

How Various Individuals Faced Death

by Bill Crews

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judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4:19). They were further threatened and released, but they went right back to their preaching. In Acts 5 the twelve apostles were all arrested for their preaching, imprisoned, miraculously set free by an angel of the Lord, and then arrested again. This time they were not only charged to cease their preaching, but were also beaten and no doubt threatened with worse than before. Their reaction? *"We must obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29). They continued their teaching; they were willing to die.

Stephen

For what he preached Stephen was seized unjustly, slandered, and brought before the great Sanhedrin court. There he was vilified and allowed to reply in his defense. When he told the truth about his accusers and judges, in anger they dragged him out and stoned him to death. Among his dying words were these to the Lord: *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,"* and *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"* (Acts 7:59-60). He was willing to forgive those who murdered him. He died with dignity, without fear, without malice, and with hope.

Paul

From the time that he became a Christian Paul was faced with the threat and possibility of a violent death at the hands of those who opposed the truth. Listen to his words: *"I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Acts 21:13). While a prisoner at Rome, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). During his final imprisonment at Rome, *"For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come (he was executed shortly after writing this letter, bc). I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

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