

Matthew

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 00] Now as the Lord may help me, I will speak from the word in the gospel according to Matthew, the fourth chapter, the first verse.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

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

So, I cannot remember that I have ever brought the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ specifically before you in the ministry.

The temptation, of course, has entered into the ministry, but I cannot remember that the occasion of the Lord's personal and specific temptations has ever come before our consideration.

[1 : 23] Well, it's full time that it did. And may the Lord direct me to speak helpfully on what is really a very mysterious subject.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness. When? Why? Why? Immediately after his baptism. And it will be remembered that recently I brought the occasion of the Lord's personal baptism in Jordan before you.

Well, after that remarkable baptism and all that attended it, then he was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness.

Now, this might seem very surprising. That immediately after his baptism, he should not proceed at once into his ministry, but be led into the wilderness.

For consider how the matter stood. For thirty years, of that incomparably valuable life of Jesus Christ had been lived in obscurity.

[2 : 57] And only three years remained before his death. Of those thirty-three years of his life, thirty were spent in obscurity.

There remained only three. And so much to be done. There was his teaching ministry to be fulfilled.

The calling of the apostles and others to follow him. There was his miracles to be wrought. There was the gospel church to be founded in.

And yet, he was led of the Spirit into the wilderness. This was surprising.

You might have thought, now everything that was needful for his ministry had been fulfilled. Surely he would have entered immediately upon it.

[4 : 05] He had been initiated by baptism, for that's what it was. as regards that, he had fulfilled all righteousness.

He had been wonderfully declared to be the Son of God by a voice from heaven, thereby establishing his divine authority for the ministry.

and the Holy Spirit had come upon him so that, as we read, he was filled with the Spirit to enable him to fulfill that ministry and then, instead of entering upon it, he led into the wilderness.

Forty more days to go by before he entered on his ministry. But there was an ease being for this. I think it was Martin Luther who said on one occasion that three things make a minister, prayer, meditation, and temptation.

And, certainly, that was applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer, meditation, and temptation, in that sense, so much entered into his personal experience and his ministry.

[5 : 44] And in speaking, if I may be enabled prophetably and instructively to speak of the Lord's temptation, I don't wish to have said it before you in a detached way and manner.

It is in my mind to show how the temptation of Jesus Christ bears upon his people even to this day.

There's a certain relationship between his temptation and theirs. and it is his temptation as it bears upon theirs and upon ours is so very instructive and so very helpful.

And particularly, for I know not, of course, the spiritual phases of the spiritual life of this congregation, if it should be that any of this time passing through an experience of temptation, this might be a word from the Lord, very suitable and very helpful.

the Lord make it so. Because as I've sometimes said, suitability is good but application is better.

[7 : 09] It isn't only the suitability of the word that does us good, it is the effect of it in its application to our hearts that conveys the blessing.

Now, as the Lord may help me, I will open up the subject along these lines. There is first the leading, then was Jesus led up of the spirit, then there is the tempter, he was led up of the spirit to be tempted of the devil, and then there is thirdly the temptation itself, he was led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

There is the leading, the tempter, and the temptation for us now to engage our hearts and minds to.

And first the leading, then was Jesus led then, after that wonderful experience, then, and this is not unusual, my friends, in the experience of the followers of Jesus Christ to be led into a very trying and sometimes distressing experience and period after a time of his special blessing.

When it might seem as though we have got fairly clear of our difficulties and conflicts and so on, there has been, we will say, some special measure of power come upon our hearts and we seem to have emerged perhaps from a time of difficulty and trial.

[9 : 16] Then we may be led in a very, very strange and mysterious way into what we didn't expect to be led into. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness so that it is nothing to stagger us or to cause us to entertain grave doubts about past experiences if we find ourselves in a wilderness.

Neither is it to be assumed that we've made a mistake if we feel we have been led of the Holy Spirit if we find ourselves in a wilderness.

What I mean is this. We are very apt to form in our own minds our anticipations of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Now we feel and rightly so too much desire to be led by the Holy Spirit into the paths of truth and grace into the knowledge of Jesus Christ into a deeper experience which we very much need into a deeper experience of those things that we have already believed.

That's the meaning of the Holy Spirit we anticipate. Things will be more clear to us which will be more enlarged in our experience we shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ if we are led of the Spirit so that it may seem very very surprising that we find ourselves in a wilderness.

