TO FOLLOW THE CHRIST
An Exposition of Bonhoeffer and Discipleship

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I recommend this thesis for acceptance by the Honors Committee for graduation with honors.

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PREFACE

My purpose in writing this thesis is to expand upon the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer known in English as *The Cost of Discipleship*. Since much of this paper will be exegesis of Bonhoeffer's masterpiece, the approach differs from the majority of honors theses that are traditionally more formal. My style is personal, in order that others—not merely honors students—may benefit from the reading and also that the more obscure portions of *The Cost of Discipleship* may be made clear to the layman. Many of the interpretations are my own opinion, reached through a relatively short experience following the Christ. The reader is thus encouraged to read Pastor Bonhoeffer's book for himself and draw his own conclusions.

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Stephen Holdzkom
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He was born on February 4, 1906, in a spacious house in Breslau, the son of an eminent scientist and university professor. He died at the hands of the Gestapo on April 9, 1945, within the confines of the Flossenbürg concentration camp. It was not a very long life. Nevertheless, Dietrich Bonhoeffer crammed more living into those thirty-nine years than many men do into seventy. As a university professor, this man had rubbed elbows with some of the greatest intellectuals and scientists in Germany at the time, but he had also worked with teen-agers in the poorer sections of Berlin. As a seminarian and young pastor, he shepherded churches in Barcelona, London, and New York, as well as in his native Germany. On one hand, Bonhoeffer was actively involved in the ecumenical movement within the Christian church, while on the other, he was one of the founders of the illegal Confessing Church during the Nazi era. Although Bonhoeffer was a staunch pacifist, he was active in the July 22 plot to assassinate Hitler. It seems to us as if this man's life was full of contradictions and paradoxes, but they all worked together to make Bonhoeffer the kind of man he was.

The diversity of the times in which Bonhoeffer lived influenced him greatly, times of rapid change and chaos, of inflation, depression, and war. Many people during the twenties, thirties, and forties were broken emotionally and spiritually, but Bonhoeffer was made stronger by the situation. He was forced
to grow rapidly as a Christian, resolving the dissonances in his life and forming new and different theological ideas. Yes, there is no doubt but that the times had a hand in forming the uniqueness of Bonhoeffer's personality.

Most important in his own view, though, and in the eyes of those who wish to study his thoughts, Bonhoeffer's character was molded by following the Christ. The concept of discipleship he held clears up for us the paradoxes in his life and brings into focus the parts of the man which seem to be contradictions. It was with Dietrich Bonhoeffer as with the Apostle Paul: "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1: 21). The man from first-century Galilee was the center of Bonhoeffer's life in twentieth-century Germany. Throughout his life, the pastor struggled with the meaning of Christian discipleship. He wrestled with its implications and applications for everyday experience, and when a satisfactory solution was discovered, Bonhoeffer taught it and also put it into practice. Thus he proved that the words of Jesus were not merely for an impossible ideal society: they worked in the real world—and worked well.

One of the greatest opportunities for testing came for Bonhoeffer when he was appointed head of a new, experimental seminary for the Confessing Church in Finkenwalde. It was here, during the most productive period of his life, that Bonhoeffer "worked out his own salvation" (Cf. Philippians 2: 12). Many ideas he presented to the brothers of the seminary sounded strange to their ears. Some rebelled against putting them into practice, but their leader persuaded them to try the new concepts. Joyfully, the young seminarians discovered the excitement of the Christian life as it had been originally conceived and as interpreted by Bonhoeffer. For many the high point of their
lives were those years at Finkenwalde; and when the Third Reich began to
imprison and kill them, the graduates went calmly and confidently to their
deaths.

During these years—1935 to 1937—Bonhoeffer began work on the book he
entitled Nachfolge, in which he set down the concept of Christian discipleship
in detail. The book appeared during Advent of 1937, with a "spiritual dedi-
cation"—though not written, because of the Nazis—to the brothers at Finken-
walde. In a circulating letter to them he wrote:

When it appeared, I often dedicated it in spirit
to you all. I would have done so on the title
page had I not feared to lay the responsibility
for my theology and my ideas on your shoulders.
Our community is founded upon something else. I
would have liked each one of you to receive the
book as a Christmas present, but this finances
would not allow. In any case, you all know what's
in it.

The little book made a terrific impact upon all who read it. Many copies
were sold, even within the anti-Christian confines of the Third Reich. When
the English translation appeared, The Cost of Discipleship, the world began
to become aware of the new theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

As implied above, the ideas contained in The Cost of Discipleship resulted
from Bonhoeffer's own experience. The words themselves were taken and reworked
from lectures given for various courses at Finkenwalde, but the reader quickly
ascertains that these are not just another set of dry, theological homilies.
The book is hard-prayed-for stuff, meant to speak to a man where he is and to
show him where he should be—and, more importantly, how to get there.

1 Eberhard Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage
CHAPTER I
FOUNDATIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Costly Grace

Many people have interpreted the teachings of the man from Nazareth named Jesus. Some have scorned him, ridiculing his words as preposterous and irrelevant, while others have embraced him, making his way of life their own. And for each of these, following the Christ has meant something different. When Dietrich Bonhoeffer began explaining what discipleship meant to him, he began by asking the questions "What did Jesus mean to say to us? What is his will for us today? How can he help us to be good Christians in the modern world?"

1

When we begin searching the Scriptures to discover what Jesus desires to say, we get the feeling that he is not speaking to us as many ministers do—high-and-mighty from a pulpit, dictating what is right and wrong. No, it seems as if he is communicating as one human being to another, and thus, we soon begin to feel his love as he shows us the way. It is strange, but we begin to believe that if Jesus were the pastor of a local church, there would be a different crowd in the pews on Sunday morning: the poor and rejected, the so-called "dregs of humanity"—and a different group offended by his words: the rich and "religious"—than is today the case. Such was his appeal when he walked the earth, and there is no reason to believe the situation would be different today. Nevertheless, it is to Jesus himself that we must look as we begin our life of discipleship.

To Jesus, and to the searching Bonhoeffer, discipleship was seen to have many meanings, but a primary one was that discipleship is joy. If you read the gospels closely, you begin to feel the delightful exhuberance Jesus felt as he lived. You can see the twinkle in his eye, the smile on his face, and the spring in his step. This man was free, and he invited those who would follow to be free with him: "When the Bible speaks of following Jesus, it is proclaiming a discipleship which will liberate mankind from all man-made dogmas, from every burden and oppression, from every anxiety and torture which afflicts the conscience" (p. 40). In taking that first step on the road of faith, the disciple is committed to something that will lift him from his weakness and put him on the way to a life of freedom.

Naturally, the course of discipleship should not be taken as a lark, to be begun on a whim and dropped on another. Neither does the joy of walking in Jesus' steps mean we can ignore the seriousness of his commands. When a man is called, it is done in earnest; the Master knows that that man will be different no matter what choice is made—that the rest of the man's life depends upon the decision. Such a call is not meant to be trifled with. In fact, Bonhoeffer says: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die" (p. 99).

Here in this seeming paradox, we recognize one of Bonhoeffer's most inspiring insights: cheap grace vs. costly grace.

As Bonhoeffer looked at the Church of his day, he saw that much of the punch had been taken out of what Jesus had said. Too often people were allowed to become members of the Church—Christ's Body—without realizing what they were called to in Christian discipleship. They, along with the Church, assumed that the sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion could be acquired at cut prices, as "grace sold on the marketplace like cheapjacks' wares" (p. 45). This is grace without price, grace without cost.
These members thought of grace as divine love and protection which was given automatically, without requiring anything of the disciple. For Bonhoeffer, this was one of the biggest failings of the Church: the failure to make people aware of the cost of discipleship and grace.

Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate (p. 47).

In other words, the Church had made Christianity too easy, in order to attract greater numbers of people. It had stressed over and over the freeness of God's love—which is true enough in itself—but, by ignoring the commands prerequisite to love and grace, it had cheapened divine grace into mere human grace. So many people forgot the words of Jesus: "No one who does not carry his cross and come with me can be a disciple of mine. Would any of you think of building a tower without first sitting down and calculating the cost?" (Luke 14: 27-28). Jesus realized that becoming his disciple would be a costly undertaking; some would have to give up all they had in order to succeed. But in the course of the centuries, the Church had transformed Jesus into a super Santa Claus, who freely gave gifts to all good boys and girls; this is what Bonhoeffer fought against.

For Bonhoeffer, God's grace was not grace unless it cost something. In the first place, it had cost the Father all that he had—his only-begotten Son—and if it did not cost the believer something, it was not worth the price God paid. Jesus demands that a sincere disciple put himself last and set the Christ up as Lord of Life. This costs the disciple his old life: all that he had falsely treasured in the past, all that he had set up within himself as gods, and all that he had hoped for in life. That, my friends, is expensive!

"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" (p. 47).

As the young Bonhoeffer struggled with this costliness, he noticed a common characteristic in all of Jesus' disciples: when each was called, he was called to be more than he was; he gladly left everything and followed the Christ to a higher plane of life. Bonhoeffer must have wondered how many people really had made a sacrifice to become Jesus' disciples in the twentieth century. How many were ready to take the benefits of discipleship without counting the cost? Too many had taken the cheap grace without realizing the far greater potentials of costly grace.

