



FAITH *to* ACTION

*“Action springs not from thought, but from
a readiness for responsibility.”*

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

FOREWORD

We need heroes today-- men and women who see and act with clarity when so many others are choosing not to. This study is about a hero. His name is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He worked to defend truth. By looking at his life, we will gain a better understanding of our Christian role toward Israel and the Jewish people and toward truth itself. Doing what is right isn't for the fainthearted, but for the brave and courageous among us.

It is my prayer that as we journey together in this reading, God will set your heart on fire to be a follower of Jesus who will put their Faith to Action in defending Israel and the Jewish people, even as we see the storm clouds of anti-Semitism gathering once again.

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WHY YOU, WHY NOW?

“Your life as a Christian should make non-believers question their disbelief in God.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Right now, our world desperately needs followers of Jesus who will put their **Faith to Action** in the same the way Dietrich Bonhoeffer did over 70 years ago. He stood against the greatest evil of his time, Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Regime.

For a Christian, the difference between action and inaction simply has to do with faith. If you have robust faith in Jesus Christ, you will be a different person from somebody who is merely religious.

Doing the will of God without applause, when it is not popular, takes great faith. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a man of faith who simply wanted to do the will of God.

SO WHO IS DIETRICH BONHOEFFER?

Born in Germany in 1906. Received his doctorate at age 21, accomplished pianist, intellectual, a witness to both world wars, a gifted communicator, served as pastor in places like Barcelona, London and Berlin, engaged to be married to the love of his life, and authored several books that are still read as classic Christian literature today.

HE HAD EVERYTHING GOING FOR HIM.

But he lived in Germany during the rise of Adolf Hitler. Dietrich Bonhoeffer believed that the Nazi persecution of Jews was biblically and morally wrong. He also believed that the Nazifying of the German Church with its teachings to hate the Jews was a moral wrong and he knew he had to do something.

With everything he had going for him, this the most important:

He put his Faith to Action--and it cost him everything.

LIVE ON PURPOSE

*“We must be ready to allow ourselves
to be interrupted by God.”*

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Courage. Integrity. Heroism. Sacrifice. These words stir something deep within us that longs to know there is meaning for each breath we take. We desire more from our hours than just sixty minutes of time. God created mankind to live life on purpose, and the good news is-- God is more than willing to show His children what that purpose is.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

Have you ever heard the saying--*Stand for something or you will fall for anything?*

As followers of Jesus, we stand for far more than just “something.” We stand for the glorious truth and good news found in scripture, and the way we live our lives is an outgrowth of that.

Our friends, family, classmates, coworkers, and even our enemies watch our actions and listen to our words to see if we live according to what we say we believe.

To live our Christian life ***on purpose***, we need to know the following:

- What we believe
- Why we believe it
- ***How to live out our faith in diverse situations***

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a man of deep integrity. He knew not only *what* he believed and *why* he believed it--*he also knew in **Whom** he believed.*

Daniel 11:32 tells us, **“The people that know their God shall be strong, and do great exploits.”**

This is the key to living a life of purpose: Knowing God.

Growing your relationship with God through prayer and Bible study will enable you to discover all of the amazing things God wants to accomplish through you and in you. There is a calling on your life that only you can uniquely fulfill. **You matter greatly.**

There are people who can only be reached with truth by someone who has had your particular life experiences. Nothing about you is chance--from your family of origin, your personality, to the shape and color of your eyes. God doesn't make mistakes. He makes masterpieces.

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago”.

EPHESIANS 2:10 NLT

Today, just as in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's time, there is a great need for young Christian men and women to answer the call on their life and live *on purpose*. To stand for truth courageously, consistently, and with humility and grace. One of the important facets of this call today is to **stand against** the growing hostility toward the promises of God to the Jewish people.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

EPHESIANS 6:13 ESV

Bonhoeffer lived out the call on his life in obedience to Christ. That meant in every direction and situation. Let's journey together and explore what it looked like when this follower of Jesus put his **Faith to Action** in a time that desperately needed heroes.

Ponder This: What have your words and actions said about what you believe about God? About God's love for you? Were they motivated by fear or by love?

