

**THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION**  
**Nehemiah: Pattern For Solutions In Spiritually Hard Times**  
**H. Handling Religious Slander**  
**(Nehemiah 6:5-9)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

The challenge of religious slander is one that we increasingly face today. Take for example the recent case involving Christian pregnancy centers here in Connecticut: Paul Hughes' story, "Pro-life clinics targeted," Republican-American, May 6, 2021, p. 1A, reported, "A truth-in-advertising bill targeting crisis pregnancy centers that neither provide abortion services or emergency contraceptives turned the floor of the state Senate into a culture wars battleground Wednesday . . . 'This bill language is straight from outside forces I'll say in a certain playbook which is designed to target all faith-based pregnancy centers with the claim that they are fake or deceptive in their advertisement simply because they do not provide abortions,' said Sen. Henri Martin, R-Bristol."

The Democrats did not have an actual illegal advertising practice in mind, for Paul Hughes' story noted, "Senate Republicans complained the bill failed to define deceptive advertising practices. Democrats voted down a GOP amendment that proposed a definition." (Ibid.)

The question rises as to why Democratic legislators are motivated to pass legislation against false advertising of Christian pregnancy centers though refusing to define illegal practices, and the editorial, "'Deceptive' legislation" (Ibid., May 8, 2021, p. 8A) gave the answer as money: "The Crisis Pregnancy Center Inc.'s website includes the claim that it has saved 1,400 babies since 1983. And every time a baby is born to a mother who considered abortion, Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers lose \$350 to \$950, or more for late-term abortions." Also, in a letter to the Republican-American, Bill O'Brien of Wolcott, vice president of Connecticut Right to Life, wrote: "Recently released government documents indicate that an aborted child's body obtained from Planned Parenthood for \$60 could be sold to the Food and Drug Administration for \$2,000, by a company named Advanced Bioscience Resources . . . Nationally, in 2018-2019, Planned Parenthood performed more than 350,000 abortions, received more than \$600 million in government funds, and had total income of more than \$1.6 billion." (Ibid., May 14, 2021, p. 8A)

Why is abortion so profitable? The answer is that "aborted baby body parts are now being harvested for the purpose of medical research" (Meredeth Wadman, "The Truth about Fetal Tissue Research," Nature Magazine, December 9, 2015 as cited in "The Voice of Women In Defense of Unborn Babies and in Opposition to Abortion-tainted Vaccines," March 8, 2021).

**Need:** *So, we ask, "How does God want us to deal with religious slander?!"*

- I. Nehemiah faced religious slander meant to pressure him to cease building Jerusalem's wall, Neh. 6:5-7:**
  - A. Sanballat sent his servant to Nehemiah with an open letter in his hand for everybody else to read, claiming that it had been reported among the Gentiles that Nehemiah and his fellow Hebrew workers actually intended to rebel against the Persian King by building up the Jerusalem wall with Nehemiah being their king, Neh. 6:5-6a.
  - B. Additionally, Sanballat's letter charged that the report was circulating that Nehemiah had appointed prophets to preach in Jerusalem that Nehemiah was to be the city's king, and this report would eventually reach the Persian King who of course would respond by seeking to put down the alleged Nehemiah revolt, Neh. 6:6b.
  - C. The letter closed with Sanballat's appeal that Nehemiah meet him supposedly to work out a solution for this problem that Nehemiah allegedly faced, Nehemiah 6:6c.
- II. This slander itself was stated in a deceitfully ensnaring manner:**
  - A. First, Sanballat's words seemingly had Nehemiah's best interests in mind, giving the appearance that Sanballat was trying to help Nehemiah avoid stirring up the wrath of Persia's king, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 686.
  - B. Second, Nehemiah's enemies led by Sanballat were trying to get Nehemiah to react to their slander in fear, to motivate them to be afraid to continue building Jerusalem's wall lest the Persian king view the effort as a form of rebellion against his authority over the Hebrews to where he would attack them, Ibid.
  - C. Third, it was possible that some "well-meaning religious leader in Judah had interpreted Nehemiah's presence as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming Messiah-King," Ibid. After all, some time before Nehemiah, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah had prophesied to encourage the Hebrews to continue rebuilding the Jerusalem temple (Ezra 5:1-2), and Haggai 2:7-9 (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftns. to Hag. 2:7 and 2:9) and especially Zechariah 9:9; 11:1-14:21 predicted the First and Second Advent of Christ and His future Messianic Kingdom. The expectation of Messiah's coming was building among the Hebrews!

