

IN PURSUIT OF SHALOM

I. [Jeremiah 29:4-14](#) [Romans 12:14-18](#) [1 Peter 3:8-18](#) [John 14:27](#)

A. *Three Dog Night's* Jeremiah was a bullfrog; not so the one in the Bible. The Bible's Jeremiah was a priest, a poet, a preacher, and a prophet. He was a prophet to Judah when they were exiled to Babylon. He was a contemporary of the prophet Ezekiel but much older. While Ezekiel prophesied from inside Babylon, even to those remaining back in Jerusalem, Jeremiah remained in Judah and prophesied to those in Babylonian captivity. He's the author of the book that bears his name as well as the book of Lamentations. Some refer to him as the *weeping prophet* as he cried out to God in anguish for Judah while pleading with God's people to repent. He suffered terribly for proclaiming the truth. Hauled off to Egypt, Jewish tradition says he was stoned to death there. I'm confident his reward in heaven is great!

B. Jeremiah's words were from God and instructive as to how He wanted His people to live while in exile. They're likewise instructive for us here and now...

C. [Jeremiah 29:4-14](#) (ESV) is our inspiring text this morning...

1) **V4: 4** *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, (Get this wrong, and they could stone you. Get it right, and they still might stone you!) to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: (Who's responsible for Judah's exile? God!)*

2) **V5-7: 5** *Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, (From among God's people.) that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the **welfare** of the city where I have sent you into exile, (Welfare = Shalom, peace & prosperity,) and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its **welfare (Shalom)** you will find your **welfare (Shalom)**. (Before we head to V8, let's explore this whole notion of **Shalom**...)*

* According to Strong's Concordance, Shalom means completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord. (Any of that sound good to you?)

* Cornelius Plantinga in his book, ***Not the Way It's Supposed to Be***, writes this about **Shalom**: "The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call **shalom**. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, **shalom** means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight--a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom He delights. **Shalom**, in other words, is the way things ought to be."

3) **V8-12: 8** *For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners (Ear-tickling false prophets) who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, 9 for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in My name; I did not send them, declares the LORD. 10 "For thus says the LORD: When seventy*

years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you My promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare (**Shalom**) and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear you. **(God will take drastic measures to get His people to a place where they will pray and seek His face. And what will follow? Shalom!)**

4) V13-14: 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 I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. **(God was faithful to His Word. After 70 years in captivity, Babylon was overthrown by the Persians and King Cyrus let God's people return to their homeland. Ezra records it all and I commend it to you...)**

D. Back to Jeremiah 29:7--this is relevant for us too: 7 But seek the welfare (**Shalom**) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare (**Shalom**) you will find your welfare (**Shalom**). **The Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon, said this about Jeremiah 29:7:** "The principle involved in this text would suggest to all of us who are the Lord's strangers and foreigners that we should be desirous to promote the peace and prosperity of the people among whom we dwell. Specially should our nation and our city be blessed by our constant intercession."

E. I shared a message 30-some years ago titled, "Let Love Abound For Your Town." It's hard to share the Good News about Jesus without loving the people you're sharing that Good News with! (**John 3:16 is rooted in love!**) Shining light, showing love, and pursuing shalom in the midst of Babylon must have been grueling. Seems to be increasingly tougher in our culture as well. Yet doing so seems to be the Lord's instruction for both then and now. Besides Millersport, we're planted in a lot of different places: Fairfield Beach, Baltimore, Buckeye Lake, Thornville, Somerset, Pickerington, Carroll, Lancaster, Hebron-Heath-Newark, and everywhere in between. How's that salt & light thing going? Have you brought any shalom to your our neck of the cornfield?

F. In Romans 12:14-18 (Phillips) Paul gives similar instruction: 14 And as for those who try to make your life a misery, bless them. Don't curse, bless. **15** Share the happiness of those who are happy, the sorrow of those who are sad. **16** Live in harmony with each other. Don't become snobbish but take a real interest in ordinary people. Don't become set in your own opinions. **17** Don't pay back a bad turn by a bad turn, to anyone. Don't say "it doesn't matter what people think", but see that your public behaviour is above criticism. **18** As far as your responsibility goes, live at **peace** with everyone.