What do you see that God has placed in your life that you would like to be more intentional about?

SETTING THE STAGE

“If you board the wrong train, it is no use running along the corridor in the other direction.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

A CULTURE OFF COURSE

Have you ever wondered how something like the Holocaust could have taken place? How could one of the most cultured and advanced nations in the world at the that time starve and mass murder 6 million of their Jewish neighbors, friends, shop owners, doctors, dressmakers, musicians, students and even little Jewish boys and girls?

The anti-Semitism that permeated the Germany that Bonhoeffer was born into did not come about in a vacuum. For a holocaust of 6 million Jews to have taken place, there had to have been a hardening of hearts toward the Jewish people for longer than the years Adolf Hitler was in power.

There were broader factors at play working in tandem with centuries old prejudices.

We must understand that Germany was first a *German* nation-- fiercely nationalistic, ethnocentric and proud. At the time Adolf Hitler came on the scene, German pride was deeply bruised after losing the First World War. The international humiliation and economic devastation left in its wake conditioned the German people to be open to the charismatic and Messiah-like persona of a man who spoke of the return of Germany's former strength and glory.

Another factor at play is the human proclivity to find unity by sharing a common enemy. The German people needed a scapegoat to blame for all of their national woes. Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, "My Struggle" served that end as he described his journey of anti-Semitism and outlined his vision for Germany's future rise to what he believed was their rightful place as a world mega power.

Yet, these facts alone are not adequate to explain the horror that is the Holocaust...

Germany was also known as a *Christian* nation, in the same sense that America today is also a “Christian nation”. In other words, many were Christian in name only, a cultural identity, without following or obeying the words and teachings of Jesus.

Lastly, the Christianity of Europe at that time subscribed to a false theology that had crept into the church as early as the second century. This false theology played a silent yet deadly real role in the Holocaust and it is called *Replacement Theology*.

“THEY KILLED JESUS”

“A false faith is capable of terrible and monstrous things.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Replacement Theology teaches that God broke his eternal covenant with the Jewish people and rejected them because they failed to recognize Jesus as Messiah and that they were replaced with the Church.

This false doctrine further teaches that the Jewish people killed Jesus. This has for centuries led the erring to label the Jewish people a “deicide” people--“God-killers” or “Christ Killers”.

But Jesus himself is recorded in John 10:18 as saying, **“No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own accord.”**

The Jewish people did not kill Jesus. The price of our sin led a loving God to send His Son, Jesus, to sacrifice Himself for humanity; no one *took what he came to give*.

Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). His sacrificial death on the cross became the ultimate sacrifice for sin, enabling you and me to be forgiven and accepted into the family of God. **The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep** (John 10:11).

Replacement Theology's bedrock, "The Jews killed Jesus" uniquely removed the Jewish people from God's love and for centuries left them open to man's hate.

To prove this false theology "true", those who adhered to Replacement Theology made themselves the self-appointed hand of God to abuse and persecute the Jewish people in an attempt to prove that God no longer loved or kept his promises to the Jewish people.

The centuries of pogroms, inquisitions, forced curfews, ghettos, second-class citizenship and even the terrorization and slaughter of entire Jewish villages, by "Christians" was anathema to the teachings of Jesus who they claimed to follow.

There is more than one-way to take God's name in vain: Claim to be a Christian and then act like a devil.

Jesus told his followers, **"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."** John 13:35

To further the sting of this false teaching, today Replacement Theology touches on the modern state of Israel as it relates to the Jewish presence and ownership of the land promised to them by God. According to this wrong way of reading scripture, the Jewish people have no right to the land because. According to this teaching, God breaks His eternal covenants.

God initiated the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 17:7-8, where we find the promise of the land to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac:

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

God's promises are eternal when he calls them eternal. To say otherwise is to call God a liar. Our faith assumes trusting in His promises.

Millions of people all over the world are calling God a liar in His Abrahamic Covenant to the Jewish people. It could be said that Replacement Theology is an attack on the very character and reliability of God.

