

Biblical Proof That Prayer Makes All the Difference When Evil Strikes

James and Peter were both apostles. One was killed by an evil king, and one was miraculously delivered from death by that same king when an angel led him out of the jail in the middle of the night.

So, what was the difference?

Why was one killed and not the other? Why was one miraculously delivered from death and the other allowed to die? Was it God's will for the one to die but not the other?

The account is found in Acts 12:1–3 (NASB1995):

“Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.”

We could speculate why this happened, but the Bible tells us.

“So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God” (Acts 12:5, NASB1995).

Apparently, James was killed suddenly before anyone had time to react. Peter was imprisoned first, so the church could respond.

And they responded with fervent prayer. And that made the difference.

Do we know that?

Yes, because it is a detail in the story that wouldn't have

been added if it wasn't the missing piece.

A long time ago, I learned about the Lord's Prayer.

It's a prayer that is meant to be prayed every day, and early in the day. I explain all that in other places, but it would be too long here.

The prayer has a petition: deliver us from evil. Some translations say "evil one." It could be translated as "protect us from the evil one," but the lexicon notes three possible different translations for this expression – the evil one, evil, or that which is evil. I believe translating it as "evil" is consistent with the rest of the Bible, though Matthew twice uses the same expression as a term for Satan (Ps. 91:10; 121:7; Prov. 1:33; 12:21).

If this prayer is to be prayed every day, early in the day, that means this prayer is prayed before we encounter evil. It's a prayer for protection to keep us from evil happening to us.

Did James pray this when he got up that morning? We don't know. I do know when people are busy and things are going well, we don't expect bad things to happen. It seems James' death was sudden.

Was it God's will? Some will say yes, and some will say maybe not. The text clearly suggests that if the church had been praying as fervently for James as they were for Peter, he would not have been killed.

The fact is that Jesus taught us how to pray twice (Matthew 6 and Luke 11), and He told us to pray every day for protection from evil. Some Bibles say that this phrase is missing from the earliest manuscripts of Luke's Gospel, but it is definitely in Matthew's.

If Jesus tells us to pray every day for protection from evil,

that doesn't sound like a suggestion. I think He expects us to.

Does that mean nothing will ever go wrong in our lives?

Often those bad things are opportunities for good things.

Now, I wouldn't call this an evil thing, but recently I was trying to do something and cracked a window in my kitchen. The guy came out to fix it and saw that the window did not stay open by itself. He offered to fix it. Now a window that was hard to lift and that wouldn't stay up by itself and was never going to be fixed opens with a finger's touch and doesn't need to be propped up anymore.

Something that could have been really annoying and ruin my day actually made it better.

But no, that was not an evil thing.

There is a story in the Book of Ezra (chapters 4-6) where the people were rebuilding the temple and they faced hostile opposition from the neighbors. The neighbors stopped the work while reporting them to the authorities. The authorities in turn essentially told the neighbors not only to leave them alone but to help them in some pretty extraordinary ways.

So, what was a case of apparent evil turned into something very good.

Either way, Jesus said we should pray every day, early in the day, for protection from evil.

Let God figure out the details. Just do it, and stop asking so many questions. {eo}

Larry A. Craig went to school to go into the ministry (Moody Bible Institute, Mundelein College, Loyola University M.A. Biblical Studies) but spent his career in the meat business. Now he is retired, so he writes on politics and religion, both

separately and jointly. He has written two books: The Importance of Healing and The Importance of the Lord's Prayer. He is working on a commentary on the Gospel of Matthew and hopes to publish a book of his articles on politics and one of his articles on the Bible. He teaches the Gospel of Matthew in a weekly Zoom Bible class and emails out his articles on politics and religion. He can be reached at lacraig1@. His political blog is .

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.