

Dietrich Bonhoeffer - Theologian & Martyr
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Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his twin sister Sabine were born to Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer on February 4, 1906. He and his sister were twins and the sixth and seventh of eight children. Dietrich's brother Walter was killed during World War I. His father, Karl Bonhoeffer, was a prominent German psychiatrist in Berlin; his mother, Paula, home-schooled the children. His mother, Paula Bonhoeffer, was the grand-daughter of Karl von Hase, a church historian in the nineteenth century.

Bonhoeffer discovered Barth between the summer of 1924 and 1925 after returning from Rome but before beginning his thesis. A bitter debate was going on between the Bonhoeffers' famous liberal theologian neighbor Adolph von Harnack and the Swiss theologian Karl Barth. In the end, Bonhoeffer would be more and more alienated from the liberalism of his supervisory professor Reinhold Seeberg and his neighbor Harnack and Bonhoeffer would embrace a more dogmatic and more conservative biblical thinking.¹ In fact, like Barth, Bonhoeffer's recognition of God's sovereignty was within the Augustinian-Lutheran tradition and when he speaks of freedom for instance it is never from the Pelagian or Arminian notion of choice-making because the state of unbelievers is bondage. Freedom must be bestowed upon sinners and its exercise always means obedience, never disobedience, which is an exercise of bondage.²

Dietrich began studying theology at Tübingen and graduated from the University of Berlin where he studied under Adolf von Harnack. At the age of twenty-four Bonhoeffer received his doctorate at the University of Berlin. Because of his youth at this time, he was unable to teach as a professor because one had to be at least twenty-five years old according to the church. So, Dietrich spent a post-graduate year abroad studying at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. During this time, he visited the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem where he collected negro spirituals, which he

¹ Mark Devine, *Bonhoeffer Speaks Today*. (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), p. 5,8.

² Devine, *Bonhoeffer Speaks Today*, p. 151.

took with him back to Germany. The experience among the poor and the sense of community and fellowship and joy had an influence on Bonhoeffer and he spoke positively of his experience at Abyssinian Baptist Church throughout his life. However, even before this time, the rise of Adolph Hitler had begun and while he definitely saw the dangers involved, he returned to Germany at twenty-five years of age.

Two years later, Adolph Hitler became dictator of Germany in 1933 when Bonhoeffer was twenty-seven years old. Bonhoeffer, unlike many of his contemporary pastors, refused to yield to Hitler's subjection of the church in Germany. Bonhoeffer helped create the Confessing Church and in 1935 he started and led an 'illegal' seminary in Finkenwalde. He was arrested in April 1943 and a year later documents were found connecting him to the failed assassination attempt on Hitler. Bonhoeffer was hung in 1945. His last reported words were, "This is the end - for me the beginning of life." Within years after his death he became a modern martyr and highly influential theologian and author.

Was there a connection between Protestant Liberalism and the embrace of Nazism and support of the Holocaust by such theological luminaries as Gerhard Kittle, Paul Althaus, and Emanuel Hirsch? Does the rejection of Protestant Liberalism by Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer help explain their resistance to Hitler? I suspect so. Liberal and higher critical thinking had already accustomed the generation of preachers leading up to 1933 to stand above the Bible, making use of it for human purposes rather than standing under it to hear the voice of God. And Hitler did his best, often successfully to co-opt German Christianity for his nationalistic purposes.³

The maturation of Bonhoeffer's theology moved from Jesus Christ, the reality of revelation in the church, to Jesus Christ as Lord over the body, the church (where Jesus calls his people to costly obedience), to Jesus Christ in relation to the whole world. The core of Bonhoeffer's theology is given a practical turn in his post-humously published *Ethics*, where he states that God in Christ manifests himself in the sphere of revelation through concrete (particular) moral decisions in the secular world. Bonhoeffer is most known for his two books *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*.⁴

³ <http://www.theologyprof.com/hitler-holocaust-and-bonhoeffer/> - Professor Mark Devine's Website

⁴J. D. Douglas, Philip Wesley Comfort and Donald Mitchell, *Who's Who in Christian History*, Illustrated lining papers. (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1997, c1992).

