



Take Up His Cross

Welcome to the Hueytown Church of Christ. Our desire is to make you feel welcomed and comfortable.

The cross holds much meaning for people today. Whether is it worn on chain, displayed prominently on a hill beside the road, hung on a place of worship, eulogized in sermon because of its spiritual significance, or just revered in thought or song, it means many different things to people today. But to the audience of Jesus in Luke 14:27 it meant none of those things, nor held any of those significances. This is true for a simple reason....

At the time Jesus urged the multitudes following Him to become true disciples through the admonition to "take up his cross and follow Me," the cross had NONE of the spiritual significance the world attaches to it today. It couldn't mean any of those spiritual things then because Jesus hadn't yet given "the cross" any spiritual significance. Then a cross meant only one thing: horribly humiliating and excruciatingly painful **death**. There wasn't any spiritual significance to it. There wasn't any deep or metaphorical meaning. It didn't even imply anything sacrificial or eternal to the hearers. Jesus' audience didn't know He was going to be sacrificed,

let alone that it would be on a Roman crucifix. They had no spiritual concept of what Paul would later call being "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20) or, "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). To them, **a cross just meant death**. Think about a couple salient points....

The cross to be carried in true discipleship does not belong to Jesus, but the disciple- "carry **his own cross**," Luke 14:27. You nor I nor anyone else could bear Jesus' cross. And even if we tried...

My cross, or yours, doesn't and couldn't have the same spiritual significance that Jesus' did and does. Because of sin, I (and you) deserve to die- even if on a cross. Jesus didn't. His cross meant so much more. And yet....



Each would-be *disciple* must be willing to take up and carry "his own cross."

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WORSHIP TIMES

Sunday Worship:

- 9:30 AM - Sermon
- 10:30 AM - Bible Class
- 11:30 AM - Lord's Supper

Wednesday Worship:

- 7:00 PM - All ages

Friday Bible Study:

- 10:15 AM @ Annex

Bible Class Topics:

Selected Psalms Prison Epistles

- Apologetics
- Children: Sacred Hearts
- Check with deacons for workbooks

Shepherds

- Amos Rowe
- Roger James
- Keith Parks
- Don Burleson

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Feel free to stop by the preachers' offices for Bible studies, prayers, talks, or a meeting.

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This doesn't mean the struggles or hardships of life to which we often refer with such language. "It's just his cross to bear," or (usually jokingly), "He is just her cross to bear" of a wife's burden of a difficult husband or a troublesome son. It does mean that...

Every true *disciple* of Jesus must be willing to *die for Him*; that we would prefer, and would chose, to die rather than give Him up and turn back to self, Satan, and sin. Peter and the other eleven disciples said as much, and surely meant it, in Matthew 26:35. But when push came to shove (somewhat literally) later that night, "Then all the disciples left Him and fled," v.56. And yet, after years of faithful service, all of them died *for* and *in* and *faithful* to Him. It also means that...

Cross carrying is a *daily* endeavor. All that we learned about discipleship and *cross-bearing* must be an *everyday* commitment. Jesus said so- not in Luke 14:27, but in Luke 9:23, "...take up his cross **daily**...". Again, think about what is being said. How different would our days be if, instead of saying a

morning prayer about what all we wanted God to help us with or do for us today, we started by affirming our willingness (and really meaning it!) to die for Him **today**. Just like yesterday, and just like tomorrow, if I don't die for Him today. Wouldn't that give us a new, better, and certainly more *spiritual* perspective? To really be willing to die for Him today and everyday? Finally...

True discipleship, and the requisite daily carrying of our own cross, is ultimately about *self-denial*. Jesus said so in Luke 9:23, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." We can never truly *follow* Jesus unless we are a willing to deny ourselves. Jesus taught us this lesson by example also, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will but Thine be done," Luke 22:43.

So, what about it? Are you ready to *take up* your *cross daily* to *follow Him*? I hope so, because that is the cost of discipleship affixed by the Lord. Conversely, you just tag along after Him with the crowds as long as it is convenient, doesn't cost too much, and you get some physical blessings or benefits. Which will it be for you?

Why Am I Still Here?

Last week someone asked me, "Ed, what are you still doing here?" The context doesn't matter. However, it did get me thinking. Most preachers who have been around a while themselves have been asked, "Why am I still here?" - Usually by a "senior citizen" of the kingdom. For most of us, it's not an easy question to answer, at least with more than a general response that does little to help the inquirer. I certainly don't claim to have "the" answer for everyone, and perhaps not even for anyone, as my knowledge surely isn't infallible or complete, and a "one size fits all" answer is likely impossible. But I have thought about it and will do my best to provide some possible biblical perspectives that may provide potential answers. However, be warned that you may not like the implications.

So, "**Why am I still here**"? Perhaps **because**:

God is letting "nature" takes its course, cf. 1Cor.15:36,42.

Since sin's entrance into the world (cf. Rom.5:12ff), death has been a part of life for pretty much everyone, Heb.9:27. How long it takes an individual to meet this "appointment," depends on several factors, such as overall strength of body (cf. Deut.34:7), how many pills and procedures one is willing to ingest and endure, and of course, God, cf. Isa.38:1-5.

