

Setting the captives free.



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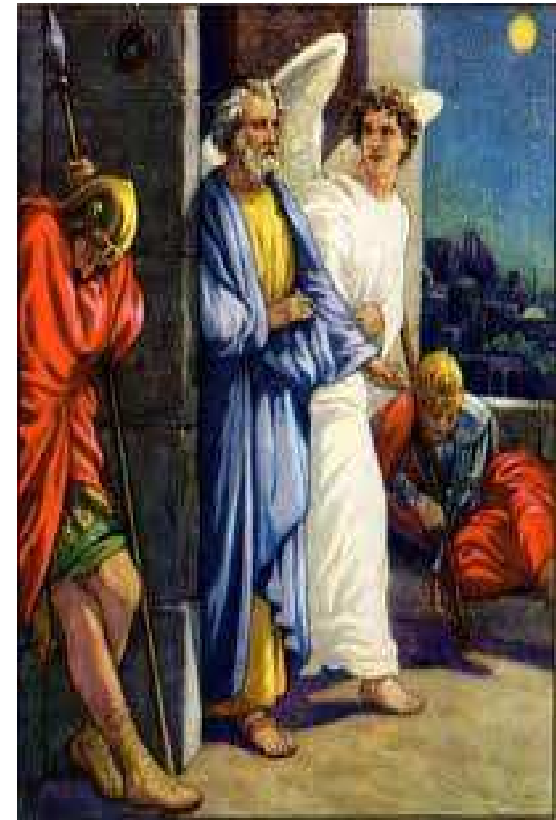
Text: Isaiah 61:1.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives

The Apostle Peter was set free from prison by an angel.

Acts 12:5-7.

So Peter was kept in prison, but fervent prayer for him was persistently made to God by the church. The very night before Herod was about to bring him forth, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, fastened with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. And suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the place where he was. And the angel gently smote Peter on the side and awakened him, saying. Get up quickly! And the chains fell off his hands.



Setting the captives free.

Now although the Apostle Peter was set free from prison by an angel in Acts 12, this was not the case for Paul the Apostle.

Acts 20:22,23.

Prisons and hardships are facing me.

2 Corinthians 11:23.

In prisons more frequent.

Ephesians 3:1.

Paul refers to himself as a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Imagine if Peter wrote a book on “**How to get out of prison with Angel intervention**” Those doing prison ministry would have always recommended that Paul read it.



Setting the captives free.

In the case of John the Baptist, he got offended with Jesus for leaving him in prison.

Matthew 11:2-6.

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else? Jesus replied, Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.



Remember that Jesus read Isaiah 61 in the synagogue in Nazareth.

Setting the captives free.

Luke 4:16-21.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.
Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.



Setting the captives free.

So setting the captives free from imprisonment from man was not the focus and thrust of Jesus ministry, in fact many Christians today are imprisoned because of their faith in Jesus and for sharing that faith with others.

John the Baptist was not going to be set free, in fact he would be put to death by Herod to honour the promise to his wife's daughter who had impressed him with her dancing.

Which prisoners did Jesus come to set free?



Setting the captives free.

Ephesians 4:8-10.

When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people. What does he ascended mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

Jesus told his disciples that the gates of Hades would not prevail against His Church.

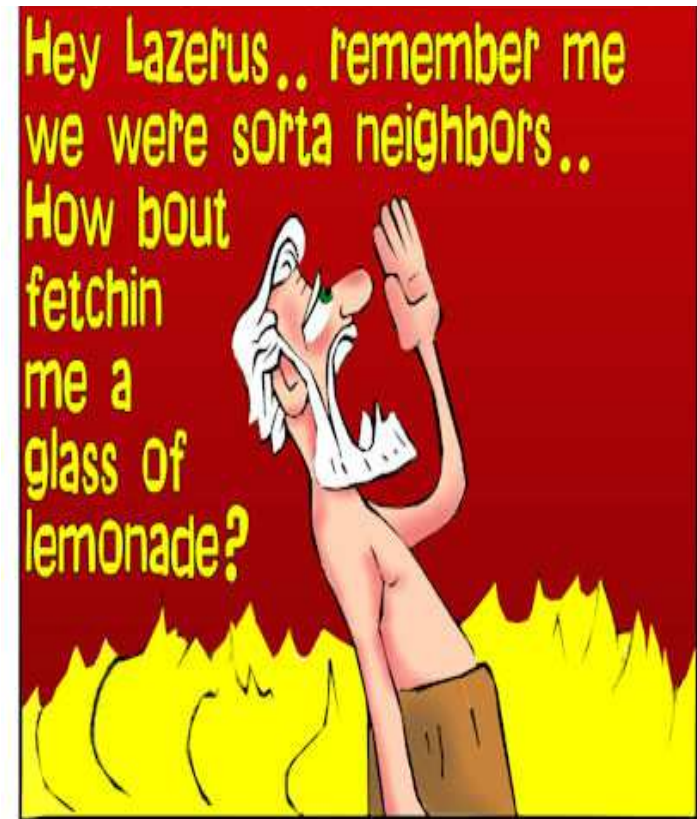
Why? Because he came to set the captives free, before he died on the cross no-one who died went to Heaven, they went to Hades where the righteous and the unrighteous were separated by a chasm that no-one could cross.

