

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Nehemiah: Pattern For Solutions In Spiritually Hard Times
K. Heeding Scripture Above Good Intentions
(Nehemiah 7:63-65 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Though a lot of people with good intentions try to solve big problems, good intentions are often not enough:

(1) It occurs in the realm of addressing anxiety disorders and depression: I was recently shown a story on a cell phone from the Sunday Republican about the crisis of childhood anxiety disorders, depression and suicidal tendencies. I researched the matter and found Abbie Petersen's article, "Pediatric doctors report increase in kids showing signs of depression" (June 3, 2021; ketv.com) that reported, "Children's Hospital and Medical Center in Omaha reports depression among children is up 65% in the last six months," that "the pandemic is just part of the problem" since "dealing with stress, remote learning, juggling relationships and being around family is adding up." Also, "(t)he number of kids who have shared thoughts of suicide is up 150% in the past year" (Ibid.) and the Sunday-Republican reported that one hospital housed so many such children that they had to put them in beds in the halls.

Psychiatrists, psychologists and physicians have good intentions in trying to solve this problem, but it is simply not enough: as early as 2015, an article that appeared in The Economist and is used by Mental Health Innovators claimed, "Depression is now the leading cause of disability worldwide," and "many patients are not getting suitable treatment, an issue only likely to exacerbate the impact" of the problem. (mhinnovation.net)

(2) Many good intentions are not solving poverty among America's minorities: Chris Powell's column, "Where will panel look for racism?" (Republican-American, May 28, 2021, p. 8a) noted, "Like the rest of the United States, Connecticut is full of racial disparities." However, instead of blaming racism, Mr. Powell claimed that government aid programs were to blame, that "for decades, welfare policy has been destroying the family unit disproportionately among racial minorities, depriving most minority children of fathers and casting many of them into a demoralizing life-long poverty," and that "social promotion in elementary education also has a disproportionate impact on children from minority groups, leaving Connecticut with a grotesque racial performance gap in education."

However, government officials keep throwing money at the problem: Jacqueline Rabe Thomas' story, "'Baby Bonds' bill advances" (Ibid., June 11, 2021; p. 1A) reported on a current state bill that provides "\$50 million a year" for "the state" to "set aside and invest \$3,200 for each child born after July 1 who is enrolled in Medicaid," and "(w)hen these children reach age 18, that money is expected to have grown to nearly \$11,000 for the adolescents to use to purchase a home, go to college or a trade school, or to start a business."

Need: So, we ask, "If many good intentions are not enough to solve serious problems, what should we do?!"

- I. In the Nehemiah 7:5-73 genealogical record that Nehemiah used to register his countrymen according to lineage, the alleged priest Barzillai had been a man with very good intentions, Nehemiah 7:63b et al.:**
- A. The alleged priest Barzillai so admired former Barzillai of Gilead that he married one of that man's descendants and took his name for himself, Nehemiah 7:63b; Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib., vol. One, p. 484.
- B. The reason for this alleged priest's admiration for Barzillai the Gileadite was very honorable (as follows):
1. When king David had been at his lowest point, fleeing from his son Absalom in Israel's civil war, Barzillai of Gilead was one man who supplied David's people the livelihood provisions of beds, basins, clay jars, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, honey, curds, sheep and cheese when David had gone east to cross the Jordan River to Mahanaim 24 miles south of Barzillai's home in Rogelim; 2 Samuel 17:27-29 ESV; The MacMillan Bible Atlas, 1968, p. 71, Map 109: "The Rebellion of Absalom."
 2. Barzillai had then supportively escorted David another 30 miles across the Jordan as David returned to Jerusalem, thus honoring David before Barzillai returned home to Rogelim, 2 Samuel 19:33-37a; Ibid.
 3. Remarkably, Barzillai was then 80 years of age, so his travel and work to help David involved great effort, leaving David grateful for Barzillai's support so that David warmly kissed and blessed him, 2 Sam. 19:39.
 4. David then asked Barzillai to relocate to Jerusalem where he would care for him, but Barzillai declined the offer due to his age, sending his son to live with David, 2 Samuel 19:33-38; Ibid., Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib.
 5. Years later when David was near death, he charged his son Solomon to treat Barzillai's descendants well in view of Barzillai's noble effort to support and honor David in David's great time of need, 1 Kings 2:1-2, 7.
 6. Thus, the alleged priest who took the name of Barzillai for himself and who married a descendant of Barzillai of Gilead admired the elderly, godly man and coveted the blessings of David upon him!

II. However, such good intentions by the alleged priest Barzillai were not enough to permit him to serve as a priest, for he could not prove his priestly ancestry from the Biblical record, Nehemiah 7:64a.