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, 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 (pp. 46-47).

It was in this way, the way of costly grace, that Bonhoeffer sought to answer the question of how to live a Christian life in the modern world. He saw that those who had been overcome by this costly grace were "able to sing the praises of the all-sufficient grace of Christ with humbleness of heart" (p. 60). They lived their lives in the perfect freedom of Jesus' love, and discovered that costly grace is equal to discipleship. These Christians could follow the Christ and live with the same enthusiasm and exhuberance as their Lord had lived.

Thus Bonhoeffer resolves the paradox. Discipleship is joy, but it is joy that is paid for by the travail of new birth. When Jesus bids the disciple to come and die, he bids him to come and partake of his Master's joy in doing
God's will, even if that means suffering and death. This is a part of the cost of discipleship.

**The Call**

The road of Christian discipleship begins with a call—a confrontation with the Son of God. Once a person has been summoned to follow the Christ, life changes for him. He may decide to ignore the call because he is having too much fun living life his own way. A man may turn down Jesus' offer, thinking he has no time for God. Jesus himself came in contact with such people, and there are many like them living today. But even if the negative decision is made, that person has been changed by this face-to-face meeting with the Savior. No one can meet Jesus of Nazareth and remain the same.

Then there is the opposite situation: a person can respond affirmatively to Jesus' call, deciding to begin anew by following the Master and doing his will. When this happens, there is a more drastic change in the individual involved. He begins to see all people and situations from a new and different point of view, since Jesus is now an integral part of everything he says and does. The Apostle Paul experienced such a change, later writing about it:

"If a man be in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (II Corinthians 5: 17).

The personal call is important, in that it involves a personal relationship with Jesus. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subjects of grace and sin render discipleship superfluous. With an abstract idea it is possible to become enthusiastic about it, and even put it into practice, but it can never be followed in personal obedience.

"Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity
without Christ" (p. 64). The abstract idea is kept, but a void develops without a personal relationship with the Christ. Thus, a disciple needs the call in order to enter into fellowship with the Master on a one-to-one basis. With this ἑνωμένη—a common fellowship—with the Savior, the follower is able to go to him in all conditions of life: joy, sorrow, thanksgiving, and petition. It is the gracious call of Jesus which makes all of this possible.

Nevertheless, as Bonhoeffer contemplated the call of Jesus and all it involved, he realized that the person's response to the call was of equal importance with the call itself. Jesus' offer of discipleship demands an answer, a definite step. By referring to the Gospels, Bonhoeffer was able to analyze the two possible responses to Christ's call. He saw that "this encounter is a testimony to the absolute, direct, and unaccountable authority of Jesus" (p. 62). There is no reason for Jesus to show his credentials to prove his identity. He is the Christ, the Son of God; every person he comes into contact with knows instinctively who he is. It is their reaction to the Master that interested Bonhoeffer. First, Bonhoeffer looked at a situation where Peter, the disciple with whom we can most easily identify, was put on the spot.

It had been a long day for Jesus' twelve disciples. They had put up with the pushing and shoving of the crowd all day. It seemed that their Master was tireless, always ready to teach or heal. Why, had they not seen him feed more than 5,000 people that afternoon with just five loaves of bread and two fish? Jesus had gone up into the mountains to pray after this; the crowd wanted to crown him king, but could not find him and finally went their separate ways. Now, late in the evening, the Twelve were getting impatient. They decided to sail back to Capernaum alone, without Jesus.

They rowed all night through a storm and were wet, tired, and discouraged, when suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water toward their boat. At first
the disciples were afraid, thinking they saw a ghost, but Jesus called to them and allayed their fears. Then Peter really put himself on the spot: "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you over the water." "Come on!" Jesus shouted. Here was a dilemma for poor Peter: he knew he dare not climb out of the ship relying on his own strength—his very first step would be his undoing. Still, if he did not come, the others would call him a coward—and worse—Jesus would rebuke him for his faithlessness. So Peter took the initial step in faith and walked easily upon the water. He did well for a while, but soon he began to look around. The waves rose black and menacingly around him; he was too far from the boat to go back. Then Peter began to ask himself: "Who do I think I am to walk upon water?" And as he doubted, he started to sink. Suddenly the waves covered him, and he cried for help; Jesus came, pulled him—sputtering—out of the water, and brought him safely to the boat (Cf. Matthew 14: 22-33).

This is a parable in Bonhoeffer's mind of the beginnings of discipleship. The call came to Peter, and it required a definite action. "Unless a definite step is demanded, the call vanishes into thin air, and if men imagine they can follow Jesus without taking this step, they are deluding themselves like fanatics" (p. 68). In Peter's impossible situation, everything was staked solely on the word of Jesus. Peter had to leave the ship and risk his life on the sea in order to learn both his own weakness and the almighty power of his Lord. The disciple succeeded because of his trust in the one who called. If he had not taken the risk, he would never have learned the meaning of faith. When Peter took that first decisive stride onto the water, he cut himself off from his previous existence; the call produced a new situation. That step made his faith possible.

The parallels to Christian discipleship are easily seen. Jesus calls me to become his follower, demanding that I give up my old life and become
new in him. I am placed in a situation where a decision must be made. If I choose to follow the Christ, I am immediately cut off from going back to my old life. This first step is the most difficult to take, but it must be made if I am to be a disciple. Nevertheless, by taking the risk, staking my whole life on the word of the Master, I learn what it means to trust him for everything—even life itself. "It means that I can only take this step aright if I fix my eyes not on the work I do, but on the word with which Jesus calls me to do it" (p. 72).

There are many barriers to my obedience to the call: reason and conscience, responsibility and piety, even law and scriptural authority. I can find many reasons why I should not follow Jesus. But the call of Jesus makes short work of these obstacles, because the security the Master offers is much greater than any security the world can give. Thus, the call creates obedience; it is the Word of God himself.

Now we may look at the other side of the coin: the man who refuses the costly grace of following the Christ to take the cheap grace, or the man who desires no grace at all. Bonhoeffer uses the story of the rich young ruler (Mark 10: 17-22) to illustrate this kind of person.

One day as Jesus was talking with his disciples, a young, well-dressed man ran up to him, and, kneeling before Jesus, asked him: "Good Master, what should I do to win eternal life?" Jesus looked down at him and replied, "Why do you call me good? You do not even know me. And anyway, nobody is worthy of that title but God." The young man was flabbergasted by this answer, but before he could gather his thoughts, Jesus proceeded to respond to the question: "You know all the commandments—do not murder, or steal, or commit adultery, or bear false witness, or cheat others, and you should honor your parents . . ." "But Master," the young man interrupted, "I've kept all these commandments
since I was a little kid, but I feel like I have still left something out. What is it?" Jesus looked straight at him; his heart warmed to him, and he said evenly, "If you want to go all the way, go, sell all your many possessions, and give the money to the poor; then you will have riches in heaven. After you have done that, come and follow me." At these words, the young man's face fell, and he went away with a heavy heart. He just could not bear to part with his wealth.

Bonhoeffer points out that, in the first place, the young man came to Jesus in the wrong frame of mind. He wanted to ask the "good master's" advice on the problem of salvation, expecting a weighty pronouncement. Eternal life was an academic puzzle worth discussing with a "good master." But with Jesus' first words the young man realized that he was not talking to just any teacher; he was face-to-face with the Son of God himself. The only answer he received was an unmistakable pointer to God's commandments. This was not Jesus' personal opinion, but that of God incarnate—God in the flesh—who answered the young man. The reply Jesus gave did not satisfy the young man; he had been brought up on the Mosaic law, and the commandments did not go far enough for him. Jesus saw through his second question and knew that the inquiry was centered in the self. By asking this second question, the young man sought to salvage the remains of his academic game. Jesus, however, was not interested in the game but in the young man himself. The Master realized that it was high time the young man heard the commandments—what they really meant—and obeyed them. The youth truly believed that he had fulfilled them and that God required more of him. Jesus quickly detected the young man's hopelessness and, loving him, ached to help him. In his final command Jesus summed up the deeper meaning of the others: the young man is called to fellowship with the Christ. The rich man-of-the-world and the Son of God, face-to-face—this was
a tense moment, but the young man hung his head in shame and went his sorrowful way.

This young man had missed the best chance for higher life he would ever have known. Now he was destined to merely exist—albeit with his riches—but never to know what real freedom was like. As an earnest seeker for perfection, the youth had probably tried to give up his wealth many times before and failed; he showed this by refusing to obey the word of Jesus when the moment of decision came. It is just here that that young man was entirely honest. Unfortunately, however, because he would not obey, he could not believe; by refusing the situation where faith would be possible, he was denied the fellowship of the Master.

Another of Bonhoeffer's observations here is that discipleship cannot be a group of rules to be followed, which will eventually yield a crown of life. Discipleship is not just another "good thing" to be added to our other "good things" in order to insure entrance into heaven. It must not be viewed quantitatively. Following the Christ is not only the most important facet of life, but also the only thing in life—that is, life itself.

