



Costly grace according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Why does it still matter today?

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Abstract: This article aims to explore the meaning of costly grace according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and why it still matters for believers today in Indonesia. Throughout his exploration and interpretation, Bonhoeffer has written extensively about what he thought to be a costly grace to fight against cheap grace. Costly grace is also an idea that has been discussed by various theologians. Many have debated what it truly means from different perspectives. So, the question is, what does costly grace mean for Christians today? Bonhoeffer's concept of costly grace has led theologians around the world to rethink what it means to have faith, precisely because Bonhoeffer's version of faith itself is a costly one. Faith is also something that's considered a great commitment that all Christians must have. Faith and grace themselves should not be cheap, and they should be costly. Bonhoeffer's concept of costly grace is also worth considering in today's world. This article finds that costly grace is needed for Christians today.

Keywords: costly grace, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, faith

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1. Introduction

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who was born in Breslau (now Wrocław), Poland, in 1906. He is known for his books and writings, mainly "The Cost of Discipleship" (*Nachfolge*, meaning: "following") and *Ethik* (meaning "ethics"). The rise of National Socialism in Germany, Bonhoeffer became a prominent figure in the resistance against its influence in German churches. Against Adolf Hitler, Bonhoeffer joined a resistance movement inside the *Abwehr* (Germany's military intelligence). He was subsequently arrested in 1943 for his involvement and executed in April 1945. As noted by M. Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler, his life is full of struggle and suffering.¹ However, Bonhoeffer has managed to leave a legacy through his writings. During his lifetime, one of the main ideas from him that's very well received, even seventy years after his death, is about costly grace. In this concept, Bonhoeffer argues that faith is not cheap. It requires a lifetime that's full of continuous commitment and struggle.

¹ Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler, "Introduction" in *The Oxford Handbook of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 2.

Therefore, this article is going to do further research on what can be understood about the concept of costly grace according to Bonhoeffer.

It is necessary to note that there have been many articles and books written about Bonhoeffer. His ideas and theology are also the subject of many discussions and debates. One such article by Philip G. Ziegler argues that, according to Bonhoeffer, Christian faith is based on obedience to God.² Uniquely, such obedience is a basis for Bonhoeffer's resistance. He saw that the church has lost its original calling to obey Christ (a lot of churches at the time chose to cooperate with the Nazi government). Therefore, the resistance against it is an act of obedience to Him.³ One of Bonhoeffer's books, titled "Ethics" (considered to be his magnum opus), has also been a subject for a lot of research, especially in systematic theology. However, the purpose of this article is not to give a systematic understanding of theology, but a contextual one, which is in the context of believers today in Indonesia. This article will focus only on Bonhoeffer's own understanding of costly grace itself through his own writings and other experts. By knowing precisely what it means to have a costly grace, faith can hopefully persist and grow, especially in a Christian-minority country like Indonesia.

In the context of Indonesia today, we cannot ignore that Christians have faced a lot of discrimination. It's not something that's just happened in the past, but it's still ongoing repeatedly. Despite not being legally a muslim country in its constitution, Indonesia is still a muslim majority country. As minority believers, Christians faced a lot of discriminatory acts, especially in areas with strong Islamic values like Aceh.⁴ Arguably, there are different factors as to why Christians in Indonesia are being discriminated against. One of them was the fear that Christianity, as the minority religion, would somehow disrupt or even replace Islam as the majority religion. One such example is the discrimination faced by congregants in GKI (*Gereja Kristen Indonesia*, Indonesian Christian Church) Yasmin, Bogor, where the local people there were trying to force the local government to close the church.⁵ There is also some fear that Christians will bring 'christianisation' toward the Muslims, effectively undermining the faith of Islam.⁶ This fear is based on concerns about Christianization efforts in Indonesia. Effectively, such fear will lead to further hatred and

² Philip G. Ziegler, "Graciously Commanded: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth on the Decalogue," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71, no. 2 (2018): 127, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930618000030>.

³ Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth, & Protestant Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 131.

