

# Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Quality: Average)

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[ 0 : 00 ] As the Lord should enable me, I would ask your attention to a portion of the Word of God in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 4 and verse 1.

The first verse of the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. I expect with most of us who read the Word of God carefully, and I trust prayerfully, there have been times when we have read certain things, particularly concerning the life and actions of the Lord Jesus Christ, when we have said, why did the Lord do that?

Or why did the Lord commit that thing to happen? Or why did the Lord allow that particular thing to come to himself and he had to endure that?

It may seem, as we read the incident through, that in the first place, it may seem to be so contrary to what we should have thought would have happened under similar circumstances, and so contrary to what we should have thought that if the Son of God had the power that is credited to him, he would have had run out to have happened.

[ 1 : 33 ] Of course, we have been singing of one of those events, the great event of the Lord Jesus Christ's life, when at last he was taken by the hands of wicked men, and he was lifted up upon that cross of the chalet, and there he suffered such dreadful suffering in his body, and finally he died.

And we might well say, why was that? And of course, there were those who interpreted this action on the path of the Lord Jesus Christ as expressive of his complete helplessness, as though he just could not do anything to avert it, that there was no possibility of saving himself from that which he was enduring.

But we have been singing those words, insulting foes, it's true. What is true? He cannot say insulting foes, it's true.

The words of gracious meaning have, though men get scorned by you. No, friends, there is a sense in which, if it was true, he could not save himself.

The matter was so bound up with the purposes of God and eternal love, that God had set upon a great number of sinners upon this earth that no man could number, and there the responsibility of performing those things on behalf of that people, whereby they might be delivered from the guilt and the power and the dominion and the shame of sin, was so bound up with the person, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, that in the fulfillment of that which he had meant himself to do, it was impossible that one he should have to go to the garden and to the cross.

[ 3 : 21 ] Well now, it does seem with those few words of introduction, that we might come and ask a similar question here. Why was it that Jesus was led of the Spirit into the world and is to be tempted of the devil?

Why was it that he did not resist such a cause? Going to some desperate and painful place to endure hunger for 40 days as he did, and then finally to have the culmination of those temptations in the ones that are recorded in this particular passage of the scripture.

We might well say, why did the Lord allow this? Surely it would have been possible for him to have turned aside and said, no, I will have nothing to do with the devil.

I will not allow him to approach me. He has been the great adversary of man, and the great adversary of my people all through the ages. I am determined never to see him and never to look upon him and never to have contact with him.

But you see, my friends, for purposes of everlasting mercy and grace, the Lord Jesus Christ allows himself, quite a bit even stronger.

[ 4 : 32 ] He delights in doing the will of his Father. He delights to be led of the Spirit of God in every way of the perfection of holiness. And therefore, my friends, there is no resistance, there is no indifference, there is no carelessness to the meaning of the Spirit of God in this aspect.

But there willingly and lovingly, he submits himself as perfect man to that command-leading power constraint, forceful constraint of the Spirit of living God that brought him into the wilderness with his express purpose that he should be tempted of the death.

There is a word that one of the Gospel writers uses in connection with this incident because it's not only in the Gospel according to Matthew that the temptation in the wilderness of the Lord Jesus Christ is written.

And there in another Gospel we read, and the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. You may say, what? Talk about compulsion with regard to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How could anybody compare him to go in that way that he did? I do not want us to think, my friends, that the use of such a strong word as that signifies that there is any opposition or resistance on the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in the man.

[ 5 : 56 ] But I believe that what we read in that word is this, that there the mighty power which the Holy Spirit of God thus possess was known in and apart in all its fullness by the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No resistance, no opposition, no carelessness, no indifference, no desire to walk in any other way, but the full power of the Spirit of the Lord was even upon the Lord Jesus Christ as there his feet were laid into the wilderness to be tempted to the dead.

But there is a question, of course, that needs to be answered. Why did he go there? Why did he go there? Well, perhaps, perhaps it may be the Lord's will that one should attempt in his own poor people.

