

# The Reality of The Cross

By Leroy Surface

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. **Matthew 16:21-25**

The apostle John began his gospel with these words in **John 1:1**; *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* In the fourteenth verse he said, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...”* From the moment the eternal Word of God, which was God, was born into this world as the Son of God, there was only one destination and purpose for his life in the flesh; it was that He should die on a cross. In **Hebrews 2:9** we read these words: *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels **for the suffering of death**, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* The “Word” which was “with God” and “was God” was made “a little lower than God” to shed His precious blood and die on the cross to take away the sin of the world. I want us to get a picture in our mind. Jesus said in **John 6:38**, *“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”* That “will” was that He would die the death of the cross. It is confirmed in **Hebrews 10:10** with these words; *“**By the which will** we are sanctified **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**”* In **Philippians 2:6-8**, Paul wrote of *“Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and **became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**”* The picture I want you to see is this: when He “came down from heaven,” it was as a microscopic, but incorruptible “seed” planted in the womb of a young virgin. Even then, His destination was the cross. When He was born as

*“Christ the Lord, the Son of the living God,”* wrapped in *“swaddling clothes”* and placed in a manger, his destination was the cross. When He took those first tiny baby steps, they were the first steps of a journey that would lead Him to the cross. If Jesus of Nazareth was to *“do the will of His Father,”* He must die the scandalous death of the cross.

By the time Jesus was of age to enter into His ministry and calling, he must have known something of His destiny. His words to Mary when she urged Him to do His first miracle seem to reveal this fact as He said, *“My hour has not come.”* Again, in **John 7:8**, when He refused to openly attend the feast in Jerusalem, He said, *“I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.”* It was less than a week before His death on the cross that Jesus told His disciples, *“The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me...”* (**John 12:23-26**). The night before He suffered the cross, Jesus began His prayer to His Father with these words, *“Father, the hour is come...”* (**John 17:1**), and several hours later after His sorrowing in prayer at Gethsemane, He told His disciples, *“The hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners”* (**Mark 14:41**).

Throughout the three and a half years of earthly ministry, Jesus was ever aware that every step He took brought Him nearer that purpose for which He came into the world, which was to die on the cross for the sin of the world. On the day of our text, Jesus had revealed to His disciples for the first time that He would suffer and die in Jerusalem when they attended the feast of Passover. The disciples could not comprehend nor would they entertain even the thought of such a thing. Peter, ever the outspoken one of the disciples, said, *“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”* Jesus immediately rebuked him sharply, saying, *“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”* Jesus made it very clear to Peter that His suffering and death in Jerusalem were the will of His Father that sent Him. It is in the context of His steady and faithful journey to *“the death of the cross”* that I have chosen these words of Jesus as the text for this message:

**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Matthew 16:24-25**

The cross is an instrument of death. If you had lived under Roman rule in those days, you would immediately understand the implications if you saw a procession following a man who was carrying a cross on his back. You would know that man was carrying his cross to the place of his own death. That was the manner of the Romans in executing the death sentence on criminals. Jesus, knowing the purpose for which His Father sent Him into the world, symbolically carried His cross every day that He lived in this world. When He called His disciples at the first, He simply called them to *“follow me.”* Now, over three years later, He is telling these same disciples, *“If you determine to come after me, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.”* How confusing such talk must have been to the disciples, who were still expecting Jesus to claim the throne in Jerusalem and drive the Romans out of the city. They had expected to receive great earthly glory through following Jesus. How is it that He was now speaking to them of suffering and death? It proved impossible with words only for Jesus to prepare His disciples for the reality of what was coming to Him. The very night before Jesus suffered the death of the cross, His disciples heard His words and said, *“...by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.”* Jesus answered them, *“Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone...”* (John 16:30-32). They had yet to determine if they would *“come after Him.”*

## Let Him Deny Himself

**The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. Acts 3:13-15**

Jesus spoke of three necessary things for all who will *“come after Him.”* The first of these is *“deny yourself.”* The definition of the Greek word translated *“deny”* is to *“utterly deny,”* or to *“disown.”* The root word means to *“contradict, disavow, reject, or abnegate.”* This is what the Jews did to Jesus when they called for Barabbas, a murderer, to be released, and demanded that Jesus should be crucified (Matthew 27:20-22). When the Holy Ghost is convicting the heart of a man or woman of sin, He is serving as a *“prosecutor”* does in a court of law. The difference is, the one prosecuted is also the jury in the case. A *“conviction”* is obtained in a

court of this world when the jury returns a guilty verdict. When the Holy Ghost is seeking a conviction against a person, the conviction is obtained when the one prosecuted cries *“Guilty! Guilty! I am a sinner; I am worthy of death.”* With this verdict, the defendant, who is also the jury, casts himself on the mercy of the judge. This is what Jesus meant when He told those who determined to come after Him to *“deny themselves.”*

