**15 Martin Luther Quotes on Growing in Grace**

**95 Martin Luther Quotes of Note, Part 5**

**A Word from Bob:** This article originally appeared as Part 5 of a six-part blog series on *95 Martin Luther Quotes of Note*.

For Part 1, visit: [*15 Martin Luther Quotes on the Sufficiency of Scripture*](http://bit.ly/15LutherSuf).

For Part 2, visit: [*15 Martin Luther Quotes on Comforting the Suffering*](http://bit.ly/15LutherComfort).

For Part 3, visit: [*15 Martin Luther Quotes on Looking at Life Through the Lens of the Cross*](http://bit.ly/15LutherCross).

For Part 4, visit: [*15 Martin Luther Quotes on Preaching the Gospel to Ourselves*](http://bit.ly/15LutherGospel).

**95 Theses and 95 Quotes**

Martin Luther is famous for his Ninety-Five Theses which launched the Reformation. So, I’m collating my favorite 95 Martin Luther quotes from my 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 dividing these quotes into several blog posts. Here’s post number five…with quotes focused on *Growing in Grace*.

**Speaking Gospel Truth in Love to One Another**

Martin Luther knew that we grow in Christ through the *mutual ministry of the Body of Christ* (Ephesians 4:15-16). That’s why, during times of spiritual temptation, Luther counsels us toward spiritual conversations. When we doubt God’s forgiveness, we must cling to gospel reminders from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. The voice and words of “brethren and fellow Christians are to be heard and believed as the word and voice of God himself, as though God were speaking to them.”[[1]](#endnote-1)
2. “I beseech you by the Lord Christ, as earnestly as I can, not to depend upon yourself and your own thoughts, but to hear the brother in Christ who now speaks to you.”[[2]](#endnote-2)
3. “When we have laid bare our conscience to our brother and privately make known to him the evil that lurked within, we receive from our brother’s lips the word of comfort spoken by God himself. And if we accept this in faith, we find peace in the mercy of God speaking to us through our brother.”[[3]](#endnote-3)
4. “Be contented, therefore, and of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. Depend boldly upon this; turn not to your own thoughts, but listen only to that which your pastors and preachers repeat to you out of God’s Word. Do not despise their word and comfort; for it is Christ himself who speaks to you through them.”[[4]](#endnote-4)

**Reminding Each Other of Who Christ Is and Who We Are in Christ**

For Luther, the greatest threat to empowered Christian living was a darkened understanding of Christ and our identity in Christ. Luther understood this battle in his own life. Speaking of Galatians 3:1 and Satan’s bewitching deceptions, Luther told his students:

1. “To tell the truth, he sometimes assails me so mightily and oppresses me with such heavy cogitations, that he utterly shadows my Savior Christ from me and, in a manner, takes Him out of my sight.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

So how do we minister to one another and counter the lying, condemning schemes of Satan?

1. “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…. The Scripture does not set forth Christ as an accuser, a judge, or a tempter, but as a reconciler, a mediator, a comforter, and a throne of grace”[[6]](#endnote-6)

Nothing was more important to Luther than reminding God’s children to remind themselves that they were indeed God’s children. Speaking of Galatians 1:4 (“Who gave himself for our sins”), Luther challenges us to personalize the gospel:

1. “But weigh diligently every word of Paul, and specially mark well this pronoun, **‘our.’** You may easily believe that Christ the Son of God was given for the sins of Peter, of Paul, and of other saints, whom we account to have been worthy of this grace; but it is a very hard thing that you who judge yourself unworthy of this grace should from your heart say and believe that Christ was given for your own invincible, infinite, and horrible sins.”[[7]](#endnote-7)
2. “Labor diligently when your conscience is thoroughly afraid with the remembrance of your sins past, and the devil assails you with great violence, going about to overwhelm you with heaps, floods, and whole seas of sins, to terrify you and to drive you to despair; that then I say, you may be able to say with sure confidence: Christ the Son of God was given, not for the righteous and holy, but for the unrighteous and sinners.”[[8]](#endnote-8)
3. “Let us therefore arm ourselves with these and like verses of the Holy Scriptures, that we may be able to answer the devil (accusing us, and saying: You are a sinner, and therefore you are damned) in this sort: ‘Christ has given Himself for my sins; therefore, Satan, you shall not prevail against me when you go about to terrify me in setting forth the greatness of my sins, and so to bring me into heaviness, distrust, despair, hatred, contempt and blaspheming of God. As often as you object that I am a sinner, you call me to remembrance of the benefit of Christ my Redeemer, upon whose shoulders, and not upon mine, lie all my sins; for ‘the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,’ and ‘for the transgression of people was he stricken’ (Isaiah 53:6, 8). Wherefore, when you say I am a sinner, you do not terrify me, but comfort me above measure.’”[[9]](#endnote-9)