Why do you open up some of those things concerning the reason why he went there? But I want, first of all, to put it in a few words that even if there should be some person here who should only hear just this portion of the word that I might speak, that it might be born upon their spirit.

My friends, if you and I are children of God by divine choice and by divine birth, by renard peak elevation, then Christ went into that wilderness for us.

[ 7 : 18 ] That's why he went there. To use a theological term, his going into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil was essentially vicarious.

He did it for others. My friends, there was no need for Christ to vindicate his mighty power. He ever possessed it. There was no need for Christ to demonstrate that he was mightier than the devil.

He'd shown it throughout the ages of the world's history. But now, as that representative man, as that great Adam that stood forth on behalf of the whole of the Church of Christ and in those blessed essential covenant purposes of everlasting love, the Lord Jesus Christ, there, my friends, he takes the place of his people.

He stands where they shall stand. He endures for them. He demonstrates his mighty power that you'll be the only hope of poor, tempted sinners, beguiled of the devil through all the ages.

And there, they can look away to the one who has not only promised that he will bruise the serpent's head, but they can look to one who's done it and still can do it, even dressed evil.

[ 8 : 36 ] Oh, my friends, this is the wonderful truth that is set before us here. It's a vicarious suffering of Christ that he endured within the wilderness at the hand of the devil.

And it was real suffering. There must not be any doubt about that, my friends. There are a tremendous lot of people who will say, well, because Christ could never sin, the Son of God could never sin, and because he had that great power and determination and holy will and gracious purpose and never to become a crime to the wicked one in that sense that sin could ever find a place upon his person.

therefore there was no real temptation and there was no real justice. But all my dear friends, if only we apprehend the real nature of sin, and every approach of the one who is, oh, shall I say, the very author of sin itself, the eve of the devil, the approach of that one under the person of the Lord Jesus Christ must be, by reason of the coming of defilement into his very presence, it must have been an occasion of most tremendous distress and suffering to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember, friends, the attack was made of Christ and the ground of the word of God. As so on, the people of God would be deceived by the devil today.

That wicked one, he knows the scriptures, perhaps I might say, my friend, better than anybody within this building. He knows just how to present them and alas also how to distort them and how to leave a word out here or add another word to them there and there to present a word which will become a word of temptation to them in beguilement and deceit.

[ 10 : 26 ] Don't forget that the Lord said on one occasion, perhaps some of you have plainly proved this, that the devil has come to you like an angel of light if it were possible to deceive the very elect of God.

It's not because, my friend, he lacks the power of deception. It's not because there is darkness instead of light in the things that he says is light and which would appeal to your understanding and to your natural reason and to the must of your flesh and the pride of your life.

It isn't that. My dear friends, the prevention is the prevention of divine grace because in the hour of danger a precious Christ for the Holy Ghost shall appear. Or don't forget, it's the one that has overcome by whose grace there should be an overcoming in times of fierce temptation.

Do you wonder, friends, that those who went to death and had to be set them and set before them all kinds of beguising, interesting, pleasurable things that appeal to their flesh, do you wonder that the cry of a living soul has been this, Lord, save me or I perish.

my dear friends, it's no good you going into the army of human provision and thinking that by this sword and the other shield that you can take up and that you have made that you will be able to overthrow the power of the wicked one.

[ 11 : 44 ] Lord, save me or I perish. It's the work of the power of God that is appealed to that mighty one who vicariously suffered for his people where not only did he go to the cross and to the garden, indeed, my friends, there the vicarious sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ reached their great and solemn and tremendous culmination but also throughout his life and not least as he goes there into that wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Friends, he does it for his people's sake. Oh, don't forget what Christ said as he went to his baptism. It is needful for us that we fulfill all righteousness, all righteousness, even in the face of the greatest enemy that we can fulfill all righteousness, in the face of the greatest foe, the gold man can ever know that we shall fulfill the righteousness of God.