This paper is primarily an examination of Bonhoeffer's book *The Cost of Discipleship* as well as one very good secondary resource, *Bonhoeffer Speaks Today* by Mark Devine of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. I believe it is very easy to try to examine the use (and often abuse) of Bonhoeffer's writings by the secular 'God is Dead' theologians and then conclude that Bonhoeffer was neo-orthodox at best and therefore of little consequence for evangelical Christians today. This would be a terrible mistake – I know because I have heard some evangelical heavy-weights make this charge and so I really left Bonhoeffer's own thoughts on a shelf rather than engaging him and his provocative and difficult writings. He is altogether more convicting when you consider the context of the unique situation in which he came of age, notably a crushed and defeated Germany that faced the rise of Nazism and an anemic church that lacked the courage from solid, biblical convictions that produces courage. Bonhoeffer did not grow up in a safe country with a freedom to worship and speak out as a Christian. In short, he was not an American and he was not an American theologian; but he was a Christian and he was a good theologian and committed pastor. Bonhoeffer had biblical courage and was actually orthodox and conservative by comparison to most all of his colleagues and while he sought an experiential faith sometimes at the expense of biblical fidelity one could argue for as rigorous of a defense of the inerrancy and infallibility of scripture as revelation and not just a record of revelation that becomes revelation to us when it is experienced (neo-orthodoxy), he has much to teach us in any case and is far to the right of many contemporary Christian leaders today, even in America.

We have to keep in mind that Bonhoeffer died young and his thinking was not in any sense developed or set down in systematic form. Reading Bonhoeffer's writings through the prism of his martyrdom is very convicting and challenging to any believer. I do think Bonhoeffer is open to the charge of being somewhat neo-orthodox in his understanding of the role of experiential Christianity and his strong emphasis on finding Christ in community or that Christ "manifests himself in the sphere of revelation through concrete (particular) moral decisions in the secular world." This is not quite the same as the Roman Catholic view that the church is the continuing incarnation of Christ in the world, but it is also not quite consistent with the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message! However, it is also true that the Word of God is intended to lead us into an ever-growing

relationship with the God of the Word and so we are not merely studying words on a page or engaging in Bibliolatry, but our study is to lead us to Christ and to Christ-likeness and to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as God works in and through us according to His good purposes. It is also true that much Christian growth is to occur in the local church. I am going to more or less leave the charge of neo-orthodoxy for the time being though I do conclude with some remarks that will touch on some areas of Bonhoeffer's thinking beyond discipleship. Oh, and so you don't think I have left the controversy of his involvement in the attempted assassination of Adolph Hitler, I'll get to that, too.

Bonhoeffer is a staunch opponent of cheap grace – I believe we would say today that he is firmly ensconced in the Lordship Salvation camp. What is cheap grace? Let's look at chapter one of *Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer considered cheap grace to be a “deadly enemy” of the church so let us feel his pathos before we get to his reasoning. He is writing as a pastor-theologian and one very convicted by the nominal Christians in his midst and the lack of courage or conviction of his church in Germany. The essence of cheap grace is that the sinner's account has been paid in full and in advance and because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. This means you can have assurance, a life of sloth and luxury and greed and still have that assurance with all of these worldly attributes because of your ‘decision’. Cheap grace is actually a result of holding to another belief which is prior and is that mere mental or intellectual assent to some theological doctrines accomplishes salvation. Do not read over this too quickly because as the next generation after the conservative resurgence of our own denomination, we always stand on a precipice whereby we, seeing that our spiritual forefathers nailed down the statement of theological principles that bind us as Southern Baptists, could look around and say that it is giving mental assent to these principles which makes one a Southern Baptist evangelical conservative. That would be a tragedy because it is the first step towards a dead orthodoxy. We must be right on the principles upon which we stand, and we must also appropriate them and manifest them in our own lives, in relationship with Christ. We must have orthodox beliefs and an orthodox relationship with God through Christ. Bonhoeffer writes further that “In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered

from sin...cheap grace means justification of sin without the justification of the sinner.”⁵ Bonhoeffer goes on to say that adherents to cheap grace believe that it is presumptuous to try to live a different life under grace than you lived before you were saved and that this was a heresy of ‘enthusiasts’, the Anabaptists and others.⁶ Let the heresy reign!

