

Word Study: I Am Weak



WORD STUDY – I AM WEAK

Ezra 4:4: “Then the people of the land weakened the hands of Judah and troubled them in building.”

As I was growing up I would listen to my father sing his favorite to himself and to God. It was the old Country Gospel Song, Just a Closer Walk with Thee. The words of that song are so embedded in me that as I go through a real difficult the words come ringing back to me: “I am weak but thou art strong, granted it Jesus is my plea, daily walking close to thee. Let it be dear Lord let it be.”

After a life time of walking with Jesus, still when I face that giant, I tremble and feel so helpless and weak. Sometimes I feel as if the enemy has a war of attrition against me. A war of attrition is when an enemy knows their enemy is so

strong that he cannot win but he hopes to gain a victory by just wearing his enemy down with a sort of guerrilla warfare. Satan knows he cannot defeat God but he also know he can carry on a war of attrition to bring me to the point where I just want to give up.

When Nehemiah returned with God's people to the land of Israel after their captivity by Babylon he found the land was occupied by colonist who were sent to occupy the land many years earlier by the Assyrian empire which was now defunct. These colonist who were from the land of the Amorites, Moabites and other nations were not too thrilled with the returning Jews and in fact feared them because of their support by the Persian Empire which was now the most powerful nation in the world. These colonist knew they could not defeat the Persian Empire but they knew they could wage a war of attrition against God's people. Thus, they were determined to harass God's people to the point where they would just give up trying to colonize the land and return to Persia. That war of attrition still goes on today.

To accomplish this the colonist incorporated the use of something still in practice in the Middle East, terrorism. In time King Araxerxes was so burdened with domestic problems and the threat of other nations seeking war against the Persians that he turned the responsibility of the Jewish nation over to his son Susa. Susa had no respect for his grandmother Esther and was, for want of a better word, anti-Semitic. Thus, Judah's support of Persia started to fade away.

But his was ok with Nehemiah and Ezra as they were of the mind that if God wanted Jerusalem rebuilt He would do it without the help of Persia. Sort of the attitude the Prime Minister of Israel Netanyahu has today. Indeed God did help, but from a practical standpoint Persia's waning support did embolden their enemies to increase their harassment. Nehemiah and Ezra knew God would keep His end of the bargain but what they did not consider was that the people would not hold up their end

which was to simply trust in God.

According to Ezra 4:4 this war of attrition was working. The people of Judah's hands were weakened and they were troubled by their enemies in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The expression their hands were weakened expresses the idea of becoming discouraged and fearful. The word weakened in Hebrew is meraphim which comes from the root word rapah which means to sink down or to loosen one's grip. The word is found in a Piel (intensive) form so it really has the idea of just letting go. In other words, just giving up. Do you ever feel that way in your service to God? People just come at you from every end, criticize, condemn, and accuse you of things that you never did or intended. Eventually, you just become bitter and discouraged and you meraphim or give up. Or maybe you are trying to build a ministry but you are getting no response, no one seems to support you and you face one obstacle after another. That poor camel's back is just completely shattered from all the last straws. Yet, even then the enemy is not satisfied, he keeps piling on the straw on that poor old camel's shattered back. All with the intent purpose to get us to merephim, give up. He is just relentless

The people of Judah just became weary of the constant harassment by their enemies. Although their enemies initially could not outright harm them physically, they would mock them, make fun of them, rob their homes while they were working on the building project or destroy their crops while they were rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah had returned to Persia for a period of time and when he returned to Jerusalem, he found a people who were in spiritual funk, they had given up working on the walls to protect their own interests and they had fallen into spiritual paganism and idolatry. They had merephim weakened and given up.

Yes, there is a good sermon for the old preacher and his building program in Ezra 4:4, but if you look deep enough you will also find an even better sermon for those of us who are

wanting to merephim give up. You can read the book of Ezra and find out how he encouraged the people, but I want to jump ahead a few hundred years to the Apostle Paul who also gives us a solution in Ephesians 15:19: "Speak to one another with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord." A quote from Nehemiah is also appropriate here in Nehemiah 8:10: "The Joy of the Lord is our strength." We will not fulfill God's work for us if we fall prey to the work of the enemy, to his war of attrition and his terrorist attacks against us like Judah did and allow negative thinking and words to control us. Instead we need to fill our hearts with the Word of God like Ezra did, find a fellowship of like minded believers where you can encourage each other with songs of praise and joy and then to enter into the Joy of the Lord. When you encourage others with songs and testimonies of praise and joy and they encourage you with songs of testimonies and praise and joy together you will stop the enemy cold in his tracks. For where you were merephim weak the joy of the Lord will make you strong.