

# Matthew 4:1-11

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Date: 21 January 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] That's chapter 4 and verses 1-12. If you've got a church Bible, page 809. I don't know what you feel about tests. Some people like tests, don't they?

! Some people like being tested. I never like tests or exams. And testing is a risky thing, doesn't it? Testing exposes something about us.

And even God's Son had to be tested. Even the Lord Jesus, in his life, needed to be tested. And when you come to the start of chapter 4, you'll see Jesus tested and tempted here by Satan. And we mustn't think that Jesus is on the defensive. And we must realise that Jesus is not a helpless defensive. You'll notice, won't you, at the end, at the start of chapter 4, he is led out of the wilderness by the Spirit.

In other words, Jesus, after his baptism, is as if he walks forth to meet his enemy. He deliberately takes him on. He confronts him. He faces him down.

[ 1 : 15 ] He faces his enemy and our enemy in order to engage in combat and conquer him. It's the Son of God, chapter 4, going to war. And he is on the offence.

And we must remember that. It is a deeply, deeply instructive passage. There's lots of different ways you can take Matthew chapter 4 and look at it for profit. But I know it's very important that you and I take heed of this passage.

There's going to be lots that we need to leave out. But I want you to notice three things. I want you to notice, first of all, the fact that you must remember. The fact that you must remember. And we see it in chapter 4, verse 1, in the light of chapter 3, verse 17.

So you'll notice, Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. It doesn't say the Spirit led him into temptation.

The Spirit led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. But do you notice those two things go together? That he is led by the Spirit whilst he is being tempted by the devil.

[ 2 : 20 ] And you and I need to remember that because what is true for Jesus can sometimes be true for his people. That you and I can begin to think that when we are being tempted by the devil, then surely we are not being led by the Holy Spirit.

Surely God has cast me off. I wouldn't be feeling this temptation. I wouldn't be undergoing all this pain in life and temptation in testing. But no.

They are not mutually exclusive. Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit. And yet at the same time he is being tempted by the devil.

And you can be tempted by the devil and that is not an indication at all that you are not being led by the Spirit. And you may say, well, of course I know that. My theology is such that I know God would never forsake me.

I know that God would never give me up. He would never leave me in temptation. That's what I believe. But there is a way, isn't there, that what you believe goes down the drain sometimes in the heat of battle. That what you believe and what you know can dissipate.

[ 3 : 30 ] It's like the morning mist. And it doesn't stand up real well. And one thing that hits you as you begin to think, I wonder, has the Lord given up on me?

Has the Lord let go of me? Maybe I'm not his child. Maybe God isn't delighted in me. Did you notice the sequence? So chapter 3, verse 17. Just look at that verse.

Behold a voice from heaven. It's the voice of Jesus' Father, his heavenly Father. And he says, God says, This is my beloved Son with whom I'm well pleased. I'm delighted in him. And then the next verse, he's led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And you sometimes think, don't you, that when you're being tempted and pressed and tested, that God isn't delighted with you? Surely, God is displeased with me.

But that isn't necessarily true at all. Jesus is the one. And God says, I am delighted with him. And now he's being tempted by the devil. So how do these two things hold together?

[ 4 : 39 ] And this has always been the case. But you remember this fact. You may be the child with whom God is very pleased with. Where you are just now. And yet you can be very and severely tempted.

And that has always been true. We draw loads of illustrations. But let me give you one from Charles Haddon's Virgin. He was the great Baptist preacher from the 19th century. And he described a time when he was a teenager.

Perhaps about 15. And there was a time of temptation that he met. It's a little bit 19th century in its language. But I don't think you'll have any problem picking it up. He says, I remember a certain narrow and crooked lane in a certain country town along which I was walking one day while I was seeking the Saviour.

All of a sudden, the most sudden oaths that any of you can conceive rushed through my mind. I put my hand to my mouth. To prevent the utterance. I had not that I know of ever heard these words before.

But these things sorely beset me for half an hour. Together the most fearful implications were dashed through my brain. Oh, how I groaned and cried before God. That temptation passed.

[ 5 : 48 ] But in many days it was renewed again. And when I was in prayer or when I was reading the Bible, these blasphemous thoughts would pour in upon me more than at any other time. I consulted with an aged godly man about it.

And he said to me, Oh, all this, many of the people of God have prayed before you. But said to me, do you hate these thoughts? I do, I truly said.

Then said he, they are not yours. And so on. You see, in other words, we can be tempted severely. We can be intensely tempted.

And it does not negate the fact that you are God's child if you've trusted in Christ. But you may wonder about that. So you must remember this fact. That you can be the child with whom God is greatly delighted in.

And yet you can be severely and intensely tried. And you may need to take a pen or a pencil or a highlighter.