Well, this is as good an understanding of free or cheap grace as there is and while there are no doubt adherents to cheap or free grace who are nonetheless holy and godly men themselves (Ryrie and Hodges among them), cheap grace is often used by men as a free pass to heaven without any real call to obedience or perseverance. It is the “of course” response to an offer of salvation that fails to call men to repent and count the cost of discipleship. It is probably the single greatest reason for unregenerate members of local churches – members of local churches who have nevertheless not been born again.

Contrasted with cheap grace, costly grace is “the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him....such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ...Above all it is costly because it cost God the life of His Son...it is grace because God did not reckon His son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”⁷

Well, there you have the terms as defined by Bonhoeffer and you can see there is a radical antithesis between the two positions. It may not be the case that these represent the best of modern scholarship on this subject, but never mind, these are the thoughts of a young pastor-theologian and one who would, in due time, show his own obedience to God’s call as he understood it by returning to Germany at great personal risk (a risk he well knew at the time) and even in his participation in the failed assassination of Hitler (another risk he well knew at the time). Both of these decisions would lead to his death

⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. (New York, NY.: Touchstone by Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 43.

⁶ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 43.

⁷ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 45.

and both decisions resulted from his understanding of his responsibility to God and to his country's future.

Bonhoeffer says that Peter received two separate calls ("Follow me.") and a whole life laid between these two calls. First, by the lake of Gennesareth when Peter left his nets and his craft and followed Jesus at His word. The second is when the risen Lord finds Peter back again at his old trade after the resurrection and once again at the lake of Gennesareth, and once again Peter is called to "Follow me." Between these two calls lay a whole life of discipleship in the following of Christ and half-way between the two calls comes Peter's confession when he acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God. The grace of Christ arrested him three different ways. Each of the three times, the call was "Follow me." And it was the grace of Christ that first called Peter and caused him to follow Him and leave everything and then to confess that Christ is the Son of the living God and then lastly, Christ invited Peter to the supreme fellowship of martyrdom for the Lord he thrice denied. Grace and discipleship are the life of Peter – costly grace.⁸

Bonhoeffer goes on to quickly note the historical basis of the secularization of the church with the rise of the Roman Empire and then the rise of Martin Luther who restored the gospel of pure grace. He noted that Luther had to renounce the monastic life and go back into the world, not because the world was good and holy but because even the monastery is only a part of the world and therefore though Luther renounced everything except his pious self the first time when he entered the monastery, the second time he did not even get to keep his pious self because the only way to follow Jesus was in the world. Before this time, Luther was able to live as a Christian under the exceptionally favorable conditions of the monastery, but now he would be in the "hand-to-hand conflict between the Christian and the world."⁹ It is the life of the Christian in the world that captivated Bonhoeffer. He was not so interested in just abstract Christianity or the devoted but passive, unengaged life. The secret of the Reformation was not relief from obedience and the embracing of a life of sin, but the justification of the sinner – not the sin! Luther had said that only faith can save, and his followers repeated this, but they did not repeat the corollary which was presupposed by Luther –

⁸ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 46.

⁹ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 48.

the obligation of discipleship. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship. Bonhoeffer writes that the only man who has a right to say he is justified by faith is the man who has left all to follow Christ. This is a very hard teaching and it resonates with us precisely because it is so counter-cultural and it rings true to anyone who is vaguely familiar with the gospels and the so-called “hard sayings” of Jesus.

Further, and I think maybe key to understanding Bonhoeffer’s ethical position, he goes on to make mention of Luther’s concept of “sinning boldly.” He reminds us that for Luther and for us that this attitude is a conclusion to honest discipleship and prayer and struggle to do God’s will and not an initial premise whereby we simply conclude that sin is justified and there are no real ethical dilemmas. We are always sinners and there is no getting away from it. However, because of costly grace and forgiveness, we are also free to be bold in this life. In fact, it pleases God for His children to act – even when the rules are not all crystal clear. But, again, these words according to Bonhoeffer are only for those who daily renounce sin and every barrier that prevents them from following Christ.

