

# A stone of stumbling: 1 Peter 2.1-10

**My thanks again to Michael Pye for today's TFTD ...**

Today I am thinking about stones. We read about the stone that was rejected, but was then made into a cornerstone and then, by a little shift of the imagination, became *a stone of stumbling* to those who again reject it. Such stones are hard symbols of very real matters.

When you build a wall out of rough stones there is a lot to think about. Though not a professional, I have tried it here and there in three different countries, sometimes with cement and more often without (so-called dry-stone walling). I have learned two practical lessons. First, the stone you first think of may not be the best one for the spot you have in mind. One that was left aside might be better after all. Second, little stones help to keep big stones in position. Therefore, if stones are roughhewn, or not hewn at all, you need a good supply of little stones to tuck in here and there. You hardly need any tools, just a small hammer to tap them into place as you go along. You need a bit of practice. And you need to get a feel for the kind of stones you happen to have available.

What does this have to do with Peter's message? Well, I think we all know the part about the Messiah being rejected, then being vindicated after all, being made into a kind of headstone for the edifice being built by God.

But what about the little stones? A little while ago, when my wife Christine and I still lived in Marburg (in Germany), our granddaughter Clara (Robin's niece) came to visit and took a walk around the town with Christine. After going this way and that, Clara suddenly said, "What are these little shiny things in the pavement?" They were in fact small brass plaques bearing a name and a date. Each one, outside the relevant house, commemorated a Jewish person who had been taken out of their home and transported to a concentration camp during the Nazi terror. This is not easy to explain to a little girl. But Christine did so, and she also showed her the site of the synagogue which had been burned down and later left unreplaced, as a memorial. The terrible lesson is that one lot of people should not hate another lot of people. Clara got the point. The people of Marburg now remember this whenever they walk down the streets. The little brass plaques are called *Stolpersteine*, which means "stones of stumbling". There are now thousands of these in various German cities.

What it means is that all these little "stones" are set into the firm pavement, as

individual reminders; and woe betide those who take offence, “being disobedient”, but blessed are those who are called “out of darkness into his marvellous light”! May the great new temple of the Lord stand firm and solid as “a spiritual house”, with its place for “the living stones” of all peoples.

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