**Faith Active in Love: Gospel Indicatives *AND* Gospel Imperatives**

So, is Luther simply saying that we just rest in what Christ has done for us and in our identity in Christ (gospel indicatives)? Is he saying that we have no calling from God to grow in grace and to serve Christ and others? Not at all. To the gospel indicatives, Luther adds the gospel imperatives. Our faith is to be active in love for God and others. Our new relationship to God through Christ motivates and empowers us to love like Christ.

Before explaining the role of works of love, Luther ensured that people understood the relationship between faith and works:

1. “The apple makes not the tree, but the tree makes the apples. So faith first makes the person who afterwards brings forth works…. Christians are not made righteous by doing righteous things, but being made righteous by faith in Christ, they do righteous things.”[[10]](#endnote-10) And, “We must first of all to believe, and so through faith to perform the law. We must first receive the Holy Ghost, through whom we, being enlightened and made new creatures, begin to do the law, that is to say, to love God and our neighbor.”[[11]](#endnote-11)

Luther believed that because Christ already changed us (regeneration and redemption), our lives should progressively change:

1. “When I have Christian righteousness reigning in my heart, I descend from heaven as the rain makes fruitful the earth; that is to say, *I do good works*, how and wheresoever the occasion arises. If I am a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the brokenhearted, and I administer the sacraments. If I am a householder, I govern my house and family well, and in the fear of God. If I am a servant, I do my master’s business faithfully. To conclude, whoever is assuredly persuaded that Christ alone is his righteousness, does not only cheerfully and gladly work well in his vocation, but also submits himself through love to the rulers and to their laws…”[[12]](#endnote-12)
2. “Therefore you must by all means put off the old man and cast him far from you… For glorying in the grace of God and the forgiveness of sin is inconsistent with following sin—remaining in the former old un-Christian life and walking in error and deceitful lusts.”[[13]](#endnote-13)

For Luther, and for Paul in Galatians 5:6, the work of faith is love:

1. “Paul therefore in this verse sets forth the whole life of a Christian, namely, that inwardly it consists in faith towards God, and outwardly in charity and good works towards our neighbor.”[[14]](#endnote-14)

What does it mean to be godly and to express our faith in God active in love for others? In a table talk recorded in 1533, Luther succinctly captured the relationship between faith and love:

1. “Concerning the verse in Galatians 5:6, ‘faith working through love,’ we also say that faith doesn’t exist without works. However, Paul’s view is this: Faith is active in love, that is, that faith justifies which expresses itself in acts…. Faith comes first and then love follows.” Luther concluded with this summary: “But this, he says, is what counts: ‘Believe in me and be godly.’”[[15]](#endnote-15)
2. “Thus, Christians, even if completely free, become willing servants once again in order to help the neighbor, walking alongside and dealing with each neighbor the way God through Christ dealt with them—and all for nothing, looking for nothing in return except God’s good pleasure.”[[16]](#endnote-16)

**Join the Conversation**

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

**Endnotes**

1. Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, pp. 181-182. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Nebe, *Luther as Spiritual Advisor*, p. 217. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, p. 201. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Nebe, *Luther as Spiritual Advisor*, p. 215. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 125. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 126. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 38. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 38-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 163. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 162-163. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. 12Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Luther, *LW*, Vol. 8, p. 308. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 335. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Luther, *LW*, Vol. 54, p. 74. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, p. 87, in Krey, *Luther’s Spirituality*. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)