

Does the Death Penalty Actually Contradict the Gospel?

Many Christians claim to be pro-life, but Christian activist Shane Claiborne says being pro-life is so much more than simply opposing abortion. Protecting life, he says, also means saving people from death—whether it be from war, gun violence and even the death penalty.

On the “Charisma News” podcast, Claiborne tells host Taylor Berglund that his group hosted a “March for Mercy” to oppose a planned execution in his home state of Tennessee.

“I’ve been visiting the guys here on death row in Tennessee for years,” he says. “And many of them are really, really, deeply committed Christians. We asked them, ‘What would you say to the governor of Tennessee if you had the chance?’ And they said, ‘We’d like to invite the governor to come pray with us and come hear what Jesus has done in our lives.’”

These men Claiborne talked to ended up writing a letter to the governor to share their stories of redemption.

“I got involved in all this partly because I think some of these issues like the death penalty go to the very heart of our faith,” he says. “And they raise questions like ‘Do we really believe in redemption? Do we believe that, as Jesus said, “I have not come to the healthy but to the sick” and “Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more”?’”

Citing Dale Recinella and the Death Penalty Info Center, Claiborne says that what strikes him is that 85% of executions take place in the Bible Belt.

“That breaks my heart because I think it makes me feel like we

might have missed the whole point of the gospel,” he says.

Listen to the podcast to hear how Claiborne says Christians can fight to preserve life.