

We're All on Death Row

Introduction. According to the latest census, there are currently 2,331 prisoners on death row in the United States. Texas leads the nation in the number of executions since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. California, Florida, Texas, and Alabama have the largest death row populations.

So much has been said by our courts, governmental officials, celebrities, and the general populace about the legitimacy and methods of capital punishment.

In Romans 5:12-14, death came on all men when sin entered the world through Adam's sin. And for each human being, death will eventually come in one of several ways; i.e. old age, disease, accident, or by the hand of another.

The important question is, "What am I doing while on death row?" We can learn a lot from how people in the Bible handled death and what can be learned from them.

I. How Did Some People Handle Death?

A. Moses.

1. He was concerned about who would lead Israel (Numbers 27:12-17), and about them keeping "feasts" (Numbers 28:1-29:40).
2. He was concerned about their unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 4:2, 30-31).
3. He left stern warnings about their faithfulness (Deuteronomy 31:1-32:47), but also pronounced a blessing for their faithfulness (Deuteronomy 33:26-29).
4. Though Moses' death was quickly approaching, he was deeply concerned about the people of God he had led so many years.

B. Hezekiah.

1. He approached his death with prayer (2 Kings 20:1-11).
2. He received an extension of his life by 15 years — but how (vv. 1-2)?
3. He was confident about his life and faithfulness, and wasn't ashamed to plead with God (v. 3). He reigned 29 years because of God's mercy (v. 6).
4. He was grateful that God's message through Isaiah meant that he would have peace during the last part of his life (2 Kings 20:19-20).

C. Paul.

1. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul recognized his imminent death (v. 6). However, he faced it with confident preparation (v. 7).
2. Paul had fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith. Therefore, he was confident about his future (v. 8).

D. Jesus.

1. He saw the rejoicing to be found in His death (John 14:28).
2. Nevertheless, He was sorrowful about the event (Matthew 26:38). And, He prayed for His Father's will to be honored (Matthew 26:39).
3. But after His prayer, He had bold confidence to face His death (Matthew 26:46; cp. Hebrews 5:7-9).

E. Ahaziah.

1. In contrast with the other exemplary individuals, Ahaziah faced death fighting against God because of his idolatry (1 Kings 22:51-53). His parents were Ahab and Jezebel, and he walked in their wicked way.

2. After Ahaziah was injured, he inquired from an idol about the prospects of his recovery (2 Kings 1:1-2).
3. He sent his army three times against God's prophet, Elijah (2 Kings 1:9-14). His epithet essentially said, "He fought against God to the bitter end."
4. The majority of humanity will fight against God until the bitter end. That's sad to everyone who loves righteousness and hates that people will be lost.
 - a) But much sadder is a Christian who no longer stands in the grace of God (Romans 5:2; 1 Peter 5:12; cp. Galatians 5:4).
 - b) They've turned against God and will have to give account of themselves when judgment comes (Matthew 25:46; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12; Revelation 20:11-15).

II. How Will We Face Our Own Death?

- A. Will we be concerned with the faithfulness of those left like Moses? Will we seek to provide them knowledge and leaders before our death so they can continue in faithfulness before God that they might die in favor with God (Titus 2:1-8)?
- B. Will we approach our death with confident prayer in faithfulness like Hezekiah, or will we be ashamed to plead with God on our own behalf (Philippians 1:5-6; 4:6)?
- C. Will we be able to face death with confident assurance like Paul? Will we know that we have truly fought a good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith (1 John 5:13)?
- D. Will we be able to face our death with steadfast resolve like Jesus? Will we, though sorry to depart this life leaving family and friends, find solace in death? Will we seek God's will in death, rather than our own? Will we boldly face death knowing the glory that's in heaven may be ours?
- E. Or, like Ahaziah, will we fight against God and His messengers to the bitter end? Will we seek answers in the idols of our day: money, pleasure, earthly joy, and self-seeking fulfillment?

Conclusion. We don't rejoice in the fact that people are weighed down with guilt and shame, but we do rejoice in the fact that Christ offers the preparation you need to overcome sin. His grace, cross, blood, and resurrection is the answer. Are you ready for your death into eternity? We're all on death row and the Lord is calling for you to be fully prepared (Matthew 11:28-30).

If you really want to obey (Matthew 7:13-14), then you need to hear (Romans 10:17), believe (John 8:24), repent (2 Peter 3:9), confess (Matthew 10:32), and be baptized (Mark 16:16). As a Christian, have you lived as you should? If not, let's confess it and pray for each other so that we can be healed (James 5:16).

I am deeply indebted to Jim Belcher for the use of his material.