In chapter two of the *Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer continues to develop his theology of discipleship. His introductory words sum it all up: “The call goes forth, and is at once followed by the response of obedience. The response of the disciples is an act of obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus.”¹⁰ Bonhoeffer states that the response of obedience is due to the absolute, direct, and unaccountable authority of Jesus. Discipleship is merely following Jesus simply for the sake of the call. The disciple is called out and must forsake his old life in order to truly ‘exist’.

The most devastating analysis of the nature and self-dialogue of unbelief is found in chapter two of *Costly Discipleship*. He states that an abstract Christology renders discipleship superfluous and while you can become enthusiastic about the formal knowledge, it can never be followed in personal obedience. This has been my personal experience unfortunately maybe too often. Well, the three disciples that Bonhoeffer introduces us to are from Luke 9:57-62. The first disciple offers to follow Jesus without having been called and Jesus warns him that he does not know what he is doing. We hear the words of the cross-bound Christ and we see that no man can choose this life for himself. Only when Jesus calls is the gulf between a voluntary offer to follow and

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 57.

discipleship successfully bridged. The second disciple (who may actually have been the first disciple) is from the same passage and he wants to first stop and bury his father. He is held bound by the law – the legal requirement to bury your father. Jesus is larger than the law and emerges at this point as the opponent of the law. Only Christ can speak in this fashion and command a man to follow him against the law. The question is Lord or law? Who do you follow? The third disciple from the same passage, the one I most identify with, is bold enough to actually stipulate his own terms as if he is mapping out a career for himself. He needs certain conditions to be fulfilled – he is at his Master’s disposal but retains the right to dictate his own terms. Trouble is at the very moment he expresses willingness to follow, he stops wanting to follow at all and is therefore conflicted (perhaps not in this case, but sometimes this can be precisely because the cost of following is being counted).¹¹

Bonhoeffer also talks about the definite steps of following Jesus. First, the disciple cuts himself off from his previous existence. This is a position where faith is actually possible. In reality we can not know when faith is possible because it depends on the call of Jesus. It is a situation where the following two truths exist: *only he who believes is obedient and only he who is obedient believes*. If the first half of this statement stands alone we get cheap grace, but if the second stands alone we get salvation by works which is of the devil. We can separate justification by faith (from obedience), but the presupposition of faith is obedience. This distinction matters. It is not a chronological distinction for faith is only real when there is obedience and in fact, there is a sense that obedience must be taken before faith can be possible. Well, this is all very technical of course but think about it from the perspective of sanctification if the issue of justification and obedience makes your reformed soul shudder a bit with the proximity of faith and works. However, Bonhoeffer believed in justification by faith alone.

Bonhoeffer also masterfully discusses the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22) and how the young man addresses the “good master” but gets an earful from Jesus who is God. He wanted a theoretical discussion with a good rabbi but instead got an answer from God who had authority to command his obedience. In fact, the young man poses a second question (the first being intended to be about eternal life): “Which?” speaking of

¹¹ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 62-63.

the commandments to be followed. He was trying to show there was ambiguity in the situation being discussed. Jesus attacks him personally (instead of his answer) because he is not interested in the young man's answers, but in the young man. At the end, it is said by John (10:21) that "Jesus loved him." Jesus knew the impetuous young man and his conflicts. Jesus creates an irrevocable situation. The young man began by asking about eternal life and Jesus ends by saying "I call thee, and that is all." The answer is Jesus Christ. Well, the lawyer (Luke 10:25-29) is very similar but the lawyer was honest enough to explicitly tempt Jesus. Jesus shows him his duty and tells him to do it and he will live. The lawyer invites moral ambiguity ("Who is my neighbor?") to justify his disobedience; but, Jesus says "You are the neighbor." Go be obedient by trying to love others.¹² The answer in all of these situations, and they are there for our instruction, is that simple obedience is what is required. Moral ambiguities are real and a result of the Fall but seem of less concern to Jesus than one might first think. Jesus is more interested in the person than the deontological reasoning (or sophistry).