Setting the captives free.

- **Luke 16:22-26.**

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.

But Abraham replied, Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.

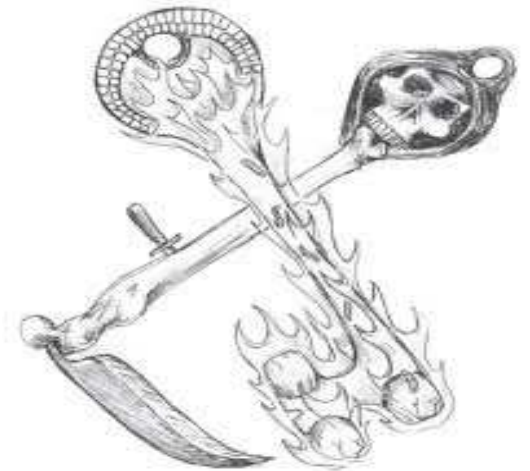


Setting the captives free.

Remember when Jesus died on the cross he told the thief next to him. Luke 23:43. *“Today you will be with me in paradise”.* But Jesus was not going to Heaven, he was on his way from the cross to spend 3 days in the heart of the earth.

- **Matthew 12:40.** *For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*
- **Revelation 1:18.** *I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

This is why Jesus was able to say to his disciples that the gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church, because he was going to open those gates and set the captives free and the Church would never have to go there like the Old Testament saints had to, as the price of sin had been paid. These are the captives referred to in Ephesians 4:8.



Setting the captives free.

Not only did Jesus set those free who had already died and gone to Hades, he freed those still alive but held in bondage by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14,15.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.



The prison of sin.

However Jesus purpose in coming to redeem mankind went a lot further than this, he came to set us free from many prisons which are not seen with our natural eyes.

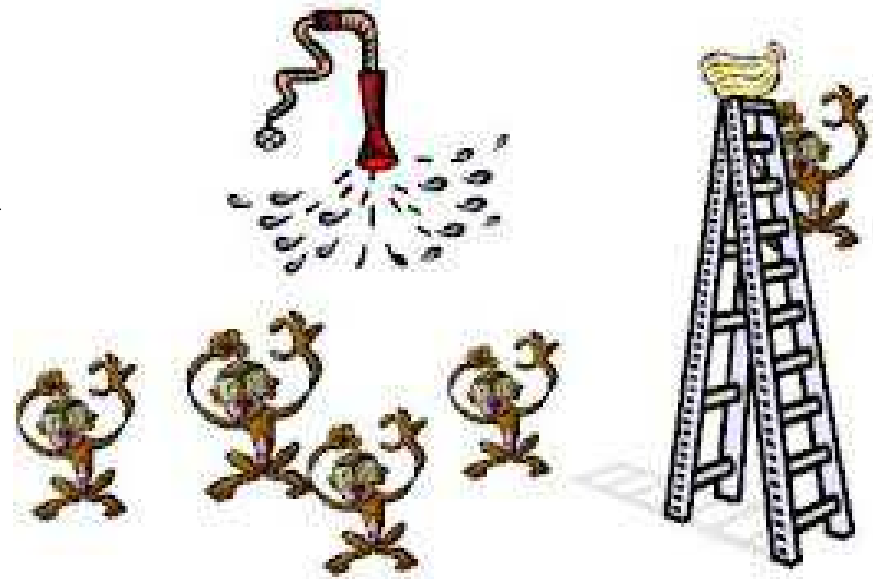
❖ The prison of sin.

2 Timothy 2:24-26. *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

Romans 6:16. *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?*

The prison of religious tradition.

- In this story, there are 5 monkeys in a cage, with bananas hung on the top of the cage. There is a stool in the room which would allow a monkey to reach the bananas. However, once a monkey got on a stool and tried to reach for a banana, all of the monkeys would be sprayed with cold water. Later, another monkey would try to get on the stool and grab a banana, but again, the monkeys would all be sprayed with cold water. Pretty soon, the monkeys all begin to prevent any monkeys from attempting to get on the stool to grab a banana. If a monkey tried to do so, the other monkeys would attack them because they do not want to get sprayed with water.



