**15 Martin Luther Quotes on the Sufficiency of Scripture**

**95 Martin Luther Quotes of Note, Part 1**

Martin Luther is famous for his Ninety-Five Theses which launched the Reformation. So, I thought I would collate my favorite 95 Martin Luther quotes from my latest book: [*Counseling Under the Cross: How Martin Luther Applied the Gospel to Daily Life*](http://www.rpmministries.org/writing/counseling-under-the-cross/).

Since 95 quotes would make for a very long blog, I’m breaking these down into several blog posts. Here’s post number one…with quotes focused on Martin Luther and his trust in Scripture.

**Martin Luther and *Sola Scriptura*: By Scripture Alone!**

Church historians call it *sola Scriptura*: by Scripture alone. Biblical counselors call it *sufficiency of Scripture*—trusting in God’s Word for the care of souls.

Luther always pointed people to the Word of God as their ultimate hope and primary help in suffering, sin, and sanctification. The Scriptures, for Luther, are sufficient to comfort the hurting, confront the sinning, and cheer the saint.

**Preach the Gospel to Yourself Daily**

1. “You have the Apostle Paul who shows to you a garden, or paradise, which is full of comfort, when he says: ‘Whatever was written, was written for our instruction, so that through patience and the consolation of the Scriptures we might have hope’ (Romans 15:4). Here he attributes to *Holy Scripture the function of comforting*. *Who may dare to seek or ask for comfort anywhere else?*”[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. “Comfort yourself with the Word of God, *the pre-eminent consolation*.”[[2]](#endnote-2)
2. “It is thus very true that we shall find consolation *only through the Scriptures*, which in the days of evil call us to the contemplation of our blessings, either present or to come.”[[3]](#endnote-3)
3. “*Nothing helps more powerfully* against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts than occupying oneself with God’s Word, having conversations about it, and contemplating it.”[[4]](#endnote-4)
4. “I have learned by experience how one should act under temptation, namely, when any one is afflicted with sadness…. *Let him first* lay hold of the comfort of the divine Word.”[[5]](#endnote-5)
5. “Therefore, whenever any one is assailed by temptation of any sort whatever, *the very best that he can do in the case* is either to read something in the Holy Scriptures, or think about the Word of God, and apply it to his heart.”[[6]](#endnote-6)
6. “If you now attempt, in this spiritual conflict, to protect yourself by the help of man without the Word of God, you simply enter upon the conflict with that mighty spirit, the devil, naked and unprotected.” Such an endeavor would be worse than David against Goliath—without God’s supernatural power helping David. You may, therefore, if you so please, oppose your power to the might of the devil. It will then be very easily seen what an utterly unequal conflict it is, if one does not have at hand *in the beginning the Word of God*.”[[7]](#endnote-7)
7. “Christ heals people *by means of his precious Word*, as he also declares in the 50th chapter of Isaiah (verse 4): ‘The Lord hath given me a learned tongue, that I should know how to speak a word in season to the weary.’ St. Paul also teaches likewise, in Romans xv 14, that we should obtain and strengthen hope from the comfort of the Holy Scriptures, which the devil endeavors to tear out of people’s hearts in times of temptations. Accordingly, as *there is no better nor more powerful remedy* in temptations than to diligently read and heed the Word of God.”[[8]](#endnote-8)
8. “Let us learn, therefore, in great and horrible terrors, when our conscience feels nothing but sin and judges that God is angry with us, and that Christ has turned His face from us, not to follow the sense and feeling of our own heart, *but to stick to the Word of God*.”[[9]](#endnote-9)

**Preach the Gospel to One Another Daily**

1. “No man should be alone when he opposes Satan. The church *and the ministry of the Word* were instituted for this purpose, that hands may be joined together and one may help another. If the prayer of one doesn’t help, the prayer of another will.”[[10]](#endnote-10)
2. “Those who are tempted by doubt and despair I should console in this fashion. First, by warning them to beware of solitude and *to converse constantly with others about the Psalms and Scriptures*.”[[11]](#endnote-11)
3. “For one has to instruct consciences that the comfort of the gospel is directed to each individual particularly; therefore, as you people who understand these matters know, the gospel has to be applied through the Word to each individual particularly, so that each individual in his conscience is tossed about by the questions whether this great grace, which Christ offers to all men, belongs to him too.”[[12]](#endnote-12)
4. “So we also *labor by the Word of God* that we may set at liberty those that are entangled, and bring them to the pure doctrine of faith, and hold them there.”[[13]](#endnote-13)

**Scripture for the Soul, Medicine for the Body**

Luther’s doctrine of sufficiency was robust enough to make room for the appropriate use of medication.

1. “Accordingly a physician is our Lord God’s mender of the body, as we theologians are his healers of the spirit; we are to restore what the devil has damaged. So a physician administers *theriaca* (an antidote for poison) when Satan gives poison. Healing comes from the application of nature to the creature . . . . It’s our Lord God who created all things, and they are good. Wherefore it’s permissible to use medicine, for it is a creature of God. Thus I replied to Hohndorf, who inquired of me when he heard from Karlstadt that it’s not permissible to make use of medicine. I said to him, ‘Do you eat when you’re hungry?’”[[14]](#endnote-14)

On the other hand, when convinced that an issue was spiritual in nature, Luther did not hesitate to call for spiritual, rather than medicinal cures. Scripture is God’s prescription, God’s choice medicine, for soul sickness. Luther writes to his friend John Agricola concerning John’s wife:

1. “Her illness is, as you see, rather of the mind than of the body. I am comforting her as much as I can, with my knowledge. In a word, her disease is not for the apothecaries (as they call them), nor is it to be treated with the salves of Hippocrates, but by constantly *applying plasters of Scripture and the Word of God*. For what has conscience to do with Hippocrates? Therefore, I would dissuade you from the use of medicine and advise the power of God’s Word.”[[15]](#endnote-15)

**Join the Conversation**

These are just a summary of many more Luther quotes on the sufficiency of Scripture from *Counseling Under the Cross*.

Of these 15 quotes, which ones resonate the most with you?

How could Luther’s confidence in God’s Word make a difference in your trust in God’s Word for your life and ministry?

**Endnotes**

1. Luther, *LW*, Vol. 49, p. 16. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Tappert, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*,p. 63, emphasis added. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Luther, *LW*, Vol. 42, p. 124. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Luther, *The Large Catechism*, p. 187, in Krey, *Luther’s Spirituality*. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Nebe, *Luther As Spiritual Adviser*, pp. 175-176. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Nebe, *Luther As Spiritual Adviser*, p. 178. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, pp. 179-180. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Nebe, *Luther As Spiritual Adviser*, p. 179. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 333, 126. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Luther, *LW*, Vol. 54, p. 78. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Tappert, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*,p. 117. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Luther, LW, Vol. 50, p. 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 333, 126. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Luther, *LW*, Vol. 54, pp. 53-54. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Smith, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther*, p. 402. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)