

Security Precautions

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As you pull up to the curbside at Washington's Dulles airport there are enormous concrete barriers between the curb and the front door. Rather than walking straight in through the doors, one has to walk around a plexiglass divider. Identification is required at various points along the way, and the passenger-to-be must remove shoes, carry limited amounts of gels and lotions (in a quart-sized Ziploc bag), get x-rayed, answer inane questions and listen to loudspeaker warnings before being allowed to board the airplane.

Why all the precautions? Because there are people in this world who wish to use airliners for evil purposes. Why is the security so stringent? Because just one lapse could prove disastrous. And why do frustrated travelers put up with the inconveniences? Because deep down inside they know what is at stake – their life. The odds are in their favor, but no one wants to depend on odds when life and death are on the line. So, we do everything within our power, even to the point of what seems great waste, in order to protect ourselves.

So, are we as diligent with our spiritual welfare as we are with our physical?

The New Testament makes clear in a variety of ways that God's people live in constant danger. There are warnings like "be sober, be vigilant" (1 Pet 5:8) ... why? "Because your *adversary*, the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (5:9). Evil is not just an abstract force but is the product of a conscious, calculated enemy who is as intent on our spiritual destruction as radical Muslims are on our cultural extermination.

But as the weapons of terrorism have changed, sparking parallel changes in detection procedures, so do the weapons of Satan. Doctrinal issues change forms. Paul warned Timothy about "doctrinal cancer" then gave an example of two men who taught that "the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some" (2:17). The Greek word "overthrow" is *katastrophe*, and so it is when the unwary buy in to a false idea that "turns upside down" (the literal meaning of the term) their faith. There is always some kind of doctrinal aberration floating around that can destroy personal faith and infiltrate churches.

Moral issues also change forms, not in substance but in the packaging. "*Flee also youthful lusts ...*" (2 Tim 2:22), Paul warns Timothy. Our culture worships youth: beauty, strength, virility. So much media is tinged with sexuality, materialism and ambition. We must be on guard, for our enemies are constantly probing for weaknesses.

There is a price to be paid for freedom. When someone is intent on doing us harm, taking certain precautions requires thought, time, expense. We might think it "wasted" if the attack never comes, but we cannot afford not to defend ourselves. Such vulnerability *invites* attack. Many such precautions never actually stop a terrorist; instead, they are a *deterrent* from the attempt ever being made. If we are Biblically studious, in communication with headquarters (prayer) and look out for each other's welfare (edification, worship), then Satan's task will be much harder.