

Jeremiah 29:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

Analysis

This verse contains one of Scripture's most counter-intuitive commands: seek the shalom (שָׁלוֹם, peace/welfare/prosperity) of Babylon, the very empire that destroyed Jerusalem and enslaved God's people. Not merely tolerate it, not just survive in it—actively seek its welfare. Pray for it. Work for its flourishing. Why? 'For in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.' The welfare of God's people was bound up with the welfare of the city where God had placed them.

This establishes a theology of cultural engagement that Jesus would later radicalize in commanding His disciples to love enemies and pray for persecutors (Matthew 5:44). Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, Esther in Persia—all exemplify this principle of seeking their host nation's welfare while maintaining covenant faithfulness. They did not withdraw into isolated communities or foment rebellion; they contributed their gifts and wisdom to the surrounding culture while remaining distinctly God's people.

For the church, this means Christians should be the best citizens—working for justice, contributing to the common good, serving our neighbors, praying for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2). We do not merely critique culture from a distance; we engage it redemptively, seeking the flourishing of our cities even when they are hostile to Christian values. Our ultimate citizenship is heaven, but our present responsibility is faithful presence where God has placed us.

Historical Context

This command was fulfilled by faithful Jews like Daniel, who served Babylon's kings with wisdom and integrity (Daniel 6:3), and later by figures like Nehemiah, who served the Persian king faithfully (Nehemiah 2:1-5). Early Christians followed this pattern—contributing to society, caring for the sick (even pagans) during plagues, showing hospitality, working honestly—so that even their critics acknowledged their good works (1 Peter 2:12).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How should Christians today 'seek the peace of the city' where God has placed us, even when the culture is hostile to biblical values?
2. What is the difference between seeking our city's welfare and compromising our Christian convictions?
3. In what practical ways can we pray for and work toward the flourishing of our community while maintaining our distinct identity as God's people?

Interlinear Text

אֶת וְדֶרֶשׁ 1 שָׁלוֹם: רַבָּע יְרֵא אֶשְׁר

And seek H853 for it for in the peace of the city H834

H1875

H7965

H5892

הַגָּל יְתִי

whither I have caused you to be carried away captives

H1540

שָׁפָה אֶתְכֶם

H853 H8033

וְהַתְפִּלֵּל 1 שָׁלוֹם: הַתִּתְפִּלֵּל 1

and pray

H1157

H413

unto the LORD

H3588

for it for in the peace

H1961

H6419

H3068

H7965

לְכָךְ שָׁלוֹם:

H0

for it for in the peace

H7965

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 6:10 (Prayer): That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

Daniel 4:27 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

Ezra 7:23 (Parallel theme): Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

Daniel 4:19 (References Lord): Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

Romans 13:1 (Parallel theme): Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

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