The answer to the young man's problem is—Jesus Christ. He had hoped to hear the word of the good master, but he now perceives that this word is the Man to whom he addressed his question. He stands face-to-face with Jesus, the Son of God: it is the ultimate encounter. It is now only a question of yes or no, of obedience or disobedience. The answer is no. He went away sorrowful, disappointed and deceived of his hopes, unable to wrench himself from his past (pp. 83-84).

Thus, the call to follow means adherence to the person of Jesus Christ and fellowship with him. The life of discipleship is not the hero-worship we would pay a good master, but obedience to the Son of God. With our consciences distracted by many barriers, we are confronted with the call of Jesus to single-
minded obedience. All along the way we try to evade the obligation of obedience, watering down the words of Jesus, making them fit our own life-styles. In this way, Bonhoeffer concludes, we make Jesus a laughing stock by degrading his words. Literal obedience is required from all who would follow the Master.

More importantly, though, we must remember that Jesus is the source and center of all—even of our faith and obedience. It never lies within our own power: "The step into the situation where faith is possible is not an offer which we make to Jesus, but always his gracious offer to us" (p. 94). This is grace that is worth the price.

The Cross

The cross upon which Jesus was crucified has become the center of Christianity; all church doctrine focuses upon the act of redemption through the cross as both the source and goal of all faith. For Jesus himself, the Passion was the consummation of all his work on earth, and many times he tried to impress this upon his disciples. They just did not seem to comprehend that their Master was to die despised and rejected by men; moreover, the Twelve—as well as many followers today—could not grasp that Jesus expected them to share in his suffering. On one occasion when he was teaching, Jesus said: "If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; day after day he must take up his cross and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, that man is safe. What will a man gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his true self?" (Luke 9: 23-25).

Thus, Jesus made clear beyond all doubt that the "must" of suffering applied to his disciples no less than to himself. He realized that only through
his passion and death would the act of redemption be fulfilled; only by giving
his life as a ransom for all would he become the Messiah, the Christ. Therefore, just as Jesus is the Christ only as a result of his suffering and
rejection, so the disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares his Lord's
passion and crucifixion: "Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus,
and therefore submission to the law of Christ, which is the law of the cross"
(p. 96). Because the way of the cross was the focal point of the Master's
life, the person who would be a disciple must join Jesus on the cross.

The first step on the road of suffering is the step of self-denial; this
must be the starting point, in order for a disciple to have fellowship with
the Christ. Self-denial is never just a series of isolated acts of mortification
or asceticism. To leave self behind is to be aware only of Jesus and no more of
self, to see only him who goes before and not the road which is so hard for
us. In other words, a follower loses himself in the Master, so that it is not
the follower's life but Christ's. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote:
"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now
live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave
himself for me" (Galatians 2: 20).

It is only by self-denial that the second step becomes possible. We would
never be able to take up our crosses if we did not have our eyes solely on
Jesus. Bonhoeffer saw that only after we have become completely oblivious of
self are we ready to bear the cross for Christ's sake. Without denying ourselves,
we could never endure the suffering, but Jesus has graciously prepared us for
carrying the cross by requiring that we focus our lives upon him. Thus joining
with him in his death comes to us as a part of the joy of discipleship and con-
irms us in it. To endure the cross is not a tragedy; it is the suffering
which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ: "The cross means
sharing the suffering of Christ to the last and to the fullest. Only a man thus totally committed in discipleship can experience the meaning of the cross" (p. 98). Joining the Master in carrying the cross does not mean that we need to go out and search for martyrdom. It is not necessary to deliberately seek suffering. Jesus says that every Christian has his own cross waiting for him, a cross destined and appointed by God; each disciple must endure his allotted share of suffering and rejection.

Despite the fact that each follower has a different amount of suffering to cope with, there are some generalities that are "musts" for all. The first suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments to his old world, as was discussed in the last section. When he embarks upon discipleship, the new convert surrenders himself to Christ in union with the Savior's death: his life is given over to death. The cross is not a terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life; rather, it meets the convert at the beginning of his new communion with Christ. Only the man who is dead to his own will can rightly follow Jesus. This suffering, however, is not just a momentary pain—like that from an injection of penicillin—but it continues throughout the life of discipleship. Every day produces a new struggle with some temptations never before experienced. The way of the cross, lined with briars and sharp stones, is an uphill climb, a way of constant suffering. By looking always to Jesus, though, the road seems smoother; in his fellowship the suffering can be borne with joy.

But there is another kind of suffering and shame which the Christian is not spared: just as Jesus carried the sin of the world to Calvary, the disciple has to bear the sins of others. The Master expects his followers to share in this work, although his death—once and for all—made atonement and redemption possible. Only with the help of him who bore everyone's burdens is the disciple
able to bear the burdens of others. Thus, according to Bonhoeffer, "the call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins" (p. 100). Forgiveness is the Christlike suffering which is the Christian's duty to bear.

This idea of our bearing the sins of others may sound strange; perhaps a personal example will help to clear up the concept and get it across. In my own short experience of following Jesus, I have found it terrifically difficult to truly deny myself; I feel my will cropping up when I least expect it. Often I berate myself for my failures, and soon I am deep in despair. By sinking into self-pity, I cut myself off from fellowship with the Master. On the other hand, when I counsel with others, trying to guide and help them, I find that I literally take their burdens upon myself. During these times, I suffer greatly because of the troubles and hardships I have taken over, but I also again find the sweet fellowship with Jesus by interceding for others in prayer. I thus lose myself in the sufferings of others and find new communion with Christ. With him by my side, I am able to bear the sin itself by forgiving it.

For Bonhoeffer, then, suffering is the badge of true discipleship. If we refuse to take up our cross and submit to pain and rejection, we forfeit our fellowship with Jesus and cease to follow him. Although we lose our lives in carrying our cross in his service, we find our lives again in the communion of the cross of Christ: "Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact it is a joy and a token of his grace" (p. 101).

Of course, no one really enjoys suffering, and many people try to avoid it as much as possible. Jesus himself did not seek after pain and rejection; his prayers in Gethsemane prove this. Nevertheless, he discovered the only
way to make the suffering pass away: to endure it. That sounds absurd, perhaps, but it is the only way out. Suffering will indeed pass as we accept it; refusing it will only prolong the agony. To bear the cross is the only way to triumph over suffering. This is true for all who follow Christ because it was true for him. 

Jesus invites all who are tired of life and are heavy laden with burdens to throw off their own yoke and take his yoke upon them: "His yoke is easy and his burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). The yoke and the burden of Christ are his cross. To go one's way under the sign of the cross is not misery and desperation, but peace and refreshment for the soul. It is the highest joy: the joy of suffering in the fellowship of the Savior. "Wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death that Jesus died, that in this body also life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus lives" (II Corinthians 4:10).

The Individual

Man has always been frightened by the prospect of being alone; he has tried to protect himself from it by forming organizations of like-minded people, by uniting with his fellow man and establishing societies and nations. The human race forms itself into groups to avoid solitude, and then, because it becomes used to always rubbing elbows with others, its fear of being alone continues. Conformity, not only to the basic goods of society, but also to the evils which exist, spreads in epidemic proportions. But when Christ calls a man, he summons him to individuality—to leave the society of men and stand before him alone: "Through the call of Jesus men become individuals" (p. 105). Each person must decide about the Master alone and for himself, with his eyes fixed solely on the Christ.

There is a puzzling portion of Jesus' teaching, which Bonhoeffer points
out in his discussion of the disciple as individual: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine" (Luke 14: 26). Bonhoeffer, as he interprets this section of Scripture, states that men utilize many worldly things to fend off the call of Christ, "yet neither father nor mother, neither wife nor child, neither nationality nor tradition can protect a man at the moment of his call. It is Christ's will that he should be thus isolated, and that he should fix his eyes solely upon him" (p. 105). Thus, men do not become individuals by any power of their own; any such attempt would lead back to conformity. It is Christ who makes them individuals by calling them.

At the moment of accepting the call, an immediate barrier is set up so that the new follower cannot return to his former ways. Oh, he could try, but after an encounter with the Master and a short experience of discipleship, he would discover that things in the old world were not as satisfying as they as they had seemed in the past. In his gospel, John has recorded such an incident: some time after Jesus' resurrection, a few of the disciples decided to go back to their old lives of fishing. Yes, they knew that their Master was the Messiah; they had seen him alive following the crucifixion. Nevertheless, things seemed to be fitting back into the old routine again, with the uproar caused by Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and surprise resurrection dying down, so they decided to try to fit back themselves. The disciples fished all night, not catching anything. When dawn finally came, they were disappointed and disgusted. Fishing was not the same; after their relationship with Jesus, anything but his fellowship was dull. There was a wall between them and their old life: Jesus Christ himself. The story ends with Jesus appearing before them and giving them the beginnings of their assignments as apostles (Cf. John 21: 1-17).
But the fact remains that without the fellowship of Christ, their lives were empty and meaningless; with his communion life was full of promise, power, and joy. The barrier Jesus had set up between them and their natural lives was not a contempt for life, but life itself.

