

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

August 2011

Christian Exiles



In a profound sense, this world is not our home. When we are away from our bodies we will be “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). We are not to be “conformed to this age” (Rom. 12:2). Our lives “are hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). We have been “transferred out of the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col. 1:13). We have “passed out of death and into life” (1 John 3:14). We are exiles and strangers here.

The fact that we are exiles on the earth (1 Peter 2:11) does not mean that we don’t care what becomes of culture. However, it does mean that we exert our influence as very happy, brokenhearted outsiders. We are exiles.

“Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20).

“Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come” (Heb. 13:14).

Yet we are very happy sojourners because we have been commanded by our bloody Champion to rejoice in exile miseries: “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:11–12). We are happy because the apostle Paul showed us that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). We are happy because there are merciful foretastes everywhere in this fallen world, and God is glad for us to enjoy them (1 Tim. 4:3; 6:17). We are happy because we know that the exiles will one day inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). Christ died for sinners so

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that “all things” might one day belong to His people (Rom. 8:32).

Nevertheless, our joy is a brokenhearted joy because Christ is worthy of so much better obedience than we Christians render. Our joy is a brokenhearted joy because so many people around the world have not heard the good news that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). Our joy is a brokenhearted joy because human culture — in every society — dishonors Christ, glories in its shame, and is bent on self-destruction.

This includes America. American culture does not belong to Christians, neither in reality nor in biblical theology. It never has. The present tailspin toward Sodom is not a fall from Christian ownership. “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). It has since the fall, and it will until Christ comes in open triumph. God’s rightful ownership will be manifested in due time. The lordship of Christ over all creation is being manifest in stages:

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Christian Exiles (Continued from Page 1)



first the age of groaning, then the age of glory. “We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). The exiles are groaning with the whole creation. We are waiting.

However, Christian exiles are not passive. We do not smirk at the misery or the merrymaking of immoral culture. We weep. Or we should. This is my main point: being exiles does not mean being indifferent or uninvolved. The salt of the earth does not mock rotting meat. Where it can, it saves and seasons. Where it can't, it weeps. And the light of the world does not withdraw, saying “good riddance” to godless darkness. It labors to illuminate. But not dominate.

Being Christian exiles in American culture does not end our influence; it takes the swagger out of it. We don't get cranky that our country has been taken away. We don't whine about the triumphs of evil. We are not hardened with anger. We understand. This is not new. This was the way it was in the beginning — Antioch, Corinth, Athens, Rome. The Empire was not just degenerate, it was deadly. For three explosive centuries, Christians paid for their Christ-exalting joy with blood. Many still do. More will.

It never occurred to those early exiles that they should rant about the ubiquity of secular humanism. The Imperial words were still ringing in their ears: “You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Mark 13:13). This was a time for indomitable joy and unwavering ministries of mercy.

Yes, it was a time for influence — as it is now, but not with huffing and puffing as if to reclaim our lost laws. Rather with tears, persuasion, and perseverance, knowing that the folly of

racism, the exploitation of the poor, the de-Godding of education, the horror of abortion, and the collapse of heterosexual marriage are the tragic death-tremors of joy, not the victory of the left or the right.

The greatness of Christian exiles is not success but service. Whether we win or lose, we witness to the way of truth, beauty, and joy. We don't own culture, and we don't rule it. We serve it with brokenhearted joy and longsuffering mercy, for the good of man and the glory of Jesus Christ.

[Taken from Ligonier Ministries, *Tabletalk* devotional, May 2011, written by John Piper.]

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the LORD and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

Colossians 3:23-24

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