

This Missionary Shared the Gospel While Enemies Held Her Hostage

Gracia Burnham and her husband, Martin, served with New Tribes Mission in the Philippines for 17 years. Martin was a jungle pilot delivering mail, supplies and encouragement to other missionaries. He also transported sick and injured patients to medical facilities. Gracia supported him whenever he was in the air by maintaining radio contact. The Burnham's three children, Jeffrey Paul, Melinda Joy and Zachary Scott were born in the Philippines and homeschooled by their mother.

On May 27, 2001, while celebrating their 18th wedding anniversary at Dos Palmas Resort off Palawan Island, rebels from the Abu Sayyaf Group seized the Burnhams and several other guests of the resort and took them as hostages to Basilan Island. In the ensuing 376 days of captivity, they endured incredible hardship and emotional fatigue. On June 7, 2002, Martin was killed in a firefight between the Philippine military and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Gracia was wounded in the leg but was freed.

In our riveting interview on a recent episode of *Make Life Matter* on the Charisma Podcast Network, Gracia shared her story with me.

"The sad thing is, a lot of people don't know Jesus—like the Abu Sayyaf. The tragedy of this whole story wasn't us being held hostage and Martin dying," she said. "The tragedy is those guys who held us hostage will never hear the gospel. If they spoke English, they heard it from us, over and over. But most of those guys didn't speak English, and they'll never hear the gospel of Jesus in their lifetime."

She continued, "They're going to go through life thinking if

they pray enough and fast enough and they give enough alms to the poor and they eat the right food and they go on a trip to Mecca, at the end of time, maybe their good is going to outweigh their bad and they'll go to paradise instead of hell.

"Isn't that sad not to know that someone took your sin?" Gracia spoke of the salvation of which she is confident. "Jesus took your sin. He took it on Himself. He didn't just take our sin; He traded it for His righteousness. Now when God looks at us, there's nothing charged against us. Jesus took care of it and we're free."

Gracia Burnham now resides in Rose Hill, Kansas. She is the author of the book *In the Presence of My Enemies*, which gives a gripping account of their year of terror in the Philippine jungle. In her second book, *To Fly Again*, Gracia reflects on the lessons and spiritual truths learned while in the jungle. She is a popular and engaging speaker in high demand at churches, colleges and conferences across the United States. She is also the founder and director of The Martin and Gracia Burnham Foundation. Connect with her at [. {eo}](#)

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