

## COURAGE IN TERRIFYING TIMES

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(Author's note: 21 years ago today, the worst terrorist attack on American soil happened when four passenger jets were hijacked by militant Islamic Al-Qaeda terrorists and three were used to attack the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon, killing almost three thousand people. A few days after these events took place, I wrote the following article to which I have recently added a few additional thoughts. God's truths are still as applicable today as they were then. Read and consider carefully.)

Terrorism is on our minds these days. Events have taken place recently in our country that has shaken us to the core of our being. There is a mixture of anger and fear in the minds of many people. It will take some time before life gets back to anything resembling normal.

Terrifying actions perpetrated by one human being on another are not new. Since the day that Cain killed Abel, men and women have lived in fear of their own safety. History abounds with examples of horrible atrocities wrought by humans upon other humans. No generation is free from it. Even while some of us live in relative comfort and safety (we think), others in our world live in constant uncertainty and fear. No one has the promise of tomorrow, but some have more confidence in it than others. Sin has caused much fear and dread in this world.

The Christian finds comfort in the knowledge that his citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). No terrorist force on this earth can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39). No threat of death can diminish the living hope that we have of "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Love and peace reign among the faithful in the kingdom of God, the kind that can only be found in Christ Jesus. Jesus taught His disciples to love even their enemies, to "*bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*" (Matt. 5:44). The world needs to see the love that we have for one another as disciples of Christ (Jn. 13:34-35), and our living and demonstrating the love of God to all men (Gal. 6:10).

When our greatest enemy, Satan, attempted the most horrible terrorist act of all – the destruction of Jesus, the Son of God – he was defeated and cast out (Rev. 12:1-11; cf. Lk. 10:17-20). Yet, that cunning adversary is not done. He now seeks to bring terror to the people that belong to Jesus, the church of Christ. Thus, the need to take courage and take up arms against his terrorist organization, yes, to "*take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and have done all, to stand*" (Eph. 6:13).

The terror of evil works subtly and methodically. We live in a perverse, crooked generation that is a constant threat of temptation and sin (Phil. 2:15; Acts 2:40; Jas. 4:4). Yet, Satan knows that his best terror is worked from within. There is nothing more troubling to the faithful child of God than sin and error permeating the body of Christ from within. We face the constant danger of false doctrines and the compromise with sin that cause brethren to stray from the faith. The elders from Ephesus were warned about savage wolves coming in among them as well as some from among themselves rising up to speak perverse things and drawing people away (Acts 20:29-30). This is Satan's terrorist organization at work. It is deceptive and deadly.

Terror can come from the "nicest" people. They are "nice" as long as you do not question or oppose their ungodly teachings and actions. We are supposed to accept them in the name of "love" and "unity." Yet, after you oppose the teaching of error, the smiles are gone and talk of love has dissipated.

Threats, whisperings, and name-calling are the tools of terror, while pretending to love and care for those kept in the dark. Their repeated calls to love one another are shown to be empty by their ugly attitudes, baseless accusations, attacking character, and the refusal to discuss issues of controversy openly. Such are wolves in sheep's clothing, deceitful workers transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness (Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

The terrors of evil exist to threaten us physically and spiritually. We must be brave soldiers, not fighting with carnal weapons, but wielding the mighty weapons of God's wisdom for the saving of souls. Let us pray for God's care in a dangerous world and continue to hold forth the word of truth that brings the victory of our faith that overcomes the world (1 Jn. 5:4).