

Theme: Christians are called to seek shalom (peace) for their city through prayer, godly speech, working with others to promote human flourishing, and always promoting the Gospel as the only hope for true shalom.

I. Intro - From Nepal to Baltimore

- A. A terrible week of suffering, anguish and injustice
- B. The effects of the fall were on clear display
- C. Baltimore is obviously closer to home for us
- D. Baltimore is also more directly caused by humans
- E. How are believers called to live in this broken world?
- F. Jeremiah 29:7 is a key text in all Scripture for our time

II. The Main Theme - Shalom

- A. The background of this text - people carried into exile
This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Jeremiah 29:1
 - 1. This is a time of great turmoil, anguish, uncertainty
 - 2. A time when the cause of God seems to be losing
 - 3. A time when God's people suffer oppression
 - 4. Understandably, many simply wanted to have nothing to do with Babylon
- B. This is a critical text for our time
 - 1. We are exiles in our world today

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11

- 2. This is true of Christians in all times and places
- 3. Our country, state, region & city are Babylon
- 4. And Babylon is becoming increasingly hostile to us!
- 5. Jeremiah could write his letter to us today!

C. The main theme of the letter - shalom

Also, seek the **peace and prosperity** of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it **prosper**s, you too will **prosper**. Jer. 29:7

- 1. The word shalom occurs three times in v7
- 2. Shalom - peace, prosperity, flourishing, all is right
- 3. The exiles are to seek the shalom - prosperity, peace, blessing, of the surrounding pagan culture!
- 4. There is no isolation - we only have shalom if the city of our exile has shalom
- 5. We have not understood nor practiced this well
- 6. So how do we work for the shalom of the city?

III. Seeking Peace For the City

- A. We begin by praying for shalom
Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. **Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.** Jer 29:7
 - 1. We begin by earnestly praying for our city of exile

2. We can do more after we pray, but we always begin with prayer - this is a spiritual work
3. This is not imprecatory “God destroy them” prayers
4. We are to earnestly pray for God to bless the city
5. Was our first response to Baltimore to pray?
6. Did we grieve with the family for the death of a son?
7. Or do we first tweet, post, or talk with people?
8. We must pray earnestly for shalom - or else we will not have it ourselves

B. We must then speak in a manner that promotes shalom

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. Jer 29:7

1. It is not enough to pray - we must act in ways that seek shalom for the city
2. This begins with our speech
3. Our speech should show heavenly wisdom
But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.
¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:17–18
 - a. Heavenly wisdom is seeking peace, not sound bites
 - b. Sound bites that catch fire are rarely wise - and never lead to shalom
4. Our speech should be gentle - even when others are not

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1

5. This includes gentle speech with people who are outside of my point of view
6. We must take time and pains to make sure we really understand others - and are not talking past each other
7. Example - child who was disobeying - took to dinner
8. Of course rioting, looting, etc. are wrong - and should be punished by civil authorities. But what variety of things are prompting these actions? Are there things we can address to help give hope?
9. We must begin to learn how other people see and experience the world - without demonizing them

C. We must work with others to promote human flourishing

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1. Requires us to work with others - even unbelievers
2. Israel could not cause Babylon to prosper alone
3. Shalom for the city is a human project - not just a Christian one
4. In common grace we work with others as much as we can
5. This includes working to relieve poverty, insure equal justice, prevent oppression
Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, ²³ for the Lord will

take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them. Proverbs 22:22–23

- a. The sub-prime lending crisis - destroyed economy
- b. Loan scams to trap the needy in poverty - payday loans; car title loans - NY Times article - woman borrowed \$1,000 to pay rent, utilities, with car as collateral - 171% loan rate; paid \$992.78 back - and then they took her car

6. These things are far outside of most our our middle class experience - but they are real
7. Example of two waiting rooms in doctors office in late 1990's
8. We are not allowed to sit by while they happen
Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Psalms 82:4
9. This is part of being a caring community - it is why we serve at Lighthouse, Winter Relief, and work with folks who are struggling - here and abroad

D. We promote the cause of the Gospel as the only hope for real shalom

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1. Our concept of shalom is guided by Scripture
2. We know full shalom will never be found in the earthly city
3. Our heavenly hope enables us to tone down speech & actions - this world is not our final hope or home
4. We know true shalom can only come from Jesus - it will never be achieved by economics, politics,

education, etc.

5. We recognize flesh and blood is never our enemy - it is a spiritual battle
6. All we do is to promote the cause of the Gospel - it is the only true hope
7. Do my prayers, speech, actions adorn and promote the Gospel - or betray it for my own agendas?
8. Am I more committed to my culture, my comfort - or to the Gospel?
9. Do I recognize that my default experience makes me more comfortable in my own Babylon than in the kingdom? Am I really promoting the kingdom - or my preferred Babylon?
10. If we don't act as citizens of the kingdom, promoting the Gospel - we are just one more splinter special interest group - and there will be no measure of real shalom
11. All we do is in recognition that every human being will stand before God
12. Am I more concerned about riots, disorder, bad economic policies - or that people died apart from Christ?

IV. Applying the Word

A. Please take time to think through all of this

1. Get the notes and listen again - these issues are not going away
2. We will never arrive on this - we will always have to be thinking through it

B. Prayer for shalom for our city & Baltimore

Peace For the City

Jeremiah 29:7

May 3, 2015

Prayer

Genesis 12:2-3

Teaching keywords: common grace; citizenship; prayer; tongue and words;

May the LORD make you into a great nation and bless you;
may He make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.
3 May He bless those who bless you, and may He be the One
to curse the ones cursing you; so that all peoples on earth will
be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:2–3

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