⁴ Husni Mubarrak and Intan Dewi Kumala. "Diskriminasi Terhadap Agama Minoritas: Studi Kasus Di Banda Aceh," *Seurune: Jurnal Psikologi Unsyiah* 3, no. 2 (2020): 58, <https://doi.org/10.24815/s-jpu.v3i2.17553>.

⁵ Budi Christopher Sirait, "Ancaman Diskriminasi Minoritas dan Hilangnya Multikulturalisme di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Penutupan GKI Yasmin Bogor," *Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik* 10, no. 1 (2019): 36-38, <https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.10.1.2019.28-39>.

⁶ Mubarrak and Kumala: 52

discrimination towards Indonesian Christians.⁷ According to 2021 data from Kemendagri (Indonesia's Ministry of Internal Affairs), there are around 2 million Christians in Indonesia compared to around 237 million Muslims. As a minority religion, Christians in Indonesia make up only 10% of its total population and have been facing a lot of unpleasant treatment against them due to this. There are also a lot of difficulties in constructing church buildings in Indonesia. An example from 2022 showed the rejection from locals against the construction of the HKBP (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*, Protestant Christian Batak Church) Maranatha church in Cilegon, Banten.⁸ An even more recent example happened in 2023, when the GKPS (*Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun*, Simalungun Protestant Christian Church) Purwakarta church in West Java was closed off by local authorities with support from the locals. From these cases, it's well known that Indonesia has a problem with religious tolerance. The tolerance for minority religions in various places in Indonesia is considered very low, and it has been affecting the freedom of religion in the country.⁹ There are places in Indonesia where it's difficult to worship as followers of minority religions. This does not happen in all of Indonesia, but there are many regions in Indonesia where Christians are facing difficulties in conducting worship.¹⁰

Based on the previous explanation, we can state that in the context of Indonesia, Christians today are being discriminated against because of their faith. This is exactly where Bonhoeffer's costly grace will come into consideration. This article argues that faith must be kept even though there are difficulties and struggles because of it. Through Bonhoeffer's understanding of costly grace, Christians in Indonesia can understand that faith itself is not cheap. Faith requires a lifetime of commitment even in a lot of discriminatory situations. Grace is costly, but that's what's made it valuable for believers.

2. Research Methods

The methods used in this article are qualitative research and literature review. Described as the method to study social phenomena, qualitative research aims to explore its subject with a descriptive approach. The research is done by describing and analyzing the data that's available before formulating it into a conclusion. It's also

⁷ Alamsyah M. Djafar, "Islamisasi dan Kristenisasi: Isu-isu krusial di Seputar Proselitisme dan Hak Kebebasan Beragama," *Jurnal HAM* 11, no. 11 (2014): 118, <https://doi.org/10.58823/jham.v11i11.90>.

⁸ Amran Efraim, "Gerejaphobia : Refleksi Surat 1 Petrus 2:11-17 Dalam Merespons Diskriminasi Terhadap Gereja di Indonesia," *Saint Paul's Review* 3, no. 1 (2023): 38-9, <https://doi.org/10.56194/spr.v3i1.31>.

⁹ Natanael Difrera Prakastyo, Elieser R. Marampa, and Simanjuntak Eddy, "Toleransi yang Tak Nyata: Problematika Hak Kebebasan Beragama dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Kristen," *Sophia: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 4, no. 2 (2023): 93-4, <https://doi.org/10.34307/sophia.v4i2.156>.

¹⁰ Anwar Hafidzi, "Konsep Toleransi Dan Kematangan Agama Dalam Konflik Beragama di Masyarakat Indonesia," *Potret Pemikiran* 23, No. 2 (2019): 52, <http://dx.doi.org/10.30984/pp.v23i2.1003>.

used in many theological research and articles.¹¹ Literature review is also used as an approach in this qualitative research. In this approach, research is done by reading and analyzing different relevant and necessary written works of literature to obtain information from them.¹² Particularly in this article, the author will prioritize books written by Bonhoeffer himself as the primary sources alongside other experts' opinions and analysis on his theology as secondary sources.

