

The Cross is the Doorway to Joy

Acts 28:23-24

²³ When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

Acts 28:30-31

³⁰ And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

Paul, the great missionary and evangelist, did not waste his imprisonment, but spent the last years of his life in hospitality evangelism.

Philippians 1:19-25

¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; ²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

Paul is describing the “cross” of the Cross: the tension is at the intersection of **what I want** and **what is necessary**.

I want what I want, but what is **more necessary** is nearly always necessary because it benefits someone else.

Taking our cross and following Jesus means choosing what is **more necessary** over and over again.

Simply put, it is holding my desires loosely, keeping an eye to heaven, and scheduling for interruptions.

²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith

Philippians 2:1-11

2 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, **2** make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. **3** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; **4** do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. **5** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. **8** Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 12:2

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Will I heed the call of Jesus to choose that which is more necessary over my own competing desires?

There is joy on the other side, but the cross is the doorway. No cross, no Joy!

Take the cross, and joy is ours in abundance.