

# A Little Luther



Martin Luther by Wilhelm Lindenschmit (1829-1895), wood engraving published 1879

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

“Christians have nothing to rely on but Christ, their Lord and God... it pins its hopes solely on the Lord Christ, who was crucified and died for us.”

### 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

<sup>17</sup> “Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him.”

*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (John 14:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.*

The Holy Spirit is not only a Comforter, who makes Christians defiant and courageous in the face of all kinds of terror; He is also a Spirit of truth, that is, He is a true and reliable Spirit, who does not deceive you or fail you. It is also part of a Christian’s character to become bold and intrepid. I do not mean that he should be imbued with a foolhardy courage, boldness, and defiance such as reckless soldiers and daredevils display when they charge fearlessly into swords, spears, and guns. To be sure, this may also be termed fearlessness; but it is a false comfort and defiance, for such a man either relies on his own strength or is actuated by vainglory. Thus there may be a spirit there, but it is not the proper and true spirit.

For the evil spirit can also puff people up and make them bold and brave, as is evidenced by his tyrants and schismatic spirits, who are far too rash and defiant, though not with the valor and the defiance approved by God. Christ, on the other hand, promises a Spirit who fills us with a courage that is called a divine, holy, and bold defiance. Therefore this must be called a genuine, true comfort, a courage that is not false or futile; for it does not rely on anything uncertain but is thoroughly reliable and puts its trust in things that do not fail or deceive.

Christians have nothing to rely on but Christ, their Lord and God. They willingly surrender all things for His sake and say: “Before I deny or forsake my Christ, I will bid farewell to neck and belly, honor and goods, house and home, wife and child, and everything!” Therefore this courage cannot be a sham or a delusion; it must be genuine and real. Its comfort is not rooted in earth’s temporal or transient things, for the sake of which it would be willing to suffer this. No, it pins its hopes solely on the Lord Christ, who was crucified and died for us. In keeping with His promise Christ certainly must say: “Since you confess Me, you enjoy this advantage and comfort; and you can boast that your defiance and courage will not mislead you. For He is called a Spirit of truth.” All other defiance and pride stems from a spirit of lies or a pseudo spirit, which cannot be pleasing to God. But whatever a Christian does and suffers in faith in the Lord Christ is absolute truth, proper, and right; and he can boast truthfully and joyfully that it is approved by God and all the angels. A Christian is sure of his position and fears neither the devil nor the world; neither is he intimidated by any threat or terror.

Therefore let this be no small comfort for you, for there is nothing else on earth that can comfort you as much in the hour of need as a confident heart. As long as it harbors doubt and is uncertain, it is incapable of defiant courage. But here the consolation is sure; whatever I suffer is not due to my misdeeds or to any worldly things from which I hoped to derive goods or honor or praise. The only charge against me is that I believe in the Lord Christ and am determined to confess His Word.

Therefore I cannot fear these people, but I must despise them and say: “Go ahead and rage if you will. If you do not choose to smile in God’s name, then be angry in the name of all your masters. And the more you fume and rage in your ire and malice, the happier I shall be, and the more I shall laugh.” For I am convinced—also from their own admission—that they are attacking us for no other reason than this, that we preach the Gospel. Since all this befalls us for Christ’s sake, He also gives us the Spirit—as He has promised—who does not deceive but is sincere and abides forever before God and everyone.

Thus we have the comforting promise and the firm confidence that whatever we speak, do, and suffer as Christians must be the truth and proceed from the Spirit of truth. Conversely, all that is done, spoken, preached, and undertaken in opposition to this must be falsehood and lies before God, though it may seem ever so fine and be proclaimed as the pure truth, the greatest holiness and intellectuality, and though the world may contend for it with all its might and blaspheme and rage against us most violently. For, after all, our doctrine and our actions are not based on ourselves, nor are we involved in this; but all this has to do with this Christ, from whom we have everything and for whom we preach, live, and suffer. And since all this is done on His behalf, we also let Him worry about it. He says that He will see it through and will give the spirit and the courage for it to endure; and whatever He does through His Christians is to be completely true and certain.

*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, p. 120). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.*