

# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

**Date** : 18 April 2021

**Sermon Title** : The Providence

**Speaker** : Rev Peter Koh

**Text** : Jeremiah 29:1-14

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Providence is a dogmatic term referring to God's governance and care for the welfare of His creations, as He had exhibited even to the displaced Judeans/exiles in Jeremiah 29:1-14. Today, some amongst us could have been displaced from the people we care about due to movement restrictions put in place to curb the spread of COVID, or there are others who feel displaced and alone due to the circumstances that we are going through. Similarly, the Judeans would have felt the same whilst in exile in Babylon.

### **1. The Punishment (vv.1-4)**

In Deuteronomy 28 and 2 Chronicles 36, we learn that the Southern Kingdom (Judea) had been sinning against God and disobeying Him. Therefore God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to invade and take them into exile around 597B.C. This was not a plan for evil but it was to chastise and teach the Israelites of the ways of God. As a result, Judea lost everything she owned:

- Monarchy - Before that, their kingdom was flourishing and the people were enjoying their lives in it under the rule of the Judean king.
- Land - Losing their kingdom, their land and their homes would have been very demoralizing for the Judeans
- Temple – The Jews also lost their temple which was not only a grand structure but also the symbol for their special divine relationship with God.

It had been hard for the Jews who had lost everything, and they could even question their hope in God.

Today, there could be some of us who are going through a crisis and we may lose hope. Some of us may spiral into depression, feel strong negative emotions such as anger or sadness and the effects of the pandemic may have contributed or even add on to that misery.

The Jews were in a similarly bleak situation. The punishments they received may look harsh but God's divine providence was also given to them. We are aware that God had put Daniel amongst the Jews that were in exile. He would have been

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amongst those who read this letter from Jeremiah. Daniel was eventually put in a high position to be able to bless the nation and the people, paving the way for Jesus to come to take the rightful place on the cross. This goes to show that God's way is sovereign and He had his divine providence for the Judeans.

- ✓ Let us not despair despite the hardships we may face, as God's providence is there for us if we learn to put our faith in Him.

## **2. The Problems (vv.5-9)**

There were false prophets who were inciting the Jews to rebel instead of settling down as they falsely prophesied that the Judeans would soon be returning to their homeland. As the exile would last 70 years, Jeremiah wrote this prophecy in his letter to the Jews in exile encouraging them to:

- Settle down, accept the situations they were in, build their homes and start their families, and be fruitful and multiply
- Be a blessing and pray
- Not be fooled by sweet talk

Whatever situation that we are in today, let us too not lament but do the best in that condition to make our lives more liveable and be fruitful. The suffering, like the Jews' will come to pass. God who delivered the Jews in exile would do the same for us.

- ✓ There may be false prophets today who give us false hopes for the present, but let us be discerning; learn to live rightly before God, seek Him and listen to His Word, so that we would surrender to our God who is in control.

## **3. The Promise (vv.10-14)**

- Chastisement for a period - God's plan for the Judeans was to chastise them for their sins for a period of 70 years.
- He promised to bring them back - After that, they would find themselves growing closer and closer to God. It was a promise of hope for the future that God gave to them through Jeremiah, in contrast to the false prophets who gave them false hopes for the present.
- Plan in mind for their:
  - Welfare not evil – that He would grow and develop each one of them. It was not a plan for evil but for their well-being and to some extent their peace.
  - Future and hope

God had a future for the Judeans and God would have the same for each one of us today. In Hebrews, God said He would never leave us nor forsake us, and in John 10:10 God said He wants to give us life and life in abundance.

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- ✓ God who is our Father wants to bless each one of his children, and in His fatherly love He wants the best for us.

## **Lessons we can learn:**

- A) God is Omnipresent - God is not bound by a place that was the temple, which was destroyed. However, God said to the people that if they seek Him they would find Him, even in enemy's land in Babylon.
- B) God is Omniscient - We can park our worries in God's hand, because God is all-knowing. We can call our Father to tell Him about our problems, as He understands what we are going through and He has the solution for us.
- C) God is Omnipotent - God's plan will be fulfilled. God is all-powerful, and we see how God fulfilled His plan that He had promised to the Judeans by restoring them 70 years later.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our God is faithful and He is the divine providence in our lives. Let us therefore examine how displaced our priorities in Christ have been in our lives, and let us place Christ in control of our situations and circumstances. When God is in control, all will fall into place and we will be fruitful as Christ is with us as we go through the crisis that we are in.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

### A. Review Sermon Content

**Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.**

Appoint someone to read Jeremiah 29:1-14 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?

- b.
  - (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “The Providence”?
  - (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

- 2a. Why did God allow the Judeans to go through such misery as losing their monarchy, land and temple?
- 2b. What was God's promise through Jeremiah to His people who were in exile?
- 2c. How did God's promise through Jeremiah assure His people that He is:
  - (i) Omnipresent?
  - (ii) Omniscient?
  - (iii) Omnipotent?
- 3a. Is God's omnipresence, omniscience or omnipotence evident in the way you live your life?
- 3b. What is one thing that prevents you from fully trusting in God's divine providence for your future?
- 3c. How can your group members help or encourage you to discern God's divine providence, and overcome 3b above, in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies and Prayer**

***Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.***

4. Share your testimony on how having faith in God's divine providence helped you through a particularly difficult circumstance in your life.

OR

Give thanks to God for His sovereignty over the crises in your life and His faithfulness in growing and developing you through it.

5. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 3b. and 3c. to God, committing to restore Christ to the centre of your life, in control of your situations and circumstances. Pray that the Holy Spirit reveals to you God's divine and perfect plan for your well-being and peace to give you a future and hope.

As a group, pray that your hearts may discern God's providence in your lives so you will put your complete trust in Him who is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent .

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