“I thought I could acquire faith by endeavoring to lead what might be termed a holy life. Later I discovered, and am still discovering to this day, that one can acquire faith only by leading an entirely worldly life. We must renounce any attempt to make something of ourselves, be it a saint or penitent sinner or churchperson (a so-called “religious” type), be it a righteous or unrighteous, sick or healthy individual—by worldliness I mean living amid the world’s abundance of duties and problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing, we cast ourselves completely into the arms of God; taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God and others in this world; watching and weeping with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. That, I believe, is faith, and that is how one becomes a human and a follower of Jesus.

How can success make us arrogant or failure lead us astray when we share in God’s sufferings through a life of this kind? I’m thankful to have recognized this, and I know that I could only have done so on the road I have traveled. That is why I reflect with gratitude and serenity on things past and present.”

* Bonhoeffer was executed in a different concentration camp on April 9, 1945.