This becomes Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Master as Mediator: not just the Mediator between God and man, but also the Mediator between man and his fellow-man. By virtue of his incarnation—becoming human—Jesus acts as a bridge between man and man's natural life. There can be no turning back, for Christ bars the way. In calling us, Jesus has cut us off from all immediacy with the claims of this world, making himself the center. Through him all experiences and relationships must pass: "Since his coming, man has no immediate relationship of his own any more to anything, neither to God nor the world" (p. 107). The breaking away from the factors of this world is simultaneous with the acknowledgement of Christ as the Son of God. It is never a deliberate act whereby we renounce all contact with the world for the sake of some abstract ideal or other. It is not locking oneself up in a monastery, trading the immediacies of the world for sanctity. That is selfishness and willfullness, which in itself is an attempt at the worldly. Only the recognition of Christ as Mediator can separate the disciple from the world of men and things.

The call of Jesus teaches us that we are alone; no direct relationships with others are possible. All our lives we thought that the enriching experiences we valued—the kinship of father and son, brothers and sisters, married love, and duty to the community—were our own doing, whereby we struggled to build relationships. Now we see that between ourselves as individuals and all others stands Jesus as Mediator: "We cannot establish direct contact outside ourselves except through him, through his word, and through our following him"
For example, as I talk with young people, trying to guide them, there is no way that I will be able to have a direct relationship with them. No matter how loving and sympathetic I am, no matter how sound my psychology or open my heart, I cannot speak to them directly, for I am unable to penetrate to their souls, their "inner selves." Only through Christ, who stands between us, am I able to counsel with these teen-agers. The otherness and strangeness between us is bridged by the Mediator. Could this be what Jesus meant when he said: "For wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)?

It is evident, therefore, what a joy and comfort Jesus as Mediator provides: although I am isolated from others by his presence, I am also united with them in his love and concern for them:

The same Mediator who makes us individuals is also the founder of a new fellowship. He stands in the center between my neighbor and myself. He divides, but he also unites. Thus, although the direct way to our neighbor is barred, we now find the new and only real way to him—the way which passes through the Mediator (pp. 112-113).

Thus, there can be no love of the world except the love with which God loved it in Jesus Christ. This puts the Mediator in the center where he belongs, with all our prayers of thanksgiving ascending through him and all our relations with others being carried forward by him. We see that each follower is called separately, but though we must become disciples alone, we do not remain alone: Peter started to say to him, 'Lo, we have yielded up and abandoned everything once and for all and joined you as your disciples—walking the same road you walk.' Jesus said, 'Truly, I tell you, there is no one who has given up and left house, or brothers or sisters, or mother or father, or children or lands,
for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundred times as much now in this time—houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and land—with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life'" (Mark 10: 28-30). Hence, we receive the promise of new fellowship; if we take the Mediator at his word and dare to become individuals, our reward is the communion—the visible brotherhood—within the Church. This compensates a hundredfold for what we have left behind. Notice also that persecutions are promised: such is the grace of the Church which follows its Lord beneath the cross.

The supreme example of this facet of discipleship comes to Bonhoeffer from the Old Testament: the story of Abraham. The patriarch had to make two breaches with the old world—one visible, the other hidden. He had to leave his friends and his father's house because God came between him and his own. This was an evident and drastic break to all those around. So Abraham became a wanderer in search of the land God had prepared for him, taking the step from the known to the unknown in faith; he would never be able to go back.

Some time later, God demanded that Abraham take Isaac, his only son, and sacrifice him. Now Isaac was the only hope that Abraham's line would be carried on; he was the child of promise. Though Abraham must have been shocked and angered by this demand from God, he accepted it and prepared to make the last journey with his son. Once again, as when he had left his father's house, Abraham became an individual, a lonely and solitary figure. He had to learn that the promise did not depend upon Isaac but upon the Mediator. No one else had heard the command; it was a secret breach which Abraham had to make. He had to go against every direct claim upon him, be it natural, ethical, or religious, in order to obey the call of God.

So Abraham and Isaac climbed to the top of Mount Moriah, with the child of promise bearing the wood for his own sacrifice. Just as the father was
ready to plunge the knife into his only son's heart—at the moment when he was ready to make the secret breach an open one—God stayed his hand. Abraham received back everything he had surrendered; the tables were turned. Abraham got Isaac, but from now on he would have his son in quite a new way: through the Mediator and for the Mediator's sake (Cf. Genesis 22: 1-18). "No one else knows what has happened. Abraham comes down from the mountain with Isaac just as he went up, but the whole situation has changed. Christ has stepped between father and son" (p. 111). Outwardly the picture remains the same, but the old has passed away, and all things are new.

For this reason, Abraham became the New Testament symbol and example of faith. He chose the costly grace of the unknown, which God offered, rather than the safety and security of the cheap grace of home. It cost him his old life, yielding true life in fellowship with the Mediator. Abraham responded in faith to the call of God, not caring for himself, but only desiring to be with God as Master, in single-minded obedience. He learned to look to the Lord for life itself, staking all he had on the words spoken to him. By being ready to suffer for his decision, Abraham was granted the fellowship with God that men craved. And finally, by becoming an individual, the patriarch Abraham became the father of the Jewish people.

Many men came after Abraham: some were willing to become followers and others were not. Some, after counting the cost, decided discipleship was too expensive, while others thought nothing was too much to give in service to God: "I count everything sheer loss, because all is far outweighed by the gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I did in fact lose everything. I count it so much garbage, for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in him, with no righteousness of my own, no legal rectitude, but the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, given by God in response
to faith. All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share in his suffering" (Philippians 3: 8-10). This is the cost of discipleship and what it means to follow the Christ.
CHAPTER II
THE GUIDE TO DISCIPLESHIP

The Beatitudes
Matthew 5: 3-12

It is strikingly ironic that the greatest and most famous sermon ever preached was probably not preached at all. The Sermon on the Mount, as found in the Gospel of Matthew, is merely a collection of Jesus' teachings organized by the author of the book. Nevertheless, this fact becomes unimportant when considering the impact the Sermon on the Mount has made upon the world. No doubt, more people's opinions of Jesus are based upon it and more lives have been changed because of it than by any other piece of Scripture. Since it expresses the dynamic teachings of the Master in a nutshell, the Sermon on the Mount serves as a guide to the lifestyle a disciple should emulate, especially since it is the lifestyle of the Savior himself. As the late Dr. E. Stanley Jones, eminent missionary, pastor, and Christian author, wrote: "The Sermon on the Mount is practicable, for the Man who first spoke these words practiced them, and the practicing of them produced a character so beautiful, so symmetrical, so compelling, so just what life ought to be, that he is as inescapable in the moral realm as the force of gravity is in the physical."¹

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer looked at this sermon, he realized that it was aimed specifically at the disciple and the life he should live. Much of the Sermon on the Mount seems absurd unless the reader knows the Christ and has a personal relationship with him, but if that person is a disciple, the more he reads this sermon, the more he is able to hear the Master's instructions. It is jam-packed

full of meaning and must be prayed about and meditated upon for the reader to receive its full impact.

The first word alone—"blessed"—is pregnant with implications and applications. The original Greek word used here—μακάριος—conveys the message of being happy, spiritually prosperous, filled with "life-joy" and satisfaction with God's favor and salvation, regardless of one's outward conditions. This one word alone, with all of its connotations, describes the life of the disciple!

Let us imagine that we are members of Jesus' little band of followers. We have wandered the countryside all morning, and as we sit down to rest, the Master begins to speak, more to us than to the crowds that have also been chasing after him: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Jesus says, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He realizes that we—his twelve disciples seated around him—have given up everything to follow him. We have left families, lands, and careers to become disciples of this man Jesus. Privation is our lot in every sphere of earthly life—not only in physical comforts and possessions, but also in spiritual power. The Master had demanded that we even erase all our conceptions and misconceptions of God from our minds when we answered his call. Now we have no security; our only hope is in Jesus. Therefore, he tells us that we, his followers, are blessed and will receive the kingdom of heaven. Because of our complete and utter poverty for his sake, we are heirs of glory.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Why does Jesus bring up mourning? If the kingdom belongs to us, why should we weep? Slowly we realize that, by mourning, Jesus means doing without what the world

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calls peace and prosperity. We have refused to conform to the world or to accommodate ourselves to man's standards. This was innate in Jesus' call to us. But now we mourn for the world: for its guilt, its fate, its fortunes: "Nobody loves his fellow-men better than a disciple, nobody understands his fellow-men better than the Christian fellowship, and that very love compels them to stand aside and mourn" (p. 121). Thus, as followers, we mourn for our friends in the world, because we see how much better they could be with Christ at the center of their lives. We bear their sorrows upon ourselves. Nevertheless, we are comforted by our Lord, realizing that God will triumph.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Jesus knows that we are powerless, disenfranchised, and weak; to follow him we have renounced all physical and legal rights to ourselves. All is in the hands of God. Still, the very earth belongs to us as disciples of the Christ. Those who now possess the world by violence and injustice shall lose it, and those who here have utterly renounced it—meek to the point of the cross—shall rule the new earth. Although we do not realize now as Jesus speaks what kind of death will become his lot, he will prove this word of meekness by his crucifixion. As it is true for the Master, it is no less true for us who follow him: "The renewal of the earth begins at Golgotha, where the meek One died, and from thence it will spread. When the kingdom finally comes, the meek shall possess the earth" (p. 123).

"Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." As we hear these words, we are finally beginning to recognize what we gave up to follow Jesus. In the joyous moment of our call, the renouncing of everything was painful, but we did not really understand why. Now we see: not only did we renounce our rights, we even gave up our own righteousness—the salvation we had been building for ourselves. Since the time of our
call, we have been constantly looking forward to the righteousness of God on earth—the salvation he has for us when the kingdom establishes itself in the hearts of men. We long for the forgiveness of all sin, for complete renewal of men, and for the full establishment of God's law, just as we long for food when we are starving. Now Jesus promises that the kingdom will come, and we shall be filled with God's righteousness.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Jesus keeps delving deeper into our minds as he speaks. We realize that, being without possessions or power, we must also renounce our own pride and arrogance. As followers of the Christ, we must now take upon ourselves the humiliation and sin of others, as if our own needs and distress were not a large enough burden to bear. Like our Lord, we have an irresistible love for the downtrodden, the sick, the wretched, the wronged, the outcast, and those tortured with anxiety. If any man falls into disgrace, we are called to sacrifice our own honor to shield him and to take his shame upon ourselves. Therefore, as the merciful, we are trampled and ridiculed for our mercy; but we are happy and fulfilled, having the Merciful for our Lord, who someday will cover us with the honor of God, thus removing our disgrace.

As Jesus continues, he begins to smile, seeing the expressions of comprehension on our faces. The truth of his words is dawning in our minds. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." We understand: only the person who has surrendered his heart completely to Jesus—even as we have done—may be called pure in heart. As the Master's word has purified our hearts, all outward purity—that which was self-centered and meant for show—is blotted out, in order that we might see only the Christ. Thus, we are free from all defiling fantasies and are not distracted by conflicting desires and intentions. We shall see God, because our hearts are reflections of the image of Jesus Christ.
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." We know that we have been summoned to peace. In our call, we found the peace which the Master imparts—that which the world can neither give nor take away. Now we are told not only to have peace but to make it. To that end we must renounce all violence. As we think over the implications of such an order, we must renounce some of our natural inclinations, and this will be difficult. Our world is full of war, crime, and hatred, and there are dissensions even within our own group. Nevertheless, the Master's kingdom is one of peace, and suffering must be endured to bring in God's reign. In a world of hatred, wrong, and war, Jesus tells us that evil must be overcome with good, in order to establish the peace of God: "The peacemakers will carry the cross with their Lord, for it was on the cross that peace was made" (pp. 126-127). Now that we are partners in Christ's work of reconciliation, we are called to be sons of God, as our Master is the Son of God.

Jesus has been building as he speaks, stealing us for his next words: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The Master knows that the world is offended by the sight of anyone—Lord or disciple—who renounces all that it holds dear. Not recognition, but rejection, is our reward as followers for our message and works of mercy and peace. As Isaiah prophesied about our Lord: "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3), so it is for us, his disciples. We must not think ourselves better than our Master; if he must suffer, in order to remain in fellowship with him, we must also suffer. Bonhoeffer points out that "it is important that Jesus gives his blessing not merely to suffering incurred directly for the confession of his name, but to suffering in any just cause" (p. 127). Thus, being rejected disciples, we receive the same blessing as the poor, for in our poverty we are equals.
Having come nearly to the end of the Beatitudes, our rational 20th century minds stab us awake, bringing us quickly from the intimate circle of Jesus' 1st century disciples. We wonder if such a place where the poor, meek, and persecuted are rulers can exist in a real world, whether such a community exists only in idealistic minds. No, there is one place where such a reign may be found—the cross of Golgotha. In that place the poorest, meekest, and most persecuted man is to be found. "The fellowship of the Beatitudes is the fellowship of the Crucified" (p. 127). For the disciple who has lost all in his old life, here at Calvary he finds all in a new life. Thus, as the last blessing falls on the follower's ear, all is redirected to the Master: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." As disciples, all the reproach we bear falls upon our Lord; it is he who bears the guilt and shame. This brings us into close fellowship with Jesus, for we share each other's burdens.

As the words of Jesus ring in our ears—both as imaginary 1st century followers and also as disciples striving in the 20th—we clearly see the way we must tread, the suffering we must endure, and the reasons for both:

These meek strangers are bound to provoke the world to insult, violence, and slander. Too menacing, too loud are the voices of these poor, meek men, too patient and silent their suffering. Too powerful are the testimony of their poverty and their endurance of the wrongs of the world. This is fatal, and so, while Jesus calls them blessed, the world cries: "Away with them, away with them!" Yes, but whither? To the kingdom of heaven (p. 128).

The Extraordinary

As Jesus continues his discourse on the life of discipleship, he reminds his followers that they have an earthly task. The Beatitudes point toward
the future, when the reign of God in the hearts of men will be accomplished, but the Master discerns the danger of looking solely to the afterlife: that of neglecting the present and the disciples’ responsibilities on earth. He does not want to leave the impression that Christians are only fit for heaven and are too good for life on earth. Therefore, Jesus compares his disciples to salt, one of the most indispensable necessities of life. They represent the highest good, that which gives meaning and zest to living. Even as the body cannot exist without salt, so the world cannot continue without the message the disciples bring. Bonhoeffer noted that the Master did not say "You must be salt," but "You are salt to the world." It is not for the disciples to decide whether they will be the salt of the earth—they are whether they like it or not. They have been made salt by the call they received. In all that they are—everything they think, say and do—the disciples are salt for the world.

There is the possibility, though, that the salt may become tasteless and cease to be salt at all. When it stops working, it is less than worthless. Everything else can be preserved and flavored with salt, but what can be used to spice the salt that has lost its savor? Thus, judgement hangs over the disciple’s head: if he ceases to work and becomes "flat", he will be worth nothing: "The call of Jesus Christ means either that we are salt of the earth, or else we are annihilated; either we follow the call or we are crushed beneath it" (p. 131).

Next Jesus shows the disciples’ relationship to others by calling them the light of the world. He does not mean they will be the light or that they possess the light, but each disciple is the light for all the earth. The follower is the light in all of existence, provided he remains faithful to his call. Therefore, he cannot remain hidden, even if he wanted to. It is the property
of light to shine. Thus, the community of Christians is meant to be seen, visible to the whole world. If the light were placed under a bushel-basket, it would be good for no one. Likewise with the fellowship of disciples: a community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him. Nevertheless, the followers must not think that they are light in and of themselves; they must remember that the Master is the source of the light. As the disciple goes about doing good works, he must remember that he does it in Jesus' name. It is by seeing the light of the cross and the community beneath it that men come to believe in God. Only to him do the praise and glory belong.

Jesus has given many new ideas into the hands of his followers, explaining to them the way they should live and how they are to relate to the world. It would be a small step for the disciples to abolish the old Mosaic law in favor of Jesus' new directives. The Master does not want this, assuring his surprised disciples: "Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish, but to complete and fulfill them." In other words, adherence to the Christ means adherence to the Law; he does not bring better laws but expects a better obedience from those who follow him: "Between the disciples and the better righteousness demanded of them stands the Person of Christ, who came to fulfill the Law of the old covenant" (p. 137). The only difference between Jesus and others in their relationship to the Law is that the Master obeys the commandments. He has nothing to add to the commands of God; he merely interprets them the way the Father had meant them. Because the disciples are bound to Jesus, they must obey the Law as he does. The fact that he has fulfilled the Law down to the very last letter does not release them from the same obedience.

When the Master begins to explain the various laws, he strikes at the root of the problem expressed by the law. First he takes the commandment "Thou
shall not kill," and he sees that the reason murders take place is that people become angry. As long as one man harbors malice against his brother, the danger always exists that the one will kill the other. Therefore, Jesus forbids his disciples to be angry with others. "Are not all the children of God?" he asks. God will not be separated from our brother: he wants no honor for himself as long as our brother is dishonored. Not only does anger bring with it the possibility of murder, it separates us from God. Hatred denies the other person the right to live as he himself sees fit. Thus John wrote: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (I John 3: 15), and any person who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar (Cf. I John 4: 19-20). To serve our brother, to please him, to allow him his due, and to let him live is the way of self-denial, the way of the cross.

As Jesus examines the commandment concerning adultery, he again searches for the crux of the problem. Knowing human nature so well, the Master sees that the lustful thoughts often result in the act of adultery. By gazing at a woman with evil desire in mind, a man has already committed the act in his heart, with only the physical act to go. Jesus implies that when you have made your eye the instrument of impurity, you cannot see God with it. How the Twelve must have groaned when the Master explained this commandment! They had all broken this one, and probably felt that it was nearly impossible to obey it: "But Jesus does not impose intolerable restrictions on his disciples; he does not forbid them to look at anything, but bids them look on him" (p. 148). If they do, the Master knows that their gaze will always be pure, even when they look upon a woman.

