

Can a Christian be a martyr in the will of God?

Webster's Definition of a martyr: One who voluntarily suffers death as the penalty for witnessing and refusing to renounce their faith.

The answer would be no, if, God has promised them long life and they believe it:

Ps 91:16 **With long life I will satisfy them, And show them My salvation.**

Prov 3:2 **For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you.**

This implies knowing God as Jehovah Nissi, as our protector, and living in Christ.

The answer would be yes if God personally tells you that you will die prematurely:

The example of Peter: John 21:18-19 **...when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish. This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God...**

Are we, if our body is killed, in which Christ lives, partaking of Christ's sufferings? Will it necessarily be terrible? Consider the example of Stephen, God's martyr:

Acts 7:59 **And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."** (they stoned Paul too but then he arose)

60 **Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.**

Did the stones kill him? No, before that happened God received his spirit. Was he then in fact worse off than if he had continued living on earth? No, consider Paul:

Phil 1:21 **For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain** (heaven versus earth).

Can martyrdom occur to some who know God but not as their protector, or who knew God and then went astray, but returned to Christ when it was too late for God, in the absence of faith, to be able to engineer their escape? Yes I believe so. The wise thing for us all is to let God reveal Himself to us as protector and walk in His ways, unless, and it is rare, He informs us our lives will be cut short. Even in that, to understand He makes it bearable and we'll be better off with Him.

Prov 1:32 **For the turning away of the ignorant (a limited heart knowledge of God) will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them;**

33 **But whoever listens to me will live safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil** (God's Angels have charge over them – Psa 91:11).

By definition a true martyr, not one who throws their life away needlessly and out of the will of God, is partaking of Christ's sufferings Who lives within them. They offer their bodies to the One Who owns their bodies accepting the purposes He may have for it. Stephen's martyrdom scattered the church and brought the gospel of God's kingdom to many – Acts 11:19-20 **...Those who were scattered after the persecution...of Stephen, traveled...far....preaching the Lord Jesus.**