



40.DAY 2023

40.DAYS 40.VOICES 40.PRAYERS

DAY 6 | JULY 6

Shalom for Singapore

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BIBLE READING

JEREMIAH 29:1-14 | 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... ⁴ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

⁵ "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.

⁷ 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 prospers, you too will prosper."

⁸ Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹ They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the Lord.

¹⁰ This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

When we want to turn our nation Godward, we can learn something from the prophet Jeremiah and the Jews living in Nineveh. We find this letter in Jeremiah 29

And the key thrust of that letter is Jeremiah's exhortation to the Jews in Nineveh to build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce, and grow their families there.

In so doing, they were, in effect, seeking the welfare of the city. There are three points of relevance for us today.

First, is the word 'welfare' we find in our English Bibles.

In Hebrew, the word is "shalom". When we take shalom to mean only peace, where there is absence of conflict, we limit our understanding. Shalom is more than that.

Shalom is peace in its fullness, which includes welfare, prosperity, wholeness, as well as the absence of hostilities. Shalom is being whole, undivided, uninjured.

Using negatives, we can say shalom is where there is nothing missing, nothing broken.

Therefore, shalom includes salvation, being completed, being healed, being healthy, without sickness, disease or infirmity.

Shalom is also to be realised with the whole community. We can describe it as the welfare of persons in community in the most comprehensive sense of existence.

So shalom is not just about me being at peace, being whole, complete, healed and healthy, prosperous, abundantly blessed. But it is what should happen in the whole community we live in.

The second point is Jeremiah's words.

For in its shalom, you will find your shalom. Wait a minute. In our minds, we generally understand that, for people to find shalom, they come to us in church, in our cells, our Bible study groups, attend our meetings. But the prophet tells God's people that their shalom is to be found out there in the city.

So, Christians in Singapore, we are to build our city-state by contributing to its wholeness, to immerse ourselves and permeate all of its life.

Using New Testament language, we are the salt that transforms the environment we are in. We disinfect and cleanse what is not good for the whole community. We preserve what is best for all. We keep refining what is good to make it even better. And in this process, with Jesus as the shalom, the whole community we live in will experience shalom.

The third and final point is Jeremiah's call that, as we do this, we pray for the shalom of the city.

The shalom is what God wants to become real for all who live here. We pray so that we may know God's idea about what shalom means in reality for Singapore.

We have to turn to the Lord in prayer, because we depend on His power to realise shalom together. Each of us has a place in the vast complexities as to how various communities flourish, then we collaborate with those whose efforts, mixed with ours, bring about a better outcome in the specific areas we have been called to.

We pray to Him because He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. And He does it not by pushing us around, but by working within us, His Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Lord, show us, reveal to us and lead us even further to realise shalom for our city. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REFLECT

- 1** What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you about the meaning of "shalom"?
- 2** How can you ask the Lord for a greater sense of urgency to share the Gospel?
- 3** How is God challenging you to extend His shalom into your different communities?

PRAY

- 1** Pray for ways to use our time, talent and treasure to bring shalom to our homes, our neighbourhood, our schools, our community, our country.
- 2** Do a prayer walk where you live, work and worship. As you pass schools, pray over the children. As you pass homes, pray over families. As you pass offices, pray over the marketplace. As you pass churches, pray over God's people. As you pass government offices, pray for our leaders. As you pass strangers, pray for their welfare.