### **III. Nehemiah had to be careful how he responded to this latest intrigue by his enemy Sanballat:**

- A. Had Nehemiah tried to clarify that there was indeed a hope in their midst of a Messianic King to come, but that Nehemiah was not that king, Sanballat would have eagerly informed the Persian King that Nehemiah had admitted that he was rebuilding Jerusalem to rebel against Persia by setting up a king. Trying to explain the truth about the Messianic prophecies would entrap Nehemiah, giving Sanballat cause to make trouble for him!
- B. However, Nehemiah needed to deny Sanballat's slander lest Sanballat conclude that Nehemiah was feeling guilt over secretly trying to become Jerusalem's king, and thus charge him with that motive to Persia's king.

### **IV. Nehemiah strongly denied Sanballat's slander, but he used few words to avoid entrapment, Neh. 6:8-9:**

- A. Without explaining Hebrew prophecies on the Messiah lest Sanballat entrap him with it, Nehemiah sent Sanballat word that his specific charge was wrong, that Sanballat had invented it himself, Nehemiah 6:8.
- B. Nehemiah realized that Sanballat and the Hebrews' other foes had made them afraid, trying to keep them from continuing their wall-building work, so Nehemiah prayed for God's encouragement to keep on working, v. 9.

### **V. Nehemiah's STRONG but SPARING response to Sanballat who was trying to entrap him by tempting him to make a wordy response that Sanballat could use against him is supported by other Scriptures:**

- A. Proverbs 10:19 NIV: "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise."
- B. Proverbs 17:27-28 NIV: "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue."
- C. James 1:19-20 NIV: "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

***Lesson:*** *When facing deceitfully ensnaring religious slander, Nehemiah wisely strongly denied it without giving the slanderer any information he might use to enhance his slander and hinder Nehemiah's work for the Lord.*

***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 respond to religious slander by strongly denying false charges while also carefully limiting our words that our foes not twist the information we give for them to misuse.*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . . )

We apply this sermon's lesson to the issue of facing slander as noted in our introduction and in general cases of religious slander as well (as follows):

(1) On the charge that Christian pregnancy centers are guilty of false advertising for not offering abortion services or referrals, it would be wise for such centers to respond by asking critics to define the false advertising.

Similarly, if we face religious slander in other realms, we can respond by seeking to get a clarification of the charge, which clarification itself sometimes can neutralize the charge due to the obvious illogic behind the charge.

(2) On the issue of the love of money that helps fuel the abortion industry, it would be wise for Christian pregnancy centers to avoid volunteering that information in ministry. Women in crisis need Christ, and their attention needs to focus on Him, not issues that distract from that, and voicing the issue of money only angers critics!

Similarly, if we face religious slander in other realms, we should avoid trying to bring up wicked motives by our critics as that can inflame them to take more severe action. Rather, we must stick with denying the false charges.

(3) On the fact that Democrats and Republicans have had a culture-war battle on the floor of the state Senate over the alleged false advertising of faith-based pregnancy centers, it would be wise for Christian pregnancy centers to keep that political issue out of their ministry to women facing pregnancy crises. It only distracts them from the Gospel, and getting involved in political talk as a Christian pregnancy center can attract additional slander from opponents who can charge that such faith-based pregnancy centers should lose tax exempt status for being political.

Similarly, we should not talk politics if facing religious slander to avoid giving critics more critique fodder.

(4) On the fact that government agencies and research companies are making a lot of money from abortions, it would be wise for Christian pregnancy centers not to bring up that fact when ministering to women in crisis. Otherwise, such women can be distracted from their need to relate Christ, and Christian pregnancy centers can also risk facing retaliatory lawsuits from government and/or business entities who are exposed by such critiques.

Similarly, if facing religious slander in other realms, we should not blame our critics for their many wrongs, but simply support our own integrity, easing tensions with our critics instead of intensifying the conflict.

**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 respond to religious slander by boldly denying false charges while also carefully limiting our words that our foes not twist the information we give for them to misuse.**