[ 6 : 52 ] And you may need to draw a box around chapter 3 and verse 17. And you bring the bottom of that box down to the bottom of chapter 4 and verse 1. And you scribble out the little section that says temptation of Jesus.

Scribble out the chapter division. Because you've got to know that it's possible to not only be God's beloved son with whom he's well pleased. To be one of God's sons or daughters.

But also to be still severely tempted. And you're still the son or daughter with whom he delights. And even while you're led by the Spirit. Even while you're being tempted by the devil.

So the fact you need to remember. Secondly, let's go about the strategy you should watch. And I want us to look at these temptations. And to see a little bit how does the devil approach Jesus. And how he approaches him.

It's possible you know as you look at this. That you will say this is Jesus' temptation. And it comes to him especially as the son of God. As the head of his people. And there is something unique about that.

[ 7 : 59 ] We'll see that a little bit later on. There's something unique about his temptation. That Jesus is facing. And it's not geared to me. And you'd be right about that. It's geared to him as.

In fulfilling the office of a saviour. A lord. But it doesn't mean that the principal thrust of these temptations. Don't also come to you and I as Jesus' people. There's a common element.

And that we must not leave out. There are common elements to this temptation. And in each temptation as you study it. You will find that the devil is saying.

The tempter is saying. There's some lack here. There's some deficiency here. There's something missing. There's something inadequate.

There's a deficiency. So for example. When he says in verse 3 and following. If you are the son of God. Turn these stones. Tell these stones to become bread. When he says.

[ 8 : 59 ] If you are the son of God. If you are the son of God. Verse 3. It's not as if the devil was doubting. He was the son of God. Devils know better than that.

Devils are better believers than believers sometimes. The if there is an assumption. So if your work colleague says. I'm going to the shop. You say to them.

If you're going to the shop. Can you get me a pint of milk? You're not doubting that they're going. You're saying. Since you are going to the shop. Do this.

And that is what we have here. The devil is saying. Since you are the son of God. If you are the son of God. And then he goes on. If you are the son of God. Which you are. You ought to tell these stones to become bread. What suggestion is he making?

Let's get into this. He is saying. If you are really God's son. God should not put you in a position. Where you have this need. He should not put you in a position.

[ 9 : 55 ] Where you have this deficiency. It is not fitting. For one who claims to be the son of God. So use your own power. To supply this deficiency. In which God has placed you.

In other words. He is saying. As he may say to our situation. Ah. You are God's child. You are God's child. And yet look at your life. Look at your extreme needs.

If you flick on to the God channel. Or TVN. You will have heard something like this. Comes from a teacher. Or a pulpit. Or a platform.

And it says something like this. If you are a Christian. You should have no outstanding need. It is not God's will.

For his children. To be in these beggar type situations. Why? You are a child of a king. It is not the will of God. That any of his children. For example.

[ 10 : 56 ] To be ill. That's not God's will. Or for you to be poor. Or for you to be unemployed. That is not God's will. So I'm asking you right now. Touch the screen. Or ring.

This number. And so to the Lord. Give a gift to the Lord. And I'm going to pray. That God will eliminate your needs. Have you ever heard that kind of line? It's very much like the line isn't it? If you are the son of God. You shouldn't have this extreme need. There shouldn't be this kind of deficiency. It's not fitting. And so when you hear that kind of line.

That is the voice of a very unholy spirit. That is the voice of the devil. Do you notice in the next temptation. That the devil takes him to the pinnacle. Or the high ledge of the temple.

And he says. If you are the son of God. So you are the son of God. Throw yourself down. And we need to pick up. What is the temptation really to it here? He's saying.

[ 11 : 55 ] How much faith do you really have? How far do you really trust God Jesus? He comes to Jesus. And he says. I've noticed.

You quote the Bible. To me in your answer. I'm glad you did that. Jesus. You do believe the Bible. Don't you? Don't you believe that the Bible. Is the inerrant word of God? Don't you believe Jesus. In standing on the promises. Is you're not like one of those liberals. Are you? You're not a liberal. That thinks. That the shadow. Of your mighty. And the shelter of the most high.

That's just poetic. Imagination. You really do believe God's word. Don't you Jesus? That these are God's words. In scripture. So let me just say.

I found you one. I found you one. On my calendar this morning. Or it was in the promise box. And it's from Psalm 91. Verses 11 and 12. Let me quote it to you. It says.

[ 12 : 48 ] For he will command his angels. Concerning you. To guard you. On all your ways. On their hands. They will bear you up. Lest you strike. Lest you strike your foot. Against the stone. You believe that's the word of God.

Don't you Jesus? Do you believe that promise? That these are the very words of God. Can you stake your life on them? And if you trust God that much.

Then I want you to take the leap of faith. Jump off the button. I want you to prove God. And what he's doing has nothing to do with trusting God whatsoever.

But testing God. And that is wrong. Satan is attacking Jesus. If you are the son of God. Surely you have to trust in God. How much faith do you really have?

