

# COSTLY GRACE SERIES

## Masked Persecution?

Revelation 2:8-11





Lockdown Laura says: Put on your mask...and step onto the cattle car.



M  
Masks Are Great, America!  
A  
A



DESECRATION!



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HORSEY



The city lived by the adage, "Rome first in all things." This loyalty was part of Smyrna's history even before Rome became a superpower. In 195 B.C. the city built a temple to Dea Roma, the goddess of Rome. It was the first city to do so. In A.D. 23 it built a temple to Caesar Augustus. In A.D. 25 Smyrna competed for the right to build a temple in honor of the Emperor Tiberius. The city won over seven other candidates, and not only built that temple but it added one for Empress Lydia and one for the Senate as well!5 The city was sold out to whatever made Rome great.

Darrel Johnson

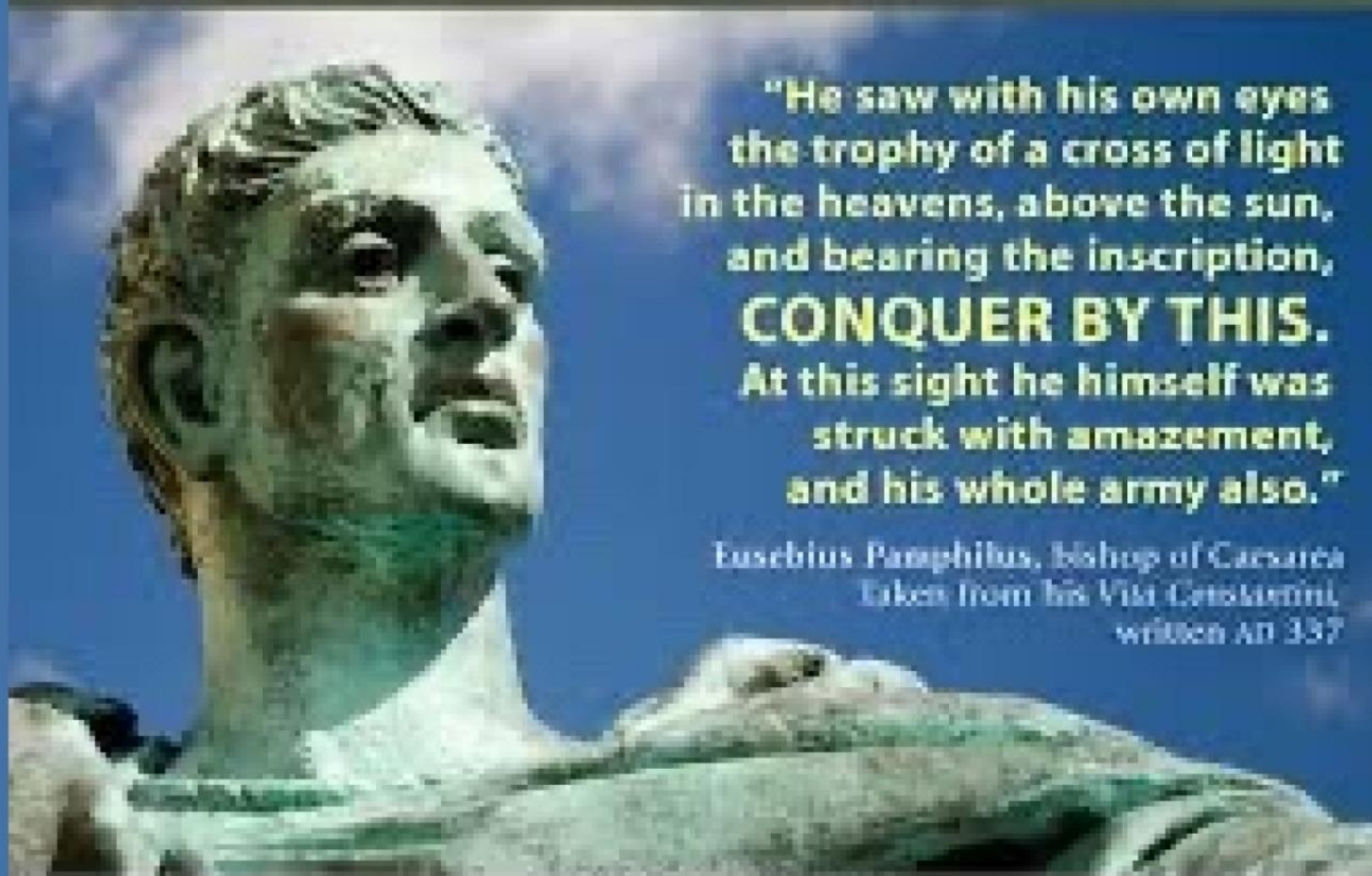
“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life:

**Revelation 2:8–11**

# THE CONSTANTINIAN CHURCH



# CONSTANTINE THE GREAT



"He saw with his own eyes  
the trophy of a cross of light  
in the heavens, above the sun,  
and bearing the inscription,  
**CONQUER BY THIS.**  
At this sight he himself was  
struck with amazement,  
and his whole army also."

Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea  
Taken from his *Vita Constantini*,  
written AD 337

JOHN HOWARD YODER MAKES THE STRIKING OBSERVATION THAT AFTER THE CONSTANTINIAN SHIFT THE MEANING OF THE WORD "CHRISTIAN" CHANGES. PRIOR TO CONSTANTINE IT TOOK EXCEPTIONAL COURAGE TO BE A CHRISTIAN. AFTER CONSTANTINE IT TAKES EXCEPTIONAL COURAGE NOT TO BE COUNTED AS A CHRISTIAN.... AFTER THE CONSTANTINIAN ESTABLISHMENT, CHRISTIANS KNEW THAT GOD WAS GOVERNING THE WORLD IN CONSTANTINE, BUT THEY HAD TO TAKE IT ON FAITH THAT WITHIN THE NOMINALLY CHRISTIAN MASS THERE WAS A COMMUNITY OF TRUE BELIEVERS. NO LONGER COULD BEING A CHRISTIAN BE IDENTIFIED WITH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, SINCE MANY "CHRISTIANS" IN THE CHURCH HAD NOT CHOSEN TO FOLLOW CHRIST. NOW TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS TRANSMUTED TO "INWARDNESS."

- STANLEY HAUERWAS -



Does anyone know... does the Christian persecution complex have an expiration date? Because... uh... you've all been in charge pretty much since... uh... what was that guys name... Constantine. He converted in, what was it, 312 A.D. I'm just saying, enjoy your success.

— *Jon Stewart* —

**AZ QUOTES**

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE  
CHRISTIAN?**

**Just going to church**  
doesn't make you a Christian any more  
than standing in your garage makes you  
a car. ~G. K. Chesterton

