



Without our prayers, all hell breaks loose.

The subject of good v evil is prevalent in stories, movies and dramas. Not only that, we know that our lives can seem like a constant battle. Some days seemingly full of light and others full of shade. There are days when we feel like we are losing in the battle and that all that is evil, is winning. Jesus taught us to pray, 'deliver us from evil' and we will look at how Jesus won in this battle against evil through his death and resurrection.

*Martin Luther*

*"He who prays is fighting against the devil and the flesh. Satan is opposed to the church – the best thing we can do, therefore, is to put our fists together and pray."*

We can only imagine how much worse the world might be without our prayer and lives lived following Jesus. How many more fights and crimes would there be without the faithful prayer and service of street pastors, how much more hunger without the prayer and action of food banks and how much more family difficulty without the prayer and actions of Safe Families for Children.

We can think back on George Bailey's wish that he had never been born, in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Without his life, the hell of 'Pottersville' took over and George's contribution of goodness was lost. God has chosen to co-labour with us and His purposes depend on our prayers and responses. Terrible evils can be restrained and wonderful blessings unlocked only through our prayers.

Pete Greig, in *Dirty Glory*, says 'The Bible is clear that we are engaged in a vicious spiritual battle, in which God's purposes are contested constantly. Prayer is our greatest weapon of defence, as well as attack.'

Ephesians 6 says, 'Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armour so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil.'

J.B. Philipps described Ephesians 6:12 like this, 'We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil.' The nature of evil is wider than just Satan; Ephesians lists evil rulers, authorities, mighty powers and evil spirits. Evil can be described as personal, structural or spiritual.

In the crucifixion, we see all manners of evil rising up against Jesus, every weapon possible from the headquarters of evil. There was the betrayal of Judas, cruelty of the Romans, denial of Peter, pain and violence of the whip, rejection by the crowd, cowardice of Pilate, mockery of the soldiers, evil of Satan in Judas, accusations of the Pharisees and the failure of the disciples. All of this evil – betrayal, pain, rejection, hatred etc. rose up and hurled itself at Jesus.

The normal human response to danger is 'flight, fight or fright'. Jesus responded instead with love. Peter, on the other hand, was ready to fight. He had bought a sword to defend himself and Jesus and in fact, cut off the ear of one who had come to arrest Jesus. Jesus healed the man and then, in Matthew 26, said to Peter:

Put away your sword," Jesus told him. "Those who use the sword will die by the sword. Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands [twelve legions] of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?"

Instead of responding to trouble with the forces of heaven, Jesus fulfilled the role of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). He bore the sin of the world, felt the full force of evil and experienced death. All hell was let loose but didn't win.

Tom Wright, said, A new sort of power will be let loose upon the world, and it will be the power of self-giving love. This is the heart of the revolution that was launched on Good Friday. You cannot defeat the usual sort of power by the usual sort of means. If one force overcomes another, it is still "force" that wins. Rather, at the heart of the victory of God over all the powers of the world there lies self-giving love, which, in obedience to the ancient prophetic vocation, will give its life "as a ransom for many."

Colossians 2:15 says, 'And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.' Every weapon of hell had been released but didn't defeat Jesus. Thus, disarming the powers once and for all.

Paul goes on to describe us as 'more than conquerors' – not just winning battles but winning with style!

Just before Jesus was betrayed, he said "'I leave you peace; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world does. So, don't let your hearts be troubled or afraid".

When the world gives, it expects something in return. Jesus gives to us because he loves us and it's a gift of grace. When we're honest, in difficult times, when it seems that evil is winning, we can let our hearts be trouble and we can be afraid. Jesus promises us peace in place of this feeling of being troubled and frightened.

The last point is that Archangel Michael (Jude 1:9) didn't fight with Satan but instead said, The Lord rebuke you. In our battles, we don't need to fight Satan ourselves but trust in God to defend us, knowing that he is our shield and defender.

Questions:

When have we seen God deliver us from evil?

How can we remember that we are more than conquerors, when battles come?

What battles are we facing and how can we trust for God to defend and protect us?