"You have been taught, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,'" Jesus continues. The disciples concentrate more intently now, because this law is the basis for all Jewish judgement; what will the Master have to say about
this command? The right way to take revenge, according to Jesus, is not to resist it. Had the disciples not given up their personal rights to follow the Christ? Had they not become meek for his sake? At this point it becomes evident that when a Christian meets with injustice, he no longer clings to his rights and defends them at all cost. He is absolutely free from possessions and bound to Christ alone. Thus, "the only way to overcome evil is to let it run itself to a standstill because it does not find the resistance it is looking for. Resistance merely creates further evil and adds fuel to the flames" (pp. 157-158). Violence stands condemned by its failure to evoke counter-violence.

Of course, this idea sounded strange to the original disciples, even as it does to us. How will submission to injustice conquer evil? The cross is the only justification for the precept of non-violence, for it alone can kindle a faith in the victory over evil which will enable men to obey that precept. In his death Jesus fulfills the law he established; the cross is the only power in the world which proves that suffering love can avenge and vanquish evil.

Slowly Jesus has been building to the center of the whole Sermon on the Mount: LOVE. He defines love as the concern and the giving of self—not only to our friends—but to our enemies as well. The only way to overcome our enemies is by loving them. We are to expect little or no response to our love; it will yield hatred and our service will bring derision. This only serves to bind us more closely to our enemies. In this way, the love of a disciple for his foe is much like the Uncle Remus story about the Tar Baby. The more Brer Rabbit fought against the Tar Baby, the more tightly he was held to him. We might say the Tar Baby reacted to the blows and kicks by loving Brer Rabbit all the more. Hence, every insult our enemies utter only serves to bind us more closely to them and to God.

"Love asks nothing in return, but seeks those who need it. And who needs
our love more than those consumed with hatred and are utterly devoid of love?
... Where is love more glorified than where she dwells in the midst of her enemies?" (p. 164). Thus the disciple is different from the rest of the world; by loving those who do not love him in return, he sets himself apart from other segments of humanity. The follower of Christ is called to be extraordinary—περισσότερον. This is the hallmark of the life of discipleship.

What is the precise nature of the extraordinary? It is the life described in the Beatitudes, the light which illuminates the world, the city set on a hill, the way of self-renunciation, of utter love, of absolute purity, truthfulness, and meekness: "It is unreserved love for our enemies, for the unloving and unloved ... In every case it is the love which was fulfilled in the cross of Christ" (p. 170). Hence, the περισσότερον is the fulfillment of the Law, the keeping of the commandments. In Christ crucified and in his people, the extraordinary becomes reality. These men are perfect, the followers in whom the undivided love of the Heavenly Father is perfected. The extraordinary is the way of discipleship.

**The Hidden Life**

So far, Jesus has explained that the life he expects of a disciple is above and beyond what he expects of other men. Each member of his fellowship is called to be an extraordinary individual, loving the unlovable, showing mercy to the unmerciful and thus transcending the grasp of the worldly. The Master has given the disciples their task; now they are ready to go out and build the kingdom of heaven on earth. They are anxious to overthrow the establishment and set up the new reign of God. But what is this that Jesus says now? "Be careful not to make a show of your religion before men; if you do, no reward awaits you in your Father's house in heaven." Did he not say just a few minutes
ago that his followers are like a city set on a hill, unable to be hidden? Did we only imagine him to say we should let our light shine before men? The Master must be contradicting himself.

No, this is not the case for the following reason: Jesus realizes the dangers involved in being extraordinary. The disciple would be tempted to look down upon non-followers and to make a show of his differences. "The disciples are told that they can possess the extraordinary only so long as they are reflective: they must beware how they use it, and never fulfill it simply for its own sake, or for the sake of ostentation" (p. 175). Bonhoeffer interprets this section of the Sermon on the Mount even more conservatively: the righteousness of the disciple is supposed to remain hidden, not only are the extraordinary deeds of a follower not meant for show, they are not meant to be seen at all! The important question to ask here is "From whom are the good works to be hidden?" Bonhoeffer answers emphatically: "We are to hide it [the peculiarity of our discipleship] from ourselves" (p. 176).

I will admit that I had a difficult time understanding what Pastor Bonhoeffer meant by this idea. It seemed to me that the disciple could not help but reveal his discipleship, and that it was by this that others could see clearly the way of God in him. I struggled for several days trying to understand this concept; finally the solution dawned on me. When a person following the Christ truly loves in the manner his Master loves, that disciple will lose himself in the other person and in Jesus. No longer will he be aware of his own problems when he immerses himself in service to others. The disciple's love, like the Savior's, is to be spontaneous and unpremeditated. He does not realize that he is doing anything out of the ordinary—he merely does it. "Our task is simply to keep on following, looking only to our Leader who goes on before, taking no notice of ourselves or of what we are doing. We must be
unaware of our righteousness and see it only in so far as we look unto Jesus; then it will not seem extraordinary, but quite . . . natural" (p. 176). And who makes a show of the ordinary? Jesus regards the extraordinary as the natural fruit of obedience.

The Master carries this idea of hiddenness into the realm of prayer and thus opens up a new world of understanding for his followers. He teaches them that the length of the prayer or the language it uses is really not important: "your Father knows what you need even before you ask him." This is what gives Christian prayer its boundless confidence and its joyous certainty. What matters in prayer is the faith which reaches out to God and touches his heart. Jesus warns against praying just for show, using as examples those men who love to pray on street corners. These men want nothing more out of prayer than for others to see them and to think them holy; since this is all they expect, this is all they get. They get their reward: the praise and honor from others. But the disciple must not think that this is the only kind of show. Bonhoeffer notes:

I can lay on a very nice show for myself even in the privacy of my own room . . . The publicity which I am looking for is then provided by the fact that I am the one who at the same time prays and looks on. I am listening to my own prayer and thus I am answering my own prayer. Not being content to wait for God to answer our prayer and show us in his own time that he has heard us, we provide our own answer. We take note that we have prayed suitably well, and this substitutes the satisfaction of answered prayer. We have our reward. (p. 182)

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3This word "hiddenness" is the invention of the translator. There is, I believe, a definite reason for this. Any other word, such as "concealment," would indicate that the disciple was making a conscious effort to hide his actions from himself, but since his extraordinary actions are natural from his point of view, he would make no effort to hide them. They are hidden as a matter of course, without his taking thought of any concealment.
If we are able to pray for show even in private, where is the innermost chamber where we can hide to pray? Only within the heart of Jesus can we escape from ourselves: by letting him alone reign, by surrendering our wills completely to him. Then we can pray that the Master's will be done; only then is our prayer strong and pure. If this is true in our lives, then our physical location will little difference, whether in the privacy of our bedrooms, in the fellowship of the Church, in a restaurant, or even on a street corner. "True prayer does not depend either on the individual or the whole body of the faithful, but solely upon the knowledge that our heavenly Father knows our needs" (p. 183).

At this point, Jesus introduces what man has entitled the Lord's Prayer. It would be more accurately called the Disciple's Prayer, for it is meant as a model for them, according to Bonhoeffer. It is the absolute quintessence of prayer; in some form or other, it embodies all of Jesus' teachings about God and man, and man and fellow-man. Of importance is the fact that the Master begins with "Our Father": thus he shows that all men are brothers under the fatherhood of God. Because of Jesus, and for his sake, we may call God "Father."

The disciple bases all his prayers on this concept. The evil will is still at work in the world, seeking to cut men off from fellowship with God; for this reason a follower must pray the God's will may prevail more and more in the hearts of all men—including himself, and that God's kingdom of peace will soon reign in the souls of humanity. Because of this concern, the Christian must pray for others, as well as himself. If he expects God to forgive him his shortcomings, the disciple must forgive those who have wronged him. Forgiveness is a facet of the Master's role, and is thus no less a part of the follower's.

Realizing that temptations are surrounding all men, the Christian prays for God to save mankind from falling into evil. Because he is united with others in brotherhood, his prayers are no more "forgive me" and "save me"—but "forgive
As Jesus continues, he make the point that the life of discipleship can only be maintained so long as nothing is allowed to come between Lord and disciple. We must be in constant fellowship with the Christ, and neither law nor personal piety nor even the world can be permitted to separate us. It is not Jesus and religion, or the Master and the world. Only by following him exclusively may we experience his presence. This singleness of purpose corresponds to the hiddeness that has been stressed in this part of the Sermon on the Mount. It is a hiddeness which knows nothing but the call and word of Christ: "Our hearts have room only for one all-embracing devotion, and we can only cleave to one Lord" (p. 196).

