



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 4, 2021

Liberating Grace of God

By Daniel H. Wilcox

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

12:2 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows.

12:3 And I know that such a person--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows--

12:4 was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat.

12:5 On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses.

12:6 But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me,

12:7 even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated.

12:8 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me,

12:9 but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

12:10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Today, we celebrate two hundred forty-five years of "liberty and freedom" in the United States of America through the bloody toils of many. In 1987, the African Methodist Episcopal Church led

by Bishop Vinton Randolph Anderson, celebrated its Bicentennial by devising an alternative epithet, “A Liberating and Reconciling People.” This liberation movement in the church evolves from God, not from humankind’s strength, as a free gift from God.

Apostle Paul confirms in 2 Corinthians that human liberty and spiritual freedom emanate from God. He testifies that though buffeted by a thorn in his flesh, a physical ailment, emotional aggravation, or psychological agony, he asked God three times to remove this affliction. The Lord responded to Paul and us by declaring that in trials and tribulations, God’s grace is sufficient for relief and endurance of life’s panics, pains, and pangs, in particular, those from Satan. This unmerited favor, grace, consoles and liberates distressed, disoriented, disillusioned believers from dungeons of despair and prisons of predicaments. Our weakness invites God’s providence to assure us of divine love and protection. Believers can trust grace to enable our worship, witness, and work for the Kingdom of God, evoking through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ our liberty and freedom.

As Methodist believers, we proclaim the blessings of grace that by it, we are justified, repentant, sanctified, and perfected. Through the power of grace, the shackles of sins and bondages of burdens cease to fester among the ransomed, redeemed, reconciled ones of God. Let us consecrate ourselves to the service of God by grateful appreciation for the sufficiency of amazing divine grace.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, share a time/instance when you have trusted the sufficient grace of God as a guiding principle? How did this experience make you feel or direct you?

PRAY: O God, who has taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor, grant us your grace of your Holy Ghost that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart and united to one another with pure affection, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Adaption from The Book of Common Prayer

Pray for the 51st Session of the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, July 6-10, 2021.

ACT:

1. During the Kingdomtide season, share with a few people this week your testimony about the liberating sufficiency of God’s grace. Journal your experience and reflect on your spiritual journey. Do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and prayerfully considering getting the vaccine when it is available—See: <http://www.amehealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

Song:

Grace! 'Tis a Charming Sound
AMEC Hymnal, #214

1. Grace, 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to my ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.
2. Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.
3. Grace taught my wandering feet
To tread the heavenly road,
And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.
4. Grace all the works shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.