In support for God’s promises to the Jewish people, Christians are in essence standing in defense of God’s character.

Ponder This: What do you think of God choosing to be faithful to people who are not faithful to Him? Have you ever experienced grace in your own life? What has God’s faithfulness looked like to you?

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

For Replacement Theology to exist, one word in the bible must be misinterpreted: **Israel.**



The eternal nature of this covenant means that Israel and the Jewish people still have a role in God’s continuing story to redeem the world.

In direct contradiction to Romans 11, which makes a very clear distinction between Israel and the Church (each with an important role to play),

Replacement Theology redefines Israel to *mean* the Church, instead of being grafted in as we are told in Romans 11. This is appropriating God’s specific promises to Israel.



To illustrate the relationship between followers of Jesus and Israel, Paul uses the image of the olive tree. This imagery shows the Church’s relationship *to* Israel, rather than *in place of* Israel.

According to Paul, God’s living covenant with Israel is like the root of the olive tree and the Church is like branches that have been grafted into that root. The branches receive their nourishing sap from the root.

When Replacement Theology attacked the “root”, the European Church withered like a branch cut away from the source of its nourishment. But

the Bible teaches that Christians are grafted into the story of salvation that God has been writing for millennia, (see Romans 11).

Yet according to Replacement Theology, the Church is *THE* Israel of the Bible. It removes any connection to the promises of God found in the Hebrew Scriptures from the Jewish people. But according to the Bible, followers of Jesus are *fellow-partakers* of God's love and mercy, *not overtakers*.

Christians who insist that God could no longer show grace or remain in a special covenant with the Jewish people because they do not recognize Jesus as Messiah, do not properly understand the grace or faithfulness of God at work in their own lives.

It is by no merit of our own that God is faithful to us as Christians. He chooses to be in relationship with us when we put our faith in Him. He is not obligated in His love; He is awesome in love.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God,” Ephesians 2:8

The Jewish people are not chosen because they can win or lose God's favor; they are chosen because they are God's choice. It is not works, but His love that makes Him faithful to His promises. And He doesn't break promises like people do.

“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” Numbers 23:19

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Romans 11:29

Ponder This: Imagine if Sunday after Sunday your pastor taught that God broke his eternal covenant with the Jewish people because “they” killed Jesus. How do you think this would affect how you view your Jewish friends and neighbors?

And further, how would you feel as a Christian if you thought God broke his eternal promises and covenants? What then would keep Him from breaking His promises to you?

BECOMING BONHOEFFER

*One act of obedience is better
than one hundred sermons.*

-DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

A Germany that produced a Holocaust didn't just **happen**. In the same way, men and women who do heroic and extraordinary things don't just **happen**, either. There are thousands of little choices made every day that move a destiny forward, be it for a culture or for an individual.

Eventually, circumstances will reveal what we are really made of. Proverbs 24:10 says, **"If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength!"**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was thrown into the very fire of standing against the tidal wave of Hitler's Nazi Germany, and he stood strong until the very end of his life. How does a young Christian become someone who will, against all odds, stand for what is right even in the face of evil itself? How did Bonhoeffer become such a person?

EARLY YEARS



Bonhoeffer, along with his twin sister, was born on February 4th, 1906 as the 7th and 8th child of a prominent and well established family. His father, Karl Bonhoeffer, was a noted neurologist and professor at the University of Berlin.

Karl Bonhoeffer challenged his children to become disciplined men and women and to pursue intellectually rigorous vocations. He trained his children to be men and women of character and courage, as well as to value independent thinking and learning.

His mother, Paula Von Hase, was the daughter of a well-known minister who served as preacher to the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and was one of a few women at that time to have a college degree. As a devout Christian, she raised her children with a thorough understanding and knowledge of the Bible.

1918 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer's elder brother, Walter, died in the First World War. The idyllic childhood of Bonhoeffer seemed to end with the death of his beloved brother. It was several years before the family would recover from the loss.

1920 - At the dinner table one evening, 14 year old Dietrich announced matter-of-factly that he was going to become a theologian. While his older brothers teased him, suggesting he would be of no use in the world as a preacher and that the Church was in disarray anyway, Dietrich shrugged it off and determined that if the Church of Germany were in disarray, he would reform it.

