

Week 2: Grace

How ought the Christian understand and respond to the grace of God in Christ?

Chapter 1, “Costly Grace” in *Discipleship*.
Chapter 2, “The Call to Discipleship” in *Discipleship*.

Weekly Devo:

Opening Prayer
1 Peter 2 & Psalm 23

Notes for this Week:

- *No All-Group Teaching Next Week (Is your small group meeting next week?)
- Suggestion: Watch “*Bonhoeffer*” directed by Martin Doblmeier, 2003.
To view this documentary on Amazon (free for Prime users), [CLICK HERE](#).
To borrow a church copy (DVD), call or email Ina: 719-884-6117
- Not currently in a small group, but would like to be? Refer to the syllabus and ...
 - Email Ina Meyer, Program Manager for Discipleship:
imeyer@firstprescos.org
- GTW Hub: <https://my.firstprescos.org/growtogether>

Introduction to *Discipleship*¹

- Written and published as a text on spiritual formation within the Christian tradition in 1937 toward the height of the Third Reich in Germany while Bonhoeffer was leading the theological arm of The Confessing Church through his professorship at Finkenwalde.
 - (It is difficult to underestimate the relevance of this context.)
- The Christian Life of the Mind and Paradox (Bonhoeffer is brilliant at exposing seeming contradictions, “paradoxes”)

¹ Equally, if not more so, known as *The Cost of Discipleship*.

- Suffering / Power
- Joy in Suffering
- Life in Death
 - Dying to Christ to Fully Live
- The “easy yoke” is the call to death to self in Christ

Questions & Criticism around *Discipleship*

- Can believers today be helped by a book written in the 1937 German context?
- Critics claim the tone is too “reactionary.” Is it? Admittedly, it can read with quite the “kick in the pants” feel. Is that okay?
 - Ill. This is the _____ book I’ve ever read!
- Does God place “demands” on his people?
- Bonhoeffer was in “the academy” writing about “true” discipleship. Can the heart of this book, therefore, hold any real water in real life? Or... is Bonhoeffer not a hypocritical ignoramus for writing such a demanding call to discipleship while living in ... luxury?

Preface to *Discipleship*

In times of church renewal² holy scripture naturally becomes richer in content for us. Behind the daily catchwords and battle cries needed in the Church Struggle, a more intense, questioning search arises for the one who is our sole concern, for Jesus himself. What did Jesus want to say to us? What does he want from us today? How does he help us to be faithful Christians today? ... We want to know what Jesus wants. (opening lines from the preface)

Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows where the path will lead. But we know that it will be a path full of mercy beyond measure. Discipleship is joy. (preface, xxiv)

- To go deeper here, read chapter four in *Discipleship*, “Discipleship and the Cross,” especially pages 52-57 (the final six pages of chapter four) for excellent thoughts on the paradox between dying to one’s self at the cross of Christ and therein finding that your true life was hidden in Christ all along and it is never until one enters true communion with

² Bonhoeffer looks at 1937 Germany and writes, “church renewal.” Wow! How might this encourage us to think differently about God building his church in 2021 America?

Christ through dying to oneself at the cross and allowing Christ to live in you, your hope of glory, by active, “obedient” faith in God’s grace.³

Chapter 1, “Costly Grace” in *Discipleship*

- Key Themes: Grace (“Cheap” and “Costly”), True Freedom, Living “all in”, Christ & Culture, Faith & Works, Following Jesus
- Foundational Note: “Works” as Salvific versus Responsory
 - When we say “works,” are we talking about them as a “means of grace” or “the right and natural response to God’s grace”?

Cheap Grace Defined

“Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of our church...

(Cheap grace) is grace without a price,” (1)

Cheap Grace:⁴

- denies God’s living word (the call to “follow me”)
 - by preaching forgiveness without repentance
- is grace without discipleship

God showed (Luther) through scripture that discipleship is not the meritorious achievement of individuals, but a divine commandment to all Christians. (8)

Like ravens we have gathered around the carcass of cheap grace. From it we have imbibed the poison which has killed the following of Jesus among us. The doctrine of pure grace experienced an unprecedented deification. The doctrine of pure grace became its own god, grace itself. (13)

Is the price that we are paying today with the collapse of organized churches anything else but an inevitable consequence of grace acquired too cheaply? ... out of human love we handed over what was holy to the scornful and unbelievers. We poured out rivers of “grace” (quote marks added) without end, but the call to rigorously *follow Christ* (emphasis added) was seldom heard... What

³ Beyond this note, time will not permit us to dive deeper into chapter four this semester, but please be inspired to go here in your personal time of study and growth.

⁴ Paraphrasing the opening pages to chapter 1.

happened to Luther's warnings against a proclamation of the gospel which made people secure in their godless lives? ... Cheap grace was very unmerciful to our Protestant church. (14)

Costly Grace Defined

Costly Grace:⁵

- is the call of God to “follow” Jesus in lifelong discipleship
- is obedience to the will of God, the “yoke” of the faith (the cross)
- condemns sin while justifying the sinner through the death of Jesus (the true gospel)⁶

(Costly grace) is God's grace in Jesus Christ. ... Blessed are they who, in the knowledge of such grace, can live in the world without losing themselves in it... Blessed are they for whom following Jesus means nothing other than living from grace and for whom grace means following Christ. (16)

Chapter 2, “The Call to Discipleship” in *Discipleship*

- Key Themes: Devotion as Absolute, Faith & Obedience



Peter confronted by Christ, [The Chosen](#), Season 1, Episode 4 (2020)

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

At once they left their nets and followed him. - Matthew 4:19-20

⁵ Paraphrasing the opening pages to chapter 1.

⁶ “...you were bought at a price...” - 1 Corinthians 6:20

Everything depends on call and deed directly facing each other... There is no other path to faith than obedience to Jesus' call... Discipleship is not a human offer. (17, 18, 23)

Following Christ means taking certain steps. The first step, which responds to the call, separates the followers from their previous existence... it was made clear to those he called that they only had one possibility of believing in Jesus, that of leaving everything and going with the incarnate Son of God. (22)

- The union of faith and obedience
 - Ill. Peter walks on water "Peter knows that he cannot climb out of the boat by his own power... so he calls, "Command me to come to you on the water." Christ answers, "Come." (26)
- The link to God's grace in Christ: "If you reject God's *commanding word*, you will not receive God's *gracious word*." (27, emphasis added)

Reflection & Growth (Small Group Prompts)⁷

- Spend 10 minutes getting to know your group / connecting.
- What does Bonhoeffer mean by "cheap grace"?
- What does Bonhoeffer mean by "costly grace"?
- Discuss Bonhoeffer's understanding of the call of Christ into discipleship.
- Bonhoeffer writes, "Following Christ means taking certain steps. The first step, which responds to the call, separates the followers from their previous existence..." (22). How has God's call on your life separated you from your former life? Into what life have you been joined? (This is a great prompt to begin to share your testimony with your group. You may want to have one person in your group share tonight, and then work your way through your group one by one over the next eight weeks.

Personal Application: Every week we will have a question(s) aimed directly at helping you grow toward Christ both immediately in the "now," as well as into the future.

⁷ Strive to square all your main findings with Scripture. In other words, do Bonhoeffer's conclusions square with the "Kingdom Principles" laid to God's People in Scripture?

- How has your view of God's grace been confirmed or challenged? How can you better live into the "costly grace" offered to you by God in Christ?
- A large theme this week is "obedience." How might your life look different as you obey the heart of God even more closely this week?

Final Reminders

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