

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER and SAINT MARIA of PARIS

Topic: FAITH IN ACTION—POLITICALLY

Prepared by Ted W. Fuson and Deborah Upton as the fourth of seven topical studies in the Summer of 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic for Bon Air Baptist Church

This is the fourth of seven studies based on Scripture and Eric Metaxas' 7 Men and 7 Women and the Secret of Their Greatness, Nelson Books, 2013, 2015, & 2016.

Some Scripture References:

Matthew 5:43-48—“You have heard it said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Matthew 26:50b-54—Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions or angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

Luke 9:23-25—If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

Hebrews 4:12-- For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Psalm 119:105-107—Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. I have suffered much; renew my life, O Lord, according to your word.

1 Peter 2:13-17—Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom for a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

The topic is Faith in Action—Politically.

Both Bonhoeffer and Saint Maria opposed actions politically. Saint Maria did it first in Russia, then in France, Bonhoeffer in Germany. She died on March 30, 1945 in the Ravensbruck gas chamber on Good Friday. He died on April 9, 1945, by hanging at Flossenburg. Both are considered martyrs to the evil political power of the Nazis just weeks before Germany surrendered May 7, 1945. (Hitler swallowed a cyanide capsule and shot himself in the head on April 30, 1945.)

Reading the entire story of these two Christians is both hope-filled in their courage and also saddening in their dying while facing such an evil enemy. Far too many men and women, soldiers and citizens, men-women-children died because Hitler was able to put together such an evil, destructive force based on false pretensions of philosophy and theology. Of course, we now know that the Russian and Chinese Communists have murdered far more people than did Hitler.

The U.S. military had casualties numbering over 23,000 dead and many more wounded in Viet Nam fighting the evil of communism. To this day, many believe the U.S. was wrong and lost a battle that they need not to fight. Do you wonder what Bonhoeffer or Saint Maria would have done? Or the Apostle Paul or Peter...or Jesus?

Many Christians in America have resisted the evil of injustice as noted in the lesson regarding the rights of African Americans. Many others have protested actively against legalized abortion and homosexual marriages. Still others protest in favor of 2nd amendment rights. Even recently, some churches have opened their doors to worship while government officials have banned gatherings of over ten people. This topic is not

about being angry or disagreeing with politics. It is about how Christians live out their faith in our free society and in other places in our world.

Here are a few discussion starters:

1. What led Bonhoeffer to resist Hitler? See pages 115-127.
2. What led Saint Maria to resist Lenin and Hitler? See pages 321-326 and 335-340.
3. Both Bonhoeffer and Saint Maria smoked and used alcohol. Bonhoeffer was a part of the failed murder plot against Hitler. Saint Maria was married twice and had one child out of wedlock. Would either one be acceptable on the ministerial staff of Bon Air Baptist Church? Why or why not?
4. Is there anything for which you are prepared to die or plead guilty receiving a prison sentence? Read Niemoller's quote on page 123.
5. Bonhoeffer called phony religiosity "cheap grace" (p.110). He wrote, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." (See page 132 and Luke 9:23-25.)
6. Do you consider these two martyrs for their faith or foolish to die needlessly when they could have kept of serving humanity in Christ's name after the war? After all, Germany was going to lose, was it not? 'Just asking to get you to think.
7. Name some men, women and children who are dying for their faith these days.