



"Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth."  
—A.W. Tozer

15-Jul-05

## **So There Has Been Another Terror Strike**

A week and a day have hustled down the track since the 7/7 bombings in London. While the four bombs did not destroy nearly what the 9/11 airplanes did nor kill nearly as many people, they still did significant damage to bodies, bricks, and psyches in Great Britain. With more than 50 dead and several hundred wounded, they aroused the attention of Londoners fixated on the Live 8 concerts, the G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, and London's recent victory over Paris in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games decision.

I happened to be in France on a church visit when the bombings occurred, giving me the opportunity to "take the temperature" of the average European on the street. Though the common reaction was not, "Oh, yeah? Another terrorist bombing? I'll have a cappuccino and a croissant, thanks," it was nonetheless unremarkable. I got the distinct impression—not from our members but from those with whom I interacted in airports and train stations in France and The Netherlands—that this was just another bombing.

I had to pass through a major Paris Metro station, Gare du Nord, Charles de Gaulle airport, and Amsterdam's Schipol airport the day after the bombings, and though the security was a little tighter than normal—instead of seeing a couple of machine-gun-toting soldiers patrolling the corridors, I saw

several—passengers were calmly making their connections. I had the chance to speak with a couple of Britons on a train, and they were essentially unfazed by the attacks. Essentially, their reaction was, "This is [the world](#) we live in."

The news reports that I saw—on BBC World, primarily—seemed to support their calm acceptance of terrorism as the status quo. From Tony Blair to the common London commuter, the British stiff upper lip was the typical comment, spoken in a well-modulated, calm voice: "We will not let this bother us. We will persevere. We will not give the terrorists the victory. Life goes on." There may be little or nothing wrong with a reaction like this, but it is curious in its near-apathy. Perhaps it comes across as strange and weak to us in comparison to the average American's reaction after 9/11, which contained a great deal more outrage: "Let's roll! These people are going to pay for what they've done!"

Our understanding of their nearly non-reaction has to factor in Europe's long history of terrorism. The United States has had a long-distance relationship with terror; though the federal government, particularly the military, has dealt with terrorists for decades, only in 1993 in the first World Trade Center bombing did the militant, fundamentalist Muslims begin to strike on American soil. Europe, however, has been dealing with terrorism—and not just Islamic but homegrown terrorism—for decades. Britain's long struggle with the Irish Republican Army goes back several generations, while other European nations have contended with their own revolutionary factions at least since the beginning of the Cold War. Violent riots, shootings, car bombs, mail bombs, kidnappings, and other forms of terrorism occur with such regularity that the general populace has become somewhat inured to them, even those on the scale of last Thursday's atrocities.

This may help to explain why so many Europeans criticize America's War on Terror as an overreaction: They are far past the "fight or flight" reaction and deep into acceptance of the situation as "normal" or at least "commonplace." Since none of the measures taken over the past decades has stemmed the terror tide, they feel that the reasonable, mature response is to shrug and move on. Do not give the terrorists cause to gloat. America's volatile reaction, then, is thought to be childish and counterproductive. It will only incite more terrorism, they say.

We need to take this contrast into consideration from a Christian standpoint. How do we react to the spiritual equivalents of acts of terrorism—trials, temptations, persecutions, etc.? Do we, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, get up, brush ourselves off, and go about our business as if nothing happened? Or are we so offended and outraged that we stand up with our fists balled and a resolute gleam in our eyes? Do we mumble, "Not again," or do we shout, "That's it! I've had enough!"?

Truly, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" ([II Corinthians 10:4](#)), so our fight is not the kind the American government wages against Islamic terrorists. But the martial spirit is no less necessary in our fight against [sin](#) and the allurements of [Satan](#) and his world. The Bible is full of military allusions: from putting on the armor of [God](#) ([Ephesians 6:13](#)) to "endur[ing] hardship as a good soldier of [Jesus Christ](#)" ([II Timothy 2:3](#)). The Christian cannot be passive or indifferent to the very real struggle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" ([Ephesians 6:12](#)).

Peter calls for steadfast resistance ([I Peter 5:8-9](#)), and Paul commands us pull down strongholds and cast down everything "that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," capturing and punishing any sort of disobedience left in us ([II Corinthians 10:4-6](#)). Jesus Christ Himself is portrayed as a great Captain of spiritual armies, out of whose mouth goes a sword used to strike and rule (Revelation 19:15; see [Hebrews 4:12](#)).

Christianity is a religion of action, not passivity. God's children need to be alert and prepared to react decisively to the enemy's attacks, wherever and whenever they may occur. "Be sober, be vigilant," says Peter in [I Peter 5:8](#), and Paul writes, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" ([Romans 13:12](#)).

Sounds like "fighting words" to me.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Endure as a Good Soldier](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The cultural mindset in Israelitish nations has weakened, negatively influenced by affluence and cynicism, which has undermined our ability to endure hardship and sacrifice in pursuit of a worthy national goal. Instead of discipline, indomitable will and character with pure national goals, we have opted for self-indulgence, laxity, and compromise. In God's plan, the development of uncompromising character requires struggle and sacrifice. Our victory over Satan requires continual drill, tests and development of internal discipline. Like the military, the victory is built incrementally in the mind; the warfare is the drill. (Luke 16:10)

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[The Whirlpool of War](#)**

by John O. Reid (1930-2016)

John Reid, a veteran of the Korean war, knows the horrors of war. We are in a spiritual war right now, and it will only become hotter as we near the end!

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