SCHOOL DAYS



1923 -1927 Bonhoeffer set out to pursue his goals and studied theology at the universities of Tübingen and Berlin. At that time, Germany was leading the world in academics and Dietrich who was a gifted and dedicated scholar, excelled as a student.

While at university, Bonhoeffer was deeply troubled by seeing hints of anti-Semitism from his classmates. He knew that it was deeply wrong. In a conversation with a Jewish classmate, Bonhoeffer was shocked to learn that the fraternity he belonged to, banned Jewish students from joining.

Coming from a family who believed the promises of God to the Jewish people found in the Bible, and that had close family friendships with Jewish academics and their children, Bonhoeffer was disturbed by what he heard and distanced himself from the racist fraternity, eventually moving on to another university altogether. There, Bonhoeffer earned his doctorate in theology by the age of 21.

FIRST TIME PASTOR

1928–1929 After completing his theological studies, Bonhoeffer served as an assistant pastor to a German-speaking congregation in Barcelona, Spain. Bonhoeffer lived, worked, taught, laughed, wept and served the scattered and discouraged German Christian community in Barcelona.

There he saw poverty of body and soul and it greatly impacted how he lived out his faith. Compassion for the hurting grew in Bonhoeffer heart as he put his years of theological training into real world action and served his flock. Just like seasons in our lives, God used this particular season of learning and difficulty to help shape Bonhoeffer into the man he was becoming.

SEEK JUSTICE

“Things do exist that are worth standing up for without compromise. To me it seems that peace and social justice are such things, as is Christ himself.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

“TELL THEM WHO WE ARE, DIETRICH”



1930-1931 New York- Still too young for fulltime ministry, Bonhoeffer came to America to do post-graduate studies at New York’s Union Theological Seminary. While disappointed with the lack of theological depth at Union, and shocked by the absence of pure gospel preaching from the pulpits in New York, Dietrich developed friendships with several classmates that would indirectly help shape his life.

One such friendship was with classmate Frank Fisher. Fisher was an African-

American seminary student from Alabama who decades later would march with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the Civil Rights movement. Fisher invited Bonhoeffer to visit Harlem's, Abyssinian Baptist Church where he was doing social work.

Bonhoeffer would go on to spend almost every Sunday at Abyssinian Baptist Church for the remainder of his time in New York. He taught a boys' Sunday school class and led an adult bible study. The preaching of Adam Clayton Powell Sr. helped Bonhoeffer turn, "from phraseology to reality."

In a letter home he wrote that at Abyssinian Baptist Church he finally heard a sermon on the Gospel and witnessed faith and worship that were alive.



Bonhoeffer fell in love with African-American spirituals and brought 75 records home with him to Germany. While he enjoyed the culture and excitement of New York, he hated its racism.

On one occasion when Bonhoeffer was out with a group of friends, Fisher was refused service in a café because of the color of his skin. Bonhoeffer led his entire group of friends in leaving the café in because of the discrimination against Fisher.

When it came time for Bonhoeffer to say goodbye to his friends in America and return home to Germany, Fisher asked, "Tell them who we are, Dietrich." In the years that followed back home in Germany, Bonhoeffer would play his collection of African American spirituals records and tell his students about Frank Fisher and the amazing African-American Christian community who had created them.

Already a sharp critic of the anti-Semitism he saw in Germany, Bonhoeffer's time in Harlem and then traveling the South with Fisher on a school break exposed him to the racism in 1930's America. These friendships and experiences deepened his conviction that Christians are to call out injustice wherever they see it.

Ponder This: What do you do in your own life when you see injustice?

What do you do when you see things that are contrary to the principles found in God's word?

Based on your Christian faith, what do you think is worth standing up for without compromise? Does defending God's chosen people fall into that category, as well? Why or why not?

