

THE CREED

THE THIRD ARTICLE (PART 3)

STORY

Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer had just finished leading the Sunday worship service for his fellow prisoners at the Flossenburg Concentration Camp in Germany when two soldiers summoned him for execution. As he left, he said, “This is the end—but for me, the beginning—of life.”

Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor, teacher, and theologian, was arrested in 1943 for helping a small group of Jews escape from Germany. He had first opposed the Nazi regime by becoming part of the confessing Church, which refused to vow loyalty to the Fuhrer. He believed only God and His Word were the authority for the Church, not the government. He later joined the resistance movement after learning about the Nazi death camps, where millions of Jews were killed.

Bonhoeffer, thirty-nine years old, was hung on April 9, 1945. The camp was liberated less than one week later. Four members of his immediate family died at the hands of the Nazis for resisting the cruel regime. Bonhoeffer wrote: “There remains for us only the very narrow way, often extremely difficult to find, of living every day as though it were our last, and yet living in faith and responsibility as though there were to be a great future” (*The Cost of Discipleship*).

Discuss one-on-one or in small groups the following questions.

1. Explain this Bonhoeffer quote in terms of your life: “Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.”
Christ gives us salvation; we don’t earn it. Following Him, we give up our self-centered lives.
2. Where did Bonhoeffer receive the motivation and strength to live according to the narrow way? *The ability to live as a disciple of Jesus comes only by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace.*
3. What does this account illustrate for us about where we can find the Holy Christian Church and the fellowship of believers? *Believers in Jesus can be found anywhere because the Spirit’s power is without boundaries. The Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace in people wherever they may be—even in prison.*