said." And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use his promises. Do you think that God will be any the poorer for giving you the riches he has promised? Do you think he will be any the less holy for giving holiness to you? Do you think he will be any the less pure for washing you from your sins? And he has said, "Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red, they shall be whiter than snow." Faith gets hold of that promise, and it does not stand saying, "this is a precious promise, I will look at it;" it goes right up to the throne, and says, "Lord, here is the promise, do as thou hast said." And God says, "Oh! faith, I am as glad to see the promise brought to me, as thou art to bring it; I meant my promise to be used, and the using of it glorifies me." Why, if any one gave us a cheque, and we did not go to have it cashed, though we might want the money badly enough, suppose we said, "I don't like to go," there would be some slur cast upon the character of the man whose signature had made it valid. And so when a Christian gets a promise, if he does not take it to God, he dishonors him. But when faith in all its raggedness and poverty, and sickness about it, goes to God and says, "Lord, I have nothing to recommend me but this, 'thou hast said it:' there is the promise, Lord, give me the fulfilment." God smiles, and says, "Ay, my child, I love to see thee trust me; there, take back the fulfilment, and go on thy way rejoicing." Never think that God will be troubled by your asking him about his promises so much. God likes to be troubled, if I may use such an expression; he likes you to go to his door, and say, "Great Banker, cash this note; great Promiser, fulfil this promise; great covenant God, fulfil thy covenant, and send me not empty away." "Do as thou hast said," is a legitimate request; we ought to say it; it honors God, and God meant that we should so use his promises, "Do as thou hast said."

Another remark. Faith has very good reasons for appealing to God to do as he has said. If you should say to faith, "Faith, why do you expect God to do as he has said it, why do you expect it?" Faith would answer, "I have a whole bundle of reasons that justify the act. And in the first place, I have a right to expect him to do as he has said, because he is a true God; I know he cannot lie. He has said he will give me such-and-such a thing; if he was not a truthful God, I would not say, 'do as thou hast said!' but since he is a true God, and never was known to break his promise, and since, moreover, by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie—his oath and his promise—he has made the thing secure; and since I know that in Christ all the promises are yea and amen, I think I have good reason enough for going to him and saying, 'do as thou hast said.' If he were some fallible being who promised and would not perform, I might hesitate somewhat; but since he is always true and constantly precious, I will go and say to him, 'Lord, do as thou hast said.'" Poor sinner! God has said, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy." Now, if you go to God, you want no other plea than this,—“Lord, do as thou hast said;” ‘I have confessed my sins;’ ‘do as thou hast said.’” “But, sinner, why should I do as I have said? you do not deserve it.” “Lord, thou art a true God.”

“Thou hast promised to forgive,

All who on thy Son believe;

Lord I know thou canst not lie,

Give me Christ or else I die."

Go, poor sinner, tell the Lord that, and as truly as he is God, he will never send you empty away. Faith has good reasons to feel that God is true, and therefore he will do as he has said. And not only so, but he is able to do it; his ability is infinite. His intentions also are the same, his promises never get worn out by being circulated, and they become all the more sure for being tried. Poor sinner, here again is a joyful thought: thou canst go to God, and say, "Lord thou hast promised to wash away all our iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea. Lord, if thou hadst been a changeable God, I might have thought thou wouldst not wash away mine, but thou didst wash Manasseh, and thou didst wash Paul; now, Lord, because thou art unchangeable, 'do as thou hast said.' For thou art just the same now, just as merciful, just as powerful, and just as kind as ever thou wert. What, wilt thou break thy promise, Lord? 'Do as thou hast said.'"

But faith puts it on stronger ground than this: it says, "Lord, if thou dost not do as thou hast said, thou wilt be dishonored, thou wilt be disgraced." If a man does not carry out his promise, he is cashiered; men care not to associate with one who breaks his promise; and what would become of God's great name if he were to break his promise? Poor black sinner! thou art coming to the fountain; God has given the promise that he will wash every sinner that comes to the fountain. Now, with reverence, let me speak it poor sinner; if Christ did not wash you, it would be a dishonor to his truth. If you were to go to Christ, and he were to cast you out, surely the devils in hell would despise the name of him who breaks his promise. Beloved, to suppose that God could violate his promise, is to suppose him divested of his Godhead. Take away God's honour from him, and he becomes less than man. Take away the honour which even man holds dear, and what do you make of God? "Oh! sir," you say, "but I do not deserve it; I am such a poor worthless creature, he will not keep his promise to me." I tell you that does not make a whit difference in God's promise; if he has promised, he is divinely bound to perform his promise, in whatever state you may be. Though you have slandered God, though you may have hated him and despised him, and run away from him, and in every way ill-treated him—if he has made a promise to you here, I will be bound for my God. He would keep a promise to the devil if he had made one; and if he has made a promise to you who are ever so vile, he will keep that promise to you. Hear the promise, then, once more, Are you a sinner? "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinner, even the chief." And, again: "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." And, again: "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And let me say again, with the profoundest reverence, that if Christ did not give rest to every weary heavy laden sinner that came to him, he would be un-Christed, he would lose his truthfulness, he would be undeified, he would lose his veracity, and the loss of one poor believing sinner would be the loss of God's own godhead; it would be the dethroning of the immortal; it would be the pulling down of heaven, the breaking asunder of the universe, and the dissolution of creation's own earth, and of creation's self. Faith may well go to God, and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said; for if thou dost not, it will be a dishonor to thyself."