[11 : 17] Will we expect to find ourselves in a very fruitful place? Now it was so with Jesus Christ then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness not down to the cities around the Sea of Galilee where there are multitudes waiting to be taught numbers of sick people needing to be healed and much needing to be done that only the Lord Jesus Christ could do but no the Spirit leads him not down to the cities of the plain but into the wilderness of the desert then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness there is much to be pondered over in this expression then was Jesus led up of the Spirit because

I gather from this and also it is my understanding so far as that goes that the Lord Jesus Christ never acted independently of the Holy Spirit indeed he was never independent of the Holy Spirit mind because the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ were entirely one in the divine nature but when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world he came into this world as a servant to do the Lord's will as he said I cannot do mine own will by the will of him that sent me and I believe that the will of God the Father that sent him was continually conveyed and directed by the

Holy Spirit what I mean is this the leading of the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ was a continual leading in which he did the will of God the Father I believe that all through his earthly life the Lord Jesus Christ moved acted spoke taught under the meaning of the Holy Spirit and what is even more mysterious and profound we read of his death itself that it was by the total spirit that he offered himself unto God an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour I believe the Holy Spirit was in his birth conceived of the

Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit was in his life leading and guiding and I believe the Holy Spirit was in his death then was Jesus led up of the Spirit for I feel no question although I see our translators put this word Spirit not without capitals but I feel no doubt in my own mind that it was the Holy Spirit himself Jesus was led up of the Holy Spirit now let us consider this leading how does the Holy Spirit lead how does the Holy Spirit lead Jesus Christ would you feel now I believe that the Holy Spirit did lead Jesus Christ exactly in the same way that he leads his people for as many as are led by the

Spirit of God they are the sons of God I believe that as it was the same Spirit it was the same kind of leading what is the leading of the Holy Spirit then the leading of the Holy Spirit as I understand it believe I have experienced it consists in an influence upon the mind directing it to the other that way or to that end that the Holy Spirit intends to lead to I believe the leading of the Holy Spirit is an express influence exerted on the mind and on the heart of such a nature as to direct the mind and heart in that way the Holy Spirit is leading I know that in our own case we need to be careful about this and not to take every kind of feeling that comes on our mind as being the leading of the

[16 : 36] Holy Spirit some things are helpful in this for one thing the leading of the Holy Spirit may always be checked by the scriptures themselves always and I have lived long enough and seen enough to know what mistakes are made by thinking that to be a leading of the Holy Spirit which is not agreeable to the scriptures themselves godly people have made great mistakes that way and if very occasionally I've endeavoured to point out what the scripture says I've seen that turned down on the ground but we are led so and so we are led so and so no my friends we must check up what we feel to be the leading of the

Holy Spirit by the teaching of the Bible no one will ever ever ever convince me that the Holy Spirit needs anyone differently from the plain teaching and direction of the word I cannot conceive that the Holy Spirit can be so divided against himself as to lay down certain principles of truth to guide us in our faith and practice in the scripture and then lead us differently in our own personal cadence you may always seek to check up the leading of the spirit by the scriptures the leading of the spirit the influence of the spirit is to guide our hearts and minds into a willingness to walk in those ways of truth that are set before us in the scriptures that's safe that's needful that's helpful leading but now as I said when I began my mind is not to speak on this subject in a detached way but to show you how it bears upon our present case and experience in these matters scriptures now when we read that Jesus was led up of the spirit into the wilderness we may not only understand that the

Holy Spirit exercised such an influence upon the mind of Jesus Christ as constrained him to go into the wilderness but that he did not voluntarily of himself enter upon this place and experience of temptation he was led in the gospel of Mark we have this same point expressed more forcibly that he was driven of the spirit into the wilderness now we must be careful here actually that word driven does not imply the sense of violence but an especially strong power of that influence for the

Lord Jesus Christ did not welcome temptation he did not go into it voluntarily he did not wish for it he would not have gone into it had he not been led into temptation I think that we may see even in this an echo of that expression in the Lord's prayer as we call it lead us not into temptation that is to say putting it in plain words Lord I dread the thought of temptation I feel so weak in myself so apt to fall I dread temptation lead me not into temptation then for all that it may be that it's the Lord's will we should come into temptation much as we dread it and would avoid it and would prefer another path altogether than that which leads us into this wilderness but what if it should be the Lord's purpose that we should enter into an experience of temptation what then well now that is how

I understand this expression that Jesus was led he would not have gone voluntarily even though he was the son of God and thus possessed of such divine power by reason of his divine nature he never voluntarily went into temptation it is still worse my friends for us to not only be willing for temptation but to actually go into it of their own mind and their own will now to go into temptation temptation unless we are led that way or into circumstances that involve temptation unless we are led into those circumstances is an exceedingly dangerous thing to do for a child of God there is because in such a case as that it is not led into it temptation but just goes into it what can he expect but that he were left to fall in it he most likely will so that this is the way the right way not to go into temptation voluntarily and even to pray that prayer lead us not into temptation temptation and yet if we are led into temptation to consider that it was one who was led before us into temptation and that was

[23 : 28] Jesus himself to be brought into temptation if we do not voluntarily go into it is no evidence that we have not been under the meaning of the Holy Spirit then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness now just a word on that into the wilderness and that suggests a good deal that I feel shows much light upon this experience of Jesus Christ he was led into the wilderness now the wilderness is a lonely place where this wilderness was there have been various conjectures I don't attempt to understand where it was nor as far as