The prison of religious tradition.

- After this, one of the monkeys is removed and replaced by a new monkey. This monkey, having not seen the effects of getting on the stool to grab a banana, obviously tries to. The other four monkeys attack the new monkey. Another old monkey is replaced by a new monkey, and not surprisingly, the new monkey is attacked when he tries to reach for a banana. Yet this time, the monkey who had just recently been added joins in on the attack. Eventually, all of the old monkeys are replaced one by one with new monkeys, who all try to reach for the banana and get attacked by the other monkeys.



The prison of religious tradition.

- Monkey experiment.

If it was possible to ask the monkeys why they would beat up all those who attempted to go up the ladder....

I bet you the answer would be....

"I don't know – that's how things are done around here"

Does it sounds familiar?



The prison of religious tradition.

- After all of the old monkeys have been replaced, you are left with five monkeys in a cage, none of which have ever been splashed with water (the other monkeys attacked him before he had the chance to cause the splash), who will all attack any monkey who tries to reach for the banana. They do not know why they are attacking anyone that tries to reach for the banana, but they do anyways. Why? Because that's the way things have always been done of course.
- This story shows us why it is important to view the world and our traditions with a healthy level of scepticism. So much of what we do in life, we do not because we make a logical decision to do so, but because it is a habit--it is how things have always been done.

The prison of religious tradition.

- Why are there so many rituals in Christianity that differ dramatically from the original teachings of Jesus (dressing nice for church, singing hymns together, etc)? Why are there so many rules and traditions in the military with no logical reason for them? Because that's how things have always been done. There are countless examples of things that we do not because they make sense, but because it is what has always been done. While I am not saying that we should tear down all of our cultures and traditions and start fresh logically, it is not wrong to pause every once in a while before you do something and ask, "why exactly is it that I am doing this?"



The prison of religious tradition.

- **John 8:31-36.**

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free? Jesus replied, Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

- **Colossians 2:8.**

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

The prison of religious tradition.

- John 9:13-

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He put mud on my eyes, the man replied, and I washed, and now I see. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others asked, How can a sinner perform such signs? So they were divided. Then they turned again to the blind man, What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, He is a prophet.



The prison of religious tradition.

- John 9:13-

They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. Is this your son? they asked. Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see? We know he is our son, the parents answered, and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, He is of age; ask him.

Tradition was more important to them than acknowledging Jesus and the miracle he had performed for their son.

The prison of the law.

- **Galatians 5:15**

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.



The prison of bitterness.

Matthew 18:32-35.

Then the master called the servant in. You wicked servant, he said, I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.

Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.



The prison of bitterness.

Acts 8:9-13,18-24.

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, This man is rightly called the Great Power of God. They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw..... When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles hands, he offered them money and said, Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. Peter answered: May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin. Then Simon answered, Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.

The prison of sickness.

Luke 13:10-16.

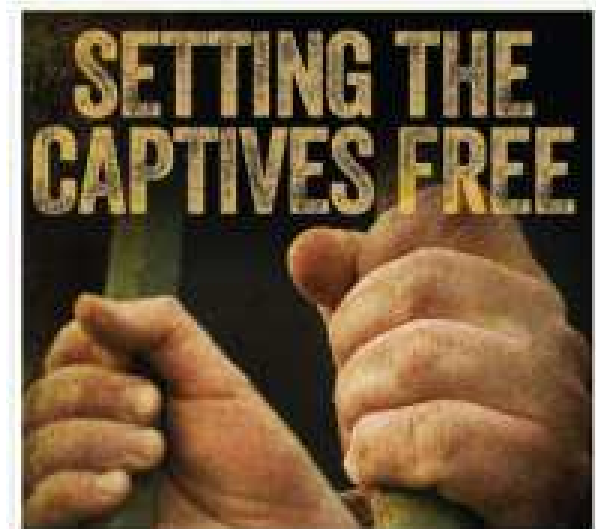
On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, Woman, you are set free from your infirmity. Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath. The Lord answered him, You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?



The prison of lust and pleasures habits/addictions.

2 Peter 2:18-21.

For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity for people are slaves to whatever has mastered them. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.



The prison of lust and pleasures habits/addictions.

The word liberated means something totally opposite to the world.

Liberate: (Collins dictionary)

Free from rigid social conventions especially in sexual behaviour.

So the person the world says is liberated, God says is in bondage.

Titus 3:3.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures, We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us..



The prison of lust and pleasures habits/addictions.

