

Faithful Exiles: Finding Hope in a Hostile World  
Copyright © 2023 by The Gospel Coalition

Published by The Gospel Coalition

The Gospel Coalition  
P.O. Box 170346  
Austin, Texas 78717

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Art Direction: Brannon McAllister  
Cover Design: Spencer Fuller, Faceout Studio  
Typesetting: Ryan Leichty

Cover Illustration: “Panel with Striding Lion,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1931.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *esv*® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture references marked *niv* are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, *niv*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

ISBN:  
978-1-956593-09-9 (paperback)  
978-1-956593-10-5 (ebook)  
978-1-956593-11-2 (kindle)

*Printed in the United States of America*

# FAITHFUL EXILES

FINDING HOPE IN A HOSTILE WORLD

# CONTENTS

Contributors	i
Foreword	v
Introduction	1
<b>CHAPTER 1: Exile Begins</b>	7
<i>Jairo Namnún</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 2: Contending as Exiles</b>	17
<i>Glen Scrivener</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 3: Hope as Exiles</b>	31
<i>Keri Folmar</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 4: Holiness as Exiles</b>	43
<i>Shane Morris</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 5: Worship as Exiles</b>	57
<i>Ken Mbugua</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 6: Politics as Exiles</b>	69
<i>Stephen McAlpine</i>	

<b>CHAPTER 7: Missions as Exiles</b>	81
<i>Elliot Clark</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 8: Prayer as Exiles</b>	93
<i>Megan Hill</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 9: Preaching as Exiles</b>	105
<i>Miguel Núñez</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 10: Apologetics as Exiles</b>	117
<i>Claude Atcho</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 11: Vocation as Exiles</b>	129
<i>Jay Y. Kim</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 12: Church as Exiles</b>	141
<i>Alex Duke</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 13: Suffering as Exiles</b>	153
<i>Blair Linne</i>	
<b>CHAPTER 14: Exile Ends</b>	165
<i>Brett McCracken</i>	
Scripture Index	177

# CONTRIBUTORS

**CLAUDE ATCHO** is the pastor of Church of the Resurrection in Charlottesville, Virginia. He has previously served as a pastor in Boston, Massachusetts, and in Memphis, Tennessee. He is the author of *Reading Black Books: How African American Literature Can Make Our Faith More Whole and Just*.

**ELLIOT CLARK** (MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) served in Central Asia as a cross-cultural church planter along with his wife and children. He now travels around the world to equip church leaders and support residential missionaries. He is the author of *Evangelism as Exiles: Life on Mission as Strangers in Our Own Land* and *Mission Affirmed: Recovering the Missionary Motivation of Paul*.

**ALEX DUKE** is senior editor for 9Marks and the host of their podcast *Bible Talk*. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky, where he also serves Third Avenue Baptist Church as the director of youth ministry and ecclesiological training.

**KERI FOLMAR** lives in the Middle East where her husband, John, is the pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church of Dubai. She has written *The Good Portion: Scripture* and *How Can Women Thrive in the Local Church?* She is also the author of the *Delighting in the Word* Bible studies for women, including a new two-volume study on Romans. Keri cohosts the podcast *Priscilla Talk*.

**MEGAN HILL** is the managing editor for The Gospel Coalition. She is the author of several books, including *A Place to Belong: Learning to Love the Local Church*. She belongs to West Springfield Covenant Community Church (PCA) and lives in Massachusetts with her husband and four children.

**JAY Y. KIM** is lead pastor at WestGate Church. He's the author of *Analog Christian* and *Analog Church* and lives in the Silicon Valley of California. He and his wife, Jenny, have two young children.