And now let us conclude by asking, what has God said? I cannot tell you all that he has said to you, because I cannot mark out all the different characters here. But, my dear friends, whatever may be your character, from the earliest stage of religion up to the last, there is always some special promise to you; and you have only to turn your Bible over and find it out, and then go to God with "Do as thou hast said."

Let me just select a few characters. There is one here, exceeding faint in the ways of the Lord. "Oh!" he says, "I am faint, though I hope I am pursuing." Now, here is the promise,—“He giveth power unto the faint;” When you get such a promise, stick hard and fast to it; do not let the devil cheat you out of it, but keep on saying, “Lord, thou hast said, He giveth power unto the faint.” “Do as thou hast said.” Let it ring and ring again in the ears of the promiser, and he will be a performer yet. “Ah!” says another, “I am not faint; I am afraid I scarcely have life at all; I am a hungry and thirsty soul; I want Christ, but I cannot get at him.” Hear this: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Take that promise to God, and keep to it: do not plead anything else, but go to God over and over again with this,—“Lord, thou hast said it; do as thou hast said.” Are you covered all over with sin, and under a deep sense of your iniquities? Go and tell him this: “Thou hast said, ‘I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea.’ Lord, I know I have these sins; I do not deny it; but thou hast said, ‘I will pardon them.’ I have no reason why thou shouldst pardon them; I cannot promise that I shall be better; but, Lord, thou hast said it, and that is enough; ‘Do as thou hast said.’” Another one here is afraid lest he should not be able to hold on to the end, and lest after having been a child of God he should be a cast-away. Then, if that be thy state, go and take this to God: “The mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed, but the covenant of my love shall not depart from you;” and when you are thinking that Saviour is going away, catch hold of his skirts, and say, “Jesus, do as thou hast said. Thou hast said, ‘I will never leave thee;’ ‘do as thou hast said.’” Or, if thou hast lost his presence, remember the promise, “I will come again to you.” Go and say, “Lord, I have lost the sweet comfort of thy presence in my heart, but thou hast said, ‘I will come again to you.’” And if Satan says, “He is gone away, and will never come back again,” tell Satan he has nothing to do with it; God has said it, and keep to this, “Do as thou hast said.” If you do that, you will want no other argument and no other reason.

Let us suppose a case, and having tried to illustrate the truth by it, we will have done. There is a desperate ruffian; he has been concerned in twenty burglaries; it is said he has committed several murders; the police are on his track, they are hunting after him; he cannot be discovered. The principal point is to discover him, for it is hoped that by his discovery and his pardon more good might be done than even by his execution. Persons come to this desperately bad fellow, and they tell him, “If you give yourself up, I dare say you will get a free pardon.” “I do not give myself up on daresays,” he says. Another comes, and says, “If you were to give yourself up, I would intercede for you; I know my lord so-and-so, and such a man, member of parliament, would intercede for you.” “No,” he would say, “let well alone. I am pretty safe now; I am not going to give myself up on the mere speculation that some one will intercede for me.” But by-and-bye there comes out a huge placard, “V.R. Free pardon to such a man if he surrenders himself.” He walks straight up to the place. Some one says to him, “Stop, my dear fellow; they will hang you, perhaps.” “No,” says he, “they won’t.” Some one says, “They have been many years looking after you; you do not think that if you get into the fangs of the law now the Queen will pardon you?” “Yes,” he says, “I can trust her? she has never given a free pardon, and then executed anyone.” He goes to the office, and they say, “We are astonished to see this fellow; he might have kept away; he had no necessity to give himself up.” “See,” says one, “there is a policeman, are you not afraid? There are the handcuffs; are you not afraid that they will be put on your wrists and that you will be put into jail?” “No,” he says, “I will walk all through the prison, but there is not a cell in which I may be locked up. The Queen has said she will pardon me, and I do not want any thing else.” “But look at your conduct; you know you deserve to be hanged.” “I know I do, but I have received a free pardon, and I will surrender myself.” “But who can tell how many burglaries you will commit if you are allowed to go free.” “Never mind,” she has promised to pardon me, and I know well that her word will not be violated. Sure the majesty of England will not lie against such an offender as I am.” Now, you would not wonder at that, would you? It would be no very marvellous thing, because we

can trust her Majesty pretty fairly. But it is the hardest thing to get sinners to come to God. "No," says one, "I have been a drunkard, God will not forgive me." My dear fellow, it is said, "All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven to man." "Oh," says another, "I have been a swearer, I have been an infidel, I have blasphemed God, and broken all his statutes." My dear fellow-creature, it is said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," Cannot you believe it? God means what he says; and can you not come to God, trembling, though you be, and cast yourself before his feet, and say, "Lord, if thou dost damn me, I deserve it; if thou shouldst cast me down to hell, I know thou wouldst be just: but then Lord thou hast said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" I tell you God will do as he has said. If you have but faith to believe that promise, you never need fear.

Worthless, vilest of the vile, sweepings of the universe, the very offal of creation, if you come to God he will take you in, for his promise is not to be broken by reason of your vileness; he will receive you, if you can but plead a promise of your own case, and say to him, "Do as thou hast said." Now, then, I will say in conclusion, it will be easy enough for every poor sinner, for every penitent sinner, for every weak saint, to go home, and turn his Bible over; and by a little diligence he will be able to find out a promise that will exactly suit his case; and if he does not find such a promise, it will be because he did not look long enough, for there is one that just fits, and when he has got hold of it let him go to God, and say, "Lord, do as thou hast said," and let him keep to that; and the heavens would sooner fall than one of God's promises should be broken. Oh! trust my Master! oh! trust my Master; trust your souls to him! trust your bodies to him, I beseech you; do it, for his own name's sake! Amen and Amen.

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