**“A Stone of Stumbling and a Rock that Makes Them Fall”**

“For you therefore that believe is the preciousness [margin, “honor”]: but for such as disbelieve, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, a **‘stone of stumbling’, and a ‘rock of offence’, even to them which stumble at the word,** being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

1 Pet. 2:7,8 ASV

Peter is writing to us about our privileged place: we are a royal priesthood, an elect race, a holy nation, a people that God claims as his own special possession. He is not just telling us to be thankful. Of course we should be, but he is calling saints to recognize their place of honor, and live up to it! Walk with your heads high, live honest, upright and holy lives of service. In the latter part of chapter 2, and through chapters 3 and 4, he will speak of them suffering “for righteousness’ sake”. They should not only face it, and take it patiently, but see it as an honor to share in Christ’s suffering - even rejoice in it! Remembering their purpose, why they are here, their station of honor – rejoice in it and glorify God!

In the verse above, to the eyes of those who believe – trust wholeheartedly in God and submit to him – this word is preciousness [honor]. But those who fail to trust in God will stumble and fall at the word. Let’s think about three ways men might “stumble at the word”, especially the word about the glory of suffering with Christ.

**Worldly ambition/desire**

If we are so consumed with the things of the world, material things, we will not care enough about spiritual things, and we will not understand the word of God as He talks to our hearts and souls. Or what we do understand will be offensive to us – too hard to swallow. We will shy away and find other things to engage our minds.

This is not a warning against sinful practices – drunkenness, fornication, stealing, etc. Of course these are wrong, but set them aside for now. This is a warning about spending too much of our time on making money, having fun, being entertained, running the rat race, working for more power or popularity. These things choke out our spiritual life, and we will “stumble at the word”.

**Fearfulness, faint heart, or spiritual laziness**

Sometimes we are too weak and indecisive about stepping out on the promises of God. We want to do right, and we are not living in sinful ways, or consumed with worldly pursuits. But we shy away from new things, we don't want to speak up or step up, we are afraid to commit ourselves, we worry about looking foolish, or stepping beyond our comfort zone. We may hear the word of God and know it well. The challenge is in front of us. We know what we should do. But we may naturally procrastinate, or we draw back, and “let others do it”. We let the arrows of Satan derail us, and we “stumble at the word”.

In Heb. 10:39, the choice is to carry on and step up through difficult and discouraging times with patient endurance – or to draw back and be overcome with the world. “But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul.”

**Be lifted up in our pride**

Peter is using Isaiah to underscore his points about the chief cornerstone and the “stone of stumbling”. In Is. 8, the prophet is trying to turn the people of Judah back to God and away from the influence of the wicked king Ahaz, who was seeking alliances with other nations for protection. Isaiah challenges them: “Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought; speak the word and it shall not stand.”

They wouldn't listen to Isaiah. They dismissed him, saying “God is with us”.

They thought they were the people of God and they could work out their own deliverance and God would bless it. When Isaiah spoke the word of God, they rejected him. Even when he spoke of God’s promises they stumbled at it. When he warned them, it was even worse.

If we claim that “God is with us” and people see that our knowledge of the word makes us arrogant and fixed on our own way, then they will know we are wrong, even though we may give book, chapter and verse for our doctrine! Our neighbors will see us – the people of God - “stumble at the word”!

When men and women fail to seek God and submit to him wholeheartedly through Jesus Christ, there are many occasions for stumbling. But it does not have to be that way. Remember what Peter is aiming at:

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Pet. 2:9-10 NKJV

Larry Walker, March 2014