3. Results and Discussion

Bonhoeffer's Background

About Bonhoeffer's background, this segment is divided into two parts. One is for his own life, especially as a theologian, and the other is for his theological thinking (including influences on his theology). This should be noted because early on, Bonhoeffer received a lot of influence on his thinking from many of his teachers (mainly from Germany and the United States of America). Both parts discuss that Bonhoeffer's theological thinking is ingrained in his life.

His life and his theology

Bonhoeffer grew up in a prominent bourgeois family in Berlin, Germany. He finished his doctorate dissertation at the young age of 23 on *Sanctorum Communio* (the sociality of the church). In 1930, Bonhoeffer began his academic career in Berlin as a *Privatdozent* (lecturer). He taught Christology, ecclesiology, and systematic theology. Following the rise of National Socialism in 1937, Bonhoeffer then spent his time writing *Nachfolge* (later became "The Cost of Discipleship") and *Gemeinsames Leben* (Life Together) in 1939. Both are considered important to understand Bonhoeffer's theology and perspective. After his arrest for plotting against the state's government in 1943 and his subsequent execution in April 1945, Bonhoeffer's correspondence in prison was published in the early 1950s by Eberhard Bethge under the title *Widerstand und Ergebung* (letters and papers from prison).¹³

According to William O'Farrell, "*Bonhoeffer's theological convictions inform both his ecumenical and resistance activity.*"¹⁴ Therefore, his theological thinking also influenced his acts. However, some of his theological teaching can still be isolated from his life. According to Joel Banman, Bonhoeffer's very own theology has been

¹¹ Kosma Manurung, "Mencermati Penggunaan Metode Kualitatif di Lingkungan Sekolah Tinggi Teologi," *Filadelfia: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 3, no. 1 (2022): 291-2, <https://doi.org/10.55772/filadelfia.v3i1.48>.

¹² Sonny Eli Zaluchu, "Metode Penelitian di dalam Manuskrip Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan," *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 3, no. 2 (2021): 255-6, <https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v3i2.93>.

¹³ Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler, "Introduction," 2-3.

¹⁴ Kevin O'Farrell, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and A Theology of the Exception: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing and T&T Clark, 2024), 40.

about him being “*a theologian of the word of God.*”¹⁵ Meaning that Bonhoeffer has emphasized the revelation of God through Jesus as the center of his theology. Banman also wrote that Bonhoeffer’s theology has been influenced a lot by Karl Barth (1886-1968). According to his letters from prison in 1944, Bonhoeffer considered his theology “*to be in the middle of modern and liberal theology.*”¹⁶ The goal in mind was to express Christianity in a way that it stands out as a timeless truth. From Harnack, Bonhoeffer also learned that Christ was the perfect example of obedience to God. This has been the base for many of his writings.¹⁷ At first glance, Bonhoeffer’s theology is often considered to have a worldly orientation to it. But after a further examination, his theology is aimed toward a “*committed and distinctive piety*” in the context of Christian assemblies. Meaning, he’s focused on Christians as the community of believers under the centrality of Christ.¹⁸ Moreover, Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiology was Ecumenical in nature. His understanding of the church was also about Christ existing as a community where a relational body of persons gathered under His word.¹⁹

Bonhoeffer’s Theological View of Grace

To understand Bonhoeffer’s view of costly grace, it is important first to discuss the biblical foundation of it. Bonhoeffer wrote extensively about the suffering of Christ. He viewed Christ as the savior with the emphasis on His suffering and even rejection by others.²⁰ The suffering of Christ and rejection of Christ can be found in Luke 9:23-26. Even back then, Christ was rejected by a lot of people in His time, and His followers also faced the same thing. In Luke 9:23, Christ said that if any man wishes to follow Him, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and then follow Him. The meaning is, one must fully submit one’s life to Christ to be His follower. This also includes participating in suffering and rejection.²¹ One must also be selfless, bearing the cross as the cost of following Christ. However, one must not forget that there is grace in following Christ, even though it is also costly. Following Him does come at a cost, and it is not cheap. It is necessary to know that Christ’s suffering proves His love for all humanity, according to 1 Peter 2:18-25, suffering itself can be

¹⁵ Joel Banman, *Reading in The Presence of Christ: A Study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Bibliology and Exegesis* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 16.