FAITH TO ACTION

“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER



1932-1933 Bonhoeffer returned to a Germany where Hitler was being hailed as a savior who would deliver Germany from her troubles. The German press was full of editorials

affirming that through Hitler's leadership, Germany's honor would be vindicated and the humiliation of the lost World War would be left behind. The promise was that through Hitler, national pride and the devastated economy would be restored. Hitler was quick to label the Jews as the reason for all the hardships Germany was facing.

Bonhoeffer refused to remain silent as Nazism moved its nationalized anti-Semitism forward. He was also keenly aware of the dangers of Hitler's regime and the strides it was making in distorting the German church with its agenda.

CONFESSING CHURCH

Bonhoeffer helped found the Confessing Church in Germany which refused to be Nazified and intimidated into silence by Hitler. Hitler established a state church that put him as head of the Church over Christ.

Bonhoeffer was one of the first Christians in the Confessing Church to recognize clearly the dangerous significance of the “Jewish question” in Nazi Germany. As early as spring 1933, Bonhoeffer pointed out that the Jews were becoming victims of the state’s policies - but his was a lone voice.

THE CHURCH AND THE “JEWISH QUESTION”



In April of 1933, Bonhoeffer wrote an essay entitled, “The Church and the Jewish Question” in response to Hitler’s Nazification of the German Church and its racist laws being put into effect against the Jewish Germans.

He outlined three points. First, the Church was responsible to question state injustice. Secondly, the Church had the obligation to help all victims of injustice, regardless of if they were Christians or not. And thirdly, the Church is called to, “put a spoke in the wheel” of injustice to bring it to a halt.

But on the ‘Jewish question’, few echoed Bonhoeffer in such outspoken views and almost prophetic clarity. The hurdle of institutionalized anti-Semitism in the Christian church for so many years was almost too much for the majority of Christian leaders to overcome.

The silence from the church in Germany as the Jewish population was stripped of rights, annexed in ghettos, and eventually hauled to gas chambers is a silence that must never be allowed to come from the Church ever again. We must, like Bonhoeffer, see the evil in our midst and do everything in our power to right it.

UNDERGROUND SEMINARY

“Jesus is the only significance. Beside Jesus nothing has any significance. He alone matters.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP



1935 - Bonhoeffer was given the position of heading up an illegal underground seminary for training young pastors in the Confessing Church. He would travel on motorcycle from one German village to another teaching and training in secret. Eventually the Gestapo discovered the seminary and arrested 27 pastors and students.

1936 - Because of his outspoken anti-Nazi views, and because he refused to join the German army and fight for Hitler, Bonhoeffer was labeled, “a pacifist” and “enemy to the state.” The Nazis no longer permitted him to teach at the University of Berlin.



1938 - On November 9, the “Night of Broken Glass” (Kristallnacht), a frenzy of Nazi anti-Semitism was unleashed on Jewish German citizens. Throughout Germany, mobs shattered the windows of houses and stores belonging to Jewish

Germans. They brutalized their Jewish neighbors and burned synagogues. 267 synagogues were burned or destroyed, and well over 7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed.

Bonhoeffer's students tried to make sense of the Night of Broken Glass and began to discuss it by looking at it through a lens of Replacement Theology. They suggested it was evidence of God's rejection of the Jewish people.

Bonhoeffer was horrified at their dangerous conclusion. He was explicit that that Night of Broken Glass was a desperately evil act of racism and terrorism and that Jews still were the people of God.

In his personal Bible, he underlined Psalm 74:8, "**They say to themselves: let us plunder them! They burn all the houses of God in the land**" and dated it November 9th, 1938--the Night of Broken Glass.

In his equating the burning of Jewish synagogues as, "houses of God" he flew in the very face of the Replacement Theology which had become a part of the fabric of the Church. Today all we can do is wonder what history would look like and how many generations of Jewish people would be alive today if all of the Church in Europe had taught the truth from the bible that, "**God has not rejected His people**" Romans 11:2.

1939 - Just before the beginning of the Second World War, Bonhoeffer was invited back to the United States to lecture at churches and seminaries.