III. Accordingly, the alleged priest Barzillai and his descendants were excluded from the priestly ministry until a High Priest rose who with prophetic gifting to clarify the alleged priest's lineage, Neh. 7:64b-65.

Lesson: *Though alleged priest Barzillai rightly admired Barzillai of Gilead so as to wed one of his descendants and take Barzillai's name as his own, his good intentions could not surpass Scripture in letting him serve as a priest.*

Application: (1) *May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-11.* (2) *May we heed Scripture above all good intentions to the contrary.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply this sermon's lesson to the issues mentioned in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) On the rising crisis in anxiety disorders, depression and suicidal tendencies, (a) upon believing in Christ for salvation of the soul (see "Application" (1)" above), (b) Psalm 119:25-32 reveals that ***if the cause is not physically based where one must be medically treated***, depression occurs if one trusts in what is false for fulfillment so that when that falsehood is exposed to be false, hopelessness sets in, leading to anxiety and depression. (c) Often, one is depressed for having relied on some entity other than God for fulfillment, a form of idolatry. (d) Thus, we view Psalm 23:4 for the solution: David wrote that (i) though he like a "sheep" under God as his Shepherd (Psalm 23:1) were to (ii) walk through the valley of the shadow of death, a gloomy, foreboding trial, (iii) he would fear no "evil, distress, misery, injury, calamity" (*ra*, Kittel, *Bib. Heb.*, p. 993; B. D. B., *A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 948-949), for (iv) You [God] (emphatic pronoun, *Ibid.*, Kittel) are (v) "with, beside to aid" (*'imadi*, *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 767-768) me, (vi) Your "club (to kill predators)" (*shebet*, *Ibid.*, p. 986-987) and (vii) Your "staff" (*mishenet*, a crooked staff used by being inverted and pulling a sheep up out of a harmful place where its own misjudgment had taken it, *Ibid.*, p. 1044), they (emphatic pronoun, *Ibid.*, Kittel) (viii) "comfort, console" (*niham*, *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 636-637) me. Many suffer from anxiety and depression by relying on a false god that proves to be unable to fulfill them, leaving them feeling hopeless and leading to anxiety and depression. One then must trust in the **TRUE God**, realizing that the Biblical omnipresent God (Psalm 139:7-10) is always right beside him able and willing to handle outside dangers and even to rescue him from his own errant steps in life so that he can find consolation and comfort from the Lord. Many people today have departed from the God of Psalm Twenty-Three, explaining why so much anxiety and depression is on the rise. We must return to the Great Shepherd of the sheep for blessing, Hebrews 13:20.

(2) On the problem of poverty among American minorities, ***Scripture addresses the issue of poverty without referring to race, ethnicity or gender, so God's solution applies to anyone who faces poverty!*** Thus, Scripture notes that (a) upon receiving Christ as Savior to become a child of God (see "Application: (1)" above), (b) one must apply Hebrews 13:5-6 and let his manner of life be without covetousness, that he be content with what he already possesses, knowing God will provide all he needs to fulfill God's calling for him. (c) Then, Proverbs 22:7 warns that the borrower is slave to the lender, that one should seek to avoid indebtedness. (d) 2 Thessalonians 3:10 calls us to work for a living versus living off of the income of others as in the case of government welfare. [Proverbs 17:16 NIV asks, "Of what use is money in the hand of a fool since he has no desire to get wisdom?" Throwing money at the poor cannot end their poverty unless they have the wisdom to handle the money well!] (e) 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 directs that we work independently of others to meet our livelihood needs and have a good testimony. (f) 1 Timothy 5:8 calls heads of households to support their dependents as part of a good testimony. (g) Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 calls us to invest in business ventures (or stocks, stock mutual funds or ETFs today) boldly, long-term, with diversification, and instead of timing the markets on when to pull money out or to put more into our investments, to ignore the market's ups and downs and just keep adding to our initial quality investments for long-term financial success. [Correct diversification also involves a portfolio of cash **and** interest-producing financial instruments **and** stocks or stock funds. This guards against being cash poor in recessions, market drops and emergencies while also protecting oneself from the drain of long-term inflation by remaining invested in stocks or stock funds.] (h) Jesus exemplified thrift, saving the leftover fragments in His feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:12, a great quality in good money management. (i) Jesus taught the need for planning with a budget in Luke 14:28-30. (j) God reimburses those who give to His interests (2 Corinthians 9:6-12), what includes giving to needy believers (1 John 3:16-18) and to needy unsaved people (Acts 24:17).

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we then put Scripture above good intentions in all things, knowing that good intentions can yet be errant ones that need to be corrected where God's Word is perfectly accurate, Psalm 12:6.