Oh, friends, here is a wonderful thing. Is there a poor sinner here this morning that says, after the week that I have lived and the temptations that have come upon me and the besetment of the devil and, alas, the sin has been found in my mind and heart and will, even if I have been prevented from enormous outward acts of iniquity, why, in the face of what I know of myself, surely there cannot be mercy for me.

Oh, friends, don't forget that word. He knoweth our pain and remembereth that we are done. Lies are the part of the pity of these children, so there will pity in them that fear him, for he knoweth our pain and remembereth that we are done.

You say, it was a dear friend that became my temptation. It was a person who was very near to me that tempted me this week. And it was even a child of God, a friend of mine, a brother or a sister in the Lord Jesus Christ that became, quite innocently in their place, a means of temptation unto me.

[ 13 : 54 ] Friends, it was just so with Christ, just so with Christ. Remember the time when one of the politics so devotedly could be wonderfully blessed with instruction, instruction of the Holy Ghost?

Do Christ which say on one occasion, Wipe these of flesh and blood have not revealed this thing that thou dost know to me that my father which is in heaven. And yet to that one, Christ has to say, get them behind me, Satan.

Thou savest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. Don't think, my friends, that the devil hasn't a power and ability to use, perhaps, a person who deeply loves you like a pawn in his own hand to present some very horrible temptation to you.

don't think that in the love that you have of the world and of guiding and of ambition, you may say, but rightly so, look at the responsibilities I have, the care of my wife and my family and my children, surely I must look after those things.

Yes, but oh, friends, how easily the devil can take possession of those things and lead you away from Christ, lead you away from the Lord, and from his word and from his will, using what may seek to you to be quite legitimate right things in order to lead you astride and deceive you in that way.

[ 15 : 23 ] No wonder the Lord Jesus Christ in the great hour, the devil's hour, the hour of darkness, he describes it as. No wonder that he goes to his disciples as there they fall asleep through weirdness and grief.

And he says to them, could you not watch with me one hour by one hour? How many hours, my friends, did Christ suffer? Oh, think of those 30 odd years of his life of suffering here below.

It was right from the very beginning, even in the earliest days. Notice, the hatred of the devil aroused in heaven with all that solid determination to destroy him.

Yes, oh, friends, it's a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and there is that man of sorrows and acquainted with grief treads that pathway of distress and suffering.

He treads it for his dear people's sake. But now, coming to the words of the text more particularly, I want you to notice, friends, that there was a particular time when the Lord Jesus Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

[ 16 : 36 ] And that is why this morning I had coupled the two chapters together and read the verses of the preceding chapter with the verses that speak of the temptation of Christ in the fourth chapter of the gospel by Matthew.

And there at the conclusion of the previous chapter, you will notice, friends, that there appeared to one whose name was John the Baptist, a good and gracious man, a witness unto God, Christ himself says there was no prophet greater than John the Baptist in the whole of the history of Israel.

No, not one greater than him. And to this great prophet one appears. And he says to John concerning that ordinance of baptism that John had been practicing in the midst of the people there as they came and under the influence of the Spirit and the preaching of the words of John they repented of their sins and they saw mercy at the hand of God with their iniquities and turned away from their ungodliness and confessed every deed and renounced them as these things were done so John according to the teaching of God and of his word he baptized them in joy now this great one draws near John is the greatest prophet of them all and yet this John says to him you come to be baptized of me but I need to be baptized of me wherefore comest thou me immediate acknowledgement you see of the complete inferiority of the position and the power and the ability of this man

John great prophet that he is to that one that has now come stood by his side but notice my friends the objection which of course seems to be quite a right objection arises from a right spirit not this a spirit of humility and a recognition that here is the glorious son of God he cometh and what is he compared to that one John Lord Jesus Christ overrules the objections of John very kindly he says it is needful for us that we should fulfill all righteousness John it's a good thing that I should be baptized it is the will of my father that I should be baptized you have taught the baptism of repentance under remission of sins but I must be baptized with thy baptism and then I teach my disciples to be baptized with a confession of praising me believing in me as the saviour of the lost the son of God sent for the remission of sin there will still be the need of repentance the whole that repentance will now known to be a gift a gift through myself by my cunning

