

## IV. Why Do Some Good Christians Die Young?

Like the Bible promises, the average life-span in America today is about seventy or eighty. The Bible says: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (Psalms 90:10).

There is a time to be born and a time to die: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2).

Yet it seems that sometimes a good Christian dies well before the normal life expectancy. Why might this be?

### A. Martyrdom.

Millions of God’s people have been killed for the faith. Men and women. Adults and children. Here are some examples:

#### 1. Abel

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” (Genesis 4:8).

#### 2. Zechariah

“And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.” (II Chronicles 24:20-21).

“From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.” (Luke 11:51).

#### 3. John the Baptist

“And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,” (Mark 6:27).

#### 4. Stephen

“ Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” (Acts 7:57-58).

#### 5. James

“And he [King Herod] killed James the brother of John with the sword.” (Acts 12:2).

Also remember: God watched His own Son die at the age of thirty-three.

### B. To save them from the evil to come.

“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.” (Isaiah 57:1-2).

God knows the future. We do not. Sometimes, to save someone from something evil, God – in His love – relocates them to Heaven. This great act of love on God’s part is often hard to understand for humans looking at the situation from this side.

### C. To be closer to God.

“And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” (Genesis 5:22-24).

It appears that the birth of his son (Methusaleh) caused Enoch to draw close to God. The birth of a child often “jolts” an adult from lethargy into reality. Enoch was about sixty-five years old when his son was born. This caused Enoch to grow close to God and walk with Him for the next three hundred years.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to

please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:5-6).

Enoch had a testimony! He pleased God and God took him. Enoch did not die, but he is an example to us that God sometimes takes younger people to Himself. Death is not a penalty for the one walking righteously. It is a reward!

“For to me to live is Christ, and **to die is gain.**” (Philippians 1:21).

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is **far better:**” (Philippians 1:23)

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be **present with the Lord.**” (II Corinthians 5:8).

“**Precious** in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” (Psalms 116:15).

Most people in Enoch’s day lived to be nine hundred years old. Enoch was translated to heaven at the age of 365. He only lived about forty percent of his life. That would be like a man today living to the age of thirty.

Missionary David Brainerd only lived to be 29, but his life still influences missionaries today, two hundred years later.

The closer to God on earth, the closer to God in Heaven. Sometimes God loves fellowship with someone so much that the only way it can be closer is for God to take that person to Heaven. Such is the example of Enoch.

## V. Why Do Some Bad Believers Die Young?

### A. Overmuch wickedness.

“Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?” (Ecclesiastes 7:17).

Solomon sufficiently warns us here that a person who is overmuch wicked can die before his time. There is a divinely appointed time for each of us to die:

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” (Hebrews 9:27).

An unrepentant believer can move that date up on God’s calendar. God’s nature is to give people “space to repent” (Revelation 2:21). If one of His children persists in disobedience, He will remove that person so they cannot sin anymore. Any good parent “pulls their children in” when they are being bad. We call it being “grounded.”

### B. No fruit.

If a tree in an orchard does not bear fruit, it is removed and another tree is put in its place. Bearing fruit can save your life. Consider the parable of the barren fig tree:

“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” (Luke 13:6-9).

God demands results. If we do not produce, He will replace us with someone who will.

Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: ....” (John 15:16).

### C. Chastisement.

The ultimate chastisement of a believer is death. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (I Corinthians 11:30-32).

In the Bible, the word “sleep” often is used synonymously for death. Here chastisement refers to a father’s correction of his children. This is why some believers are weak, some are sickly, and some sleep (die prematurely). The Lord chastens His children, but thankfully does not condemn them.

This is referring to the sleep of the body, not the sleep of the soul or spirit. As we have already seen, the spirit and soul never sleep. They go immediately upward to God or downward to hell. The body “sleeps” in the grave till the resurrection: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” (I Corinthians 15:51).

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.” (I Thessalonians 4:13-15).

## **D. Defiling the Temple of God.**

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

The word “defile” means “to ruin by immoral influence, to deprave.”

The body is holy. It is the temple of God. It is not to be defiled. The believer needs to stay away from all vices: alcohol, illegal drugs, junk food, gluttony, sexual sins, cigarettes, etc.

## **E. Sin unto death.**

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” (I John 5:16-17).

Some sins are greater than others (John 19:11). Our position in Christ is eternally secure, but a great sin can lead to a person’s premature physical death. There are sins unto death. There are sins not unto death. Some examples of sins unto death:

### **1. For Achan, it was covetousness.**

“And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it... And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.” (Joshua 7:20-21, 25-26).

### **2. For Korah, it was the sin of rebellion against those in authority.**

“Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:... And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.” (Numbers 16:1-2, 31-32).

### **3. For Ananias and Sapphira, it was lying to the Holy Spirit.**

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things... And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.” (Acts 5:1-5, 7-10).

There are other examples in Scripture where people came under immediate judgment from God because of a sin unto death.