Many religious teachers say that if we *“deny ourselves”* of certain things of this world, God will be pleased and receive us on that basis. This is the prescription for a lifetime of struggle. Sin continues its reign in their hearts, but they must, through their own determination and willpower, overcome it. They enter into an endless cycle of struggle and failure, ever condemned in their hearts because of the content of their hearts. This is not what Jesus told us. He said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (**Matthew 11:28**). Jesus clearly promised *“rest,”* not *“struggle,”* to all who would come to Him. He also promised freedom from the power and presence of sin (**John 8:31-36**) to all those who would *“continue”* with Him. The *“cross of Christ”* is the place where that *“freedom”* begins.

## Crucifixion

Crucifixion was a long and torturous death for most. Some would linger for days before their body would be so weakened from hunger and dehydration that it would collapse under its own weight and die of suffocation as it hung suspended by ropes under the armpits. The crosses of the condemned were always planted outside the wall of the city along the Roman highway, where the crucified criminals would be displayed for a spectacle to all who passed by. Travelers would wag their heads in mockery; many would pause to taunt and torment the condemned with their words. The ordeal for the condemned would begin at the court of law where they were tried and found guilty. They would then be delivered up to soldiers who were appointed to carry out the crucifixion. As the procession to the place of crucifixion began, the captain of the soldiers would command the condemned, *“Take up your cross, and follow me.”* They were required to carry their own cross from the place of their condemnation to the place of their crucifixion. Along the way, they would be followed, not only by a few grieving loved ones, but also by a mob of jeering spectators. Little children would throw stones; others would run by and hit them, laughing and mocking along the way. A close examination of both **Isaiah 53:8** and **Acts 8:33** will show this to be so in the case of Jesus. It was this procession that was called *“His humiliation,”* and what a humiliating ordeal it

was. John records this very simply with these words: *“And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst”* (**John 19:16-18**).

Jesus had not literally taken up His cross at the time He told His disciples to take up their cross, yet in a very real sense He had carried it for a lifetime, because Calvary was His destination from the beginning. It was at Calvary (Golgotha, *“the place of the skull”*) that Jesus laid His cross down, and there He was crucified. The crucifixion of the Son of God was different from most. Others were only tied with ropes to the cross. Theirs was not a *“bloody”* death, but a death of dehydration and suffocation. Jesus was *“nailed”* to the cross. Long spikes, driven through His feet supported his body weight, while the spikes in His hands held Him upright. Blood poured from the place in His hands and feet where the spikes were driven. Blood poured from His head and brow from the sharp thorns of the crown that was beaten into His flesh. The beating Jesus took upon His back was described in prophecy in this way: *“The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows”* (**Psalms 129:3**). Blood poured from the long *“furrows”* the whip had *“plowed”* into His back. Isaiah said, *“His visage (face) was so marred more than any man, and his form (body) more than the sons of men”* (**Isaiah 52:14**). The mocking multitude believed Jesus was a blasphemer and a deceiver. They believed it was God who had so punished Him. They mocked, *“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him”* (**Matthew 27:42**). They taunted, *“He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God”* (**Matthew 27:43**). Isaiah, writing seven hundred years before, saw much more clearly the events of that day; *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet **we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”*** (**Isaiah 53:3-6**).

# Following Jesus

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. I Peter 2:21-25

The example Jesus left for us was His sufferings and death on the cross for us. Of course he *“did not sin,”* but that is not an option for a sinner. The continuous struggle that religion offers is that sinners are taught to stop sinning, which is as absurd as telling a skunk to stop stinking. Every created thing does that which it is its nature to do. As long as a person is a sinner, they will continue in sin, whether in action or in thought. The *“steps”* of Jesus that we are told to follow are the same that Jesus told His disciples in our text; *“Take up your cross, and follow me.”* The steps of Jesus took Him to the place of His death, which was called *“Golgotha, the place of the skull.”* Those are the steps we are to follow. Notice the words in I Peter 2:24, *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins... .”* Jesus *“died for us”* and we are *“dead to sin.”* That is because *“Golgotha,”* the place we call *“Calvary,”* is also the place where *“we die.”* The exhortation Jesus gave to His disciples in our text, *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me,”* was not given after His death at Calvary, but before. It was *not* given to *“new creations in Christ Jesus”* that have been *“born again of the Spirit of God:”* instead, it was given to unregenerate men who had determined before to *“forsake all”* and follow Jesus, but would soon *“forsake Him”* in the time of His suffering. They were still *“without strength (Romans 5:6),”* and would be until Jesus died for them and rose again the third day. In Romans 5:8, Paul said, *“...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Notice those words, *“While we were yet sinners.”* Notice that Paul was speaking in the past tense to those who were no longer sinners. What happened between the *“past,”* when they were sinners, and the *“present”* when they are not sinners? **“Christ died for us.”** Oh, pray for understanding of what is meant when we say, *“Christ died for us.”*