Christ's call is the only way we become individuals. When called, people become aware they are alone and so become aware of their responsibilities and duties, but this is only to protect themselves because they do not want to stand alone before Jesus and decide to follow Him with their eyes on Him alone. The call teaches us that our relation to the world is built on an illusion. There is a terrible theology, according to Bonhoeffer, that says Jesus reconciled us to God so we can return to the world and enjoy the world – though it crucified Christ. It equates love of Christ with love of the world and therefore is justification of sin and not the sinner. The second way to be an individual is to follow in the midst of society and with friends and to enjoy worldly wealth – but, Bonhoeffer notes it is Abraham who was called to this, after having already made a radical break with the past. Also, though we enter discipleship alone, we do not go at it alone because we have the church that compensates many times over for that which was once thought lost. So, we do have everything in Christ – but with persecutions in a fallen world.¹³ After all this, so there was no doubt they would be people of the cross – Jesus went and

¹² Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 70-78.

¹³ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 94-101.

was crucified. There is much in these writings that are at once very difficult and also exhilarating. This is real discipleship – if you can take it.

I want to go ahead and digress at this point and discuss Bonhoeffer's participation in the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler in the context of the theological perspective of his ethics and his theological view of discipleship. Bonhoeffer did not really care for moral ambiguity (as was intimated in the section above regarding supposed moral ambiguities of the rich young ruler and lawyer), but neither did he have moral absolutes from which to act in machine-like fashion at all times. He did not really believe it was helpful to ask "What is good?" in a situation of moral difficulty. Bonhoeffer rather asked not what does it mean to do good – but what is the will of God? What is required of us in this moment of our lives? What must we do? This was Bonhoeffer's perspective. There is no direct revelation on these issues. Christians in an evil totalitarian country must will the defeat of their own nation or support its success and thereby destroy everything. As for Bonhoeffer, he knew what he must do. Bonhoeffer felt the 'old rules' do not apply any more because of Nazism and all one can do in such a situation is act and plead for God's mercy. The marriage of totalitarianism with, as Churchill said, a "sinister science" meant that regimes have so much power in their statecraft (all their power: military, cultural, etc.) that you almost can not bring them down but through violence. Even the Soviet Union's demise was only after many army officers defected finally. I suggest that God can do anything He wants and I also suggest that totalitarianism today is a far different beast than those even of the time of French Revolution and other pre-industrial totalitarian regimes. Modern weapons and technology are a near-stranglehold on power. I think it is this frustration coupled with seeing the smoke of Jews ascend over Germany while the 'church' watched and thought about it and prayed about it if even that (and absconded) that compelled Bonhoeffer to act – not rashly or without due consideration to prayer and consulting the scriptures (action as a conclusion and not as a premise or pretext to do what you want), but to act at last to assassinate evil rather than support it, and to plead for God's mercy after all. There really is no middle ground position after all in my opinion or if middle ground is sought, it is really moral cowardice through a calculated passivity. It is choosing to live in the monastery rather than the world. Look at the following passage:

Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live." (*Exodus 1:15-22*)

Shiprah and Puah disobeyed Pharaoh and lied and God blessed these Hebrew midwives with families and Moses was preserved. Well, it is not exactly killing Pharaoh of course, but neither did God condemn their actions as failing to submit to the ruling authorities. They were blessed specifically for having lied to the established authority in Egypt because they were following God. Perhaps preserving life supercedes the command not to lie?

As far as a comparison to the issue of abortion in the United States today, I believe there are sufficient dissimilarities to the evil of abortion in our land as compared to the evil of Nazism. In the case of Nazism, the normal mechanisms beyond providence and prayer (is there even a distinction?!) for exerting influence were gone. There were no Supreme Court appeals, there were no elections that might trickle down to a new Supreme Court appointment or two that may change the direction of the court - there were none of the remaining mechanisms of a constitutional republic such as we have in our country today, not to mention the albeit rare possibility of a constitutional amendment. Also, there was overt and violent opposition to those who opposed the Nazi state and especially violence against Christians. Also, there was an attempt by the Nazi state to declare that its actions were further revelation from God and to shut the mouths of pastors, while evangelical Christians in our country can hold up pictures of aborted fetuses and a Bible and ask men, publicly, to repent, and we can do the same to those who aspire to public office or those who hold office now. This just was not the case in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s.

