

# **Paradise Lost**

**by**

**John Milton**

**Web Book Publications**

# Paradise Lost

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## Book I

"If thou beest he--but O how fallen! how changed  
From him who, in the happy realms of light  
Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine  
Myriads, though bright!--if he whom mutual league,  
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
And hazard in the glorious enterprise  
Joined with me once, now misery hath joined  
In equal ruin; into what pit thou seest  
From what height fallen: so much the stronger proved  
He with his thunder; and till then who knew  
The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,  
Nor what the potent Victor in his rage  
Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,  
Though changed in outward lustre, that fixed mind,  
And high disdain from sense of injured merit,  
That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,  
And to the fierce contentions brought along  
Innumerable force of Spirits armed,  
That durst dislike his reign, and, me preferring,  
His utmost power with adverse power opposed  
In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,  
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost--the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield:  
And what is else not to be overcome?  
That glory never shall his wrath or might  
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
With suppliant knee, and deify his power  
Who, from the terror of this arm, so late  
Doubted his empire--that were low indeed;

That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
This downfall; since, by fate, the strength of Gods,  
And this empyreal substance, cannot fail;  
Since, through experience of this great event,  
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
We may with more successful hope resolve  
To wage by force or guile eternal war,  
Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,  
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy  
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven."

So spake th' apostate Angel, though in pain,  
Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair;  
And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:--

"O Prince, O Chief of many throned Powers  
That led th' embattled Seraphim to war  
Under thy conduct, and, in dreadful deeds  
Fearless, endangered Heaven's perpetual King,  
And put to proof his high supremacy,  
Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate,  
Too well I see and rue the dire event  
That, with sad overthrow and foul defeat,  
Hath lost us Heaven, and all this mighty host  
In horrible destruction laid thus low,  
As far as Gods and heavenly Essences  
Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains  
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,  
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state  
Here swallowed up in endless misery.  
But what if he our Conqueror (whom I now  
Of force believe almighty, since no less  
Than such could have o'erpowered such force as ours)  
Have left us this our spirit and strength entire,  
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,

That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,  
Or do him mightier service as his thralls  
By right of war, whate'er his business be,  
Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,  
Or do his errands in the gloomy Deep?  
What can it the avail though yet we feel  
Strength undiminished, or eternal being  
To undergo eternal punishment?"

Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-Fiend replied:--

"Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,  
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure--  
To do aught good never will be our task,  
But ever to do ill our sole delight,  
As being the contrary to his high will  
Whom we resist. If then his providence  
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,  
Our labour must be to pervert that end,  
And out of good still to find means of evil;  
Which ofttimes may succeed so as perhaps  
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb  
His inmost counsels from their destined aim.  
But see! the angry Victor hath recalled  
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit  
Back to the gates of Heaven: the sulphurous hail,  
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid  
The fiery surge that from the precipice  
Of Heaven received us falling; and the thunder,  
Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now  
To bellow through the vast and boundless Deep.  
Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn  
Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.  
Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,

The seat of desolation, void of light,  
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend  
From off the tossing of these fiery waves;  
There rest, if any rest can harbour there;  
And, re-assembling our afflicted powers,  
Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,  
How overcome this dire calamity,  
What reinforcement we may gain from hope,  
If not, what resolution from despair."

Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate,  
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes  
That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides  
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,  
Titanian or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,  
Briareos or Typhon, whom the den  
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast  
Leviathan, which God of all his works  
Created hugest that swim th' ocean-stream.  
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,  
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,  
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,  
Moors by his side under the lee, while night  
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.  
So stretched out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay,  
Chained on the burning lake; nor ever thence  
Had risen, or heaved his head, but that the will  
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
Left him at large to his own dark designs,

That with reiterated crimes he might  
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought  
Evil to others, and enraged might see  
How all his malice served but to bring forth  
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy, shewn  
On Man by him seduced, but on himself  
Treble confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured.  
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames  
Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and, rolled  
In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.  
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight  
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,  
That felt unusual weight; till on dry land  
He lights--if it were land that ever burned  
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,  
And such appeared in hue as when the force  
Of subterranean wind transports a hill  
Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side  
Of thundering Etna, whose combustible  
And fuelled entrails, thence conceiving fire,  
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,  
And leave a singed bottom all involved  
With stench and smoke. Such resting found the sole  
Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate;  
Both glorying to have scaped the Stygian flood  
As gods, and by their own recovered strength,  
Not by the sufferance of supernal Power.

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"  
Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat  
That we must change for Heaven?--this mournful gloom  
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he  
Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid

What shall be right: farthest from him is best  
Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme  
Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,  
Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,  
Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,  
Receive thy new possessor--one who brings  
A mind not to be changed by place or time.  
The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.  
What matter where, if I be still the same,  
And what I should be, all but less than he  
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least  
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built  
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:  
Here we may reign secure; and, in my choice,  
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.  
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,  
Th' associates and co-partners of our loss,  
Lie thus astonished on th' oblivious pool,  
And call them not to share with us their part  
In this unhappy mansion, or once more  
With rallied arms to try what may be yet  
Regained in Heaven, or what more lost in Hell?"

So Satan spake; and him Beelzebub  
Thus answered:--"Leader of those armies bright  
Which, but th' Omnipotent, none could have foiled!  
If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge  
Of hope in fears and dangers--heard so oft  
In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge  
Of battle, when it raged, in all assaults  
Their surest signal--they will soon resume  
New courage and revive, though now they lie



Groveling and prostrate on yon lake of fire,  
As we erewhile, astounded and amazed;  
No wonder, fallen such a pernicious height!"

He scare had ceased when the superior Fiend  
Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield,  
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,  
Behind him cast. The broad circumference  
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb  
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
At evening, from the top of Fesole,  
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,  
Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.  
His spear--to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great ammiral, were but a wand--  
He walked with, to support uneasy steps  
Over the burning marl, not like those steps  
On Heaven's azure; and the torrid clime  
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire.  
Nathless he so endured, till on the beach  
Of that inflamed sea he stood, and called  
His legions--Angel Forms, who lay entranced  
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks  
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades  
High over-arched embower; or scattered sedge  
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed  
Hath vexed the Red-Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew  
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,  
While with perfidious hatred they pursued  
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld  
From the safe shore their floating carcasses  
And broken chariot-wheels. So thick bestrown,  
Abject and lost, lay these, covering the flood,

Under amazement of their hideous change.  
He called so loud that all the hollow deep  
Of Hell resounded:--"Princes, Potentates,  
Warriors, the Flower of Heaven--once yours; now lost,  
If such astonishment as this can seize  
Eternal Spirits! Or have ye chosen this place  
After the toil of battle to repose  
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find  
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heaven?  
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn  
To adore the Conqueror, who now beholds  
Cherub and Seraph rolling in the flood  
With scattered arms and ensigns, till anon  
His swift pursuers from Heaven-gates discern  
Th' advantage, and, descending, tread us down  
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts  
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf?  
Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen!"

They heard, and were abashed, and up they sprung  
Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch  
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,  
Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.  
Nor did they not perceive the evil plight  
In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;  
Yet to their General's voice they soon obeyed  
Innumerable. As when the potent rod  
Of Amram's son, in Egypt's evil day,  
Waved round the coast, up-called a pitchy cloud  
Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,  
That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung  
Like Night, and darkened all the land of Nile;  
So numberless were those bad Angels seen  
Hovering on wing under the cope of Hell,

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