¹⁶ Banman, *Reading in The Presence of Christ: A Study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Bibliology and Exegesis*, 18.

¹⁷ Banman, *Reading in The Presence of Christ: A Study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Bibliology and Exegesis*, 18.

¹⁸ Mark J. Knight, “Christ Existing in Ordinary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sanctification,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 2 (2014): 415, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12073>.

¹⁹ Keith Clements, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Ecumenical Quest* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2015), 35.

²⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. Translated by R. H. Fuller (London: SCM Press, 2015), 41-2.

²¹ Danny Yonathan, “Memahami Konsep Menyangkal Diri, Memikul Salib dan Mengikut Yesus: Sebuah Analisis Biblikal Lukas 2:23-26,” *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 1, no. 2 (2019): 122-3, <https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v1i2.14>.

understood as the grace of Christ for humanity. The text tells that suffering can come even to those who are righteous. One can even suffer because of one's faith in Christ (1Pet 4:14). 1 Peter 2:20 notes that there can be two kinds of suffering. One is suffering because of living righteously, and the other is suffering because of sins. Suffering because of living well is noble, because that is what Christ did. He did not commit any sin whatsoever, and he lived a perfect life on earth without it (1Pet 2:22). However, He still suffered because of the sin of humankind.²² Conclusively, it can be understood that Christ is the suffering Messiah and God who suffers with humanity. He suffers not because of His sin. He struggles to bear the burden of humankind's sin. His suffering for humanity is what made the costly grace valuable.

Costly grace against cheap grace

*"Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church; we are fighting today for costly grace."*²³ From this direct quotation, it can be discerned that Bonhoeffer was criticizing the church at his time while simultaneously acknowledging his religious motivation. Against cheap grace, he argued that the church has an enemy to fight against unitedly. He described it as forgiveness of sins, but without the actual repentance that is required for it.²⁴ With this, Bonhoeffer proposed an idea of discipleship as a form of obedience and the will to have the costly grace. According to him, discipleship itself is an invitation from Christ to obey Him.²⁵ He wrote that such grace is costly because it calls Christians to follow, and it is called grace because it calls Christians to follow Christ. Meaning, Christ is both the grace and the source of it in the concept of costly grace.

In his own words, *"it is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life."*²⁶ Christians who are called to be His disciples should not have the so-called cheap grace; they should have a costly grace. It is indeed costly to be a disciple of Christ, because discipleship means to give one's own life to him.²⁷ Quoting Luther, Bonhoeffer saw that even Christ Himself had His own cost to pay, which was paid by His own life. Grace itself can never exist without Christ, who paid the price to save those who believe in Him. Without Christ, there is simply no grace, and only costly grace is the true grace. That's because it came from Christ, whose life was both the cost and the grace at the same time. On the opposite side, cheap grace is the counterfeit of the costly grace (which is the only true grace). It

²² Misray Tunliu, "Penderitaan sebagai Kasih Karunia Tuhan Yesus Kristus: Refleksi 1 Petrus 2:18-25," *Jurnal Teologi Gracia Deo* 4, no. 1 (2021): 21-2, <https://doi.org/10.46929/graciadeo.v4i1.76>.

²³ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 3.

²⁴ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 3.

²⁵ Sari Saptorini, "Pemanggilan Murid Secara Sengaja Berdasarkan Teladan Tuhan Yesus." *Pasca: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 15, no. 1 (2019): 38, <https://doi.org/10.46494/psc.v15i1.67>.

²⁶ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 3.

²⁷ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 5.

requires no actions and can cause Christians to live their lives just as they are, without the desire and dedication towards repentance.