**BLAIR LINNE** is known as one of the originators of the Christian Spoken Word genre. She is also an actress, Bible teacher, author of *Finding My Father*, and creator and cohost of the podcast *GLO* through The Gospel Coalition podcasting network. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through writing and spoken word is her passion. She is married to her husband, Shai, and they have three children.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**KEN MBUGUA** is the lead pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Nairobi, Kenya, and is the managing director at Ekklesia Afrika, a ministry that seeks to strengthen churches by providing access to theological resources. He and his wife, Arlette, have three children.

**STEPHEN MCALPINE** is the director for cultural engagement at City to City Australia. He is the author of *Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World That Says You Shouldn't*. Stephen is married to Jill, and they live in Perth, Australia, with their two children. They attend Providence Church, a network of evangelical church plants in Perth.

**BRETT MCCRACKEN** is a senior editor and director of communications at The Gospel Coalition. He is the author of *The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World*, *Uncomfortable: The Awkward and Essential Challenge of Christian Community*, *Gray Matters: Navigating the Space between Legalism and Liberty*, and *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide*. Brett and his wife, Kira, live in Santa Ana, California, with their three children. They belong to Southlands Church, and Brett serves as an elder.

**IVAN MESA** (PhD candidate, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is editorial director for The Gospel Coalition. He's editor of *Before You Lose Your Faith: Deconstructing Doubt in the Church*. He and his wife, Sarah, have four children, and they live in eastern Georgia.

**SHANE MORRIS** is a senior writer at the Colson Center and host of the *Upstream* podcast, as well as cohost of the *BreakPoint* podcast. He has coauthored hundreds of BreakPoint commentaries and columns and has written for *WORLD*, *The Federalist*, *The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, and *Summit Ministries*. He and his wife, Gabriela, live with their four children in Lakeland, Florida.

**JAIRO NAMNÚN** is pastor of Iglesia Piedra Angular in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He is married to Patricia and they have three children.

**MIGUEL NÚÑEZ** (DMin, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; ThM, Southern Baptist School for Biblical Studies; MD, INTEC School of Medicine) is pastor for preaching and vision at Iglesia Bautista Internacional and president of Ministerios Integridad & Sabiduría in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He's a Council member of The Gospel Coalition and vice president of Coalición por el Evangelio. He has authored several books, including *Servants of His Glory: Cultivating Christlikeness in a World of Performance*.

**GLEN SCRIVENER** is an Australian author and speaker who lives in the U.K. He directs the evangelistic ministry Speak Life and has written 10 books, including *The Air We Breathe: How We All Came to Believe in Freedom, Kindness, Progress, and Equality* and *3-2-1: The Story of God, the World, and You*.



# FOREWORD

THIS IS A CONFUSING time for Christians as they seek to best respond to the alarming trends they encounter in society.

Some give up the fight and choose to discard basic aspects of Christian belief and practice that run counter to societal trends. Others, overcome by disappointment, retreat from engagement in society and choose to simply, passively survive while trying to be true to biblical belief and morality.

Still others are infuriated by apparent defeats in the battle for righteousness as society yields more and more to the agenda of forces hostile to the Christian ethic. They resort to desperate measures of protest, using offensive methods in their quest to regain control. Sadly, they don't show signs of the "joy and peace in believing" (Rom. 15:13) that broadcast the gospel's beauty to our joyless and restless world. Their cause is right: countering injustice, immorality, and apostasy. But their methods don't commend their cause to a world desperately in need of the saving truth of Christ.

When Paul saw the impressive, beautiful temples in Athens, something else grabbed his attention. These magnificent buildings were devoted to idolatry. And he

was enraged (Acts 17:16). But his approach to the people was restrained. He dialogued with them using the Athenian style of communication. Paul demonstrated the approach advocated by Peter, who taught that when we “make a defense to anyone who asks [us] for a reason for the hope that is in” us, we should do so with “gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15). We’re provoked to anger by the challenges to Christian belief we face today. But we’re restrained in our response.