Therefore, with our lives fixed upon Jesus, there is no need to worry about the future. It is in God's hands. This is not to be taken as a philosophy of life or as a moral law: it is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and only so can it be understood. Only those who follow the Master and know him can receive this word as a promise of the love of his Father and as a deliverance from anxiety over the evils and dangers of this world. By using the lower creatures of the earth—sparrows and lilies—as the main characters in his parables on the subject, Jesus shows how God provides on a day-to-day basis. The sparrows trust God and are fed; the lilies trust God and are beautifully clothed: "If the Father takes care of these things so well," Jesus explains, "will he not take care of you, if you but trust him?" The point the Master is making here is not so much one of faith, although that is important, but one of priorities. Fellowship with him and obedience to his commandments—"seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness"—come first; all else follows. This is the simplicity of the carefree life, knowing that God will provide day by day. Such is the life of the disciple: day by day. How wise God is by hiding the
future from us! If we knew of the trials coming tomorrow, we would quickly
shrink from living each day, and our minds would constantly be worrying about
the morrow. With God holding the future in his hands, we are able to trust him
for strength to meet the tribulations. We can now get as much "living" out of
a day as the Master has put into it.

Again, we have here either a crushing burden, which holds out no hope for
the poor and wretched, or else it is the very essence of the gospel, which
brings the promise of freedom and perfect joy. Jesus does not tell us what we
ought to do but cannot; he tells us what God has given us and promises still to
give. In fellowship with the Christ, all things are added to our lives; the
Master will see to it. And if we are in communion with the Father, nothing
can really harm us; God will help us in our hour of need, for he knows our
needs.

After he has been following Christ for a long
time, the disciple of Jesus will be asked, "Lacked
ye anything?" and he will answer, "Nothing, Lord."
How could he when he knows that despite hunger and
nakedness, persecution and danger, the Lord is
always at his side? (p. 201)

The Separated Life

In the Sermon on the Mount thus far, Jesus has stressed that the disciple
is expected to be different from other men and that this uniqueness is to be so
spontaneous that it seems normal to the follower himself. In both its aspects—
the extraordinary and the hidden—discipleship betokens the separation of the
disciples from all their old ties and an exclusive adherence to the Christ.
Does this separation from the rest of society confer on them special rights and
privileges? How easy it would have been for the twelve disciples to adopt a
superior attitude and pass unqualified condemnation on the rest of the world
had Jesus stopped his sermon here. But the Master is aware of these dangers, so he says: "Do not judge or criticize or condemn others, so that you may not be judged yourselves." If the disciples judge others, their own judgement will fall upon them. "Instead of cutting themselves off from their brother as the just from the unjust, they find themselves cut off from Jesus" (p. 203).

Bonhoeffer points out that it is impossible for the true disciple to take a sanctimonious attitude and judge others, since Jesus stands between him and the non-disciple as Mediator. Therefore, true Christians always see other men as brethren to whom Christ comes; they meet them only by going to them with Jesus: "Discipleship does not afford us a point of vantage from which to attack others; we come to them with an unconditional offer of fellowship, with the single-mindedness of the love of Jesus" (p. 204).

Unfortunately, the Church has often forgotten this portion of Jesus' teachings. Down through the centuries, Christian has killed fellow-Christian—in the name of Christ, no less—because of differences in doctrine. The various branches of the orthodox Church have become exclusive and cliquish, looking down on those whose skin is of a different color, those whose ideas do not correlate with the "standard," or those who simply do not dress well enough. And yet many Christians wonder why the Church has been ineffective! Jesus says that we are to love unconditionally. When we judge others, we confront them in a spirit of detachment, observing and reflecting, as it were, from the outside. "But love has neither time nor opportunity for this. If we love, we can never observe the other person with detachment, for he is always and at every moment a living claim to our love and service" (p. 204). By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil, since we are too busy looking for it in others. If, when we judged others, our real motive were to destroy evil, we would look for evil where it is to be found; there would be no need to go any further than our own hearts.
Not only is the Christian not to judge others, he is not to force the gospel on anyone. He has neither the power nor the right to cram the Good News down anyone's throat: "Every attempt to impose the gospel by force, to run after people and proselytize them, to use our own resources to arrange the salvation of other people, is both futile and dangerous" (p. 206) in that we are not trusting in the power of God to change lives. Without the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, spreading the gospel in this way is like throwing pearls in the path of pigs: they neither understand the Good News nor care to try it. To try to force the Word of God on the world by hook or by crook is to cheapen the joyous tidings of forgiveness. The Word is a potent force in its weakness. This is Bonhoeffer's concept of the power of weakness: the compelling strength of Jesus' character is not found in force, but in his submission to the will of God, his humility, his willingness to suffer and be rejected, and finally in his death on the cross. This must be true for the disciples of the Master, as well as for the Word: "If they do not realize this weakness of the Word, they have failed to perceive the mystery of divine humility" (p. 206). The same weak Word which is content to endure the gainsaying of sinners is also the mighty Word which can convert the hearts of sinners. Its strength is veiled in weakness. As the Apostle Paul writes to his friends in Corinth: "For Jesus is not weak and feeble in dealing with you, but is a mighty power within you; for though he was crucified in weakness, yet he goes on living by the power of God" (II Corinthians 13: 3-4).

Therefore, Jesus makes it clear that the disciple has no special privilege or power of his own in his relations with others. The mainspring of his life and work is the strength which comes from fellowship with Jesus Christ. The Master gives his disciples a simple way to test whether they are on the right lines with others or not: all they need do is replace "I" for "you," and put
themselves in the other man's place. "So then whatever you desire that others would do to and for you, do you also to and for them." The moment the follower does this, he forfeits all advantage over other men, and can no longer excuse in himself what he condemns in others. The evil in the other person is exactly the same evil as in himself. Henceforth, the disciple will look upon other men as forgiven sinners who owe their lives to the love of God.

There is, however, a separation between the disciples of Jesus and the men of the world; it is not a break made by the followers, though, but one made by the world. It is the world's choice not to follow the Christ. The difficulty of the road of discipleship is apparent by the small number of followers. Never let the disciple of Jesus pin his hopes on large numbers; there are few who find the narrow path the Master calls his followers to. It is fatally easy to miss one's way and stray from the path, even after years of discipleship:

To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way. To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same time to love the enemies of that truth, his enemies and ours, and to love them with the infinite love of Jesus Christ is indeed a narrow way. To believe the promise of Jesus that his followers shall possess the earth, and at the same time to face our enemies unarmed and defenseless, preferring to incur injustice rather than to do wrong ourselves is indeed a narrow way. To see the weakness and wrong in others, and at the same time refrain from judging them; to deliver the gospel message without casting pearls before swine, is indeed a narrow way. The way is unutterably hard. (p. 211)

Nevertheless, Jesus never promised us a bed of roses or a path lined with ferns and flowers. His way is not easy; it is possible only by keeping our eyes, minds, and souls glued to the Master. If we gaze at the road instead of at him who leads us on, we are already straying from the path. He is himself
the way—the narrow way—and the straight gate.

As the Master concludes his discourse, he drives the separation even deeper; not only is the disciple parted from the world, but the doing disciple is divided from those who merely speak: "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." In Jesus' mind, the kingdom is not a matter of talk. Love is not a matter of words, but must be genuine, showing itself in action (Cf. I John 3: 18).

If this is so, what is the final criterion by which Jesus will accept or reject his disciples? Who will pass the test, and who will not? This is what the disciples have been eagerly awaiting since the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. "Here is the crucial question—has Jesus known us or not?" (p. 217). There is nothing left for the disciple to cling to but Jesus' eternal word and call "I have known you." From the beginning to the end of life it is always the Master's word and call. If we follow Christ, cling to his word, and let everything else go, he will see us through each day of our earthly lives, even to the day of final judgement. His word is his grace. Jesus knows only one possibility: simple surrender and obedience, not bending his teachings to one's individual situation or watering them down by constant interpretation, but hearing his words and the profound meaning of them and obeying. This is the straight and narrow road of discipleship; in such a way may a person be truly and forever free and blessed.
CHAPTER III
THE WORK OF DISCIPLESHIP

Although the way of Christian discipleship is at first a personal decision and an individual calling, Jesus stresses action. His followers have a job to do, a ministry to those around them; they cannot remain in ivory towers discussing theological principles, but must go out and work in the world. Even as the Master had a mission, so the disciples are assigned a task from him. Matthew describes a scene in his gospel in which the immensity of this task even overwhelms Jesus: "So Jesus went around all the towns and villages teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the Kingdom, and curing every kind of ailment and disease. The sight of the people moved him to pity: they were like sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless; and he said to his disciples, 'The crop is heavy, but the laborers are scarce; you must therefore beg the owner to send laborers to harvest his crop'" (Matthew 9: 35-38).

One of the first things Bonhoeffer notices about this story is the poignant description of the crowds "like sheep without a shepherd." Here were the people of Israel wandering about, searching for a leader—someone who would minister to their spiritual needs along with being a political leader. Those who held power in the time of Jesus, the priests and Romans, had failed to give these hungry, searching crowds someone to look up to. Instead, the ruling classes exploited the poor, trying constantly to keep them in their place. No one lifted them up or led them into peace and prosperity: "There were questions but no answers, distress but no relief, anguish of conscience but no deliverance, tears but no consolation, sin but no forgiveness. Where was the good shepherd they needed so badly?" (p. 224). Oh yes, the Pharisees honestly tried to lead the people into the way of God, but ended up heaping burdensome laws on them and
sternly condemning them when they fell short. What use were all these orthodox preachers and expounders of the Law, when they were not filled with boundless pity and compassion for God's maltreated and injured people? It is no wonder that the hope for the coming of the Messiah was so strong during this time.

