

## Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) climbs Mont Ventoux



Have you ever climbed up a mountain? You can see a long way from the top of a mountain. On 26<sup>th</sup> April 1336 Francesco Petrarch climbed a mountain. It was a mountain in France called Mont Ventoux. You can see it in the picture. It was a clear day. Petrarch climbed the mountain

because he wanted to see the view. He wanted to know what it felt like up there. In Petrarch's day some people thought mountains were just a nuisance. "They get in the way and stop us travelling," they said. Petrarch did not think like this. "The mountain is there," he said, "so I will climb it!"

Nowadays there is a road to the top of this mountain. There was no road in Petrarch's day. Petrarch set off with his brother. Two servants went with them. Petrarch had an idea. His brother and the servants were going straight up. Suppose he took a longer route? That would be less steep and less hard. He found a path that looked easier. Off he went. The path was easy but it did not go the right way. Petrarch had to stop. He had to go back. He had to climb up the hard way after the others. Then after a while he saw another easier path. Once again he set off along it. Once again it went the wrong way. Once again he had to go back and follow the others. Up and up they went. It was hard. Had Petrarch learned his lesson? Not yet! One more time he tried to find an easier path. One more time it went the wrong way. One more time he had to go back. He had to climb the hard path with the others.

"Climbing this mountain is like life," thought Petrarch, "the path of sin is easy. To do what is right is hard. To do what is sinful leads to hell. There must be something good inside people when they are born. That is what makes some of them able to live good lives." Petrarch thought some more when he got to the top of the mountain. He looked round at the beautiful view. "How silly people are," he thought, "they do not take care of their souls. They should be good. They should do what is right."

Some of Petrarch's ideas were good. The path of sin *is* easy. To do what is right *is* hard. Sin does lead to hell. But then Petrarch went wrong. He had been listening to people round him talk. "Human beings are the most important things there are," they said, "they are more important than God! They have goodness inside them." Petrarch

did not know the Bible well. If he had known the Bible well he would have thought of something else. He would have remembered “all have sinned<sup>1</sup>...” He would have remembered “there is none righteous no not one<sup>2</sup>...” The Bible tells us the truth. Human beings are born sinful. They cannot be good on their own. That is why Jesus came to die. He took the punishment for our sins if we trust in him. In Petrarch's day there were many clever people who made beautiful pictures, statues and buildings. They did this to give glory to people rather than to God. They did not understand where the gifts of painting, sculpture and building came from. We can look at their grand work now. When we look we can see that those gifts came from God. We can see this if we know the Bible. Petrarch and his friends had forgotten it.

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1 Romas 3:23

2 Romans 3:10