How far are you willing to trust God? See Satan can enter. Can't he? Into the most holiest of places.

[ 13 : 46 ] He can talk about the most spiritual subjects. Like faith. And the word of God. And let me be clear. It is really sinful to mistrust God. To not trust him. But it's also true.

That when we get into this. How much faith do I have? You are coming right into the clutches of the devil. It is very, very subtle.

That when I begin to say. How much faith do I have? How much faith do you have? What have I done? I have turned to myself.

And I'm looking. In. And I'm saying. Here is my faith. How much do I have? And I'm looking at my faith. And I'm trying to measure it.

Whereas. Faith. Works in exactly the opposite way. Faith is focused on its object. What matters. [14:47] With faith. Is in what? Or in whom? Do you have faith? And when I begin to say. How much faith do I have? And I get into that.

Then I'm turning away from the object of faith. And I'm looking inward. And I'm into this introspection in this case. And I've got into navel.

Spiritual navel gazing. And when you do that. You are frequently disappointed. Because all you will find. When you look into your heart.

At. How much faith do you have? Is. It's just such a little thing. Isn't it? And then the temperature can be okay. Do you see?

It can come to something like this. To you. If you had faith. You wouldn't be so afraid. Would you? Isn't there something you're afraid about this morning? Well.

[15:43] If you had faith. You wouldn't be so afraid. And you know that you're afraid. Don't you? So you must not have any faith. Or if you had faith.

You wouldn't fear. You wouldn't fear. Cancer. You wouldn't fear unemployment. And you know that you do fear it. And so you begin to say.

Maybe I don't have faith. All I'm trying to say. Is that in that situation. There can be more temptation than truth. I'm not trying to get you to have a weak faith.

I'm not trying to get you to. To give in to your fears. Or anything like that. But sometimes the enemy can make capital out. If only you had this much faith.

And then he goes to Jesus again. He says in verse 8. And he shows him. All the high mountains of the world. And all their splendor. And he says. No Jesus. You can have all these. If you just bend the knee once. And worship me.

[16:45] The interesting thing is. God has already promised. Jesus. The mountains of the world. And the kingdoms of this world. And the splendor of this world. Already in Psalm 2 verses 8 and 5. It's already been promised to Jesus.

And the way of temptation here. Is not the lure of glory. But the way to it. Jesus. Jesus. You can get this. You can get what God has promised.

And so if you remember last week. Chapter 3. Jesus has already taken his stand at his baptism. He said in essence. When I was baptised. I am willing to stand in the place of sinners. I am willing.

To walk to the glory. By the path of suffering. At the cross. And so I will stand in the place of sinners. And I will suffer in their place. And now the tempter is saying to him.

It's in chapter 4. You don't have to go through all that. You don't have to go to the cross. You don't have to go to the suffering. You just go to glory now. You can get glory right now. Bow your knee. And I think there's a suggestion here.

[17:53] Again of deficiency. As if. Perhaps Satan could say. If you really are the Messiah. And you really are the coming king. You really ought to have some of the trappings of glory. Around you. There ought to be.

An observable evidence. Of your position and your success. And can you see how that comes to the Christian? There really should be. If you are a Christian.

More evidence of your success. You say you're the child of God. Look at you. I don't mean economic success. Or prosperity necessarily.

Says the devil. But I mean spiritual success. Why if you're a Christian. Why is it that you're struggling with the same sin. For years and years and years.

That's been bugging you for ages. If you're a Christian. Why do you get so shattered. By disappointments. If you're a Christian. Why are you so depressed.

[18:49] And down all the time. Christians don't get depressed. And he continues. And he says. If you're a Christian. There should be a radiant joy.

There should be power. And bristling confidence. Why are there more marks of your success. In your Christian life. And so the devil rattles on.

As one writer has put it. If you really are the child of God. You say you are. Why do you still have so many problems. And that's a temptation. Is it any wonder.

That as you look at the strategy. Of the enemy here. That you and I need to bow our knees. And pray. That the Lord would protect us. As Paul prayed.

For the church of Philippi. When he prayed. That their love. Would have found more and more. In knowledge. The depth of insight. That you'd be able to discern. What is best. The strategy you should watch.

[ 19 : 44 ] And then thirdly. The provision you can use. Do you see that. Part of that in verse 2. What you see in chapter 4.

Is the Lord Jesus conquering the evil one. And you have this. Conquest spelled out. It's implied in verse 2. He mentions doesn't he. After fasting.

40 days and 40 nights. He was hungry. That's the understatement of the sanctuary. Is it? Why does he mention that? He mentions that.

Because of Exodus chapter 19. And 19. 24. And Israel is in the wilderness of Sinai. And in Exodus 19 verses 1 and 2.