**ARE WE BEING PERSECUTED**

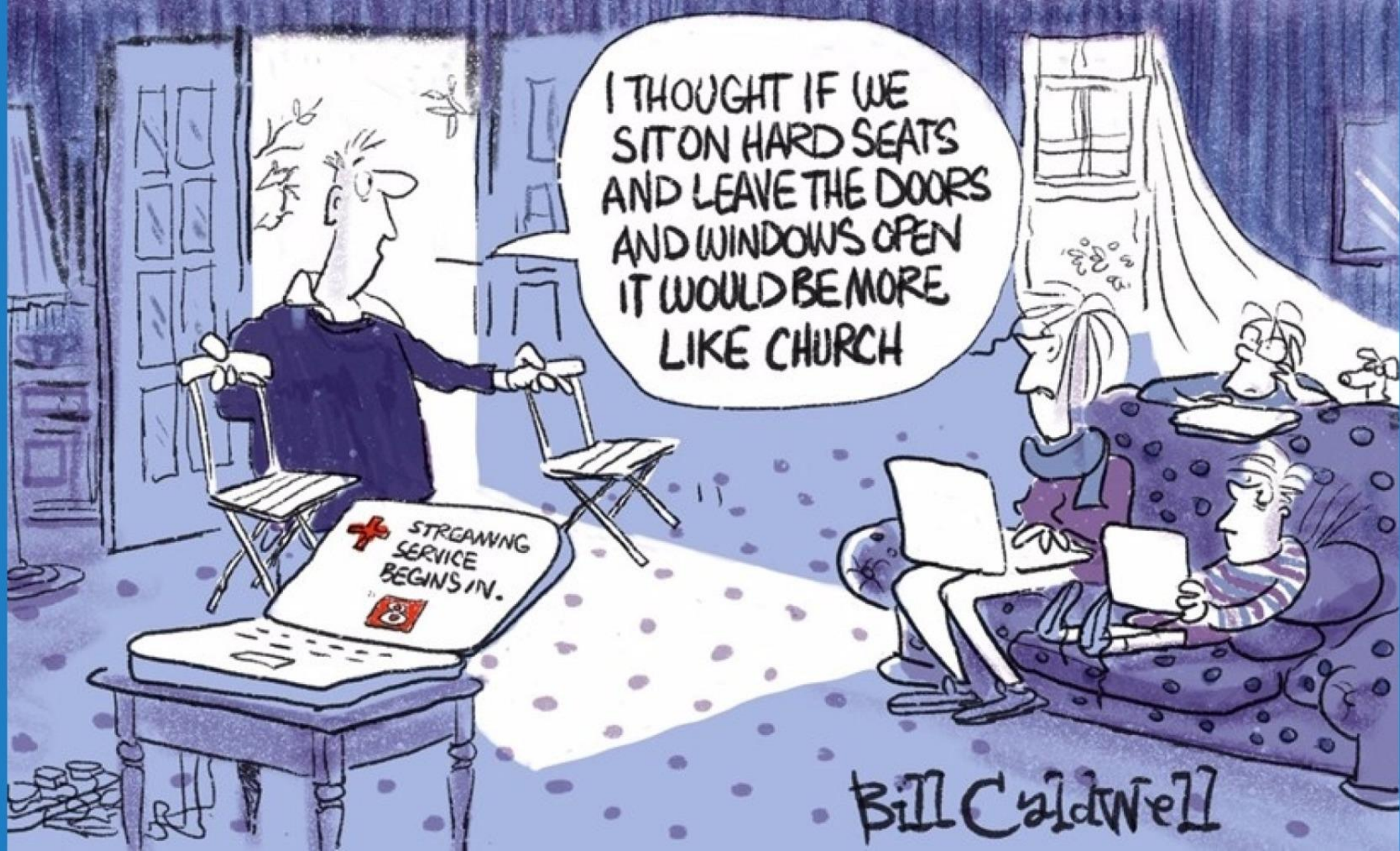
CAN WE  
FAST FORWARD  
THE SERMON?

St. STEPHEN'S

...live stream... liv

Bill Calwell





I THOUGHT IF WE  
SIT ON HARD SEATS  
AND LEAVE THE DOORS  
AND WINDOWS OPEN  
IT WOULD BE MORE  
LIKE CHURCH

STREAMING  
SERVICE  
BEGINS IN.

Bill Caldwell



*“The Church is the Church only when it exists for others...not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live for Christ, to exist for others.”*