For Bonhoeffer, the only correct response to this counterfeit grace was through discipleship, which calls to immediate obedience. Not a confession of faith or a religious decision, but a complete obedience to the word of Christ in one's whole life. Bonhoeffer described it: "*When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to His person.*"²⁸ The word "exclusive," however, does not mean that Bonhoeffer suggests an idea of legalism in his understanding of discipleship. He wrote that following Christ is a gracious call and commandment (Ps 119:45).²⁹ Obedience to Christ and His word means that one will respond and act on it based on one's faith in Him.

According to John D. Godsey, Bonhoeffer's approach to theology can also be a practical and contextual one. He intends to answer the question: "*How can we live the Christian life in the modern world?*"³⁰ To Bonhoeffer, the answer is through discipleship, and there is no other way. Christians are disciples of Christ, and disciples must obey their Teacher. It is precisely only in this kind of discipleship that the authentic and costly grace can be found. It is worth noting that, according to Bonhoeffer, disciples of Christ will never surpass or exceed Him. They are, in principle, followers of Christ and His teachings. Bonhoeffer then relates this to Christ's suffering for His costly grace. What this means is that Christ suffers; therefore, Christians, as followers of Christ, are not above suffering itself. To put it bluntly, he wrote that "*discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ,*" and "*suffering is the badge of true discipleship.*"³¹

However, this does not mean that Christians must suffer for suffering's sake. Bonhoeffer discussed two kinds of suffering: the common suffering and the suffering of Christians. Focusing on the latter, Bonhoeffer asserted that costly grace requires Christians to follow Christ, especially amid suffering. Christ also suffers, just like the rest of humanity. He suffers not because suffering itself is above Him or because He is unable to avoid it entirely. Instead, He chose to suffer with the rest of humanity out of His perfect obedience to the will of the Father.³²

The implication of this is that Christians must understand that the suffering of Christ is evidence for His costly grace. Bonhoeffer also noted that it is exactly through Christ that one receives and truly understands costly grace as the true and authentic

²⁸ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 16.

²⁹ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 16.

³⁰ John D. Godsey, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 153.

³¹ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 45.

³² Bonhoeffer wrote that suffering must be faced and not avoided. Jesus prays to the Father that the cup of suffering may pass from Him, but the only way for it to happen is to drink it: Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 46.

grace from God.³³ He also warned that there is a discipleship without Christ in it, meaning a discipleship where one does not fully submit to Him and His teachings. He wrote that such discipleship is devoid of God's promise and Christ will reject it (Luke 9:57-62). Like cheap grace, counterfeit discipleship should also be avoided at all costs.³⁴ Therefore, Christians should seek to have a true and costly grace in an authentic faith towards Christ as His disciple.

Why does costly grace matter?

The exact reason why costly grace matters is that, in Bonhoeffer's words, "*it is the sanctuary of God.*" He wrote that such costly grace is the living word and the Word of God that He speaks for today. Costly grace is also the call that Peter received from Jesus. Jesus said the word "follow Me" as the first and last word He spoke to His disciples (Mark 1:17; John 21:22). Therefore, there is a true and costly grace in Jesus' ministry and that of His disciples. Fighting against cheap grace is also another reason why Christians must follow the path of costly grace. Cheap grace essentially thinks about sin lightly.³⁵ Consequently, this will lead to the understanding that salvation from Christ is something that is also cheap. Thus, it is important to keep costly grace in the fight against cheap grace. Costly grace also matters precisely because it's found in Jesus Christ and His calling for believers. For example, Apostle Paul himself had his own cost to pay for his faith. However, because it is a true faith, Paul found out that putting faith in Christ is worth the price (Phil 3:7-14). Therefore, it is paramount for Christians to have the right faith in Christ. Because it is only in the right faith and the costly grace that the promises of God's Kingdom can be found. Although suffering can also come with this costly grace, Bonhoeffer viewed it as his cross to bear. However, he was not alone in this struggle because he viewed that God is also present in his suffering. In his own words, "only the suffering God can help."³⁶

Bonhoeffer also wrote that God becomes joy for Christians even amidst human suffering. According to him, faith in God means to put trust in God, He who suffers with the rest of humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ. From this statement, we can understand that even though we suffer because of following Christ, we are not alone in that suffering. There is Christ in our suffering because He is also present in His costly grace. Bonhoeffer also wrote that suffering leads to the knowledge of sin, and thereby, to the return to God. Refusing to suffer and rejection (taking the cross) is a way to forfeit the relationship with Christ and even to reject Him entirely. Meaning, one cannot accept Christ as one's saviour but at the same time try to avoid the

³³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*. Translated by Neville H. Smith (New York: Touchstone Books, 1995), 59.