Moses. Is up on Sinai. The mountain. And he is receiving the covenant of God. And they are in the wilderness. And Moses.

[ 20 : 39 ] Goes up on the mountain. On Sinai. For how long do you remember? 40 days and 40 nights. Exodus 24. 18. What happened. During those 40 days. And 40 nights.

The amazing thing is. Israel. Start worshipping. Don't they? The image of the golden calf. Israel was faithless. They were faithless.

Faithless to the Lord. In the shadow of the covenant mountain. And you have 40 days and 40 nights. That was a period of Israel's faithlessness.

And infidelity in the wilderness. And in Matthew 4. You have verse 1. Jesus led up by the spirit. Into the wilderness. And there is another wilderness. And another Israelite.

Israel that started off as one individual. And became a nation. Is now back to one individual. And there is another 40 days and 40 nights.

[ 21 : 36 ] But there is a different result. Because these 40 days and 40 nights. Are the period of Jesus faithfulness. You see what he is doing. He is overcoming the evil one.

He is reversing. The faithlessness. Of his people. And as he conquers. This evil one for himself. And his people. There is a divisive. Decisive victory.

It is a victory. It is a victory. It is a great victory. But I want to say to you. It is a victory for now. As well. That is what the writer has in mind.

Certainly what the writer of the Hebrews. Has in mind. So in chapter 2 and chapter 4. He pulls this out. You see the one. That can help you.

And aid you. When you are tempted. Is the same one. Who has conquered temptation. Himself. And so there is nothing. So comforting.

[ 22 : 33 ] As knowing that the one. Who is enduring. The same temptations. As we face. And the same kind of testings. We face. Is sympathetic. In our difficulties. And in our trials.

But you might say. Well that is ok. But Jesus can't really know. What I am going through. Jesus cannot really stand. Where I stand. Because he didn't yield. To temptation. He never gave in. He doesn't know. How bad it is. He doesn't know. How. He never struggled. Like I struggle. He needed to succumb. To temptation.

Like I do. He can't really say. He knows what it is like. But that is not true. Because you see. It is only the one. Isn't it? It is only the one. Who has withstood. The whole onslaught.

Of the enemy's attack. To the very end. And is still standing. That is the only one. Who knows the full strength. Of the enemy. The one who surrenders.

[ 23 : 33 ] Before the attack. Is completed. Doesn't know. The full intensity. Of the artillery. And the weapons. And the power. And the vigour. And the offence. Of the enemy.

It is only the one. Who can withstand. To the end. And is still standing. At the end. That knows the full vigour. Of the enemy. It really is absolute nonsense. When somebody says. Jesus needed to have consented.

And succumbed. To temptation. He knows far more. Of temptation's power. Than you can ever fathom. And so what it means. Is that we have one. That is tempted. In every way.

Just as we are. So do you have a family. Who may not be sympathetic. To you being a Christian. Jesus in John 7. Had brothers. That didn't believe in him. He had no sympathy.

Within his family. We lose loved ones. And there's no mention. Is there. Of his earthly father. Joseph. After he's 12 years old. In the gospel.

[ 24 : 31 ] And most scholars. Conclude. That his earthly father died. Jesus knows. What it was like. His best. And his closest friends. Deserted him. One of them. Betrayed him.

People tried. To use him. He knew. What it was. To be looked down upon. On the basis. Of where he came from. He faced. And endured. Death.

Death. With a plus. Because. His death. In his death. There was something. That was connected. In some way. With the absence of God. He was tempted. In every way. Just as we are.

And that's why. Because he himself. Suffered. When he was being tempted. He is able to help.

Those who are being tempted. He knows. What the road is like. And he can bring.

To you help. In your time of need. There's a legend. About when Hitler. Was in control. Of

Germany. That on one condition. On one occasion.

[ 25 : 27 ] Hitler was going to visit. A cathedral. And in preparation. For that. The officiating clergy. Came into the cathedral. And told the congregation. Everyone whose father. Is Jewish. Must leave the cathedral.

A number of people. Got up. And walked. Dejectedly. To the exit. Then the clergyman. Came in.

And said. All those whose mothers. Are Jewish. Must leave this sanctuary. And according to the legend.

The statue of Jesus Christ. At the front of the cathedral. All of a sudden. Became animate. And he stepped down. From the cross. And sorrowfully. Began to walk out of the cathedral.

Now I know it's a legend. But you get the point. Tempted. Sharing in every way. With us. And it's no wonder.

That this Jesus. Understands. What you are facing. And he's able to help. And so he's coming down. From that high mountain. And he's not eating any bread. He's had no dramatic rescue.

[ 26 : 28 ] From God. And he doesn't have any. Royal robes. Flowing on his shoulders. Or a crown on his head. He's the son of God. And he's just the same. Just obedience.

That's all. And obedience. Salmon. Makes much noise. It just pleases God. That's all. Let's pray.