Because of the great pressure he was facing from the Nazis due to his outspoken stand against Hitler and his anti-Semitic regime, he felt it might be better to flee to the safety of American on a speaking tour as he was quickly losing his freedom to openly speak in any capacity in Germany due to his criticism of Hitler.

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He accepted the invitation and set sail for New York, but he was troubled by the thought of leaving his home country when things were getting difficult, but he yearned for the ability to speak freely in America in opposition to the destructive ideology that opposed everything he stood for as a Christian.

In less than a month he would return home to Germany.

He knew that if he wanted to be able to play a part in rebuilding Germany and the German Church, he must return, continue to take action, and share the fate of those suffering instead of take the easy way out.

Ponder This: Let's explore what it looks like to put *Faith to Action*.

What are some examples of “Bonhoeffers” in your own life—(people who have stood up for the principles and promises found in the word of God even when it was difficult and cost them something).

Has putting your faith to action ever cost you anything? What did that look like?

Do you have any regrets from a time when you knew you should have spoken up and didn't? Was it from fear of rejection or ridicule? What would you do differently today?

Has supporting Israel every caused you to receive pushback?

DOUBLE AGENT

“We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER



1940 - Because of his outspoken criticism of Hitler and his regime, on his return to Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was forbidden from speaking or teaching in public. His decision to resist evil came at great personal cost. Once in the running for one of the highest roles in the German Church, this brilliant scholar was now censured and silenced. Standing by his convictions cost him.

After the illegal Confessing Church seminary was discovered by the Gestapo and shut down, Bonhoeffer changed his strategy at resisting the evil in his midst. He began to use his connections with friends in high-ranking positions who also saw Hitler for the mad man that he was to position himself for action in any way that he could.

Bonhoeffer joined the German Secret Service and acted as a double agent to work against the regime from the inside.

Despite the restrictions imposed on him, Bonhoeffer was able to continue his work for the resistance movement under cover of employment in Germany's Military Intelligence Department, which in fact was a center of the resistance. Up until this point, Bonhoeffer had tried to oppose the Nazis through religious action and moral persuasion but now worked from inside to fight the regime.

OPERATION 7

“The Church was silent when it should have cried out because the blood of the innocent was crying aloud to heaven. She is guilty of the deaths of the weakest and most defenseless brothers of Jesus Christ.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER 1940

Using his standing as a well-connected and highly educated pastor, Bonhoeffer traveled to church conferences throughout Europe. He was expected to collect information about the places he visited and then turn the information over to the German authorities for their use in the war effort.

But instead, Bonhoeffer used his access and connections in a plan labeled, “Operation 7” which was designed to rescue Jews who were awaiting death under Nazism. The goal was to smuggle as many Jews as possible to safety in neutral Switzerland.

OPERATION VALKYRIE

1943 - Bonhoeffer still worked as a double agent to thwart the Nazi regime from the inside by attempting to rescue Jews. During this time, there were a growing number of high-ranking Germans, including his brother-in-law, who worked to stop the evil of Nazism.

These members of the anti-Nazi Confessing Church knew that the slaughter of countless innocent people, the shipment of thousands of Jews by train in cattle cars to meet their death in concentration camps, and the polluting of Church with Nazi lies must end.

They came to a conclusion: Hitler's reign over Germany must end. Therefore Hitler himself must end.

A plot to assassinate Hitler began.

This plot was code-named "Operation Valkyrie", meaning *Operation July*. The plan was years in the making. Bonhoeffer and the main conspirators planned to overthrow the madman in a daring and complicated plot that relied on perfect execution and complete secrecy, all for the end goal of stopping the shed of more and more innocent blood.

But the July 20th, 1944, "Operation Valkyrie" attempt on Hitler's life failed.

Soon Hitler would become personally aware of Bonhoeffer's resistance to his regime.

BONHOEFFER IN LOVE



As Bonhoeffer continued his work in the resistance movement, he met the daughter of a fellow pastor in the Confessing Church. Her name was Maria Von Wedemayer.

Bonhoeffer fell deeply in love with Maria, and asked her to be his wife. The two were engaged to be married and even in the

midst of fighting the evil he saw all around him, the two began planning a future together.

