

A man with glasses and a red polo shirt is speaking at a podium. He is gesturing with his right hand. A large white speech bubble with the words 'table talk' in a stylized font is overlaid on the right side of the image. The background is dark and out of focus.

table talk

8/16/26

"When A Christian Nation Forgets God"

Lutzer's Sixth Thesis: Ordinary People can make an extraordinary difference!

The first time I saw the book *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer was in the book store of Southeastern Bible College in 1973. I was waiting in line, loaded down with freshman texts, study guides, an RSV Bible, a couple of Mounds bars and stacks of charts. **Somehow, I managed to pick up Bonhoeffer's book and the most famous line of the text caught my eye. "When God calls a man, He bids him come and die."**

For a passing second I thought I had misread. Didn't Jesus say "come and DINE?" Yes, I know he did. We sang the song about it regularly in my home church. The prevailing attitude in charismatic thinking at the time was "people of faith don't end up dying, they end up dining!" To his eternal credit, my pastor would often preach about martyrdom, but most of us relegated those stories to pioneering Christians. It was the beginning my long journey toward trying to understand "the fellowship of his suffering."

During my ministry I have met a few high-profile men and women of God who have certainly suffered. Yet, I must say the ones who influenced me the most deeply are a few men and women (and children) whose names are unknown to politicians and most pastors.

Erwin Lutzer's book is centered on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemoller. Bonhoeffer was arrested and hanged, never seeing the end of the war. Niemoller was in a concentration camp for years and was released only when Allied forces liberated the death camps.

In that paperback book I read these words by Pastor Bonhoeffer: "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheap jack's wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness

of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. In such a church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins. No contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

Those two men led a group of extraordinary saints who were well-known for their sacrifice and service. They also led tens of thousands of "ordinary Christians," who did what they could though it seemed hopeless and helpless.

I have visited the Ten-Boom Clock Shop in Holland. I stood inside the tiny "hiding place" that was the creation of Corrie Ten Boom and her family. Not only was Corrie unknown throughout most of Europe, her story did not impact America for nearly thirty years after she was unceremoniously released from the Nazi Death Camp.

Erwin Lutzer is right. Ordinary people can make an extraordinary difference. It was true in the Third Reich, and it is true in America.

Many conservative Christian historians agree that if every pastor had been a Bonhoeffer or a Niemoller, Hitler probably could not have accomplished his demonic agenda. It was a time the congregations should have followed courageous pastors into the spiritual battles of the times. But it is costly – very costly. Similar to Rome, society today doesn't care what you have in your "box of truth" as long as you don't mess with their box of truth. When we say that Christianity is the only authoritative truth, we intrude upon the "box of others." We must insist that Jesus is not just a "god among other gods."

It is impossible to argue away these words of Jesus: "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE. No man comes to the Father unless He comes through me."

I know this mission seems hopeless at times, but Lutzer testifies, "It is not necessary for us to win our battles in order to be faithful to our calling.

I love you,
Pastor Stephen