

A Little Luther



Martin Luther by Wilhelm Lindenschmit (1829-1835), wood engraving published 1879

A Little Luther Goes a Long Way (“long” is eternal life, the “Way” is Christ Himself)!

“I ask and demand no more than this one thing, that you faithfully preach about Me, watch over My Word and Sacrament, show affection and harmony among one another for My sake, and patiently bear the adversities that this entails for you.”

About A Little Luther:

Martin Luther was a German Reformer living in the 16th century. His writings contain much wisdom and understanding of God’s Holy Scriptures and are always subordinate to them, meaning the Bible itself is the sole true authority (*Sola Scriptura*). Luther simply had marvelous, God-given insight into His Word. Some of these nuggets are simply too good not to share. We’ve tried to highlight points that seem to us to summarize Luther’s teachings from these glorious passages of Scripture. May God bless your own studies of Scripture, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16).

The WORD

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Jn 14:15-16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.”

These are all words of Him who is about to depart from His disciples and now bids them farewell. He gives them comfort and exhorts them not to be frightened and saddened by His departure. As though He were to say: “I must now go from your sight. Therefore I tell you this as My farewell and Godspeed. You must not become afraid and fearful; but believe in Me, and take to heart what I am telling you. For I will not leave you without comfort and help, even though you find no comfort and help in the world. Yes, I am going to the Father for this very reason, to assume My power and My reign and then to manifest these in you. And though I depart from you physically, I shall send you another Comforter from the Father. He will always remain with you, for I know that you cannot abide in the world without a Comforter.

“Until now I, through My bodily presence, have been your Comforter. You have taken delight in Me and have felt secure and fearless, and you would like to remain with Me. But now that you hear that you are about to lose this comfort, you are cast down and troubled. Yet My departure shall not harm you. Just remain My disciples and hold to Me, and I will compensate you richly for the loss. For I Myself will ask the Father to grant you the Comforter, who will stay with you forever; and neither the world nor the devil will deprive you of Him, no matter how they rant and rave. He will strengthen you and make you courageous and bold, far better than I can now do by My physical presence. Moreover, He is wiser and more learned than all the world. Therefore you will not lack for comfort, strength, courage, and wisdom.”

That is the comfort. But Christ advisedly prefaces it with the words: “If you love Me and keep My commandments.” The dear Lord definitely foresaw that unrest would be afoot in Christendom after His departure, particularly among the preachers and teachers. He knew that they would not remain in agreement but would be split into schisms and factions. He completely abolished Moses for His Christians, and now He does not want us to be encumbered again with the intolerable burden of the Law. For we invariably find that where laws rule, especially over the conscience, there is no end of commands and precepts. One law leads to a hundred new ones, and these hundred multiply into a hundred thousand. “Therefore,” Christ says, “I do not impose anything else on you. I ask and demand no more than this one thing, that you faithfully preach about Me, watch over My Word and Sacrament, show affection and harmony among one another for My sake, and patiently bear the adversities that this entails for you.”

These are the brief commandments which Christ calls “My commandments.” “And these,” He says, “I impose on you only if you love Me and gladly keep them for My sake. For I do not want to be a Moses, who drives and plagues you with menace and terror; but I give you commands which you can and will surely observe without coercion if you love Me at all. If love is wanting, it is useless for Me to give you many commandments; for they would not be observed anyhow. Therefore if you want to keep My commandments, see that you love Me, and think of what I have done for you. It is proper that you should love Me, who am about to give My life for you and to shed My blood for you. Do this for My sake. Live in harmony and friendship with one another. At the same time adhere steadfastly to Me in your preaching, bear with one another in love, and do not introduce schisms and factions.

“For I have richly deserved your loyalty. It is hard for Me to accomplish your redemption, and it costs Me My life. I am hurling Myself into death and into the jaws of the devil to deliver you from sin and death, to destroy the power of hell and the devil, and to present you with heaven and all that I have. I will gladly pardon you if you err and sin at times, even if you fall grossly, also if you are weak and frail, but only if you return to Me, manifest your love again, and also forgive one another, as I do you, so that your mutual love will not be destroyed.”

Christ begins this admonition here; but later He will extend it and stress it more, in order to impress this on their minds for the hour of His departure. For He knew very well, as I have said, that there would be many who would adorn themselves with His name and boast of being His disciples and preachers of the Gospel but would set their own reputation, glory, and honor above Christ’s blood and death. They would not esteem Christ’s grace and ineffable love and all that He did to accomplish our redemption highly enough to jeopardize or surrender their own pleasures or honor or power for it. They would not deprecate their own knowledge and cleverness, because their reputation for smartness, wisdom, and learning is of greater consequence to them than Christ and the pure doctrine of the Gospel.

Luther, M. (1999). Luther’s works, vol. 24: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 24, pp. 101–103). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.