

# 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)!

“You already have all that I am to accomplish in you and all that I am to do for you. I have given you all, have conquered death for you, delivered you from sin, reconciled the Father, and fulfilled the Law. You need nothing else.”

### John 21:15–17

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” <sup>16</sup> He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” <sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

## The WORD

<sup>21</sup> “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Jn 14:21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Christ gave His disciples the sublime comfort that they would be in Him and He in them. **This is the chief doctrine of Christianity.** From it we are to understand that we are not justified and saved in and through ourselves but in and through Christ, who did everything for us, who fulfilled the Law and defeated sin, death, and the devil. “This you will have in Me,” says Christ; “but subsequently I will be praised in you, and you will have to confess and to preach this in all the world. When you have received this from Me, when My blessings have become your own, and when, in turn, your evils, sin, and failings become Mine—just as all that is My Father’s is Mine, and that which is Mine is also My Father’s—then you will come forward. You will administer My Word and commandments, be Christ’s apostles and preachers, and be baptized. You will hear and confess the Word publicly, in order that the world may see and hear that you are My Christians and adhere to My Word and commandments. When you do all this, you will surely experience that the devil and the world, as well as your own evil conscience and false brethren and schismatic spirits, will harass you, and that you will be surrounded by all sorts of trials, terror, anxiety, and distress.

“Then it will be learned for sure whether you are truly in Me and I in you, that is, whether your faith is firmly established, whether you have received Baptism and the Sacrament in earnest, whether you have preached and heard the Gospel and let yourselves be called Christians.” The great danger and distress will chasten them and demonstrate what each one is and is not. **Talk is cheap.** Even the pope and his crowd boast: “We are baptized Christians. Christ is in us, and we are in Him.” But when life is in jeopardy, yes, even when less vital things are at stake, such as temporal goods, or when shame and disgrace or other grief and woe are inflicted by the devil, then one says: “I really do not know what to do!” For it hurts to be cast into prison, to be put in the stocks and tortured, to abandon everything, to be everybody’s door mat, to be so maltreated that there is no more wretched creature on earth than a Christian. In such circumstances the flesh is weak and fearful, the heart pounds, and the devil adds fuel to the fire by making the heart ever more afraid and timid.

“Therefore,” says Christ, “I will give you a sure sign by which the true Christians, who are in Me and in whom I am, can be recognized, namely, the observance of My commandments. **You already have all that I am to accomplish in you and all that I am to do for you. I have given you all, have conquered death for you, delivered you from sin, reconciled the Father, and fulfilled the Law. You need nothing else.** For there is no more wrath, no death, no hell, no sin; all are overcome and destroyed, and you really lead a heavenly life. But whether you truly believe this and earnestly adhere to it—this will be seen if you live accordingly here on earth; if you preach and profess freely and intrepidly; if you hazard property and honor, life and limb, for this; and if you love one another as heartily as I have taught and commanded you. This will be the test and proof of true faith in Me.” But, as Christ said earlier, it all depends on whether you feel and find that you love this Man. For if you truly believe this, then love will be there, and your heart will be moved to say: “Christ, my dear Lord, has done so much for me. He has reconciled the Father to me and shed His blood for me. He has fought and defeated my death and given me all His possessions. Should I not requite this love? Should I not thank and praise, honor and serve Him with my life and my goods? If not, I should be ashamed that I am a human being.”

Therefore Christ declares: “Sincere love for Me is part of a true Christian. Otherwise he will never be able to carry on.” **The heart must cleave solely to Christ and neither love nor fear anything else.** If you are threatened with imprisonment, with loss of life and goods, you must be able to declare undauntedly: “This I will gladly suffer in defiance of the devil, out of love for my dear Lord and to His glory and honor.” Then no suffering will be too burdensome for you, but everything will be tolerable and light. This we see in many examples of the martyrs, how out of love for Christ they scorned all torment and pain. We read in particular about a rich citizen of Rome who lost much property, house and home, wife and child; but his heart retained its trust in Christ and said: “Even if they have robbed me of everything, they will not take my Christ from me.” Thus, you see, his heart was inflamed with love for Christ and clung to Him in heaven above. Therefore he did not care that he had to forfeit everything on earth. He surely could not have done this if love for Christ had not impelled him.

Therefore when Christ was entrusting the ministry to Peter, He asked him three times whether he loved Him (John 21:15–17). For He knew and saw that **no one can be a true preacher or a Christian unless he loves Christ with heart and soul.** But how can a person have such love for Christ unless he first believes firmly that he has everything in Him, unless he is convinced beyond a doubt that Christ is his Treasure and Savior, his Life and Comfort? When this conviction is rooted in the heart, love will flow and follow in its wake. And where there is that love, it cannot rest or be idle. It goes forth, preaches to, and teaches everyone. **It is eager to plant Christ in every heart and to bring everybody to Him.** On this it wagers and stakes whatever it can and must. Christ seeks to impress such love into the hearts of the disciples by means of these kind words. Therefore He says: “Well, as My farewell gift I leave you forgiveness of sins, heaven, and the Father’s favor and grace. **In Me you have all you desire. Just see that you believe this sincerely. Then you will indeed love Me and observe everything I have told you.**”

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. 145–148). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.