

THE ROAD OF EXILE

02: Seek the Good of the City

THE ROAD OF EXILE | LESSON 2

Steve Ellis | September 2026 | Southbelt Church of Christ

Introduction

Jeremiah writes from Jerusalem to God's people who are already learning to live in Babylon. His letter asks a question that reaches beyond their circumstances:

How are God's people supposed to live in a place that is not their home?

JEREMIAH AND DANIEL: A BRIEF TIMELINE

627 BC

Jeremiah
called

605 BC

Daniel taken
to Babylon

597 BC

Major
deportation

586 BC

Jerusalem &
temple destroyed

Jeremiah was not taken into Babylonian exile. He remained in Judah, witnessed Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC, and later was taken against his will to Egypt.

Notes:

Exploring The Text

A Letter to the Exiles

“This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles...” (Jeremiah 29:1, NIV)

Jeremiah is writing to people who have experienced tremendous loss. Yet God has not forgotten his covenant people.

“This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon...” (Jeremiah 29:4, NIV)

Notice the words: “I carried into exile.”

Even in exile, God remains in control.

Notes:

Build, Plant, and Live

“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce...” (Jeremiah 29:5–6, NIV)

BUILD

houses and settle down

PLANT

gardens and eat

LIVE

raise families and put down roots

These are ordinary things. God's answer is not some grand program for changing Babylon. It begins with ordinary faithfulness.

Exile does not mean _____ from life.

Their identity as God's people does not remove them from the place where they live. It shapes how they live there.

Notes:

Seek the Shalom of the City

“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.” (Jeremiah 29:7, NIV)

SHALOM

peace

well-being

wholeness

welfare

flourishing

**Seek the shalom of the city,
because in its shalom you will find your shalom.**

God connects the well-being of his people with the well-being of the place where they live.

Seeking Babylon's good does not mean approving of Babylon's values or gods. Daniel shows that faithfulness may require saying no. But resistance to Babylon's values does not become hatred toward Babylon's people.

Notes:

A Blessing to the Nations

“...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:3, NIV)

We can hear an echo of Abraham's calling. Even in Babylon, God's people are called to seek the good of those around them.

Notes:

You Are Going to Be Here for a While

“When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.” (Jeremiah 29:10, NIV)

For many hearing the letter, seventy years meant they would spend the rest of their lives in Babylon.

Faithfulness starts _____.

You don't wait for Babylon to become Jerusalem before you begin seeking its good.

Notes:

God Still Holds the Future

“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.” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)

These words are spoken to exiles. God is not promising quick relief. He is reminding them who holds their future.

Babylon does not determine their _____. God does.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart... I will bring you back from captivity.” (Jeremiah 29:13–14, NIV)

Their hope is in the God who promises to restore his people.

Notes:

Continuing the Journey

Faithfulness begins in surprisingly ordinary places: relationships, family, honest work, knowing our neighbors, prayer, and caring about the peace and well-being of the places where we live.

Peter later describes followers of Jesus as “foreigners and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11, NIV).

Because we belong to God, we seek the good of the _____ and _____ around us.

What is one ordinary way I can seek the good of the place where God has placed me this week?

One More Thing

Seek the good of the place where God has _____ you.

Scripture Acknowledgement

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For Additional Study

BibleProject: [The Way of Exile](#)

BibleProject: [Exile](#)

BibleProject: [Exile in the Bible: An Ethic of Loyalty and Subversion](#)

N.T. Wright: [End of Exile: Daniel, Jesus, and Redemption \(N. T. Wright Q&A\)](#)