

# A History of the Life and Actions of the Very Reverend Dr. Martin Luther - Part 2

by Philip Melancthon

---

*Philip Melancthon's sermon reflects on the life and legacy of Martin Luther, emphasizing the importance of his teachings and the need for the church to uphold these truths in the face of challenges.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5, Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 4:7

**Topics:** "Church History", "Faith Leaders"

---

## Description

Philip Melancthon delivers a heartfelt address to the students at the University of Wittenburg on the death of Martin Luther, emphasizing Luther's role in revealing the true doctrine of the Son of God. Melancthon recounts Luther's final moments, his prayerful commendation to God, and his significant impact on the Church. He praises Luther's unwavering faith, dedication to prayer, and profound understanding of the Gospel, highlighting his pivotal role in clarifying essential truths and guiding the Church through turbulent times.

---

## Transcript

Philip Melancthon,

to the Students in The University of Wittenburg,

on the death of Luther, 1546

On our assembling to hear the Epistle of

Paul to the Romans, at nine o'clock in the forenoon, Dr. Philip Melancthon

publicly recited to us the following address; saying at the same time, that he

was induced to do so by the suggestion of some learned professors, and that we

being in possession of the true state of things, might be prepared to reject

any incorrect statements which he foresaw would be in circulation after

Luther's death.

Most Noble Youths,

We have undertaken as you know, to deliver a critical exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, wherein is contained the true doctrine of the Son of God, which our Heavenly Father has in peculiar mercy, laid open to us, at this time, through our revered Father and Preceptor, Dr. Martin Luther.

But now alas! so deep a shade of sorrow is cast over these writings, which but augment my grief, that I know not whether I shall be able hereafter to pursue the study of them in our college. I am anxious however, at the request of my friends of the University, and that you may have a right understanding of the circumstances of Luther's death, to communicate to you the following particulars, in order that you may not even entertain, much less circulate, reports which, as is so often the case, will probably now be current in society.

On the 17th of February, our Master and Teacher, a little before supper, was attacked by his usual complaint to which I remember he had occasionally been subject. After supper a recurrence of the disorder took place, under the influence of which he requested permission to withdraw into an adjoining room, where he lay for nearly two hours, until his sufferings increased. Doctor Jonas sleeping in the same room with him, Doctor Martin called him hastily, requesting him to rise and give orders that Ambrosius, the servant who attended on the children, should make his private apartment warm: and having retired into it, Albert, the illustrious Count of Mansfield, with his Countess, and many others, entered, the names of whom for brevity's sake, we omit. At length when he found that the close of his life was approaching, before four o'clock on the following day, the 18th of February, he commended himself to God in the following prayer:-

(Following given in German)

"My heavenly Father, eternal and merciful God ! Thou has revealed unto me Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have learned--whom I have proclaimed to be my Lord--whom I love and whom I honour, as my precious Saviour and Redeemer,--whom the ungodly persecute, dishonour, and blaspheme; take Thou my soul unto Thyself." Three times he expressed these words.

(Following in Latin)

"Into Thy hands I commit my spirit, Thou hast redeemed me, O God of Truth !"

(Following in German)

"And God so loved the world," &C.

Amid these prayers occasionally repeated, he was called to the one eternal assembly and to everlasting bliss, in which he is now enjoying the presence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with that of all the Prophets and Apostles.

Alas, for the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! Our Elijah is no more, he who guided and governed the Church in this decrepitude of the world. Human sagacity could not have discovered the doctrines of the Remission of Sins, and of Faith in the Son of God; but He has been pleased to reveal them to us through the medium of this, His servant, whom also we see that God has taken unto himself.

Let us therefore cherish his memory with that of the peculiar doctrine which he delivered to us, and let us be the more humbled in our spirits when we contemplate the great calamities and the mighty revolutions which will probably follow this event.

I beseech Thee, O Son of God! Thou who wast crucified for us, and art now the risen Emmanuel, that Thou wilt govern, preserve, and defend Thy Church. Amen.

ELEGY ON THE DEATH

OF THE REV. MARTIN LUTHER, D.D.,

FROM THE LATIN OF  
PHILIP MELANCTHON.

Since Luther is no more, his cherished name  
Shall from our hearts, a deathless tribute claim.  
We hailed him minister of Christ, the Lord,  
Jesus he preached, with faith, and taught his word.  
Luther is dead! and now the church in tears  
A mourner clothed in saddest garb appears.  
She weeps her loved preceptor now no more,  
Honoured and dear, a father's name he bore.  
Fallen on the field the mighty chieftain lies,  
And Israel's voice proclaims his obsequies.  
Then let us bathe In tears the muse's lay  
And publish forth our sorrows to the day  
It thus becomes us well-to weep and mourn  
Whilst, orphans in our grief, we dress affection's urn.