We don’t need to panic when we see segments of society being overrun by forces hostile to Christianity. Deeper than the world history we see, there’s another history unfolding. God is working out his plan for his creation, and nothing can thwart it. The final victory, of which the resurrection is the firstfruits, will surely come in God’s timing. We’re living in the period between the firstfruits and the consummation. If we realized this, we wouldn’t compromise our principles and accommodate ourselves to the present world. Neither would we use unbiblical methods to combat wrong. Our confidence in God enables us to stick within the parameters of Christian belief and practice.

The quiet confidence that comes from the vision of the sovereign God at work and the conviction we have a significant role in God’s agenda would, on the one hand, save us from bitter hostility toward others. Such hostility is now being described as fundamentalism. It’s incompatible with the peace of Christ that rules in our hearts and moderates our behavior (Col. 3:15). On the other

## FOREWORD

hand, the knowledge God is at work will give us a passion to join in fulfilling God's plan for history.

The Bible is loaded with stories of people who, trusting in God, lived radiant lives of obedience under difficult circumstances and had a lasting positive influence. The book in your hands calls such people "faithful exiles" as it profiles several Old and New Testament characters whose lives have much to teach us today. It describes both men and women, people in different professions, and people facing hugely different challenges. Their faith in God helped them to be faithful. Presented here is a much-needed perspective on how we can be faithful to God in difficult situations. This book also challenges the apathy of some Christians who have given up on the possibility of making a significant difference in this world. It motivates them to join in the agenda of the kingdom of God during these confusing days.

Right now, my country, Sri Lanka, is going through one of the darkest periods in its history. The country is close to economic bankruptcy, with little prospect of recovery any time soon. A significant percentage of our population cannot afford adequate healthy meals. Impunity, incompetence, and corruption in high places have left people with no trust in the leadership. People have given up hope. Hundreds of thousands of people, including Christians, are trying to leave the country.

I've felt one of my most important callings these days is to promote the hope of the Christian faith in Sri Lanka. God hasn't given up on Sri Lanka. There's another history at work. If we align ourselves to the stream of

God's sovereign plan for the world—the other history—we move along a path that will ultimately lead to triumph. Amid the gloom that surrounds us, we can be excited about our call and give ourselves passionately to it.

In a passage that discusses how we should respond to the frustration we face on earth (Rom. 8:20–39), Paul says, “If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (v. 25). In the New Testament, patience is an active concept. Believing the sovereign God is working for good in all things (v. 28), we join with God in his work. So whether we're facing socioeconomic collapse as in Sri Lanka or cultural and religious upheaval as in the West, we don't retreat in discouragement or lash out in uncontrolled anger. Knowing God is working, we seek his will for us and resolve to do our part as his representatives on earth.

Ajith Fernando  
Teaching Director, Youth for Christ  
Colombo, Sri Lanka

# INTRODUCTION

**Elliot Clark and Ivan Mesa**

*“She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings.” (1 Pet. 5:13)*

WRITING TO CHURCHES ON the far side of the Roman Empire, the apostle Peter opened his first letter by addressing Christian diasporas (1 Pet. 1:1). These believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia had been displaced and dispersed from their homeland. They were, in a real sense, *exiles*.

Yet their experience wasn't that of *literal* exile. It didn't involve their physical removal from a place. Instead, this exile manifested in social and familial ostracism. These Christians were marginalized and maligned for their faith. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, they were mocked and reviled (3:16). But also like Christ, they were chosen and precious (2:9; cf. 2:4, 6). They were, by God's grace, *elect* (1:1).

The twin themes of exile and election develop throughout Peter's epistle, culminating in its benediction. As Peter composed the final lines of his correspondence,

alongside Silvanus and Mark, the apostle signed off: “She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings” (5:13).

Of course, Peter wasn’t writing from *literal* Babylon. By then, that infamous city—that ancient enemy of God’s people—had long been gone. Yet by making this striking allusion, Peter connected with the experience of his readers. Just as they were *elect exiles*, he too was a chosen outcast. The church in Rome, of which he was a member, constituted God’s chosen people in Babylonian captivity.

