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## The mental battle against terrorism

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The war against terrorism in Afghanistan is showing some signs of success. There is quiet tension in the United States, but terrorism is erupting in other parts of the world. In Spain, a car bomb blamed on the Basque separatist group ETA injured 99 people in Madrid. In Colombia, an outlawed paramilitary group assassinated a dozen men in a village north of Bogota. In India, fighting with Islamic militants in the Kashmir region resulted in 28 casualties over the weekend. The US isn't the only target of terrorism, and militant Arabs aren't the only terrorists. It's important that we become aware of the global situation and not narrow our view to exclusively US interests.

The global threat of terrorism goes beyond the threat by a single organization or a united group. It's the acceptance of unlawful, unbridled violence as a legitimate means to achieve political, religious, or economic ends. As incomprehensible as it may seem, millions of people around the world are supporting and justifying terrorism as a viable tool. Soldiers, civilians, and even government officials are being brainwashed into performing and justifying atrocities, even celebrating them. The propaganda attacks that accompany such acts would shift blame toward the victims while exonerating the perpetrators.

The battle against this evil isn't just military. It's mental. It's resisting the temptation to justify or sympathize with evil.

The first skirmish is in our own thought. Are we justifying terror in our personal life? Outbursts of temper, physical bullying, verbal abuse, can be a kind of terrorism. Healing such impulses in our lives supports the global battle against using terror as a tool.

God is the power of gentleness at work in the world. A Bible verse says, "thy gentleness hath made me great" (Ps. 18:35). What a profound idea, that

gentleness is powerful! Gentleness is the might of divine Spirit influencing and changing human thought toward goodness. God supports this transformation. This divine influence transforming human consciousness is actually the Christ.

The Christ is the healing power of God. This power of God on earth is first felt within us. It subdues the unbridled passions of anger, frustration, or selfishness with a divine calm. The calmness of Christ is the divine presence. It's the activity of God destroying evil, freeing men and women from mental and physical slavery.

One example of divine power freeing humanity when terrorism failed is in the account of Moses' life in the Bible. Early in his life, Moses rebelled at the cruel enslavement of his people. He felt powerless to help. So he resorted to terrorism. He killed an Egyptian. But this act was condemned rather than condoned by his own people. They rejected terrorism as an unacceptable method to achieve freedom.

Years later, Moses did lead his people to safety and eventually to a homeland. But this leadership was based on obedience to God, rather than on charisma, revenge, or lawlessness. In fact, the Bible says, "Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). Such meekness wasn't weakness or failure to act. Moses acted with the serene strength of having divine authority. Where terrorist tactics failed, meekness and obedience to God succeeded.

As Moses learned to control unrestrained passion, so we can contribute to eliminating terrorism by refusing to excuse it in our affairs. Turning to God for strength to resist evil impulses frees us and can help free those around us. The effort to resist terror - no matter how people attempt to justify it - contributes to real freedom, just as the Israelites' refusal to applaud Moses' killing of an Egyptian began a chain of events leading to his reformation and their release. Prayer to increase our confidence in the power of righteousness to guide human affairs blesses people we may never meet. The war against terrorism is first won in this mental realm.

And we are frontline soldiers. The terrorist tendencies of armed conflicts must be restrained and removed. Let's remain alert to eliminate terrorism wherever it occurs, whether it affects us personally or not. This effort will help protect us as well as others.