

Church History - Lutheranism After Luther

by David Guzik

The legacy of the Reformation, particularly Lutheranism, is characterized by a reformation of ideas and thinking rather than people, and the rise of Pietism as a movement emphasizing personal devotion and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Duration: 28:43

Scripture: Romans 6:16, Ephesians 1:4

Topics: "Church Governance", "Theological Debates"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that no one man leads their church, but rather it is a body of elders. However, the speaker acknowledges that within the congregation, there is usually one person who holds significant respect and influence, effectively leading the congregation. The same principle applies to a board, where one person sets the tone and influence. The sermon also touches on theological debates, such as the concepts of God's sovereignty and human free will, as well as differing beliefs on the real presence of Christ in communion.

Transcript

What we want to talk about today is the legacy of the Reformation. What happened after this time of Reformation? What was Lutheranism like after Martin Luther? Well, the man who succeeded Martin Luther as the leader of the Lutheran movement was a man named Philip Melancthon. He was a German man who was an associate.

He was like Martin Luther's chief lieutenant. You know, number one guy beside Martin Luther. Melancthon seemed like a natural choice to succeed Luther.

I mean, it's not like they elected a president or something like that, but every movement has a leader. You understand that, don't you? Some people are kind of into the idea of a leaderless organization. We don't have any leader.

We don't have any head. It's just a group of people. No one man leads our, sometimes it's said in the church, no one man leads our church.

It's a body of elders. You know what? I'll tell you something. Every organization is led primarily by one guy.

Oh, no, no, no. In our form of church, it's a congregational church. No one man, it's a congregation.

No, I'm telling you, in that congregation, one man leads it. Because there's one guy there who, generally speaking, has such amount of respect from everybody else that when Brother Jones stands up and says, this is how I'm going to vote on this issue, 55% of the congregation goes with Brother Jones. You know what I mean? Brother Jones leads that congregation.

He's just, whatever, he leads it. The same thing on a board. No one man leads our organization.

It's a board. Well, I'll tell you what. There's one guy on that board who sets the tone, who sets the influence, who guides it.

I'm not saying that's a bad, it's not a bad thing at all. I think the only bad thing is being dishonest about it. You know, every organization is primarily led by one guy.

Now, it may not be the same guy every time. You know what I mean? I mean, different people may lead on different decisions, but when decisions are made, there's one person who leads the way and other people come around and join his team or this and that. But, you know, it's one thing.

So, who is going to be the unofficial head or the unofficial spokesman for the Lutheran movement? Well, Philip Melancthon was the logical choice because, again, he was number one assistant, so to speak, to Martin Luther. But a lot of people mistrusted Philip Melancthon and they thought that he was not consistent with Luther's ideals. A lot of this was because there were differences between Luther and Melancthon.

Some of them were doctrinal and some of them were in personality. Well, what were the doctrinal differences? Well, doctrinally, Luther was very strong on God's sovereignty and salvation. This may seem surprising to you, especially if you know what the Lutheran church is like today, but Martin Luther was more Calvinist than John Calvin was.

If you want to talk about God's sovereignty, if you want to talk about the place of God's election and human free will and stuff like that, Martin Luther was more Calvinistic than John Calvin. Martin Luther had, you've heard me mention this guy before, I don't know if you remember the name, Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus was a leader, a Christian leader, but also just kind of a leading thinker of that time.

And Luther and Erasmus had a running debate about God's sovereignty or human free will. Erasmus argued the human free will position and Luther wrote one of his most famous books as a response to Erasmus. And the book is titled, *The Bondage of the Will*.

And basically Luther's response, and it's fairly compelling, he goes, you talk about free will, that's a joke. You don't have free will. Now, not that Luther believed that we were robots, that God just kind of programmed to do whatever we want.

That's not what Luther was talking about. Luther says, you don't have a free will because you're in bondage to sin. You got a free will? Okay, stop sinning.

Show me your free will. Just stop sinning. You got a free will, right? Then just stop sinning.

What are you talking about, free will? Your will is sold as a slave under sin and the only freedom you have is when you submit to Jesus Christ and recognize his rulership and his ownership over everything. Well, I mean, obviously the book and the whole debate is much more complex than that, but it's a compelling

argument. Luther was very strong on the position of God's sovereignty and God's election.

Melanchthon retreated from that. Melanchthon emphasized more the human role and the human will of salvation. And he was much more a champion of the ideas of free will and such like that.

Melanchthon also ended up objecting to Luther's idea of the real presence of Christ in communion. And this is probably something that we should talk about. Okay, this was a big deal.

I mean, because what's the centerpiece of Roman Catholic theology? It's the Mass. I mean, communion is very important to Roman Catholics, right? I mean, they would say it's essential for your salvation to regularly take communion. You know that faithful, faithful, faithful Catholics receive communion every day.

They go to Mass every day. They receive communion every day. And this is essential to them.

Now, Luther knew the Catholics had the Mass wrong. But what is it? Okay, so there's all these different positions. The Roman Catholic position is called on the nature of the body and the blood.

What is the nature of the bread and the wine? You know, that's the question we're dealing with. The Roman Catholic position is called transubstantiation, right? We've used this word before. It takes the whole whiteboard to write that one.

Transubstantiation, which means that the bread and the wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Now, they say, well, it's not it materially, but it's spiritually. Spiritually, and they would say, what's more real, the material or the spiritual? The spiritual is more real.

So they say, that is what it really is. Now, I hope I'm getting this right because I'm doing this off the top of my head. Okay, Luther's position was called consubstantiation.

Luther's idea was that not that it actually becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but that Christ is really present in the bread and the wine. Do you understand the difference? Roman Catholics say the bread becomes the body of Christ. Luther says, no, no.

The bread's still bread, but Christ is in it. See the difference? It's not much of a difference, but it's not exactly what the Catholics say, right? Well, I think that's the third position. Is to look at the body, to look at the bread and the wine as pictures, or if you want to say symbols.

To say, no, the bread is still bread, and Christ is not actually present in the bread. Any more than Christ is actually present in, you know, this chair or in the car. But, it's a powerful picture of what Jesus Christ did for us, and we need to receive it as a visible picture of receiving Christ.

Now, this is what the Catholics believed. This is what Luther believed. This is, now, you know what? Again, I'm going to misstate something here.

Somebody who really knows this stuff, if they're listening to this tape, they're going to scream when I say this, because it's inaccurate, okay? But, this is more like what Calvin believed. The picture, the symbol thing. He didn't actually believe that, but it's more along those lines.

Just for ease of explanation, because I wouldn't even intend to spend a lot of time on this, this was a different kind of belief. Now, you wonder, how did the Lutherans and the Calvinists get along? You had this huge movement in Germany, presided over by Luther. You had this huge movement in Switzerland,

and in areas around there, presided over by Calvin and Zwingli, okay? And it would be very natural for them to get together and say, hey, I mean, do we agree? Let's see, you know, let's compare notes.

And so they got together, I believe the thing was called the Colloquy at Marburg. A city called Marburg. And they got together there, and it was Zwingli and it was Luther and Melancthon were there.

Calvin wasn't present at this, but Zwingli was. And they got together and they said, well, maybe it wasn't Zwingli, maybe it was a representative. I think it was Zwingli himself.

And they went through and they said, okay, what do you believe about justification by faith? Yeah! You know, what do you believe about the scriptures only? Yeah! What do you believe about this? And they went through and they were all together, oh, agreement, agreement, agreement. What do you believe about the communion? That's where it got tough. Because this was more of what Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation believed.

That it was pictures and symbols. You know, that's what the communion, precious pictures, precious, important pictures, important symbols. But that there wasn't anything sacred about the bread itself.

And the Roman Catholics would say, you better believe that bread is sacred. It is the actual body of Christ. The Lutherans would say, you better believe that bread is sacred.

Christ is present in the bread. There you go. What is it? Well, this, the whole colloquy at Marburg, almost blew, well, it did blow up over this one issue.

To exaggerate a little bit, Luther went nuts. Luther couldn't believe it. He, he, he, he called the Swiss Calvinists, he called Zwingli and the Swiss Calvinists, said that they were of another spirit because they disagreed on this issue.

They said that, that, you know, they were sitting at tables, you know, discussing this, and it was a velvet table, and Luther kept writing in the velvet with his finger in Latin, this is my body, this is my body. Because that was the scripture he stood on, you know, that Jesus said, this is my body, which, by the way, is the scripture that the Roman Catholics stand on. And, and they left with a lot of bitterness from the colloquy at Marburg because of division on this specific issue.

Well, what do you do with that? You say, you know, it was a big deal. Now, you know what's fascinating about this? It kind of gives you some insight into Luther. What a passionate, you might call him mercurial kind of guy, of flashes of this and that.

At another time, later, you know, years later, Luther read an article or a book or something that Zwingli had written on the, what he believed communion was all about. And Zwingli just stated his case, you know, just like he did before at the colloquy at Marburg. And Luther said, yeah, I agree with that.

You know, Luther was a complex guy. He could get a bee in his bonnet and get just fired up over something, and then, you know, it just kind of fizzled, or whatever. Okay, well, the reason I bring this up is that we're talking about Philip Melancthon, right? Luther's dead, Melancthon is going to succeed him, but a lot of Lutherans don't trust Melancthon because Melancthon is a lot more here than here.

They even accused Melancthon of being a crypto-Calvinist. You know, you're like a secret Calvinist, Melancthon, because you believe this over the elements of communion. There was a very heated debate

over Luther's succession.

It became so heated that at one stage, Lutheran university professors took guns into their lectures for self-protection. Because, you know, it was getting kind of heated up. Now, in 1557, they had another colloquy, which is, you know, a meeting to discuss doctrine.

At Worms again, where Luther made his dramatic, you know, here I stand, I can do no other, God help me. And they got together with Roman Catholics to discuss doctrine, right? The Lutherans and the Roman Catholics, you know, hey, let's have some debate. Well, the Lutherans were embarrassed before the Roman Catholics, because they fought so much among themselves over these issues, that they just looked silly in front of the Roman Catholics.

And it really gave strength to the Roman Catholic thing that says, okay, once you come out of the umbrella of the Pope, then you're just going to have endless factions, endless separatists, endless disputes, because you've left this. Finally, in 1577, they reached an agreement called the Formula of Concord. You know, Formula of Agreement, basically.

In the Formula of Concord, they came together, and it created a precise Lutheran statement of faith, a Lutheran orthodoxy after Martin Luther. Now, this is an important transition thing. I mean, for any movement, think about it.

When Martin Luther was alive, how do you define Lutheranism? Go ask Martin Luther, right? When Martin Luther is dead, how do you define Lutheranism? So they finally came up with a statement that said, this is Lutheranism. And basically, that says you have to have a document, when you don't have the person, if you're going to define it after a person. So they finally came to that in 1577.

And the Formula of Concord ended up being much more Luther than Melancthon. The Lutheran view of the elements, Luther's view of the elements was strongly adopted. It was much more predestinarian oriented than free will focused.

And so that's how it ended up. Now, what happened in development after that? Well, one of the remarkable things about the German Reformation was it was really much more a reformation of ideas and thinking than it was a reformation of people. What do I mean by that? Luther constantly bemoaned the fact that lives were not being changed.

Luther was not impressed with the spirituality of the average German in his churches. Not impressed at all. He was very depressed.

And he worked very vigorously during his life, they did statistics, they did this, they did whatever they could to try to get a feeling, how can we get our people more right on with God, more in love with God. Let me put it to you this way. Luther's Reformation was not a revival.

It really was not a revival of religion. Because, you know, like I say, Luther himself looked at it, I would say, and I may be putting this too strong, grant me a little bit of exaggeration, Luther died a discouraged man. Because he looked and he said he knew he had the truth, but he saw that people's lives were not being changed the way that it should be.

So, now, I don't say that to criticize the work of Martin Luther. He absolutely set in motion an essential revolution in ideas and thinking and doctrine, if you want to say that. It was more a reformation of doctrine

than it was of people.

Now, you might say, the subsequent reformations of people, the revivals that came after Luther, were based on his ideas. You couldn't have one without the other. But, we need to be honest about what Luther did in Europe, and it was much more a reformation of doctrine than it was people.

Well, they saw this in the German church. They were discouraged by the low level of spirituality within the German church. And there arose a guy, and you know what, I'm sorry, I don't have a date on this.

I think you're talking within a hundred years or so after Luther. A guy named Jacob Spenner. And he's the father of what we call the Pietist movement, or Pietism.

And you know what this is, you know what Pietism is, right? It's the faith that believes in getting pie up at Marie Callender. No, no. Piety, you could also call it Pietism.

Piety is devotion to God, right? See, there's a very pious man, there's a man very devoted to God. Well, Pietism is an emphasis in the Christian life on a personal devotion, and a personal devotional life to God. The Pietists stressed the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Not merely church membership, not merely correct doctrine, not merely being baptized. But they were looking at, what's your relationship with Jesus Christ like? Spenner taught things like this. It's better to be a Calvinist, or maybe even a Roman Catholic, and have a living faith in the Lord Jesus, than to be a Lutheran with dead faith but all the right doctrines.

In other words, Spenner looked around at the church and goes, look, we got the right doctrines, but we don't have hearts and lives that are alive to God. And so, the idea of Pietism is going deep into God. It has elements.

If you want to talk about it this way, it's basically Protestant, and I don't mean this in necessarily a critical way, it's Protestant mysticism. Let's go deep into God. It's very devotional, very prayer, worship, that oriented.

They stressed the importance of Bible study and small group fellowship. You have maybe one-fourth or one-fifth of the people who are there who are the Pietists. And they have their own home Bible studies.

They have their own prayer meetings and stuff. And it's like they're a church within the church. You would ask them, are you Lutherans? Oh yeah, we're Lutherans, but we're Pietistic Lutherans.

Kind of like, if you're familiar with this at all, the charismatic Catholic movement. We're Catholics, but we're charismatics. We're charismatic Catholics.

So you have this dynamic. And this is something that's going to be really replicated in the Protestant church, as it was in some ways in the Roman Catholic church, the idea of the church within the church. That was sort of the legacy and where Lutheranism went after Martin Luther.

Well, how about Calvinism after Calvin? Okay, you know what? I'm not going to talk about Calvinism after Calvin, because for that I need to talk about the five points of Calvinism and Arminianism and that. We'll talk about that next week, okay? So what I'm going to talk about instead is I'm going to talk about another aspect of the legacy of the Reformation, and that's the Anglican church. This is like a whole different animal.

Okay, you've got these three leading nations, right? You've got the nation of Germany. You've got the Germanic peoples. Who's top dog there? Luther.

You've got the Swiss people. Who's top dog there? Calvin. Zwingli was first, but Calvin ended up having much more influence.

Calvin was second generation. Let's remember that. Then you've got the English.

And who's top dog there? Oh no, you see, that's kind of... There's a variety of top dogs in the English Reformation. The Anglican church divided from the Roman Catholic church in the year 1534. Do you know what the word Anglican means? The word Anglican means something.

It's not necessarily the title of a church. You could say, we speak the Anglican language. I mean, if you want to use the word Anglican in a broad sense.

Because Anglican is the Latin way of saying English. Of England. Danish, Scottish, Swedish, English.

The English people were called by the Latins, by the ancient Roman Empire, the Angles. Do you know why they were called the Angles? Because they were fair-headed and fair-complexioned. And somebody said, they look like angels.

You know, that was the quip. So, they were called the Angles by the Latins. So, Anglican means of the Angles.

And obviously, English is just a variation of that. So, when we talk about the Anglican church, all we're talking about is the church of the English people. Again, I'm not talking about English speakers.

I'm talking about the country, the nation of England. For a long time before 1534, there was a lot of power struggles between the Pope and the kings of England. Power struggles, political struggles, money struggles, all sorts of things.

Because the Pope had huge land holdings and huge financial and political influence through the church in England. I think that up to 25% of all land was owned by the church. I mean, it was heavy, heavy.

Well, you know, the king of England didn't like that a foreign power, the Pope, had all this influence, all this power in his country. So, eventually, in the year 1534, which, by the way, is about the time of this other great river, right? That's a few years after Luther, you know, 20 years after Luther. I mean, the Reformation is going on in Europe at this time.

Now, what's interesting about this is England is firmly Roman Catholic. But, King Henry VIII, who was a loyal Roman Catholic, doctrinally. Matter of fact, King Henry VIII wrote doctrinal tracts, or pamphlets, against Martin Luther.

And the Pope praised him for it. That's why the Pope gave Henry VIII the title Defender of the Faith. Which, interestingly enough, the kings of England have to this day.

That is a royal title for the kings of England, Defender of the Faith. By the way, Prince Charles proposes that when he takes the throne, he's going to cross this word out and just say Defender of Faith. In other words, Defender of your faith, Defender of his faith, Defender of your faith in Islam, your faith in that.

I'm just the Defender of Faith. Not the Defender of THE Faith. The reason why Henry VIII broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and established an Anglican church in England were mainly political.

There were political reasons. Well, if you want to say, also, personal reasons. You know, he had those divorces that the Pope wouldn't recognize.

But, even that was really more of a political struggle than it was anything else. He chafed under the Pope's political dominance. And he said, I want to be set free from this.

So, how do you do it? Basically, they said, okay, we're going to break away. And what was in Henry VIII's mind is he said, look, instead of having a Roman church, right? That's what they had. We're not going to have a Roman church.

We're going to have an English church. In other words, an Anglican church. We're no longer the Roman Catholic Church in England.

Now we're the Anglican Church. This cathedral that used to be Roman Catholic Church? No, no more. Now it's the English Church.

Now it's the Anglican Church. Did anything change of what they did inside of there? No, not immediately. Not under Henry VIII.

Henry VIII wasn't interested in changing stuff. He didn't have a problem with the ceremony, with the doctrine and that. No, no problem.

I just don't like the political control that the Pope has over this. So, that's what Henry VIII did. Now, here's the other aspect of this.

The kings and queens after Henry VIII, some of them would be more Catholic, some of them would be more Protestant. Basically, what they decided was they said, okay, generally speaking, what we want, this is what the Anglican Church is going to be. The Anglican Church is going to be, in its ceremonies, Catholic.

In its doctrine, it's going to be Protestant. That was the general idea. We'll make them Protestant in doctrine, Catholic in their ceremonies.

Now, they said, this is great. We'll get the best of both worlds. Man, we love those Catholic ceremonies.

They know how to do things right. Very stimulating to the mind, to the senses. Yes, yes.

Very artistic. Yes, yes, yes. Man, we got that Protestant doctrine.

Yeah, that's what you want. Best of both worlds, right? No. You know why? Because the Church was always too Protestant for the Catholics and too Catholic for the Protestants.

Right? I mean, that's basically what you had. And this was the constant source of fighting within the Anglican Church. They would all say, oh, we're all Anglicans.

What does it mean to be an Anglican? And what it meant to be an Anglican could change from one king or queen to the next. So it was very, very... All right, let me just wrap up with this. Lutheranism had its pietistic movement led by Jacob Spinner, right? Anglicanism had its pietistic movement led by John Wesley.

Wesley basically adopted a pietistic movement within the Anglican Church. Wesley never told anybody, break away from the Anglican Church. Wesley said, you stay in the Anglican Church, but you just have your own group within the congregation that are the Methodists, who are serious about following God, who want to go deeper with Him.

That was Wesley's vision. But after Wesley died, then eventually Methodist churches broke away from the Anglican Church. And maybe we'll talk a little bit more about the Church in England, but that's kind of how it got started, the Anglican Church.

What do we call the Anglican Church in America? We don't call it the Anglican Church. What do we call it? Episcopalian Church. When you see an Episcopalian Church, that's the Anglican Church.

They just call it, instead of calling it the Anglican Church, they call it the Episcopalian Church. But that is the Anglican Church here in America. I have to go pretty quick.

So let's pray, and we'll pick up Calvinism after Calvin next week. Father, thank you for this. And Lord, Father, help us not to make compromises that seem like the best of both worlds, but really, Lord, in some ways are the worst of both.

Give us wisdom in that and in all things as we seek to walk after you this week. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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