I shall be exalted as a prince of the saviour to give repentance and remission of sin John have come across characters who said to you you teach us to repent but sin is such an appealing for as you will be to my nature that how can I truly and fully and rightly repent of my sin it means pulling it away and never indulging in it again if I do not do that then I appear to be a hypocrite before then I confess that I repent but I am the contrary part my friends with that it is impossible I know but not with God for with God all things are possible there were those who came to God that were not without the planted influence of the spirit God upon them and there my friends they truly did repent of their sins but now notice my friends there is to be a complete unfolding of the great way of grace and of life and salvation in one blessed person that has appeared upon them in one of the disciples of Christ of the later age in the life of

[ 20 : 54 ] Jesus he says show us the Father and it's a light of life let us see God there was really no power God there was there was a voice of God it is as though the disciple comes to the Lord Jesus Christ he says to him look there was a time when Moses saw the back parts of God and his very voice was shining as a result of this contact with him we would see something more than Moses saw show us the Father and it suffices us my friends there's a wonderful thing the long after God to long to know God to long to see God to long to hear the voice of God there was a dear man years ago you know David the sweet psalmist of Israel he said that the heart handed out of the water book so handed my soul after thee O God may I very affectionately ask you this morning to what degree you really panned after God now just put in the balances of the sanctuary

God enabled you in the soaring the things that you've been doing the past week what have you been taking after right now among men success in some particular walk of life the accomplishment of some ambition with regard to the trialing in the schools of human thought so that you may hold some exalted position among men what have you been seeking after this week what are you saying I love my gardens and I love my pleasures and I love my recreation and I'm determined to indulge others what have you been seeking after this really friend what is it a matter of self indulgence or is it something that is the consequence of divine gift within your soul which is created in your heart and love to the Lord Jesus Christ you see that has caused you to side as the heart panting after the water so panting my soul after the over how many of you before you went to sleep last night just dropped your head as it were before the

Lord maybe my friend the anxiety and concern of it didn't allow you to get on to sleep as quickly as you thought you might do and there you had to have this painful and yet blessed occupation a prayer and exercise towards God and what do you pray oh Lord let me see thee tomorrow let me have a list from thyself tomorrow let me hear some voice from thyself within my soul tomorrow Lord let me know that I really do believe in God let me know also by blessing spiritual experience that thou art the God of my soul and the God of my salvation so Jesus went down to John and there he was baptized with him now there were three things that happened on this occasion first of all I want you to look at the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and I would have you see him there at the hand of

God being immersed in waters of John and coming up out of the waters of John and I would have you see there the deep humiliation of the Son of God before his father and before men a humiliation that will signify by the very thing that he did and by the constant repetition of it throughout the ages which will signify friends something that is yet to become to become upon the dear Son of God that is absolutely essential for my salvation and your salvation except Christ doubtless referring to the ordinance of baptism as a sign or an expression or a symbol of that which is to come he says I have need to be baptized he said I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straightened until it be accomplished in other words

Christ says there is one way for me I cannot I will not I must not depart from that one way I am straightened to that one way and I would not be but straightened to that one way and that way leads me to the cross and the garden and the shine and the spitting and it leads to the agony and the darkness and the absence of my false face from my soul it leads me to that it leads me to that it leads me to that that I say I have a baptism an evening and overwhelm me I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straightened until it be accomplished our friends we have before us in this hour at this particular time you see holy which

[ 26 : 24 ] Christ was led of the spirit of the wilderness we have set before us all the exceeding preciousness of the son of God and the great suffering which he loved to our souls he was willing to endure is there a tear in your heart if not in your eye as I say those words that he is willing to endure willing to endure for me instead of I am grievous revulter against God that I have been is it God himself that there is appointed a suffer for me for me what thinking of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme you can't be right in the rest unless you think right to get him the man of God years ago wrote a book entitled The Suffering Saviour if you can ever get a copy of it you get it and read it through but you know you need something more than a book written by the most devoted and accomplished hand that this world has ever known concerning the dear son of

