

No Cross, No Crown

1 of 1 | Easter Sunday | Take Up Your Cross!

SLIDE 1 William Penn

William Penn (1644 - 1718) was an English writer, religious thinker, and influential Quaker who founded the Province of Pennsylvania. Penn was an advocate of democracy and religious freedom.

In 1681, King Charles II granted a large piece of his North American land holdings along the North Atlantic Ocean coast to Penn to offset debts he owed Penn's father, the admiral and politician Sir William Penn. The land included the present-day states of Pennsylvania and Delaware.

The following year, in 1682, William Penn left England and sailed to Delaware Bay. There the colonists pledged allegiance to Penn as their new proprietor, and the first Pennsylvania General Assembly was held. Penn then founded Philadelphia.

Penn was one of the earliest supporters of colonial unification. Penn wrote urging the union of the English colonies in what later became the United States after the American Revolution. The democratic principles he included in the West Jersey Concessions and set forth in the Pennsylvania Frame of Government inspired delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia to frame the U.S. Constitution, which was ratified by the delegates in 1787.

William Penn was a man of deep religious conviction and exhorted believers to adhere to the spirit of *Primitive Christianity*.

However, before all this notoriety, Penn was imprisoned several times in the Tower of London due to his faith. His book *No Cross, No Crown*, published in 1669, which he authored from that prison, has become a classic of Christian theological literature. (taken from a Wikipedia article)

SLIDE 2 No Cross, No Crown

I base what I say today on Penn's book, *No Cross, No Crown*. And I base my reason for doing so on this Bible verse:

SLIDE 3 Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV) *"This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.' "*

The ways of the Lord do not change. They have never changed, but each generation seems to come up with their own version of what God is like. The modern ways of our days are really not relevant to our current lives.

Man's ever-changing ways cannot provide the internal life we need to succeed. It's what's inside us that counts. You cannot create a better world around you without having what it takes inside you.

SLIDE 4 Primitive Christianity

William Penn's book was published in 1669. Even then he saw the problem of modern philosophies creeping in and defiling the gospel, watering it down, and making it void of the changes we really need to live a life worth living.

A quote from the *Forward* of the book says this about Penn:

"William Penn was in the twenty-fourth year of his age when he wrote "No Cross, No Crown." It was not therefore produced by weariness of the world, or that disgust which arises from long indulgence. It was the result of a calm and deliberate survey of the world's manners and customs, viewed with the eye of a sincere and devoted Christian. He thought, and felt, and wrote, as one sensible of the dignity and noble endowments of man, and of his high destiny as an immortal being."

SLIDE 5 Suffering Brings Insight

Penn wrote this book while imprisoned in the Tower of London for his faith in Christ. He was thrown out of his father's house, the Lord Admiral Penn, he was crosswise of the social norms of the day, and he was outspoken of Christians who did not live in a way that represented Christ. (Does that remind you of Paul who also wrote several epistles to the churches from prison?)

Penn proposed getting back to what the Bible actually said, and forsaking the perpetual drift of society towards evil.

SLIDE 6 Losing Our Edge

Here are three reasons we tend to lose our fervency in Christ.

SLIDE 7 1. Corrosion - We are corrupted in our faith by walking in the world. Sin has a powerful draw on us. There are pleasures to be had, there is fame to be won, and there is a personal sense of self-worth to be obtained. Not to mention all the fleshly pleasures that war against our souls. We need a continuous cleansing stream.

SLIDE 8 1st Peter 2:11 (NIV) *"Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul."*

The second thing is:

SLIDE 9 2. Conformity - Then there is the pressure to conform to social norms and accept the views of others as your own. There can be no absolute truth if there are variances in our religions and our lifestyles. Therefore we eventually begin to doubt and discard the truths we once held dear—the life-changing truths of the gospel of Christ.

Thirdly there is this:

SLIDE 10 3. Contempt - When we see others who claim devotion to Christ and live worldly lifestyles, we begin to lose the value of our faith and forsake its life-changing power. If others can be so happy without embracing the deeper things of Christ, then why not us too? If others cannot obtain the freedom they preach, then how can we?

SLIDE 11 Being a Disciple

A disciple is literally a learner. The biblical way of learning is by shadowing another person and learning from their example. The Paul and Timothy relationship is one example. However, the greatest example is Jesus himself. Yet, his mentorship comes at a price. We must commit to walking as he walked and doing as he has done. Jesus said this in Matthew:

SLIDE 12 Matthew 16:24 - 27 (NIV) *"²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, **Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.** ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."*

We are called to bear the cross if we truly want to learn of Jesus. But it doesn't end there. He goes on to say:

SLIDE 13 *"²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done."*

Living for the Lord and denying ourselves is not just difficult now, it has been difficult throughout all the generations of believers, all the way back to the persecutions of the first believers who followed Christ.

We must fight the *corrosion, corruption* and the pressure to *conform* if we are going to continue in our faith and live separated from worldly desires and worldly ways.

Paul said this after a lifetime of struggle with Christians and sinners alike:

SLIDE 14 2nd Timothy 4:7, 8 (NIV) *"7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."*

SLIDE 15 My Cross to Bear

The cross was not just for Jesus. It is for us too. In the same way it brought resurrection life to our Lord and Savior, it will bring resurrection power to us as we apply it to our lives.

Look what Jesus had to say about everyone who was following him:

SLIDE 16 Luke 14:25-27 (NIV) *"25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple."*

SLIDE 17 *"27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*

He then shares about counting the cost by using the illustrations of building a tower and a king fighting a war.

We think he ends his teaching with this statement in verse 33:

SLIDE 18 *"33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."*

But he actually ends it with this:

SLIDE 19 *"34 Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. Whoever has ears to*

hear, let them hear."

We are not asked to do certain things for Christ. We are asked to follow him by living out the example he gave us—to die to ourselves and carry our cross and follow him.

Through the Cross Jesus inherited the kingdom of God. We too, through the cross inherit the abundant life he has promised. It is a life of sacrificial service to others. Our purpose in life does not reside within us. It is in those we serve.

You may say, "Some are not called to that." No, we are all called to it. He gave his life for us. So we must give our lives for him.

Let me share what William Penn said about this:

"Indeed, such is the state of things in this day, that we must either renounce a belief in what the Lord Jesus has told us, that "whosoever does not take up His daily cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple;" or, admitting it for truth, conclude that the generality of Christians do miserably deceive themselves in the great business of Christianity, and disappoint their own salvation." - William Penn, No Cross, No Crown

And to reiterate what we said was the Apostle Paul's view of it:

SLIDE 20 2nd Timothy 4:6 - 8 (NIV) *"⁶ For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."*

SLIDE 21 Altar Time

Every Easter we celebrate what Jesus has done for us, yet we do not embrace it in our own personal lives. We continue to drift away into a modern salvation that costs us nothing and wastes what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

Maybe the way to truly celebrate his resurrection is by experiencing it in our own lives by taking up our cross too and following him.