G. Different from our Jewish ancestors, our notion of exile shouldn't be seen as a place of punishment but rather a place of mission. You may not like the term missionary, but if you're a believer, you are one! Whether you're sent across the ocean or across the street, you're called to be a herald of the Good News about Jesus. And if you want people to pay attention to your message, your manner of life matters. So to borrow an often tried phrase: "We're called to not just talk the talk but to walk the walk!"

H. 2,000 years ago Peter wrote similarly. 1 Peter 3:8-18 (NIV) records: 8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. **9** Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this

you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. **(Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16): 10** For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. **11** They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek **peace (Shalom)** and pursue it. **12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." **13** Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? **(Hey-that dude's producing way too much Shalom-let's put the hurt him!)** **14** But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." **15** But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, **(Shalom)** **16** keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. **17** For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. **18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. **(Colossians 1:20 indicates that God the Son, Jesus Christ, has made peace (Shalom) between God and man, heaven and earth, by His blood shed on the cross. Do you think others round-about-us need to hear about this?!)**

I. If your neighbors were interviewed by investigative reporters and they were asked specifically if they thought you were Christians, how would they respond? Would they say, "They must be because they have Christian bumper stickers on all their cars and they always wear Christian t-shirts!" Or would they say, "Despite all their Christian duds & bling, they treat us like garbage!" "That big cross in their yard--well we're afraid they're gonna hang us on it!" Or would they say, "Those folks must be Christians because they're the most loving and kind neighbors we've ever had!" "There's just such a peace about them!"

J. We must ask: Do people find Shalom on our Facebook pages? In the conference room at work? In our business dealings? What about restaurant staff where we eat out? At the Post Office or bank? In the bleachers at ballgames? Classmates & teammates? Do our neighbors see it? How about strangers at the grocery store? Or will they only catch a fleeting glimpse during a chance visit to church on a Sunday morning?

K. Jesus said in His *Sermon on the Mount*, "Blessed are the peacemakers (the *Shalom-makers*) for they shall be called the children of God." Has a nice ring to it doesn't it?! The Prince of Peace was once fast asleep in a boat, in a storm! Fearing disaster they woke Him. *(Talk about disturbing the Peace!)*

* But then Jesus calmed the storm. Any storms in your life that need calmed? But let's go home with **John 14:27 (AMP) 27** *Peace (Shalom) I leave with you; My [perfect] peace (Shalom) I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace (Shalom) calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.*

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[Jeremiah 29:4-14 \(ESV\)](#)

4 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: **5** Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. **6** Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. **7** But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. **8** For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, **9** for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in My name; I did not send them, declares the LORD. **10** “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you My promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear 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 I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Shalom in Strong's Concordance

According to Strong's Concordance 7965, Shalom means completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord.

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. on Shalom

"The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom He delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.

- Cornelius Plantinga, Jr, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*.

Charles Spurgeon on Jeremiah 29:7

"THE principle involved in this text would suggest to all of us who are the Lord's strangers and foreigners that we should be desirous to promote the peace and prosperity of the people among whom we dwell. Specially should our nation and our city be blessed by our constant intercession. An earnest prayer for your country and other countries is well becoming in the mouth of every believer. Eagerly let us pray for the great boon of peace, both at home and abroad. If strife should cause bloodshed in our streets, or if foreign battle should slay our brave soldiers, we should all bewail the calamity; let us therefore pray for peace and diligently promote those principles by which the classes at home and the races abroad may be bound together in bonds of amity. We ourselves are promised quiet in connection with the peace of the nation, and this most desirable; for thus we can bring up our families in the fear of the Lord and also

preach the gospel without let or hindrance. Today let us be much in prayer for our country, confessing national sins, and asking for national pardon and blessing, for Jesus' sake."

- Charles H. Spurgeon, *Faith's Checkbook*.

Romans 12:14-18 (Phillips)

14 And as for those who try to make your life a misery, bless them. Don't curse, bless. **15** Share the happiness of those who are happy, the sorrow of those who are sad. **16** Live in harmony with each other. Don't become snobbish but take a real interest in ordinary people. Don't become set in your own opinions. **17** Don't pay back a bad turn by a bad turn, to anyone. Don't say "it doesn't matter what people think", but see that your public behaviour is above criticism. **18** As far as your responsibility goes, live at **peace** with everyone.

