

Sermon Notes for Bonhoeffer Part I of II

Introduction to the Series: *Faith in Action*

Today, we launch a two-part series, *Faith in Action*, where we'll dive into the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer—a man whose faith led him to stand against the injustice of Nazi Germany. Bonhoeffer believed faith isn't passive; it's a call to action, especially in the face of evil.

He once said, "Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness, and pride of power." He saw that the church must be a voice for the voiceless, fighting for justice in a broken world. His life challenges us today: What does living a faith that acts mean?

Main Teaching

1. Faith Without Action is Dead (James 2:14-17)

Read James 2:14-17: *"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ... Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."*

James calls us to a faith that works. Bonhoeffer knew that faith goes beyond belief; it requires action. In Nazi Germany, he saw that passive faith allowed evil to flourish. He joined the Confessing Church and actively resisted the Nazi regime, knowing silence made the church complicit in the atrocities.

Illustration: Bonhoeffer's work with the Confessing Church challenged him to oppose Hitler's control over the German Church. He argued that a passive church in the face of evil fails Christ. Bonhoeffer's commitment to act shows us that faith isn't just about believing; it's about living out our beliefs.

Application: Let's consider our own lives. Where do we need to put our faith into action? Where can we stand up for others, advocate for the hurting, and love as Christ did?

2. The Call to Justice (Isaiah 1:17, Micah 6:8)

Read Isaiah 1:17: *"Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause."*

Read Micah 6:8: *"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

Bonhoeffer believed that genuine faith meant standing against oppression. Inspired by Isaiah's and Micah's call to justice, he understood that God's people must be a voice for the vulnerable. His time in New York introduced him to the African American church's fight against racism, a fight that strengthened his resolve to oppose Nazi oppression back home.

Illustration: Bonhoeffer saw the fight for racial equality in the U.S. as a mirror to his struggle in Germany. This experience shaped his conviction that Christians must resist systemic evil. He said, "We are not simply to bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice; we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself."

Application: Where is God calling us to "drive a spoke" into the wheels of injustice? How can we actively seek justice in our communities, neighborhoods, and workplaces?

3. Radical Love in Action (Matthew 25:35-40)

Read Matthew 25:35-40: *"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink... Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

Jesus makes clear that caring for the vulnerable is central to discipleship. Bonhoeffer didn't just preach this love; he risked his life for it. He joined a plot to assassinate Hitler, concluding that inaction in the face of evil was itself a sin. He knew discipleship required radical love that reached beyond comfort and safety.

Illustration: Bonhoeffer's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler may seem shocking, but he wrestled with its moral implications. Inaction, he believed, would have been a betrayal of Christ's command to love the "least of these." His choice reminds us that true faith often requires radical, uncomfortable love.

Application: Are we willing to go beyond comfort in our love for others? How can we embody Jesus' love by serving those in need, speaking up for the oppressed, and living as His hands and feet?

Conclusion: Faith That Transforms the World

Bonhoeffer shows us that faith cannot remain hidden. His story challenges us: faith calls us to live boldly and courageously, to pursue justice, and to embody radical love. True discipleship pushes us to make a difference, to be a force of hope, and to reflect Christ to a world in need.

Bonhoeffer's legacy isn't just a history lesson; it's a call to us today. How is God calling you to live out your faith in action? Where can you step out of comfort and into God's work of justice and mercy?

Next Week's Preview: We'll explore the personal cost of following Jesus next week. Bonhoeffer said, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." Join us as we consider what it means to embrace the cost of discipleship.

Key Takeaways

1. **Faith Demands Action** – Faith that doesn't lead to action is incomplete. True faith moves us to make a difference in our world.
 2. **Seek Justice Boldly** – God calls us to fight for justice and advocate for the oppressed, following the example of Christ and Bonhoeffer.
 3. **Radical Love is Central to Discipleship** – Our faith should reflect Jesus' love, especially to the least and the marginalized.
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Jesus-Centered Prayer

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, thank You for a faith that transforms and calls us to action. Help us to live courageously, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer did, standing for justice, seeking Your Kingdom, and loving the vulnerable. Open our eyes to see where You are calling us to act. Strengthen us to be bold and compassionate and reflect Your love in all we do. In Your precious name, we pray. Amen.

Go in peace, church, and let your faith move you to action!