A FUNERAL ORATION

ON THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER,  
PRONOUNCED AT Wittenberg,  
by Philip Melancthon

Although amid this universal  
grief, my voice is impeded by sorrow and by tears, yet since in so large an  
assembly, we are called upon for some expression of our feelings; let it not  
be after the manner of the heathen, a declamation in praise of the departed  
one, but rather a commemoration in the audience of those now present of the  
wonderful pilotage of the church in all her perils; that we may call to mind  
on what account it behooves us to mourn, what purposes we should ourselves

most diligently pursue, and in what manner we should order our lives. For although irreligious men conceive that the interests of this world are borne along in a giddy tide of confusion and uncertainty, yet, reassured as we are by the many indubitable testimonies of God, we make a wide distinction between the church and the profane multitude, and we believe that she is indeed governed and upheld by the power of God: we clearly discern his polity—we acknowledge the true helmsmen, and we watch their course,—we choose also for ourselves, befitting leaders and teachers whom we devotedly follow and revere. On these so weighty matters, it is necessary both to think and to speak, as often as mention is made of that revered man Dr. Martin Luther, our beloved father and teacher; and whilst he has been the object of most cruel hatred to many, let us who know that he was a divinely inspired minister of the gospel, regard his memory with love and esteem, and let us gather such testimonies as prove that his teaching was by no means a blind dissemination of seditious opinions, as the Epicureans give out, but a demonstration of the will and of the true worship of God, an unfolding of the sacred records and a declaration of the word of God, that is of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In orations such as the present, much is usually said of the individual excellencies of those whom we wish to commend; passing however, in silence over this part of my theme, it is my design to dwell principally on that main point, the call to gospel ministry; and here we may unite in opinion with all just thinkers, that if Luther has illustrated a wholesome and necessary doctrine in the church, we ought to return thanks unto God, that He has been pleased to raise him up to this work, whilst his personal labours, his faith, his constancy, and his other virtues are to be commended, and his memory to be held most dear by all good men. Let this therefore be the beginning, of our oration.

The Son of God, as Paul says, sits on the right hand of the Eternal Father, and gives gifts unto men; these gifts are the voice of the Gospel and of the Holy Spirit, with which, as He imparts them, He inspires Prophets, Apostles, Pastors and Teachers, and selects them from this our assembly, that is to say, from those who are yet in the rudiments of divine knowledge, who read, who hear, and who love the prophetic and apostolic writings; nor does he often call to this warfare those who are in the exercise of established power, but it even pleases him to wage war on these very men through leaders chosen from other ranks. It is cheering and instructive to take a retrospect of the church throughout all past ages, and to contemplate the goodness of God who has sent out from its bosom gifted ministers in so unbroken a series, that as the first of these have passed away, others have pressed closely in their footsteps.

The line of the first fathers is well worthy of our consideration. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methusalem, Noe, Sem, and Abraham, who was raised up to be a fellow-helper of Sem and his associate in the all-important work of spreading true religion; and although at this time Sem was still dwelling in the neighbourhood of Sodom, the people had lost the recollection both of his precepts and those of Noe, and were altogether abandoned to the worship of idols. To Abraham succeeded law and Jacob; next Joseph\_who kindled the light of truth throughout all Egypt, at that time the most flourishing kingdom in the world. After these, we read of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David; then Elisha, of whose ministry the prophet Isaiah was a partaker; then Esdras, Onias, and in succession the Maccabees, Simeon, Zacharias, and John the Baptist: and lastly, Christ and His Apostles. It is delightful to behold this unbroken chain, which is a clear testimony to the presence of God in his church.

After the Apostles followed a band, which although somewhat weaker, was

nevertheless honoured with the blessing of God. Polycarp, Irenaeus, Gregory the Niocaesarien, Basilius, Augustinus, Prosper, Maximus, Hugo, Bernardus, Taulerus, and others; and although this later age has become more corrupt, yet God has always preserved a remnant of the faithful, whilst it is evident that the light of the gospel has now been peculiarly manifested through the preaching of Luther.

He is therefore to be numbered with that blessed company, the excellent of the earth, whom God has sent forth for the gathering together and the building up of his church, and whom we truly recognize as ornaments of the human race. Solon, Themistocles, Scipio, Augustus, and others were indeed great men, who founded, states, or ruled over vast empires; yet do they rank far below our spiritual leaders, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Paul and Luther.