During this time, Bonhoeffer's Nazi resistance efforts and his role in a plot to rescue Jews was discovered by the Gestapo, which was the German secret police under Nazi rule. It ruthlessly suppressed opposition to the Nazis. The Gestapo were heavily monitoring Bonhoeffer and his fellow resisters. The home of Bonhoeffer's Mother and Father, where Dietrich was living, was kept under surveillance.

On an April afternoon in 1943, two men from the Gestapo arrived at the home of Bonhoeffer's parents. They inquired if Dietrich was home, and then entered. When they met him coming downstairs, they seized him and immediately put him in the back seat of the car and drove him directly to Tegel prison. He would write Maria many love letters from cell 92.

They would never see each other in this life again.

TO TRULY LIVE

*“When Christ calls a man,
he bids him come and die.”*

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

1945- In February Bonhoeffer was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp and in April he was transferred to the Flossenburg camp. Originally imprisoned for being a resister and for his work on the “Operation 7” plot to rescue Jews, the discovery of documents linking Bonhoeffer directly with “Operation Valkyrie” led to his further interrogation and eventual death sentence.

Adolf Hitler could not abide the knowledge that there were resisters still living who had plotted the end to his beloved Third Reich as well as those who plotted his assassination.

During his time in prison, Bonhoeffer suffered loneliness as well as the realities of being treated as an enemy of the state under Nazi rule. His

fellow prisoners would later tell of his inspiring peace and faith in the midst of suffering. Yet Dietrich was still a very real human being. The poem below was written by him while imprisoned:

Who Am I?
Who am I? They often tell me
I step out from my cell,
Composed, contented and sure,
Like a lord from his manor.
Who am I? They often tell me.
I speak with my jailers,
Frankly, familiar and firm,
As though I was in command.
Who am I? They also tell me,
I bear the days of hardship,
Unconcerned, amused and proud,
like one who usually wins.
Am I really what others tell me?
Or am I only what I myself know of me?
Troubled, homesick, ill, like a bird in a cage,
Gasping for breath, as though one strangled me,
Hungering for colors, for flowers, for songs of birds,
Thirsting for kind words, for human company,
Quivering with anger at despotism and petty insults,
Anxiously waiting for great events,
Helplessly worrying about friends far away, empty and tired of praying,
of thinking, of working,
Exhausted and ready to bid farewell to it all.
Who am I? This or the other?
Am I then, this today and the other tomorrow?
Am I both at the same time? In public, a hypocrite
And by myself, a contemptible, whining weakling?
Or am I to myself, like a beaten army,
Flying in disorder from a victory already won?
Who am I? Lonely questions mock me,
Who I really am, you know me, I am thine, O God!

-DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

From his bunker in Berlin, Hitler personally ordered the execution of Bonhoeffer and his co-conspirators.

On Resurrection Sunday, April 9, 1945, Just 11 days before the allied forces defeated the Nazis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was led from his prison cell before jeering SS guards, and hanged.

Before he reached the place of execution, he had turned to a friend and said: **“This is the end—for me, the beginning of life.”**

A Nazi SS doctor who witnessed Bonhoeffer’s execution wrote, “I was most deeply moved by the way this loveable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. . . . He climbed to the steps of the gallows, brave and composed. . . . I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.”

Bonhoeffer took a courageous stand against the evil of his day and paid the ultimate price for doing so.

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

It is estimated that just in the last few years, nearly one hundred thousand followers of Jesus have been killed in the Middle East by followers of radical Islam.

The only country in the Middle East where the Christian population is safe and growing, is the Jewish State of Israel.

Ancient Christian communities that date back to the time of Christ have been completely wiped out. Hundreds of churches in Egypt have been burned to the ground and men, women, and children are executed simple because they are Christians. This is why we must be bold.

There is a saying common in radical Islamic circles, “First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people.” Meaning: first we kill the Jews, and then the Christians. Those who hate Israel and those who hate Christians are one in the same.

Christians in the West do not face the threat of death as so many Christians around the world do. We may get blocked on Facebook for posting a Biblically belief related to a cultural controversy, or be called bigot.