I can see does it matter at all it is very certain that the wilderness was a lonely area Jesus Christ was alone in the wilderness alone and here again it is very true a wilderness attempt an experience of temptation is a very lonely path to walk in I know that it is very true that there's no temptation taken you but such as is common to man that is to say everyone is subject to temptation but when we come into it we seem to be alone in it alone in the wilderness there was no one there with Jesus Christ except the devil no one there was no one to speak a word to him to give him any kind of such comfort as we will say his followers might have given him

Jesus and the devil were in the wilderness alone and that makes temptation all the more distressing that one feels to be alone we have very little company in temptation of this nature and we are very apt to suppose that we are not understood that this is a path others have not trodden well Jesus Christ was alone in the wilderness no disciples with him and what is more the wilderness was not only a solitary place but a silent one when the devil tempted him there was no competing voice with that of the devil no competing voice no one else was speaking it was the devil's voice alone in the wilderness for

Jesus was alone with the devil and the devil was alone with him if I may put it to you like this the devil had Jesus Christ all to himself and there was no one else there's no doubt that this made the wilderness temptation all the more distressing for there was no one with him in it no voice except the voice of the devil no manifest presence in that lonely area the wilderness and in the wilderness experience of temptation and I've never gone into this before like this this morning in the wilderness of experience of temptation there's a silence in this sense that sometimes we don't even get a word from the Lord the Lord is silent no one else can

I understand and the devil is speaking suggesting prompting urging than was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness and now for the last part this morning I will set before you some reasons scriptural reasons and instructive why Jesus Christ must need be led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted and of course one reason was this that he was the captain of our salvation and our salvation means salvation over temptation as well as salvation over sin and condemnation for the whole matter comes down to this it's a conflict between sin and the soul and sin is the means or the objective of satanic temptation now to gain the victory of salvation means to gain the victory over temptation

[29 : 35] Jesus Christ is the captain of our salvation not only with regard to his redemptive work at Calvary but with regard to his victorious conflict in the wilderness he was the captain of our salvation our salvation from temptation now how could he have been the captain of our salvation if he never fought a battle to be the captain of salvation means to go before to lead to take the brunt now how could Jesus have been the captain of our salvation if he had never engaged in conflict with the devil and the devil had never engaged in conflict with him now to be the captain of our salvation he must be led the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and it was such a conflict and such a victory as affects us to this day now only think what would have happened if he had been defeated in that temptation everything would have come to nothing his work ruined his salvation aborted his purpose in coming to this world rendered of none effect it was necessary that he should get the victory over the devil himself in order that his people might come off victorious now

I want you to carefully ponder over this the scripture sets before us two leading men two head men theologians speak of them as federal heads the first was the first man Adam the whole human race by natural generation sprang from the first man Adam then the scripture speaks of the second man the Lord from heaven the second Adam the second Adam the Lord from heaven is the head of the church of the whole redeemed number of those to be saved and will be saved in and through Jesus Christ the captain of their salvation he is the head of the spiritual body the church and everyone who has spiritual life receives it from Jesus

Christ by a spiritual birth as truly as we receive our natural life from the first man Adam by a natural birth birth so the first man Adam is the head of the human race the second Adam the Lord from heaven is the head of the church now they were both tempted and we know how the first man Adam was tempted a doubt was injected into his mind about what God had said a very very very favorite device of the devil to inject doubt into the mind about what God has said half God said was a subtle injection of doubt and the first man Adam fell to it was overcome by temptation ruined all his posterity because I've often explained to you poison was put into our nature in the first fountain of it in Adam poison a fountain you poison every stream that flows out of it the whole stream of human life was poisoned when Adam sinned and have it thus in the scripture for by one man's transgression sin entered into the world and death by sin for that all have sin the whole human race is ruined because their head fell by temptation but the second Adam the Lord from heaven comes to redeem his church and people the same enemy attacks him too now he falls not by temptation he stood where Adam was defeated he conquered where Adam fell and therefore our federal head Jesus

Christ has brought us all all victorious through his victory over sin and temptation temptation I know temptation can wound us distress us hurt us injure us that is to say if we in any measure fall by it but our head stood our head stood he overcame he overcame in himself and he overcomes for all his people brethren if he fell we should have fallen but because he stood we stand and his victory will make us more than conquerors it all depends on Jesus Christ entirely it all depends on Jesus Christ now I must close there was one other point I would like to have mentioned but I'll just introduce it to their for long in the discourse this morning then was

Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted why not only it might that it might be proved that he was victorious of a temptation that it might give him sympathy for his tempted followers don't overlook that what it expressly said that we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity mark the feeling not the disciples nor the observation but the feeling we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities for he was in all points tempted like as we are yet without him what then therefore he is able to succor them that are tempted we cannot fully enter into all his temptations but he can fully enter into all of ours all and not only enter but enter sympathetically not only enter sympathetically but enter helpfully there I will leave the subject this morning will veritably you you

[38 : 01] Thank you.