



Terrorism on the Mission Field

by Jean Easley

The year was 1992, and the civil war that had raged for decades in Guatemala was in its last years. However, the violence had then escalated, threatening not only the infrastructure of Guatemala but also the normal, everyday lives of its people. Terrorist tactics such as blowing up bridges and high-rise commercial buildings hindered both government and commerce and put a great fear into the heart of the people. We came to recognize the goals of terrorism first hand.

My missionary husband and I were among those who were concerned about the random acts of violence, but, thank God, we had an Advocate in Christ Jesus, our Lord. When our fears would come upon us anew, we prayed, and our peace was restored. It was the day we were living in.

Headquartered in Guatemala City at the time, we began to read of one important bridge after another along the coastal route from the Guatemala border with Mexico to Guatemala City being destroyed by bombs. The highway on which these bombings occurred linked western Guatemala's sugarcane and cotton industries with the governmental seat and commercial markets in the highlands of Guatemala City. With the destruction of bridges, harvests were delayed, tremendous costs of re-building were incurred, and travel by the general population was greatly hindered. The terror struck into the heart of Guatemala was exactly what the terrorists intended.

A missionary to Mexico brought us the shocking story of his own encounter with the bridge bombers. He was driving from Guatemala City on the same route that Bro. Easley and I drive after we cross into Guatemala from Mexico. It so happened that he had just crossed one of those bridges; in fact, his was the last car to cross it, when he watched in horror in his rear view mirror the bomb blast that sent that huge bridge to the bottom of the ravine. One quickly realized how easily he could be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

So it was that our papers had expired, and we needed to spend a few days out of Guatemala before re-entering with new papers and another opportunity for extended stay. So we decided to return to the States for about 30 days to visit our family and to take care of other business. Of course, our travel necessitated crossing the remaining bridges as well as the "detours" created by previous bombings. As we traveled toward Mexico, I found myself praying, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," over each bridge, even though we were greatly relieved to witness the armed patrols stationed there at the end of the bridges. We believed there were Unseen Hands there, too, guarding over us. God, in His great mercy, did undergird us with His hands and sent His angels around about us to bring us safely home.

Those who have been witness to the great harm and devastation that terrorism brings are wise to the enemy's tactics to paralyze a nation with fear and thereby control that nation. It is an unconventional brand of war where the enemy does not engage in face-to-face combat but specializes in inflicting suffering upon the innocent, killing or maiming even the weakest among us, and making cowards of entire societies.

The devil is a terrorist. He is the world's greatest terrorist. He is a defeated foe, but he specializes in lies and destruction in order to keep believers from trusting in God. He spreads fear, hate, and evil of every kind. He knows that, if we allow him to intimidate us, we may live our whole lives cowering in the corner--afraid to step out and do anything for the Lord.

But, thank God, we have been aptly warned in passages such as Luke 12:5 just where to place our fear: "...Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more than they can do. But I will forwarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him."

Fear of the Lord, the Bible says, is the beginning of wisdom. It is only through our faith in Christ that we have the ability to overcome our fears--even those deliberately planted by the devil and his host of terrorists--and believe the Lord for deliverance and peace and, at the end, eternal life. Praise God!