This creative turn of phrase does more than help far-off readers relate to the apostle. By depicting the church as God’s chosen ones in Babylon, Peter reveals his understanding of the situation for Christians in all of life and in all the world. Wherever we find ourselves, we are exiles. Every citizen of heaven living on earth is far from home.

## **STORY OF THE BIBLE**

In one sense, we could say such exile is common for humanity. Ever since the fall, sin has separated us from God and from one another. Part of what it means to live east of Eden is to experience the effects of sin’s corruption, the corruption that touches every aspect of life for every person in the world.

However, God’s chosen people have always experienced a particular and persistent exile. Abraham sojourned in Egypt. Moses ran to Midian. David fled to

## INTRODUCTION

Philistia. The nation wandered in the wilderness. Eventually, they were taken captive to Assyria and Babylon.

Some of their wanderings were owing to their sin, some to the evil of others or sin's curse upon the world (seen in human violence and natural disasters). Many of Israel's temporary homes were hostile locations that threatened their faith and their lives—which ultimately threatened the promises of God.

Today, God's new covenant people still experience a kind of exile. We may not be living in literal Egypt or Babylon, but each of us lives as a stranger in a strange land. Like John on Patmos, we're longing for the return of our King and the realization of our inheritance. This reality calls for patient endurance as we wait for the promise.

If this is the story of God's people from beginning to end, then the experience of exile will affect all of life. It will influence our prayer, our preaching, and our politics. But we must also recognize our exile isn't an accident. These fiery trials shouldn't surprise us. Instead, we recognize them as God's means for purifying the church and providing blessing for all the world.

Like Abraham's, our sojourn is part of God's plan—that the nations might seek and find their way to God (Acts 17:26–27). That Eden's exiles might one day make their way home.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK**

Peter's first epistle, as an exhortation to fellow exiles, encourages believers to set their hope on God's future grace

(1:13). We can't think of a better goal for this book. Our desire is to give Christians *hope in a hostile world*.

There's no disputing that Christian beliefs, values, and ethics are in precipitous decline in the West. As many of us now inhabit a post-Christian society, we're learning for the first time what exile feels like. Yet this experience is nothing new for many believers and churches in the majority world. They continue to occupy spaces that overtly oppose their witness. As Peter wrote in the first century, such suffering is no surprise (4:12).

We want to learn from these brothers and sisters around the globe alongside those within the post-Christian West. We want to consider how God is at work in the world. We want to encourage you with a positive vision for how Christians can live in this hour of hostility. And we want to reflect on ways the church can respond to increasing antagonism, opposition, and threats.

By labeling our experience as *exile*, we're not implying the church is powerless. Nor are Christians exempt from social, cultural, or political engagement. Instead, we believe the gospel calls exiles to active involvement for the good of society while also directing us to gentleness and respect for all (3:15).

Is now the time for Christians to surrender the culture or retreat in isolation? Should we stand up and take back what's been lost? Rather than limiting our options to fight or flight, we believe the gospel gives rise to hope (1:3, 13, 21)—and that hope should color our actions and responses in every sphere of life.



## INTRODUCTION

To shade in that image of hope, we'll look at the lives of exiles throughout Scripture. Some of them were literal sojourners, foreigners, and refugees. Others simply lived as expats of heaven while strangers on earth. We'll consider their example as a model for how to live as those patiently striving for holiness while waiting for home (1:14–16). This is, in essence, the message of another letter in the New Testament: Hebrews.

Hebrews was written to encourage endurance in those tempted to succumb to social pressures. It was written so believers in a hostile environment might imitate “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12). To that end, the author of Hebrews famously recounted the stories of God’s people in history who, in the words of C. S. Lewis, “did most for the present world” because they “thought most of the next.”<sup>1</sup> Their story is our story.

This is the story of *faithful exiles*.

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: William Collins, 2016), 134.