But even in the West, being a follower of Jesus requires great faith and boldness. To stand by the truth of scripture when it is under attack requires an uncommon man or woman.

Jesus did not promise his followers popularity. He did not even promise them easy lives. In fact, Jesus taught His followers that they must die to self if they are to truly live.

Let's take a look at Luke 9:23-26

Then Jesus said to the crowd, **“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.”**

But Bonhoeffer knew that Jesus promised his followers His never-ending love, a relationship with the Father, and the help of His Spirit.

**“Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, ‘Thy will be done’;
And when at last I’ll hear the call,
I know I’ll say ‘twas worth it all’;
Only one life, ’twill soon be past,
Only what’s done for Christ will last.”**

C.T. Studd

Odds are, we will not be asked to pay the ultimate price for following Jesus in this life as so many of our fellows believe currently are. But

every day, in small ways, we live declaring whose approval we value most: this quickly fading world's, or God's.

Bonhoeffer wrote a book called, *The Cost of Discipleship*. In it he urged believers to see past temporal distractions and difficulties and fix their eyes on the goal of following Jesus.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12: 1-2

PROMISES KEPT

“God does not give us everything we want, but He does fulfill His promises, leading us along the best and straightest paths to Himself.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER.

God loves the Jewish people. We see this throughout scripture. He loves all people passionately, but he has a special role for the people through whom he has chosen to display his character and faithfulness through for thousands of years.

Satan hates anything that God loves, and he tries to destroy it. In John 10:10 we read: ***The thief comes to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.***

These goals of the enemy are not just reserved for the Church, but for anyone who identifies with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

There is an all-out spiritual war on the Jewish people from the kingdom of darkness because God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and still has an eternal covenant and plan for the Jewish people that will affect all of human history. God still plans to fulfill the covenant that he made through Abraham to the Jewish people.

Satan believes that if he can wipe out the Jewish people, he can stop God's plan, and make God out to be a liar.

From the enslavement of Israel in Egypt, Haman in Persia trying to exterminate the Jews, King Herod calling for the murder of every male Jewish child, Hitler's attempted genocide of the world's Jews just a generation ago, Hamas' call for Jewish blood on Israeli soil, and radicalized college students calling for Israel's destruction; this battle is ongoing.

Today, the number of groups, terror organizations, academic and cultural leaders, and even entire regimes calling for the complete destruction of Israel is at a record high. This hatred for the Jewish people is as old as recorded history.

But God is working through His children to bring His will to pass. God has those whom he is calling to stand up against the darkness of this age and be a voice for truth.

God always has His Bonhoeffers.

ARE YOU READY?

“Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

In standing up for truth you must be ready. Throughout the Bible God has called ordinary men and women to do extraordinary things. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is often called the “Hall of Faith” because it lists the great acts of faith performed by those who have gone before us in their pursuit of knowing and following God.

In walking in obedience to the call on their lives, many of these faithful followers of God lived lives contrary to the culture of their time. As followers of Jesus in the 21st century, the call to be a “set apart people” still applies.

Many voices will tell you who you should be and what you should believe, but ultimately one day all of those voices will fade and One voice will remain. Are you training your ear now to hear His voice amongst the many?

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” John 10:27

When the choice arises to bow to Biblical and eternal truth or to bow to the spirit and movements of this age, we must, **MUST**, choose the narrow way regardless of the direction the crowd is headed.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”
Matthew 7:13-14

This is not a popular preaching point, but taking the path of least resistance is never where Jesus leads.

“If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” John 15:19

Understanding God’s covenant with Israel fits into the broader tapestry of His plan for world redemption. Christians do not support Israel and the Jewish people because the Jewish people are perfect. No people group can bear the burden of that expectation and impossible standard.

Supporting Israel and the Jewish people falls into the category of standing up for what is right and believing the Word of God is true. The reason the Jewish people are under attack is because of who they are, the role they play, and their identification with the God of the Bible.

For the first time in two thousand years, the Church is actually showing love to the Jewish people, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because Jesus asked us to.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40

Will you put your Faith to Action?

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