It is important to recognize that Bonhoeffer never advocated that anyone else should assassinate Hitler and certainly never advocated that it should be the policy of the

confessing church in Germany. In fact, he never commended his action as a moral rule to be followed mechanically. He would have been angered to have seen the following:

But he (Pat Robertson) compared Chavez to Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler and quoted German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "[That if a madman were] driving a car into a group of innocent bystanders, then I can't, as a Christian, simply wait for the catastrophe and then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try to wrestle the steering wheel out of the hands of the driver."¹⁴

Bonhoeffer simply did not believe in a deontological moral reasoning in the situation he found himself in. But, he also rejected situational ethics – the notion that there are no standards and norms at all.

Bonhoeffer wrote that there were three ways the church should relate to the government: first to declare the biblically revealed responsibility of the state; second to aid victims of government misconduct or atrocity; and he increasingly became convinced that the third was to resist the state. Bonhoeffer had a preference for bold yet humble and non-self-justifying thrusts “into the tempest of living” as opposed to an overweening moral fastidiousness more interested in maintaining an abstract purity than addressing wrong and suffering while there is still time.¹⁵ Clearly, Bonhoeffer was not a true Christian pacifist, but neither did he quickly resort to violence and war. It is interesting to consider what Bonhoeffer’s response would be to the abortion question we face in our time. Clearly, he was pro-life. He wrote that the destruction of the embryo is “a violation of the right to live which God bestowed upon the nascent life.” Also, that once conception occurs, “that God intended to create a human being” and if aborted “...it is nothing but murder.”¹⁶ It is up to the reader to determine if his action to assassinate Hitler violated one of the clearly stated biblical norms and standards or was in the area where a Christian might earnestly seek God and act and, being in grace, let God judge. I believe that given the circumstances and the fact he was a German in Germany, that he acted correctly. I also do not believe we can fashion a moral rule from the situation to

¹⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/08/24/robertson.chavez/>

¹⁵ Mark Devine, *Bonhoeffer Speaks Today*. (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), p. 128.

¹⁶ Mark Devine, *Bonhoeffer Speaks Today*. (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), p. 141

guide us today and, in any case, Bonhoeffer would be very disagreeable if we did (as Pat Robertson tried).

In the end, I have learned a great deal from Bonhoeffer. I believe the first half of *Cost of Discipleship* should be read by every Christian. His diagnosis of unbelief in the different examples of the would-be disciples, rich young ruler and lawyer are very insightful as to the nature of unbelief. I have also learned a great deal of respect for him as a man and a Christian. He rejected passivity, led courageously and expected God's greater reward. What else can a disciple do? He was not perfect but he acted prayerfully and aware of the situations he was in. It may have been more courageous to actually return to Germany when he did than to sign on to assassinate Hitler. I learned a great deal about discipleship, the nature of unbelief, obedience in the life of a Christian and that you can be courageous in extreme situations and maintain the integrity of your Christian witness without endless introspection, self-doubt and retreating from the world. His life was also one that was very pastoral, never settling for just academic work. He always rolled up his sleeves to minister to others, including children. The only thing I would add is that there is also a cost to not being a disciple and so it is not the case that you get a free ride to fortune and fame on the other side of the coin and while we do not suffer from too many earnest disciples, but rather from too few, we also should point out the costs of not following and obeying God.

See also:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L81YpIUUP3o>

Who Am I?

Who am I? They often tell me
I would step from my cell's confinement
calmly, cheerfully, firmly,
like a squire from his country-house.

Who am I? They often tell me
I would talk to my warden
freely and friendly and clearly,
as though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me
I would bear the days of misfortune
equably, smilingly, proudly,
like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really all that which other men tell of?
Or am I only what I know of myself?
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
struggling for breath, as though hands were
 compressing my throat,
yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,
trembling with anger at despotisms and petty humiliation,
tossing in expectation of great events,
powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
faint and ready to say farewell to it all.

Who am I? This or the other?
Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
and before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer