

## Grace

*Heir to the Throne*

*“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” – Romans 5:6-8*

How do you wrap your mind around the grace of God, a grace that loves us so lavishly (1 John 3:1) that He sacrificed His only, beloved Son (Matthew 3:17). For us! And not because we were so very, very good—but while we were still His enemies. Enemies of His Kingdom.

Would you die for a very, very good person? Maybe. But how many of us would die for an evil person? That’s what grace is about. To try to grasp such undeserved favor toward you and me, I made up a story...

Imagine an evil terrorist cell infiltrates a city, planning to destroy it, and everyone in it. They especially hate the king of that country and all his ways. They rent a little house in a quiet neighborhood. At first their neighbors wonder about these people who come and go a lot; but soon they ignore them.

Strange, scary crimes start happening around the city. Bombings, arsons, kidnappings, rumors of trafficking, death threats, robberies, murders. Fear increases. Police have no suspects.

After many successful missions, the terrorists gather in their home to assemble another incendiary bomb but accidentally touch two wires together. It explodes. Some die instantly. Survivors are unconscious, helpless in the ferocious heat of the inferno ignited by their own evil plans. They will all die. They cannot help themselves.

Outside, the neighbors gather, driven back by the blaze of roaring flames. As sirens approach, they theorize in hushed tones what might have happened. Several mention strange behavior, but nobody really knows them.

Understanding dawns like the morning light: these must be the terrorists the police are hunting! They must have been making a bomb. Well, it serves them right! Let them die in a funeral pyre of their own making. Who’d want to save them anyway, after all the things they’d done? Justice will be served.

Fire trucks arrive—but have to park well back from the murderous temperatures. The fire chief figures these neighbors are probably right. Let it burn. Why risk a firefighter?

Then a big black limousine with the king’s crest arrives, and the king steps out. “I have plans for one of those terrorists—in fact I love him very much.” What??!! “Who will go into the fire and save him?” asks the king.

Nobody is willing. Nobody could, even if they wanted to. Then his beloved son, the prince, sole heir to the kingdom steps forward. “I don’t want to—but as you wish,” he agrees. His father

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sends him. The onlookers gasp, some mocking under their breath, “He thinks he’s so great—let’s see him survive this hellish inferno.”

Before the prince is even to the front porch, his skin blisters, his muscles char, his lungs sear beyond healing, his eyes scald in the smoke. He will die. But staggering, then crawling inside, he finds the terrorist. Shielding his enemy with his own broken, burned, dying body, he drags him out... and falls dead at his father’s feet. Nobody else could have done it; nobody could even imagine that much love.

The terrorist is resuscitated. He realizes what has been done for him and pleads forgiveness—and his royal highness grants it!! In fact, the king adopts him as his own child, now heir to the kingdom!! Once an enemy of state, now seated at the royal table. What grace!

Some scoff, “Why didn’t he save them all?” But the real question is this: “By what incredible grace did he save any at all?” None of them deserved it. None of us deserve it.

Dear friend, do you see how valuable you are? It’s not based on your academic scores or any achievements. It’s not related to your performance. It’s not prevented by the worst things you have ever done. His grace takes us while still His enemies, rescues us at the cost of His only beloved Son, and adopts us as His own children!

2 Timothy 1:9 *“He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.”* (See also Titus 3:4) Wow.

Do you suppose this reformed terrorist would have any purpose in his life greater than to tell everyone he could about this wonderful grace he’d received?

That’s what Paul is talking about in Acts 20:24. *“But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned to me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.”* (NLT)

- **What parallels can be seen between this story and the life and death of Jesus? How are we like the terrorists in a fire of their own making? (Ephesians 2:1-5)**
- **What are some ways to walk daily in the wonder of this amazing grace?**



*One month after vet school graduation (WSU, 1983), Fred Van Gorkom went to Ethiopia with Christian Veterinary Mission. While working in veterinary projects, famine relief, refugee and discipleship ministries he met Vicki, also a veterinarian (OSU, 1982). They married in 1986, returning immediately to remote southwestern Ethiopia where they raised their four children while doing community development and church planting. In 2008, they moved to CVM Seattle where they serve to help mobilize others for the privilege of international missions. Email: [fvangorkom@cvm.org](mailto:fvangorkom@cvm.org)*