God is letting your flesh "reap" that which it has "sown," Gal.6:7-8.

Consider, "Why didn't God kill Cain for murdering Able?" God took steps to ensure that no one else

would kill him, cf. Gen.4:9-15. Have you ever wondered why? Have you ever considered that God is allowing you to remain so that you might *"from the flesh"* *"reap"* what you have *"sown"*? I realize such is an unpleasant thought which lacks any comfort, and I'm certainly not writing to or suggesting such is the case for any specific individual, but shouldn't we at least consider the possibility?



God still has "work" for you to do, cf. 1Kings 19:13-16.

Elijah wanted to die. He even asked God to *"take my life"* v.4. Instead, God sent a messenger to *comfort* and *provided sustenance* for him. Why? Because despite Elijah's thoughts and feelings, his *"work"* was not yet done, vv.15-18. Many who, like Elijah, think they're *"finished"* and *"have nothing left to offer"* are just as wrong as he was. Simply put: We're not *"finished"* until God says we are. So instead of asking, *"Why am I still here?"* try asking, *"What can I still do?"* Then adopt the attitude and ethic of Paul as found in Phil.1:20ff, and get busy doing *"what you can,"* cf. Mark 14:3-9.

God is kind, longsuffering, and patient, and is therefore not (yet) willing for you or others you may still influence, to perish, Rom.2:4; 2Pet.3:9. It could well be that one is *"still here"* simply because God is hoping that His *kind, longsuffering patience* will *lead you to "repentance"* and salvation; or even that He is *patiently* allowing you to remain so that you may be His agent of influence in the lives of others who need to repent and be saved. Exactly who is the antecedent of the pronoun *"you"* in 2 Pet.3:9? Is it not the Christians to whom Peter is writing? (cf. 2Pet.1:1-5) If so, God's *patience* in 2 Pet.3:9 is manifested toward Christians because He doesn't want *"any to perish but for all to come to repentance!"* Think about it, won't you?

The choice is not ours to make, Deut. 31:14.

God determined *"the time for you to die,"* not Moses. David believed and stated, *"... in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them"* Psalms 139:16. The choice is just not rightfully ours to make. And when that *"appointed"* time may be is just not revealed... to any of us.

Are there *"better"* answers to the question? Probably, but you'll have to ask someone smarter than me to get them! Nonetheless, perhaps these will at least provide some spiritual *"food for thought"* until you can find and ask that person. But I do have one concluding suggestion. Instead of asking, *"Why am I still here?"* try asking, *"What can I yet do to glorify God with whatever time He allows me?"* Having then seriously and soberly contemplated that question, get busy. <Modified>



- **Charles Dunn** the brother of Linda Rogers is currently in ICU in Jackson TN hospital. His sugar was 1100 and rising a long with his heart rate. Please pray for the family.
- **Carol Horne** fell again Saturday morning. She had an appointment with Ortho (3/1). They decided not to do a pain block but work the soreness out. **Don** also fell because of his vertigo and has a bump on his head. So they have not had a good week and are working through the sorenesses.
- Brother **Dale Hyman** has been diagnosed with Leukemia. However, he has developed pneumonia and is being treated. He began chemo treatments and is receiving platelets as part of the treatment. He will remain at UAB throughout March, so please keep Pam and the extended family in your prayers during this challenging time.
- **Bridget Bailey**, a friend of Lottie Smith's, has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She has had surgery, and doctors do not think she will need chemo or any other treatment. Praise God.
- **Norma Armstrong** was scheduled to return to Wilma's house via ambulance. She is needing a home sitter and if anyone can help or recommend someone—please let her know.
- **Dubb Williams**, the father of Roydell Williams and a neighbor of Janice and Roger, suffered a stroke. The family has asked for us to remember him in prayer. Address for cards: Dubb and Monique Williams, 404 Wright Ave., Hueytown, AL 35023.
- **Brian Bonner** is doing very well, per Nurse Faye. He is sore but is taking it easy.
- **Chris Gill** did not have her 3rd round of chemo on Monday. Her ANC number was low, and she received an injection that did boost her white blood cells. On 3/6, she will have labs again and hopefully get her 3rd round of chemo on 3/15.
- Don Burleson's mom was moved to Self Rehab on Monday. She will be there for 21 days. She is doing good and seems to be better, per Joan. Please pray for her recovery. Cards of encouragement can be sent to: **Lois Burleson**, 131 E Crest Rd, Room 210, Hueytown, AL 35023
- A gentleman named **William**, a neighborhood friend has requested prays regarding some health issues.
- **Suzy Boykin** has been suffering from bronchitis and an ear infection.
- **Amy Sims** has been diagnosed with hypoglycemia unawareness. She has to wear a glucose monitor to monitor her sugar levels. She will have an ultrasound to check her pancreas and liver. Please keep her in your prayers.
- **Rochelle** and **George Rangel** will have adenoidectomies on March 20th. George will also have a double myringotomy at the same time. Prayers are appreciated.
- **Gospel Meeting:** Today our Gospel Meeting begins. Please continue to invite people to hear the Gospel. This a special effort to share the good news with friends and family who need encouragement to become Christians. Everyone is welcomed!