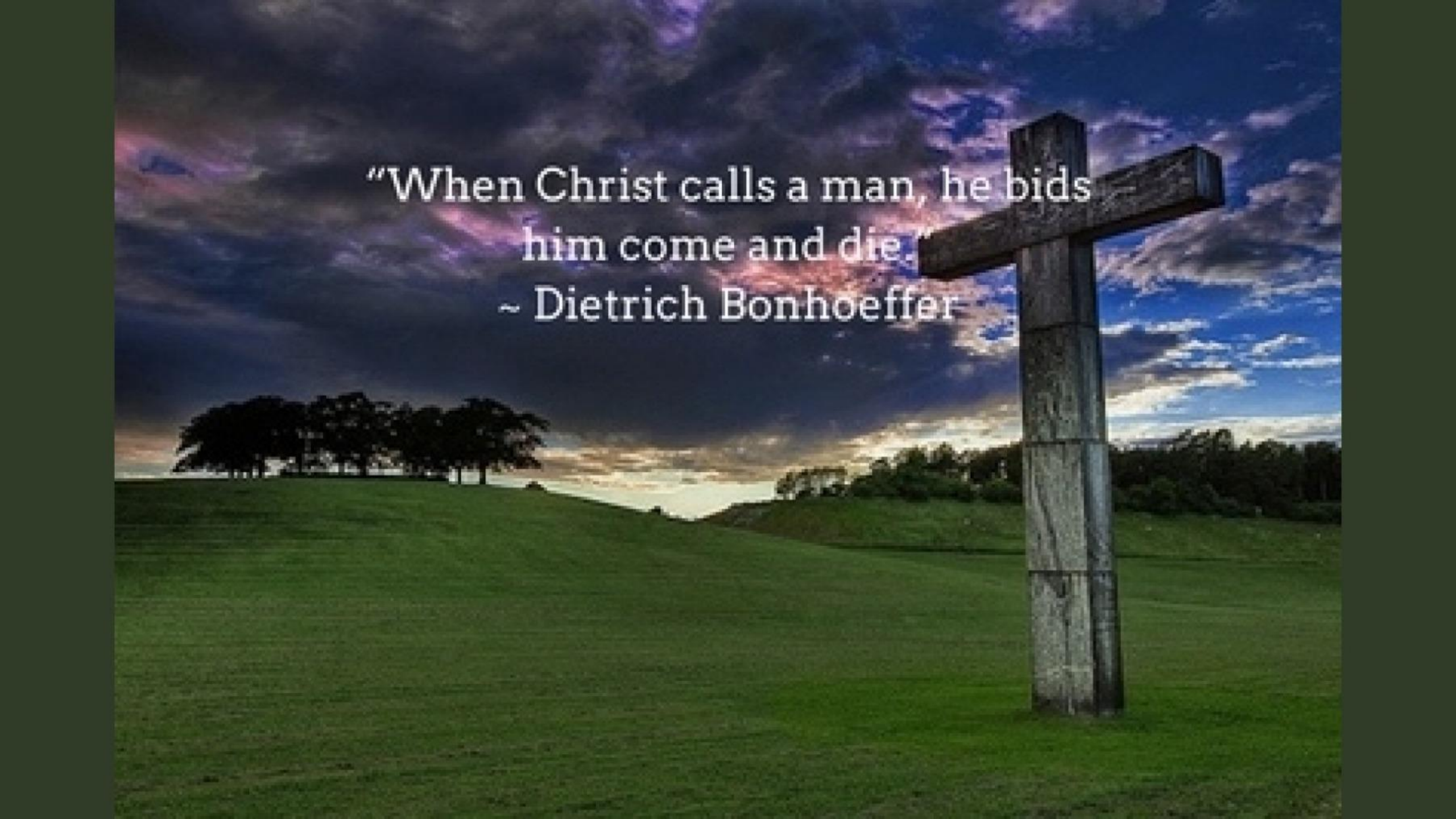
*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

# THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

A church cannot be a true church without  
causing trouble  
Thomas Torrance

It seems only fair to conclude by telling you that there is a way out of the pressure. Just don't get serious about loving Jesus. Just go with the flow of the culture. Just settle for a comfortable, run-of-the-mill, watered-down kind of discipleship—"Christianity Lite." Just settle for a status-quo-blessing kind of discipleship. And there will be no pressure. And there will also be no passion.

Darrell Johnson

A large, weathered wooden cross stands in a lush green field. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the background, a line of trees is silhouetted against the horizon. The overall mood is contemplative and solemn.

“When Christ calls a man, he bids  
him come and die.”  
~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**“Those who are born once, die twice; those who are born twice, die once.”**

**E.V. Hill**