So Jesus looks at these misguided crowds, and his heart is filled to overflowing with compassion for them. What a contrast there is between the Master's reaction and that of the rulers! Instead of perceiving the people as wretched and poor, Jesus sees the ripe harvest of God—the great and wonderful potentials locked in each member of the crowd. "The harvest is great," he says. The time has come for these potentials to be unleashed; the hour has arrived when the harvest must be gathered into the kingdom of God. "Jesus beholds the promise of God descending on the multitudes where the scribes and zealots saw only a field trampled down, burnt and ravaged. Jesus sees the fields waving with corn and ripe for the kingdom. . . . The harvest is great, but only Jesus in his mercy can see it" (p. 225).

Thus, the followers have their work cut out for them. They must harvest this crop; they must bring out the potential for good in each individual; they must continue the work of the Master. But how can they do this? In what way may the disciples be made capable of such a gigantic task? Only by looking to the Master for guidance and help will they be able to fulfill this obligation.

Jesus takes his disciples ("learners") and transforms them into apostles ("those who are sent"). He arms them with the power of his Holy Spirit—an effective force without which the work could not be done. Because of their new role, they are given the power that Jesus himself possesses—the spiritual strength to preach, teach, and heal; since they are sharing his work, they now share some of his authority. It is indeed unfortunate that the Church in the past centuries has forgotten this fact. We are often content to be learners, but we tend to shy
away from the work as apostles, ignoring the promise of power which Jesus
gives: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the
works that I do; and greater works than these will he do. . . . " (John 14: 12).
We express the belief that the age of miracles ended with the original apostles,
when in reality, those days were only the beginning.

Ah, but we say that Jesus' disciples were special men—that they were
saints. Perhaps this would seem to be true at first glance, but when we look
at the Twelve more carefully and study the gospels in more detail, we realize
that these men were very human with a human diversity of character. What dif­
f erences between Peter, Matthew, John, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot!
Many of the others are just names to us now, but we can be sure that they were
not plaster saints either. Nevertheless, this heterogeneous group of men was
molded into the foundation of the Church. "No power in the world could have
united these men for a common task, save the call of Jesus. But that call
transcended all their previous divisions, and established a new and steadfast
fellowship in Jesus" (p. 227). That power which the Master imparted to his
followers made them equal to their task. And the same power is possible for
the followers of the Christ today.

As in all things, though, the disciples are dependent in this work upon
the will of the Master. They are not left free to "do their own thing;" they
cannot choose their own methods nor can they adopt their own conception of the
task. The follower's work is Christ-work. They are not allowed to pick where
they will go to minister, either; Jesus sends them where they are needed most.
"This makes it quite clear that it is not their own work they are doing, but
God's" (p. 228).

Perhaps this whole idea may seem constraining. The perfect freedom
promised to the new disciple must now appear to be a lie, especially to those
outside of the fellowship of the Master. Actually this only seems to be the case. For a follower of the Christ, Jesus is all he needs; in the Master alone is he able to find the complete peace his heart has searched for. However, the work he is now sent to do will meet with success only in so far as the disciple has followed God's will. If he tries to rebel, to become more "free," he finds himself even more tightly bound: the responsibility for success now rests purely on the shoulders of the disciple himself. He is alone—and destined to fail.

On the other hand, when the follower goes where Jesus sends, the work is blessed, and God is trusted for success. The assurance is also given that the Master will be with the follower as a partner, giving him strength and power to meet the task. For the true disciple there can be no better freedom than this.

Thus, the disciples are sent forth to do the work of their Master. They are now his fellow-workers, receiving his power and authority, only to give their love, compassion, and help freely to those who need it. Jesus sends them out with the words: "He that receives you, receives me." (Matthew 10: 40). In this way the followers are now to meet those to whom they are sent as if they were Christ himself; they are bearers of his presence. To be a disciple of the Christ is to bring to the world the most precious and wonderful gift imaginable—the gift of Jesus Christ. Inherent in this gift is costly grace, forgiveness, and salvation for the believer with whom the disciples come into contact. This in itself is the greatest reward a disciple can receive—the fruit of his toil and suffering.

The work of discipleship is unending; what began with a group of twelve men following the God-man has grown into an organized religion which has representatives on every continent of the world. Today it seems that the world is in the same situation as Israel in the time of Jesus: we have questions but no answers, distress but no relief, anguish of mind and conscience but no
deliverance, tears but no consolation, sin but no forgiveness. We ask with the searching Israelites of old, "Where is the good shepherd we need so badly?" And now the answer must be given—the same answer as was given the Jews—Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. We, the followers of the Christ, must be the ones to lift up his name. We bear his presence with us; we are responsible now to see the fields heavily laden for the harvest; we hold the keys which will unlock the potential for creative good in the world. This was the Master's work—and still is, for that matter—but now we must carry on his work in the world, always looking to him for guidance and strength. It is our responsibility to make Christ known to all:

He has no hands, no hands at all,
No way to lift a heavy load.
No hands to still the tempests of life,
Save the hands of His children.
He has no hands.

He has no feet, no feet at all,
To carry His love throughout the world;
No feet at all to lead the weary home,
Save the feet of His children.
He has no feet.

He has no voice, no voice at all,
No song to sing in the darkness;
No voice to tell of Redeeming love,
Save the voice of His children.

He has no way to save the world from sin
But through our lives, consecrated to Him
And His glory!

This is the essence of the disciple's work.

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1Ruth Arzman, He Has No Hands (Schmitt, Hall and McCreary Co.: Minneapolis, 1971).
"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die" (p. 99). Although this is true in a figurative sense for all true Christian disciples, for some the time comes in which it is necessary to take this statement literally. The pages of Church history are replete with the stories of the martyrs. It so happens that the man who wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* may be numbered with them. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who revived the emphasis on suffering in the Christian faith, suffered persecution and death at the hands of his enemies—even as his Lord had. During his days in Nazi prisons, Bonhoeffer realized how costly—and therefore how precious—his Christian commitment was. "It was brotherly love of his fellow-men which also caused Bonhoeffer to believe that it was not enough to follow Christ by preaching, teaching, and writing. No, he was in deadly earnest when he called for Christian action and self-sacrifice" (p. 23).

I must admit that I am fascinated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I meditate on what a loss his death constituted; he was so young, and had so much within him that needed to come out—but the time would not allow. We are the poorer for what was left inside. Nevertheless, he gave us much—so very much—to contemplate about discipleship. And we are the richer for this.

Bonhoeffer's whole life of discipleship was a struggle toward freedom; that word meant something to him that eludes us. He thought of something more than political or intellectual freedom: for him it meant individual, spiritual freedom—almost a heaven-like state. Thus, as he looked at Jesus, he saw that the Master also had struggled toward freedom. Shortly before his execution, Bonhoeffer wrote a poem entitled *Stations on the Road to Freedom*. I am sure that this piece of poetry holds much of Bonhoeffer's heart and soul in it.
because when we read it, we feel the pastor's longings, too:

Discipline
If you set out to seek freedom, then learn above all things
to govern your soul and senses, for fear that your passions
and longing may lead you away from the path you should follow.
Chaste be your mind and your body, and both in subjection,
obediently, steadfastly seeking the aim set before them;
only through discipline may a man learn to be free.

Action
Daring to do what is right, not what fancy may tell you,
valiantly grasping occasions, not cravenly doubting—
freedom comes only through deeds, not through thoughts taking wing.
Faint not nor fear, but go out to the storm and the action,
trusting in God whose commandment you faithfully follow;
freedom, exultant, will welcome your spirit with joy.

Suffering
A change has come indeed. Your hands, so strong and active,
are bound; in helplessness now you see your action
is ended; you sigh in relief, your cause committing
to stronger hands; so now you may rest contented.
Only for one blissful moment could you draw near to touch freedom;
then, that it might be perfected in glory, you gave it to God.

Death
Come now, thou greatest of feasts on the journey to freedom eternal;
death, cast aside all the burdensome chains, and demolish
the walls of our temporal body, the walls of our souls that are blinded,
so that at last we may see that which here remains hidden.
Freedom, how long we have sought thee in discipline, action, and suffering;
dying, we now may behold thee revealed in the Lord.¹

I could not help noticing, as I re-read this poem, how closely it parallels
the life of Jesus. It seems that he went through all of these experiences in his
life here with us. But I guess that that is what makes him the Master: he has
gone on before, struggling, striving, and loving life, and we as disciples must
follow in his footsteps. True, they are bloody footprints, but that makes them
all the easier to see and follow. Bonhoeffer followed him all the way. I often

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison (The Macmillan Co.,
wonder whether I could die for what I believe about Jesus as Bonhoeffer did. But even as I begin to ponder this question, I realize that for me—and, I guess, for all disciples—the true test is not whether I can die for him, but whether or not I can live for Jesus.

And Jesus said, "If you dwell within the revelation I have brought, you are indeed my disciples; you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8: 31-32
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