It is also well that we should regard the grand disputations which have existed in the church, and in connection with this subject let us look at those themes of deep and high import which have been brought to light by Luther, and which evince that the tenor of his life was worthy of our highest approbation. It is true that many exclaim "the church is in confusion," saying that inextricable controversies are engendered in it; to these I answer, such is the mode of divine Government, for when the Holy Spirit convicts the world, dissensions arise through the pertinacity of the wicked; and the guilt is on those who refuse to listen to the Son of God, and of whom our Heavenly Father says, "Hear Him."

That Luther illustrated the essential truths of the Gospel is manifest, as the deepest shades had previously veiled its doctrines, in dispersing these he clearly proved to us the nature of sincere repentance, he showed us in whom we must seek refuge, and what is the sure consolation of the mind that trembles under a sense of the wrath of God. He elucidated the doctrine of Paul which

says, that man is justified by faith; he showed the difference between the Law and the Gospel, between Spiritual righteousness and the Moral law; he pointed out the nature of true prayer, and he called back the church universal from that heathen madness which teaches that God, is to be invoked even when the mind, oppressed with metaphysical doubts, is flying far from Him: he enforced on us the conviction that prayer is to be made in faith, and in a good conscience, and he led us to the one Mediator, the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the Eternal Father, and interceding for us; not to those images and departed mortals, to whom the ungodly world, with awful infatuation, is wont to perform its devotions. He also pointed out other sacred duties which are acceptable to God, whilst he was himself careful to adorn and to preserve inviolate the institutions of civil life as no preceding writers had done; he also drew a line of distinction between works necessary to be performed, and the puerile observances of human ceremonies, including there rights and established laws which impede the offering of the heart to God. In order that this heavenly teaching might be transmitted unimpaired to posterity, he translated the prophetic and apostolic writings into German, which work he executed with such perspicuity, that this version alone imparts more light to the mind of the reader, than the perusal of many commentaries would do. To this he added various expositions which, as Erasmus was accustomed to say, were far superior to any others then extant; and as it is related of the builders of Jerusalem, that they wrought with one hand and held the sword in the other, so was he at the same time contending with the enemies of truth, and composing expositions fraught with divine philosophy; whilst by his pious counsels he strengthened the minds of many.

Since the mystery of godliness lies far beyond the reach of human vision, as for instance, the doctrines of Faith, and of the Remission of Sins, we are

constrained to acknowledge that Luther was taught of God; and how many of us have witnessed there wrestlings in which he was himself instructed, and by which we must be convinced that through faith alone we also can be heard and accepted of God. Therefore shall His people to all eternity celebrate the blessings which He has conferred on the church by this His servant: first they will offer up thanksgivings to God, then they will acknowledge that they owe much to the labours of this our friend and brother; although the irreligious who deride the church in general, say that these good deeds are but idle pastime or intoxicating madness.

Let it not be said that endless disputations have been raised, or that the apple of discord has been thrown by the church, as some falsely assert; nor have the enigmas of the Sphynx been propounded by her, for to men of sense and piety who can give a candid judgment, it is by no means difficult on comparing opinions, to distinguish those which accord from those which do not accord with heavenly doctrine; and indeed there is no doubt that in these controversies we discover the revelation of Himself. For since it has pleased God to manifest Himself and His holy will in prophetic and apostolic writ, in which he has revealed himself, we cannot suppose that His word is ambiguous like the leaves of the Sybil,

"Which flit abroad, the sport of playful winds."

Others however, without any evil design, have complained that Luther was unduly severe; I do not myself offer an opinion on this subject, but answer I them in the words of Erasmus: "God has administered to us of the present age, a bitter draught, on account of our abounding infirmities." But when he is pleased to raise up such an instrument against the shameless and insolent enemies of truth, as when the Lord said to Jeremiah, "Behold I have given my words into thy mouth, that thou shouldest destroy and build up," and when it

is His pleasure to set as it were, His Gorgons in array against them, then it is a vain thing that they should expostulate with Him; for He governs His church not by human counsels, neither truly are His ways our ways. It is however, no uncommon thing for minds of limited scope to undervalue the more powerful energies with which others may be endowed, whether directed to good or evil purposes; thus it was with emotion that Aristides beheld Themistocles undertaking and bringing to a happy issue, vast enterprises; and although he rejoiced in the felicity of the state, he was earnest to arrest that ardent spirit in its career.

Nor do I deny that strong and lively impulse often leads astray, since none who are subject to the infirmities of our nature, are without fault. If however, there be any living of whom we may say as the ancients did of Hercules, Cimon and others, 'Unadorned indeed, but in all important points a good man,' then was Luther a just man, and his name of good report; for in the church, if, as the apostle Paul says, "he war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience," then he pleases God and is to be revered by us. And such we know Luther to have been, for whilst he steadfastly maintained sound doctrine he preserved the integrity of his own conscience: and who that has known him can be ignorant with what large benevolence he was endowed, or forget his suavity in the intercourse of private life, and how far removed he was from contention and strife, whilst to all his actions he imparted the gravity that became his character, as is depicted in the following passage; "His manner was dignified, and his discourse familiar;" or rather, all with him was in accordance with the language of Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report;" so that the asperity of which we have spoken, appears to have arisen from the love of truth, not from a factious spirit, or from

bitterness of feeling: of these things both we and many others have been witnesses. But if I were to undertake an eulogium on the remaining points of Luther's life, a life which until the age of 63 was absorbed in subjects of the highest interest, and was passed in the pursuit of piety and of all that is noble and good, in what lofty strains of eloquence might I not indulge. His was a mind in which we never traced the inroads of wandering lusts; no seditious counsels held their seat there, on the contrary he rather advocated the laying down of arms, as he was unwilling to mingle with the interests of the church, schemes for the aggrandizement either of himself or his friends. Indeed, I esteem his wisdom and his virtue at so high a price as to feel assured that human efforts alone could never have attained to them. Thus it is essential that spirits bold, lofty, and ardent, such as every thing proves Luther's to have been, should be restrained by a power from on high. And now what shall I say of his other virtues? I have myself often surprised him, when with weeping he has been engaged in offering up prayers for the whole church. He devoted almost daily, a portion of time to the repetition of certain psalms with which amid his sighs and tears, he mingled his prayers; and he often said that he felt indignant against those who through slothfulness of spirit, or on account of wordly occupations, say that the prayer of a single sigh is enough. He considered therefore, that forms of prayer are prescribed to us by divine counsel, and that a perusal of them animates our minds even as our voices acknowledge the God whom we worship. And often when weighty deliberations have arisen on the danger of the state, we have seen him endowed with a mighty potency of soul, unmoved by fear and unsubdued by terror, for he leaned on that sacred anchor which is the power of God; nor did he allow his faith therein to be shaken. He was also distinguished for the acuteness of his perceptions, as by his own

independent judgment he could readily perceive the course to be pursued in cases of difficulty. Nor was he as many think, negligent of the public weal, or inadvertent to the interests of others; on the contrary he could fully appreciate the welfare of the community, whilst he most sagaciously perceived the sentiments and wishes of those with whom he mingled in social life. And although the genius of his mind was of a lively order, he read with avidity ecclesiastical writings as well as history in general, from which, with a peculiar dexterity, he derived precedents adapted to the present occasion. Of his eloquence we possess enduring monuments, for in this science he undoubtedly equalled those to whom the highest palm in oratory has been conceded. We do then for our own sakes, justly mourn that such a man, endowed with the loftiest grade of intellect, instructed in wisdom, matured by long experience, adorned with many excellent and heroic virtues, and chosen by God for the building up of his church; that he who has embraced us all with a father's love, should have been thus called away from our earthly fellowship. For we are like orphans deprived of an excellent and faithful parent; but whilst we bow to the will of God, let us not in the memory of our friend allow his virtues, and the benefits which we have derived from his society to perish from amongst us. Let us rather bid him joy that he is now participating in sweet and unrestrained communion with God, and with his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Prophets and Apostles; which fellowship he ever sought and waited for through faith in the Son of God. In that blessed state he now receives the approval of God on the labours which he here sustained in the propagation of the gospel, with the testimony also of the Church universal in heaven; there, set free from the shackles of mortality as from a prison, and having joined that company which is perfected in wisdom, he now sees, not as in a glass darkly, the essential character of God, the union of the two

natures in His Son, and the whole assembly of the gathered and redeemed church; whilst those divine real ties which he here knew but in part, which he briefly demonstrated, and which in faith he contemplated, he now beholds with open face, and moved with ecstatic joy, in all the ardour of his soul he gives God thanks for his unspeakable gift. He learns why the Son of God is called the Word, and the likeness of the Eternal Father; and in what way Holy Spirit is the bond of mutual love, not only between the Eternal Father and the Son, but also between them and the Church. He had learned whilst here on earth which be the first principles of the oracles of God and often did he most wisely and weightily descant on these highest themes; on the distinction between true and false prayer, and on the knowledge of God and of divine manifestations; also on distinguishing the true God from false deities.

