

Reagan and Trump: How God Protected 2 Presidents From Assassination

On March 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan walked out of the Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C., after speaking to a labor union group. The president had only been in office for 70 days. He stopped to greet a crowd when suddenly a 25-year-old man named John Hinckley Jr. fired six shots with a short-barreled .22-caliber revolver from 15 feet away.

Reagan's press secretary, James Brady, was shot in the head, and then a policeman and a Secret Service agent were also hit. The last bullet out of Hinkley's gun struck Reagan in his side. When a member of his security team saw blood in Reagan's mouth, the president was rushed to the hospital. Doctors found that the bullet was only one inch from the president's heart.

The experience permanently marked Reagan's life. He wrote in his diary, "Whatever happens now, I owe my life to God and will try to serve him in every way I can."

More than 43 years later, another U.S. president endured a similar assassination attempt. In this case it was former President Donald Trump, who was campaigning in Butler, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, on July 13. A 20-year-old man named Thomas Matthew Crooks, perched on a rooftop nearby, fired several shots at Trump with a semi-automatic AR-15 rifle.

One spectator in the crowd was killed—volunteer firefighter Corey Comperatore, who was 50—while two others were shot but survived. Trump was spared. Some say it was luck, because the bullet that was aimed at his skull only struck his right ear. Others are convinced God miraculously shielded him from death that day.

Breaking news, Spirit-filled stories. Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!

When the bullet hit Trump, he crumpled to the floor of the stage as secret service agents rushed to his aid. Blood was visible on his face and neck, but Trump was able to walk on his own. Before leaving for the hospital, he defiantly raised his fists in the air and shouted, "Fight! Fight! Fight!" to remind the crowd that he wasn't quitting his race.

Trump wore a bandage at the Republican National Convention this week in Wisconsin. A chunk of his ear is missing, and there will probably be a permanent scar. Like Reagan, Trump knows he came within a hair of losing his life. "I'm not supposed to be here, I'm supposed to be dead," Trump told the New York Post.

I'm old enough to remember the Reagan shooting, so I'm fascinated by the contrasts of these two historic incidents:

- In both cases, the shooters were troubled young men. Hinkley was weirdly obsessed with the young actress Jodie Foster, and he told investigators he shot Reagan to impress her. We know less about Crooks because he was killed on the spot after he fired at Trump. Schoolmates told reporters that Crooks was a loner and that he had been bullied.

- In both cases, three people were injured or killed in addition to the two presidents who were wounded. In Reagan's case, Brady survived but suffered from paralysis and eventually died in 2014 from his injuries. A policeman and a Secret Service member were also injured. In Trump's case, Comperatore died while shielding his family from the gunfire; two other men, ages 57 and 74, were hospitalized after being shot.

- In both cases, the bullets intended for the two presidents came within millimeters of killing them. The bullet aimed at Reagan ricocheted off of a car and then hit him under the

armpit. The bullet aimed at Trump's head veered ever so slightly to graze his ear. Had it been any closer, Trump wouldn't have survived.

Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up to date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!

I'm not being superstitious when I make these comparisons. But this incident has inspired me to be more intentional in my prayers for Trump. I'm praying that he will think often about the obvious miracle that occurred on July 13. I've never come within a half-inch of death, but people who get that close to eternity usually change their attitudes and rearrange their priorities.

There's no question that the bullet that almost took Reagan's life shaped his character, and also shaped the public's view of him. He was already a Christian when he was elected, but Reagan became more outspoken about his Christian faith after his brush with death. Church leaders found the Reagan White House to be a friendly place that celebrated Christian values. And on the global scene, the former Soviet Union opened to the gospel during Reagan's time in office.

How will the bullet that came so close to Trump's head change him? It's possible that he will be the second president in U.S. history to serve two non-subsequent terms. Grover Cleveland, who was first elected in 1885, was the only president to do that so far.

Some observers say Trump seems more thoughtful since the tragedy in Pennsylvania. I'm praying it will become a spiritual milestone for him personally. We all know Trump can at times be brash and offensive. I've always overlooked his tone because I agree with many of his policies. But I pray that this historic near-miss moment will give him deeper convictions, stronger determination, more compassion when he

speaks and, most of all, more humility.

I know Trump has his haters, even among Christians. Not even an assassination attempt will evoke sympathy from some people. As for me, I will not only thank God for this miracle; I will pray that the miracle will make him a better man. I pray that President Trump will know deep in his heart that every day of life is a sacred gift, and that he will use every moment he has left to lead our nation toward better times.

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

J. Lee Grady is an author, award-winning journalist and ordained minister. He served as a news writer and magazine editor for many years before launching into full-time ministry.

Lee is the author of six books, including "10 Lies the Church Tells Women," "10 Lies Men Believe" and "Fearless Daughters of the Bible." His years at Charisma magazine also gave him a unique perspective of the Spirit-filled church and led him to write "The Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale" and "Set My Heart on Fire," which is a Bible study on the work of the Holy Spirit.