God you need the hope these truths are from the fleshy tablets of your heart you need them to be written there in an hour that will acclaim you in the utmost horror for your soul that will bring you to that place where you will have to cry with the public and God be merciful to me be sinner or you'll have to come if he writes these things from the flesh tablets of the princess one thing that is written there will never be right and that is denying the memory of Jesus Christ from your heart last that we should become to war but the Lord is not going to allow that that night you should be alive a witty sinful woman queen of England Mary I refer to know my history of bloody Mary because of her mental persecution of

Protestant Christian that woman said before she died that when she died the name of Carrie would be found written of her heart!

because Carrie was lost to the British government during her lifetime or near the hour of her death for the name of Carrie would be written of her heart of cross friends there are more noble things that have a place within our right we so your dear wife your dear husband and child that little one of whom you weren't agreed by death you lost them but you've never forgotten them oh yes they are in your heart but friends God grant this name this name this precious name oh what name is there to be compared with Jesus what name this and friends to a poor woman who there is in great range she has told Christ in the court age of the tomb and there he sees the stone rolled in front of it the next morning or least the third morning she got out there to see if she can find it to his empty he's gone man appears she doesn't know who he is the resurrection appearances of the

Lord Jesus Christ are sometimes marked by this their eyes behold them not that there was any impotivity about the appearance of Christ not my bit that there was any doubt about it being Christ himself he said on one occasion handle me and see the spirit has not flesh!

[ 30 : 30 ] Christ himself the essentially always one the faithful through with it says I'm barely Jesus barely Jesus but for those who she doesn't appreciate her eyes are holding she she should not see her and there as she looks upon this line she said if you tighten your line tell me where you laid and I'll take you the night still there sorrow and grief and disappointment and misapprehension of the the possibility to truly understand the meaning of it all with all the things that this may create within the mind and the rebellion that may rise up even against God who has admitted such a thing to what is so dearly love my friends even that cannot quench the plight of love and the holy desire toward Jesus Christ the name is written upon the fresh tablets of the heart

I will bear it away I'll bear it away if it's only a little clay or little plot of ground in which I can bury this lovely body I'll bear it away I'll bear all the expense and all the trouble of it and all the shame and all the opposition and all the persecution that may come to me by reasonable identification with Jesus Christ I'll bear it all says Mary I'll bear it all the knife is written upon my heart I'll bear it all Mary Mary my Lord of my God only one word does it with only one word all friends this morning Christ should speak your name like that Mary Mary he knows where you are even if you wander so far away from him he still knows where you are even if you got within your heart everything he knows what you are and where you are and there before weeping grief-stricken misty fire woman oh the others are old

Mary Mary Mary my friend spoken like that it becomes the new night in Israel doesn't he does it becomes the new night now says Mary I never knew that he thought of me like that I never knew that he loved me like that I never knew that he would go to such lengths for me like that I never thought that he would die for me like he!

that would away my sins and now I know that he speaks mindly Mary Mary Mary Mary But of course this is just the end when he speaks like that he's got something for you to do you know friend you won't all go into a cook you won't all have a glass in the Sunday cook he's got something for you to do you know when he speaks like that go and tell my disciples and Peter that I go to Galilee and there shall they speak me ye are witnesses of these things witnesses of my grace and of my power witnesses of my life because I have written it from the way of my heart because I have written it there I will never fail thee as a measure of grace to be able to testify of me wherever you may be and in whatever condition you may find yourself and the pain for the opposition may be however strong the temptation of the devil don't forget that the one who suffered to you that dreadful baptism and the very wrath of God against the sin of his people is the one that has met thy greatest enemy and dealt with him trust him he will not forsake thee though thou hardly occupy thee he will never never leave thee nor will let thee quite leave him the

Lord may be blessed you amen to to Oh