There are many in this assembly, who in times past, have heard him thus express himself, "You shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and [de]scending upon the Son of Man." Thus he delighted first to instill into the minds of his hearers this most full consolation, which declares that heaven is opened, that is to say, that there is a way made for us to God, that the barrier of divine wrath is removed as we flee for refuge to his Son; that God holds near communion with us, and that those who seek him in prayer are received, governed and kept by him. Luther admonished us that this divine promise, which infidels declare to be fabulous, is and must be opposed to human doubts, and to those fears which deter diffident minds from venturing to call upon God, or to put their trust in him; for he said that the angels ascending and descending on the body of Christ, are the ministers of the gospel who with Christ for their leader, first ascend to God and receive from him the gifts of the Gospel, and of the Holy Spirit, and afterwards descend, that is to fulfill their duty of teaching amongst men. He also added

this interpretation, that those heavenly spirits themselves, whom we usually call angels, beholding the Son are enabled to comprehend and to rejoice in the mysterious union of the two natures, and as they are soldiers of their Lord in defense of His Church, so are they guided and governed as by the signal of His hand. Now is our departed friend himself a spectator of these most sublime visions, and as he once among the ministers of the Gospel, ascended and descended with Christ for his leader, so now he describes angels sent on embassies by their Lord, and enjoys in common with them, the absorbing contemplation of divine wisdom and of the works of God.

Let us call to mind with what delight he has recited to us the polity, the purposes, the dangers, and the deliverances of the prophets, and with what erudition he was wont to trace the history of the church in all ages; thus it is evident that his heart glowed with no common emotion when speaking of those favoured servants of the Lord. The spirits of these he now embraces, with delight he listens to their living words, and with them he speaks face to face, whilst they with transport hail him as their fellow, and with one heart and one voice give thanks unto God for having thus gathered and preserved his church.

Therefore we doubt not that Luther is happy: we do indeed, mourn our bereavement, and whilst we bow to the fiat which has called him hence, we know it to be the will of God that we retain in our memories the virtues and the benefactions of this his servant.

Let us now be faithful to our trust. We must acknowledge that he was a hallowed instrument of God. Let us then devotedly embrace his doctrines, and strive to resemble him in those graces which are essential to our more humble walk, the fear of God, faith and fervency in prayer, soundness in ministry, purity, vigilance in avoiding seditious counsels, and an ardent thirst for

knowledge. And as we are called upon to turn our thoughts with intentness and frequency towards those leaders in the church whose histories have been transmitted to us, as Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Paul, so let us often dwell on the doctrine and experience of Luther. Let us now add the tribute of thanksgiving and prayers which are due from this assembly, and let us all unite in this devotion.

"We give thanks unto Thee, oh omnipotent God! the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and Founder of Thy church, with Thy co-eternal Son our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, wise, good, merciful, a true Judge, powerful and uncontrolled; in that Thou art by Thy dear Son, gathering unto Thyself an inheritance from amongst the human race, and art preserving the ministry of Thy gospel, for which Thou hast at this time raised up Luther. We beseech Thee that thou wilt henceforth sustain and govern thy church, and that thou wilt seal in us the true doctrine, as Isaiah prayed for his disciples. Deign Thou to quicken our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may offer prayer acceptably unto Thee, and that we may order our lives in Thy fear."

In conclusion, as we are aware that the loss from amongst us of those who have directed us in our earthly course, often proves to survivors, the watchword of impending calamities: I would myself, with all to whom is committed the gift of teaching, implore you to consider to what the world now stands exposed. On the one hand the Turks are ravaging, on the other contending parties threaten us with a civil war; every where indeed, we trace the empire of misrule; and now that the enemies of the church no longer fear the power of Luther, they will doubtless with the greater daring, lay waste the doctrine which has been delivered to us by divine authority.

That God may avert these evils, let us be more diligent in regulating our lives and directing our pursuits, and let us ever hold this sentiment fixed in

our minds, so that whilst we retain, hear, learn, and love the pure truths of the Gospel, we may ourselves constitute the house and church of God: as the Son of God himself says, "If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Encouraged by this cheering promise of our blessed Lord, let us incite one another to the acquiring of heavenly wisdom, and let us not forget that human interests and human institutions are to be respected for the sake of his church. Let us realize to our minds, that future eternity to which God has called us, who indeed has not in vain revealed Himself to us by such illustrious testimonies, neither has he sent his Son in vain, but He truly loves and preserves those who magnify His grace.

Amen.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/philip-melancthon/a-history-of-the-life-and-actions-of-the-very-reverend-dr-martin-luther-part-2/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**