³⁴ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 5-6.

³⁵ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 5.

³⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: An Abridged Edition*. Translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2017), 134.

suffering that comes with following Him. Costly grace, then, is something that should not be taken lightly.³⁷ But even with the sufferings that can come with it, costly grace does matter, and it must be fought for today. Costly grace is also an inseparable part of true Christian discipleship. An inauthentic discipleship would not have it. As disciples of Christ in modern times, we must nurture this costly grace in our lives in order to be faithful disciples to Him. To submit to Him, we must participate in His costly grace.

Costly Grace for Today: The Context and Reality in Indonesia

In his book titled “Life Together,” Bonhoeffer wrote that Christians must share God’s word. In his ecclesiological understanding, the church is described as the community of faith.³⁸ However, it cannot be denied that these communities of faith in Indonesia have often faced discrimination. As previously stated in the introduction, religious discrimination is a problem among Christians in Indonesia today. This is precisely where Bonhoeffer’s understanding of costly grace comes into the picture.

This article identifies at least two main ideas to understand Bonhoeffer’s theory of costly grace. The first is about costly grace as a reminder to live an authentic Christian life. Christians must acknowledge that they have sinned against God (Rom 3:23). Yet, God is willing to forgive those sins by sacrificing His Son for the salvation of humanity (John 3:16). It has been from the beginning to save humanity from sins. The suffering of Christ (especially His death) is necessary for humanity’s salvation. Jesus then becomes the reconciliator between humankind and God. As previously stated, it is costly because Christ gave His own life, and it is grace because it’s for the salvation of humanity. In costly grace, it also costs one’s own life. However, because it’s also a grace, Christ Himself also gave His life in it. Christians who embrace Christ’s costly grace are called to participate in it.³⁹

The second main idea about costly grace is to live as Christians through hard situations and even sufferings. Just as Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, faith itself is also not cheap. Christ’s suffering was not meant to be taken lightly, and His salvation must not be regarded as inexpensive.⁴⁰ Therefore, in the context of Indonesia’s realities, it is crucial to emphasize the second idea of costly grace, recognizing that a true understanding of grace involves endurance and sacrifice.

Christians in Indonesia have faced discrimination due to irrational fear of the Christian faith itself (sometimes called Christianophobia). It affects not just what

³⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3 & Temptation*. Translated by John G. Fletcher (London: SCM Press, 2004), 119-20.

³⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*. Translated by Daniel W. Bloesch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 81.

³⁹ Bill Hull and Brandon Cook, *The Cost of Cheap Grace* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2020), 6.

⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 5-6.

people think of Christians, but also their acts and attitudes toward them. There is a distinction between hatred and fear of other religions, but in the context and reality of Indonesia, those two can often be found together at the same time. In Indonesia, many Christians today are still being rejected due to their faith.⁴¹ The rejection of Christian faith is also something that Bonhoeffer paid attention to. He wrote that the Gospels teach that Christ must suffer and be rejected. Suffering and rejection sum up the whole cross of Jesus, and to die on the cross itself means to die despised and rejected. However, Christ's suffering and rejection are a divine necessity.⁴²

In the background of rejection against Christians in Indonesia, Bonhoeffer's explanation rings true. What can and should be derived from this idea for Christians in Indonesia today is that even though they are discriminated against and rejected, Christ Himself experienced the same thing. This shows a remarkable solidarity of Christ with the struggle of His disciples. At the same time, He leads by using an example, which is His suffering. It is also in today's suffering that Christians can find His presence. Bonhoeffer wrote that even though the world may reject the cross of Christ, the cross remains as a way of reconciliation between God and humans. Jesus Christ, who is the crucified reconciler, experienced suffering and rejection for the sake of humanity.⁴³ Christians in Indonesia today may find discrimination and rejection in their life. As a matter of fact, it can even be said that it's also a common occurrence.⁴⁴ However, Christians should find their solace in Christ only by understanding His true and costly grace. Despite facing discrimination and rejection, Christians today must keep their faith intact. It is, after all, the cross that every Christian carries.

