

PILGRIM IN THE DESERT

“What worries you, young pilgrim, desert bound?
You feel this dryness and the sandy wind?
These sun-parched days and icy nights you’ve found,
Do they appall you, as you try to walk
Across this lonely plain without a friend?
Would you enjoy someone with whom to talk?”

“I do not think I know your face or voice.
But come and join my walk, if that’s your choice.”

“Of course I will, young man! You need a friend
As a companion while you cross this plain.
This desert is a killer! Who would send
A lad like you into this bleak abode?
Out here it’s broiling solitude and pain!
Your journey isn’t even on a road!”

“When I began, the way was shown to me,
And though I have no road to walk upon,
I’m on a trail whose windings reach, you see,
Quite far before me in a narrow style.
My wise instruction is to hurry on,
To travel quickly . . . mile after mile.”

“Absurd, young friend! You need to stop and rest!
What wise instruction would demand this test?”

“My Wise Instructor freed my wayward life
And said to leave the world and worldly strife.”

“But no one’s wayward! In the world there’s peace . . .
From what did your Instructor give release?”

“My Master turned my darkest night to day
And changed my inner sadness into joy.
I knew the turmoil of the worldly way.
I played with lies. I choked upon the fruit
Of sin with all its power to destroy
First spirit-life, then soul-life afterward.
And long I fled, with judgment in pursuit,
Until I fell upon the Corner Stone
And broke my heart and heard His Word.
He promised me I’d live my life anew

With sacred peace within I'd never known,
If I would follow Him my whole life through."

"Well then, if that's the case, please, let me show
A better, faster way for you to go . . ."

"Oh no! He set my steps to follow here . . .
To alter them might be to fall, I fear."

"Don't fear a little moment's rest with me.
I know some lovely sights you'd love to see."

"The far horizon with His promise of
Eternal life is quite enough a sight
For me, and its dimensions soar above
The highest worldly prize this life bestows.
I'd rather see my steps made clear with light
Than stare at glories that a dark world shows."

"You seem so sure that you have not been fooled!
Where is this One speak so freely of?
If reason reigns, your words are overruled!
You can't be certain that His path is true!
And if you are the object of His love,
How could He choose this desert trail for you?"

"Tempt me no more! I recognize you now . . .
You also, Satan, to the Lord must bow!"

"You think I'm harmless, stripped from my disguise?
I know your silly weaknesses, young fool!
He lets frail babies fight an enemy who's wise!
And now, not just my tongue will trouble you,
For I will work with any painful tool
I can, to crush your will and spirit, too."

"Back off, you serpent, bound for lake of fire!
You see this Sword He's given me? Look well!
Its sting will make your wicked tongue retire!
Be still and turn away, or I will slash
This blade down to your black heart's core from hell!
Your doom is certain when the Lord returns,
When all your lies disperse like windblown ash,
When Heaven's light invades your heart and burns!

“Enough! Don’t swing His cutting Word at me!
I’ll go for now, but when this scorching sun
Has sapped your strength and you ache wretchedly,
My snares will trip and trap you on this trail!
You’ll pray for death to end your foolish run,
And I will laugh to watch you fall and fail!”

“My enemy has flown away, dear Lord.
I somehow didn’t know the fiend at first,
But he has fled before Your Spirit’s Sword.
And now I feel so weary from the fight.
My feet are sore, my tongue is dry from thirst.
But on I’ll go, before the coming night. . . .

“Halt, gallant pilgrim, by the Lord’s command!
You see that grassy hill, those fruit-filled trees,
And fountain flowing close beside? Don’t stand
Amazed! Go there to eat and drink and rest.
But tarry prayerfully in taking ease,
Returning quickly to your noble quest.”

“Fair angel, from celestial hosts above,
First, let me kneel and praise Him for His love!”

“Sing out, dear pilgrim! God is pleased to see
That you stayed true and won the victory!”

— *David L. Hatton 1/10/1969 (revised 8/6/1993)*