

## Paradise Regained (Matthew 4:1-11)

**Introduction:** *Paradise Lost and Regained*

I who erewhile the happy Garden sung,  
By one man's disobedience lost, now sing  
Recover'd Paradise to all mankind,  
By one man's firm obedience fully tried. (Milton, *Paradise Regained*)

Adam was in a Garden—Jesus was in a desert. Adam was filled—Jesus was hungry.  
Adam had a wife to support him—Jesus was alone.

### 1. God leads his children into temptation, and delivers them out

God leads us into the path of temptation in just the same way he led our Savior into its path (compare 2Chr 32:31, 2Sam 24:1, Matt 26:35, Luke 22:31-32, Rom 7:18, Ps 119:113, Ps 81:11-12). It is in this way he exercises our faith, destroys our pride, teaches us to wage spiritual warfare, makes us to prize the help that Christ alone can give us, and he teaches us to hate sin. As Luther famously put it: “The devil is God's devil.”

**Application:** *We also must learn to stand alone—but not alone*

Jesus overcame his temptation alone, but not alone. He had a sense of the Father's presence and of the Spirit's leading, and a living knowledge of the Word of God. These are what support us in the hour of solitary temptation. This is one reason why God's people have sought to be alone with the Lord: If they could walk with him alone, they would never face temptation alone. You should seek the company and help and encouragement of other believers; but you must learn to love the company of God alone.

### 2. Temptations for Jesus, and for us

(a) *Serve yourself*

He's committed himself to a 40-day fast, and the tempter comes to him at his weakest point to entice him to use some of his power on himself to satisfy his physical desires.

(b) *Step out in faith*

The subtlest and most powerful temptations are those which suggest what appears to be good. “What you need to do is trust the Lord and step out in faith.” Don't you trust the Lord? Won't you walk by faith and not by sight?

(c) *Save yourself from the cross*

Jesus himself refers to the devil as “the ruler of this world” (e.g. John 12:31).

**Application:** *We must learn to overcome temptation in the same way.*

Jesus was truly man and he resisted his temptations with precisely the same resources that are available to us and none other. All three of the Lord's replies are taken from Deuteronomy 6:13-8:3, a section that deals with the lessons from the time Israel spent in the wilderness. These were the lessons Israel failed to learn, but Jesus, a new beginning for the people of God, has both learned them and practiced them.

**Conclusion:** *Living in the victory of Jesus*

Our adversary has already been conquered; he may continue to rage, but his doom is sure.

But here's our point of rest;  
Though hard the battle seem,  
Our Captain stood the fiery test,  
And we shall stand through him. (Milton, *Paradise Regained*)

## Abraham, Moses, and Christ (Galatians 3:1-14)

**Introduction:** *About the series so far*

Jesus had had plenty to say to the Pharisees (e.g. Matt 23). Likewise, the apostles vigorously contended with and appealed to various misbelieving groups, from the unbelieving Jews outside the church, to the Judaizers, proto-Gnostics, Antinomians, and others inside the church. Hardly any NT letter fails to publish their errors and warn the church against following them (see 1Cor, Gal, Jude, 2 Peter, 1-3 John for striking examples). This was passed to elders in the early church: “There are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households” (Titus 1:10-11, see Acts 18:28). Paul himself is very sensitive of the way he is coming across to many: “For do I now ... seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal 1:9-10). This kind of ministry is not at all pleasing to men—and especially in our day.

**Review:** *The foolish Galatians (v. 1)*

When Paul went out to preach the good news, he says, he resolved to “know nothing but Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). He calls his gospel, “the message of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18). And he says the same thing here to the Galatians. “Before [your] eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified” (Gal 3:1). If you require works to be justified, you nullify the grace of God (2:21), overturn the truth of the gospel (2:14), reject the offense of the cross (5:11), and believe another gospel, which is no gospel (1:7). Those who follow it are accursed and cut off from Christ (1:8, 9).

### 1. From Christian experience (v. 2-5)

God gave them his Spirit, and confirmed what they believed with miracles. *And they didn't even have to be circumcised.* They didn't have to *do* anything. They just believed, and they received the Spirit who worked wonders among them. Now, he asks, “Do you really think that you can begin with the Spirit and then be made complete in the flesh?”

### 2. From Abraham (v. 6-9)

Was Abraham given a righteousness from God after he was circumcised? No, he wasn't circumcised until 14 years after it says, Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6, 17:10ff). What came later could neither perfect Abraham or take anything away. There were plenty of converted Gentiles in the OT who never were circumcised, such as Naaman, the Ninevites, and Nebuchadnezzar.

### 3. From Moses (v. 10-14)

The law is not a ladder by which we climb higher than where Christ has placed us. It is what points us to and drives us to Christ, showing us what he's done for us — the character and the fruit of which the promised Holy Spirit bears within us by the power of the gospel, to the glory of God.

**Conclusion:** *The rich blessings that are ours*

Spurgeon: “When the Law comes to curse a man who believes in Christ, he says, ‘What have I to do with you, O Law?’ You say, ‘I will curse you,’ but I reply, ‘You have cursed Christ instead of me. Can you curse twice for one offense?’ Behold how the Law is silenced! God's Law, having received all it can demand, is not so unrighteous as to demand anything more. All that God can demand of a believing sinner, Christ has already paid, and there is no voice in earth or Heaven that can accuse a soul that believes in Jesus” (*Christ Made a Curse For Us*).