It can also be argued further that every Christian is going to face some rejection in their life. Bonhoeffer wrote that the cross itself can also mean rejection and shame as well as suffering. However, Christians must not give their faith to Christ because it's the only way to reconcile with God. He wrote that to bear the cross is not a tragedy and suffering, but is a necessity for a costly grace. Suffering is not an accidental thing; it is an integral part of humanity.⁴⁵ When Christians in Indonesia today are fighting against rejection, discrimination, and even suffering, they must

⁴¹ Manotar Tampubolon, Fernando Silalahi, Wiwik Sriwidiarti, Desi Sianipar, "Christianophobia: A Threat to Indonesian Pluralism and Religious Freedom." *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding (IJMMU)* 9, no. 11 (2022): 336. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i11.4260>.

⁴² Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 42.

⁴³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 292.

⁴⁴ Rona Ganta Barus, Khatrina Rintis Lintang Rahayu, Ester Tandana, Liantoro Liantoro, and Darmadi Darmadi, "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen Melawan Diskriminasi Masyarakat Majemuk di Indonesia." *Indonesia Journal of Religious* 5, no. 2 (August 29, 2023): 100, <https://doi.org/10.46362/ijr.v5i2.32>.

⁴⁵ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 43.

remember that Christ has gone through all of that. They are an inseparable part of the costly grace, especially in the word 'costly.'

However, we must not forget that there is also the word 'grace' in Costly Grace. The God who paid the consequences of our sin is the same God who bears our burdens and sufferings. We must also remind ourselves that on His cross, Christ has overcome His sufferings. The cross then becomes His triumph over suffering. Just like what Christ did, suffering itself must be endured so that it will eventually pass away.⁴⁶ Despite many difficulties and hardships in life, Christians must bear the costly grace. They are not alone, because God is with them amidst their struggles. In the context and reality of Christians in Indonesia today, Bonhoeffer's idea of costly grace is an important thought that's worth considering. Its relevance is present in the context of Christians in Indonesia who have faced a lot of difficulties due to their faith. Costly grace will help Christians in Indonesia to understand that in their hardship (the cost), there is still a meaning, which is the true discipleship of Christ and His salvation (the grace).

4. Conclusion

By analyzing Bonhoeffer's theological writings, this article has found that costly grace is the true grace needed by Christians today. Costly grace calls believers to embrace suffering and rejection as an integral part of an authentic faith and discipleship to God. The reason why costly grace still matters today is that it's the only form of grace with accountability for repentance and faithfulness to God. It also serves as a theological framework and a practical guide for Christians today to interpret their struggles, including (but not limited to) discrimination and suffering. This research also highlights that by embracing costly grace, Christians today can foster their resilience and deepen their authentic faith in God. Ultimately, costly grace, according to Bonhoeffer's theology, is very important to understand and to act upon in the context of Christians in modern times.

Therefore, Christians in Indonesia today must not worry about their lives because of three things to consider. First, God is with them amidst their sufferings, and He has overcome them through Christ. It is also in the suffering itself that humans can feel the presence of God. Second, sufferings and hardship because of one's faith in Christ are an integral part of costly grace. After all, it is the reason why costly grace is so valuable even today. With this, Christians in Indonesia can understand their struggle and put even more faith in Christ. Third, in understanding the costly grace, Christians in Indonesia point to God as the source of true grace, which is the salvation, solace, and the source of freedom for humankind. God will not abandon those who believe in Him, for He is the savior of humanity (Heb 13:5).

⁴⁶ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 46-7.

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