

Tempted (Pt. 2): God Is Able To Protect

Introduction

Good morning Turning Point – this is a day the Lord has made so let's rejoice! For those with us for the first time today I am Danny Davis, lead pastor of this great church and we are glad you are here with us this morning.

Today is the second part of a 3-part series we are talking about at Turning Point, entitled, "Temptation." We are looking at Matthew 4:1-11. Last week we talked about Jesus' temptation to turn stones into bread and we learned that we could depend on a dependable God.

This morning we will look specifically at Matthew 4:5-7. Let's read it together this morning...

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put your Lord God to the test.'" (Matthew 4:5-7)

PRAYER

(ME)

One thing I have had a hard time getting used to in South Africa is all the security. The walls, fences, guards, dogs, flamethrowers on cars, cars with electric shock, guns, satellite trackers, and the list goes on and on. I realize all of these things are supposed to make us feel safer, but do they?

A few months ago we experienced a smash and grab. Our window was shattered while we sat at a robot and the thief took off with Sis. Karissa's purse. Over the next several weeks we kind of lived in fear. We would jump red robots (especially at night) and if we saw someone on the street getting within 20 meters of the car we would start getting very afraid.

I got quotes on having the windows tinted with the anti-smash and grab coatings. Why? In an effort to make myself feel more secure; to make myself feel as if I had something around me that would protect me, and; more importantly – my family.

(YOU)

What about you? Do you ever feel unprotected? Insecure? Vulnerable? Do you always feel like you are on guard against "someone" but your not sure whom that "someone" is?

Now, don't get me wrong, a certain amount of fear is good and helps us to be alert in order to protect ourselves from danger. I am talking about a gripping uneasiness that causes us not to trust others or always feel as if we are unable to find peace or rest.

We all realize there is a crime problem in Johannesburg and we are all aware of the number of rapes, hijackings and other violent crimes. But who can we count on to protect us from all of these dangers? Who will be the superhero that flies in to save the day? Are there days when you just wish God would swoop down and show that He is powerful and awesome!

(TRANSITION) Church we are not alone in feeling unprotected or insecure; we are not alone in emotional pain of feeling unprotected. Jesus has walked in our shoes and this is evident during this 2nd temptation recorded by Matthew...

(GOD)

Reading the account of Jesus' wilderness temptation we will find one word used over and over by the devil – **IF**. Look at what the devil says to Jesus...

*“**IF** you are the Son of God...throw yourself down..”*

The devil had taken Jesus up to the highest point of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was the tallest building in Jerusalem.¹ It would be like the devil taking Jesus to the top of the Carlton Centre in the CBD. From the top of the Temple Jesus could see the whole city of Jerusalem. **Then the devil does something very clever** (or at least he thinks it is clever)...HE BEGINS TO QUOTE SCRIPTURE TO JESUS...look at this...

Matthew 4:6b - For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'”

The devil is quoting from Psalm 91:11 & 12. There is only one problem with this whole scene. The devil is taking these scriptures and using them to try and get Jesus to commit sin!² This is not the first time the devil has taken the Word of God and tried to use it against people. We need only to read Genesis 3 where the devil “misquotes” what God said and then Eve eats of the forbidden fruit and mankind falls into sin.

Psalm 91 is a beautiful Psalm about how God will protect those who put their trust in Him. It is a Psalm detailing how God will be a shelter to those who will abide in Him...let me read a portion of this Psalm too you.

¹ *Life Application Bible*, pg. 1534 – notes on Matthew 4:5

² *Life Application Bible*, pg. 1534 – notes on Matthew 4:6

9 If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge-10 then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. 13 You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

The Lord is not telling us we will never feel unprotected or insecure (you need to read the whole Psalm). These are natural emotions we all have because we live in a world full of danger. What God is telling us is this: in times of danger He will help us! His angels will guard us when danger comes our way.

So why would the devil try to use this scripture to tempt Jesus? Basically the devil is trying to convince Jesus that God is unable to protect Him in the face of this danger.

“Throw yourself down!” screams the devil, “God will command His angels to protect you.” In other words, the devil is saying, **“MAKE GOD PROVE HIMSELF TOO YOU!** Put GOD to the test and see if He will do what he says he will do!”

But Jesus does not fall for this trick of the devil. He does exactly what He did to overcome the 1st temptation – He confronts the lie with truth from the Word of God. Jesus says to the devil...

“Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

Jesus pulls from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy chapter 6. This is a chapter where God is reminding Israel of their responsibility to keep the commandments and teach them to the next generation. He then reminds them of how He has led them out of slavery and is leading them to a land of promise.

Remember in the Old Testament how Israel had disobeyed God and were made to wander in the Desert for 40 years? Well, one day during these 40 years of wandering, the people were camping at a place called Rephidim but there was no water to be found (Ex. 17:1). The people began to fight with one another saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” (Ex. 17:7). God tells Moses to take his staff and strike a rock. When Moses strikes the rock water comes out and the people are satisfied.

The Israelites problem was not really water! Their problem was they were not sure if God was able to protect them in this place where there was no water. In their insecurity and feeling as if God was not going to protect them – THEY DECIDED TO DEMAND GOD TO PROVE HISSELF TO THEM! THEY PUT GOD TO THE TEST – AND GOD WAS NOT VERY HAPPY ABOUT IT! It only showed how little Israel trusted God.

So when Jesus says, *“Do not put the LORD your God to the test,”* He is telling the devil, “I will trust in God. He is able to protect me. He is able to make water come out of a rock. If He can do this for Israel in the Desert then He will do this for me in this Desert. He will not fail me – HE IS ABLE TO PROTECT ME!”

(WE)

Is it possible that in our moments of fear and insecurity we try to get God to fly in like superman and save the day? We see the insecurity of the world all around us.

- Job losses, financial crashes, banks on the verge of meltdown.
- War, hunger, famine and more.

We see these things happening and we are tempted to say, “Where is God in all of this? Why doesn’t He just show up, snap His fingers and make it go away?” We are asking the same question asked by the Israelites when there was no water, “IS THE LORD AMONG US OR NOT?”

Do not allow the devil to tell you that because suffering exists in the world that God is gone or distant! God is able to protect us. Remember the words of the Psalm –

If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge-10 then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

There will be times in all of our lives when we are weak (just as Jesus was) and the devil will come and show us the world systems can protect us. He will say, “You might as well put your trust in the powers of this world because you just can’t trust whether God will show up or not! You may as well find your protection in the arms of the comforts of this world.”

(TRANSITION) But I say, NO! I will make my dwelling with the Most High! I will find my refuge in the One who is able to keep me from falling! What about you?

(YOU)

- Are you ever tempted to look around at your circumstances and say, “Is the Lord among us or not?”
- Are you ever tempted to look at how the world and Christians suffer and say, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

- Do you ever look around at the crime and the violence we all are so familiar with and say, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Do you ever just want God to somehow show up and save the day? Let me assure you this morning that God will protect you – if you abide in Him. That doesn’t mean we will never face dangers or somehow we will be exempt from the problems of this world. It simply means the Lord will be with us when we face danger, uncertainty, insecurity and more.

- The police will fail to protect us
- Government policies will fail to protect us
- Wealth will fail to protect us
- People will fail to protect us.
- **God is able to protect us!**

What is that one area of your life where you have thought, “I don’t know if God is with me in this or not?”

- Young lady – maybe you have never experienced the true love of a real father. Your dad is not really a dad but a guy who shows up every now and then. You feel as if you are somehow unprotected because there is no dad. So the devil whispers, “Just find protection in the arms of another man. Find comfort in the attention men give you and the affection they show you in a sex. That’s your protection; that’s who will save the day!”

GOD IS YOUR PROTECTOR – HE IS YOUR FATHER. He will not take advantage of your weakness and exploit your vulnerability. He will pull you close to Him and love you the way a Father should love his little girls.

God is not some guy who sends you a MXit message pretending he has something great for you if you will just expose your body – God is a real Father who will protect you from these things – if you will abide in His dwelling place.

- Young man – maybe you feel hopeless to be a man! You feel like you have to harden your heart and act like you don't care about things because that is what other men do. You may feel that if you show your feelings or demonstrate your worship to God that other will look down on you.

God will protect you! You can be a man of integrity and authority without being corrupt or abusive. You can have a relationship with God that sets an example of what men ought to be. Don't be tempted to think you are out here alone.

What is it today that you fear the most? What is that one thing you feel as if you cannot be protected from? What is that one thing that makes you feel insecure or vulnerable? What have others done to you that has caused you to feel unprotected (raped, molested, manipulated, broke their promise too you, etc.)?

Would you bring that thing to Jesus today and allow Him the opportunity to show you how He will protect you as you abide in His house. Would you make up your mind that this week when that thing tries to tempt you away from the presence of God you will simply look at it and say, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Invitation to pray