



## Why do believers have to die?

Recently, I stood at the graveside of a dear Christian friend. Before addressing the gathered family and friends, I once again pondered the question, “Why do believers have to die?” The wages of sin is death, and believers have sinned. However Christ has paid the full penalty for our sins. So why do believers have to die?

The simple answer is, “They don’t.” Believers do not have to die, because Christ has died in their place. There is not an atom of penalty left to pay. Therefore, God could translate believers to heaven without them having to pass through death, just as He did with Enoch and Elijah, and as He will do with the believers who are living upon Christ’s return. So, believers do not have to die, as Christ has purchased deliverance from physical death and the redemption of our bodies. But, in most cases, the Lord has chosen to delay or postpone the application of these benefits until the general resurrection of all. The question remains, though: “Why?” If believers do not *have* to die, why do they?

The answer is that God wisely allows the vast majority of believers to pass through death because of the immense spiritual benefits of the experience.

### ***1. Dying brings us into communion with Christ’s sufferings***

Christ’s death is different from the believer’s penalty-free death because Christ’s death was a penalty for sin (our sin). However, dying reminds us of what Christ did for us. It brings us into a new communion with Him and increases our love for Him (Phil. 3:10).

### ***2. Dying gives us a unique experience of Christ’s all-sufficient grace***

Bodily death is still a painful evil to the believer. He will fear it and feel it. As the last moments approach, there is often great physical pain and sometimes spiritual fear. There is also the emotional distress of seeing loved ones weeping.

At such times the dying believer can experience tremendous help from Christ. His grace is found to be more than sufficient at this time of greatest need.

### ***3. Dying transforms us into Christ’s image***

One of the blessings of dying is the rapid ripening of the believer’s character and the acceleration of his sanctification. The outer person is growing weaker, but the inner is growing stronger and stronger. Though death can take an ugly toll on the body of a believer, yet his soul is being swiftly beautified. I’m sure many pastors have seen how even the approach of death can result in a believer “shining” in a way they never have before.

### ***4. Dying is our last and perhaps greatest opportunity to witness for Christ’s glory***

In many ways, death is the supreme test of faith. What an opportunity to speak of how faith in Christ helps us to die and gives victory over the greatest enemy. How many unbelievers have been converted by the dying words of godly fathers or mothers!

### ***5. Dying brings us into Christ’s presence***

Death hastens us into the presence of Christ and our coronation as His precious people. Death temporarily separates us from our bodies, but it unites our souls to Christ in a new and wonderful way.

In summary, believers do not have to die, but they do die: to have communion with Christ’s sufferings, to experience Christ’s grace, to be made like Christ’s image, to witness for Christ’s glory, and to bring them into Christ’s presence.

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