1 Peter 3:8-18 (NIV)

8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. **9** Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. **10** For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. **11** They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. **12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." **13** Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? **14** But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." **15** But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, **16** keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. **17** For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. **18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Colossians 1:19-20 (AMP)

19 For it pleased the Father for all the fullness [of deity—the sum total of His essence, all His perfection, powers, and attributes] to dwell [permanently] in Him (the Son), **20** and through [the intervention of] the Son to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace [with believers] through the blood of His cross; through Him, [I say,] whether things on earth or things in heaven.

John 14:27 (AMP)

27 Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

"Peace, Perfect Peace" - Lyrics by Edward H. Bickersteth, Jr. / Music by Gary Chapman
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJ4ofbkOY1w>

The God of Peace, Through Jesus Christ, Equips Us - John Piper
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUeUeeJ1g-c>

Isaiah 26:3-4 (NLT)

3 You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in You, all whose thoughts are fixed on You! **4** Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD God is the eternal Rock.

Colossians 4:5-6 (ESV)

5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. **6** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (ESV)

9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, **10** for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, **11** and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, **12** so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 (ESV)

1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, **2** for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. **3** This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, **4** who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. **5** For there is one God, and there is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

R.C. Sproul on Shalom

Shalom...first of all means an interlude of safety from the ravages of warfare. The insecurity that comes from war made its mark on these (Hebrew) people. They looked for the day when the swords would be beaten into plowshares ([Micah 4:3](#)). The Old Testament concept of peace ascends into a theological vision. It is a vision of a new relationship between God and us, and with each other: a relationship of friendship. In sin we are estranged from God ([Ge 3:8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [Ro 5:12-note](#)), but in Christ we have peace with God....The fruit of peace with God is peace with others ([Gal 5:22-note](#))....Too often we desire to be the recipients of joy and peace. We wait for it to come to us through other people and circumstances. However, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," ([Mt 5:9-note](#)) suggesting we should initiate peace. Anticipate how you can actively bring peace and joy to a situation, relationship, or task.

- R.C. Sproul, *Before the Face of God*.

John MacArthur on Shalom

"Close to the meaning of the Hebrew word *shalom* is the word used by the Kekchi Indians of Guatemala, who define peace as "quiet goodness." The term they use conveys the idea of something that is active and aggressive, not just a rest in one's own heart away from troublesome circumstances. The biblical concept of peace does not focus on the absence of trouble. Biblical peace is unrelated to circumstances--it is a goodness of life that is not touched by what happens on the outside. You may be in the midst of great trials and still have biblical peace."

- John MacArthur, *Grace to You* message titled, "*The Gift of Peace*." To read more, go to: <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/P21/the-gift-of-peace>

Biblehub Commentary on Cyrus 1 and the Return of the Exiles

By Pastor David Guzik

"It is quite possible that the Prophet Daniel was instrumental in this stirring of Cyrus. He may have showed the king the prophecies of Jeremiah 25:8-13 and Jeremiah 29:10-14, which refer to the punishment of Babylon and the end of Israel's exile. And if he showed Cyrus such prophecies, he almost certainly would have included Isaiah 44:28-45:5, which mentions Cyrus by name some 150 years before he was born."

- David Guzik is the pastor of Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara, California. Before that he served as director and teacher at Calvary Chapel Bible College, Germany. To read more, of David's commentary, go to: <https://enduringword.com/>

Peace, Perfect Peace

By E.H. Bickersteth, Jr.

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.

Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to Heaven's perfect peace.

Peace, perfect peace, 'mid suffering's sharpest throes?
The sympathy of Jesus breathes repose.

- Edward H Bickersteth, Jr., 1875, was vacation-ing in Harrogate, England, where he heard a sermon on Isaiah 26:3 by Canon Gibbon. The minister related that the Hebrew text used the word peace twice to indicate absolute perfection. The idea was still on Bickersteth's mind when he visited a dying relative that afternoon. To soothe the man's emotional turmoil, Bickersteth opened his Bible to read from Isaiah 26:3. He wrote down these lyrics, just as they appear today, and read them to the man: perhaps the last thing he heard before Jesus called him "to Heaven's perfect peace."