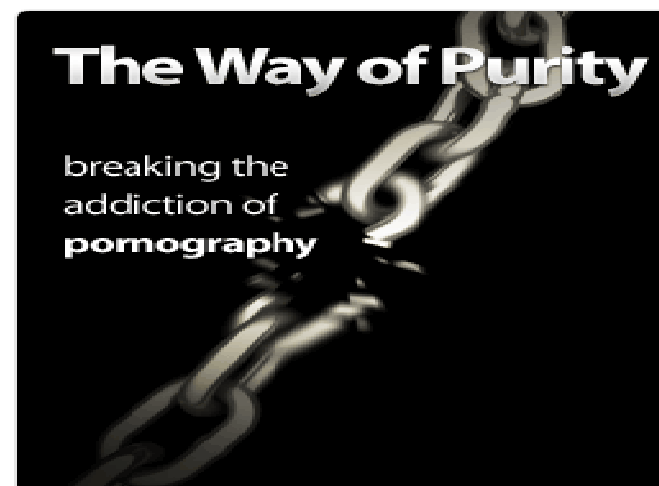
Why are so many Christians addicted to porn?

Fifty percent of Christian men and twenty percent of Christian women report being “addicted” to pornography. What are we to make of these staggering numbers? Many Christian groups, including Covenant Eyes, quote this statistic from the 2006 ChristiaNet survey, but what do these numbers mean?



When polled about addictive or frequent porn use, Christian percentages always seem significantly higher. Why? Are Christians simply more likely to get hooked on porn? What is going on here?

At a youth Pastors conference in USA, the owner of the Hotel that was used said there were a record number that had accessed the porn channels.



Setting the captives free.

The Lord has come to set us free and to give us the responsibility of setting others free.

This is not only spiritually, but physically.

Christianity has brought abolition of slavery and equal rights for women, in countries ruled by Islam the opposite is seen.



Setting the captives free.



Learning to, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy." - Proverbs 31:8-9

Setting the captives free.

There once was a man named George Thomas, pastor in a small New England town. One Easter Sunday morning he came to the Church carrying a rusty, bent, old bird cage, and set it by the pulpit. Eyebrows were raised and, as if in response, Pastor Thomas began to speak...'I was walking through town yesterday when I saw a young boy coming toward me swinging this bird cage. On the bottom of the cage were three little wild birds, shivering with cold and fright. I stopped the lad and asked, 'What you got there, son?' 'Just some old birds,' came the reply.

'What are you gonna do with them?' I asked.

'Take 'em home and have fun with 'em,' he answered 'I'm gonna tease 'em and pull out their feathers to make 'em fight. I'm gonna have a real good time' 'But you'll get tired of those birds sooner or later. What will you do?'

'Oh, I got some cats,' said the little boy. 'They like birds. I'll take 'em to them.'

Setting the captives free.

The pastor was silent for a moment.
'How much do you want for those birds, son?' 'Huh?? !!! Why, you don't want them birds, mister. They're just plain old field birds. They don't sing. They ain't even pretty 'How much?' the pastor asked again.



The boy sized up the pastor as if he were crazy and said, '\$10?' The pastor reached in his pocket and took out a ten dollar bill. He placed it in the boy's hand. In a flash, the boy was gone.

The pastor picked up the cage and gently carried it to the end of the alley where there was a tree and a grassy spot. Setting the cage down, he opened the door, and by softly tapping the bars persuaded the birds out, setting them free.

Setting the captives free.

Well, that explained the empty bird cage on the pulpit, and then the pastor began to tell this story.

One day Satan and Jesus were having a conversation. Satan had just come from the Garden of Eden, and he was gloating and boasting. 'Yes, sir, I just caught the world full of people down there. Set me a trap, used bait I knew they couldn't resist. Got 'em all!'

'What are you going to do with them?' Jesus asked.

Satan replied, 'Oh, I'm gonna have fun! I'm gonna teach them how to marry and divorce each other, how to hate and abuse each other, how to drink and smoke and curse. I'm gonna teach them how to invent guns and bombs and kill each other. I'm really gonna have fun!'

Setting the captives free.

'And what will you do when you get done with them?' Jesus asked. 'Oh, I'll kill 'em,' Satan glared proudly. 'How much do you want for them?' Jesus asked

'Oh, you don't want those people. They ain't no good. Why, you'll take them and they'll just hate you. They'll spit on you, curse you and kill you. You don't want those people!!'

'How much?' He asked again.

Satan looked at Jesus and sneered, 'All your blood, tears and your life.'

Jesus said, 'DONE!'

Then He paid the price.

The pastor picked up the cage he opened the door and he walked from the pulpit.

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