

# **Grace: Free, Costly, or Cheap?**

**A close engagement with Bonhoeffer's cheap and costly grace in *Discipleship*.**

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## **Declaration**

This thesis is presented for the Honours degree of Theology of Murdoch University. 2011.

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its Main content, work that has not been submitted for a degree at any tertiary Education institution.

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Virginia Ingram

# Copyright

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of cheap and costly grace in *Discipleship* within the context of Bonhoeffer's theological, and historical background. I shall argue that cheap grace is not grace but rather an ironic statement that Bonhoeffer created in reaction to Lutheran theologians who denied the role of works as a necessary response to faith. Bonhoeffer believed that these Lutherans centred their theology on traditions and Creeds, rather than accepting Christ's call to discipleship, and neighbourly love.

Costly grace, in contrast to cheap grasp is characterised by faith which is active in obedience to Christ. Bonhoeffer calls costly grace the call to discipleship, and expects Christians to accept the operational consequences of obedience. These consequences are suffering, persecution, and possibly even martyrdom. However, costly grace is not only a call to action. Costly grace is grace, which means that a Christian comes closer to God, and the truth of their existence through living a life of obedience and discipleship.

However, Bonhoeffer's theology of costly grace is not without criticism; and I will propose that Bonhoeffer's treatise of 'Costly Grace' is lacking an adequate theology of the Holy Spirit, overly Christocentric, and can be accused of taking away the central Reformation tenet of grace as a gift. I will propose that all of these criticisms can be explained by Bonhoeffer's life setting. For example, a lack of Pneumatology, and an overly represented Christology was a product of Bonhoeffer Lutheran background and the Christocentric theology of the day. Moreover, it can be argued that Bonhoeffer's belief that faith must be expressed in concrete acts of obedience was a product of what Bonhoeffer perceived as the

need of the church, at a time when Nationalism, and Germanism had overtaken Christian beliefs.

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