**For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. II Corinthians 5:14-15**

The Greek text literally says, “...if one died for all, then all died.” It gives us understanding of the saying, “*Christ died for us,*” for “*if Christ died for us, we died with Christ.*” Paul does not leave us wondering about the “*hypothetical statement (if One died for all);*” he continues, “*And He died for all, that they which live... .*” Praise the Lord! Everyone that will believe this truth died with Him. Paul said in **Romans 6:8**, “*Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.*” It is only those who are “*quickened together with Christ (Ephesians 2:5)*” who also “*live,*” and their life is “*unto Him which died for them, and rose again.*”

## **By Means of Death**

**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Romans 5:12**

**And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, *there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.* For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Hebrews 9:15-17**

Death entered into the world by sin. In the incredible wisdom of God He chose death as the means to take sin away. It would require the death of the Son of God. It would also require that it be death by crucifixion. It was Jesus whom Paul spoke of in **Philippians 2:8** when he said, “*He humbled himself, and **became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.***” The “*death of the cross*” is the “*means*” God chose to deliver His people from sin. Everything that was accomplished at the cross was “*through death.*” It is through that death that we are reconciled to God: “*...we were reconciled to God **by the death of his Son...***” (**Romans 5:10**). “*And you... hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh **through death...***” (**Colossians 1:21-22**). It is through death that Satan is defeated: “*...that **through death** he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil...*” (**Hebrews 2:14**).

***Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Romans 6:6-7***

The “power” of the gospel to save is vested in the fact that Jesus not only “died for us,” but that we also “died with Him.” The simple truth is that when Jesus died for us, our “old man” died with Him. The purpose of the “death” of our “old man” is to “destroy (render entirely idle) the body of sin,” in order that we would no longer be slaves to “serve sin.” Paul concludes the thought of our death “with Christ,” saying, “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” Paul speaks of our “death to sin” repeatedly in his writings as follows:

**Romans 6:2: God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?**

**Romans 6:8: Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:**

**Romans 6:11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Romans 7:4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;**

**Romans 7:6: But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.**

**Galatians 2:19-20: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:**

**Colossians 2:20: Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world...**

**Colossians 3:3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.**

**II Timothy 2:11: It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:**

The apostle Peter also confirms the message of deliverance from sin through our death with Christ in I Peter 2:24: ***“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.”***



With such a vast body of evidence in the writings of the apostles, who can continue to deny the truth of our *“crucifixion with Christ?”* Notice in these verses there are three different things we are *“dead”* to: first, we are *“dead to sin;”* second, we are *“dead to the law;”* and third we are *“dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world.”* There are several things we should understand in these sayings. First, it is by one death that we are dead to all three, and that is *“death by crucifixion with Christ.”* In each case, our *“death with Christ”* brings *“glorious liberty”* and *“freedom.”* Second, no one is *“free from sin”* that is not *“dead to sin,”* and no one is *“free from the law”* that is not also *“free from sin,”* and, vice versa. Millions of *“Christians”* today trust in the keeping of hundreds of *“principles of life”* to help them live for God, but these are nothing more than the *“rudiments of the world”* which Paul warned the child of God against, saying, *“Wherefore if ye be **dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world**, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?” (Colossians 2:20-22).* The truth of *“death with Christ”* easily reveals what the apostle is saying in this text. He is not saying to go ahead and *“touch, taste, and handle”* those things that perish with the using. That is the way of the world, to live for the temporary rather than the eternal. The question begins with *“If ye be dead with Christ.”* Those who have died with Christ are dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to the law, dead to the commandments and doctrines of men, and dead to all things that are contrary to godliness and righteousness. They do not need the *“rudiments of the world”* to keep them from the world. Paul said it this way in **Galatians 6:14-16**, *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom **the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”*

## Take up Your Cross

Many believe they have *“taken up their cross”* the day they were *“born again.”* To them, the cross of Christ is a lifetime of struggle against sin. They believe they are *“purified”* through the things they suffer in this present life. This belief is not much different from the Catholic system of *“penance”* and *“temporal punishments.”* To these it is *“hard”* to live a Christian life, with the *“hardest thing”* being to *“love your enemies.”* Some believe their *“cross”* is sickness, or some affliction, which they believe has made them a *“better person.”* It seems the *“cross”* of these *“believers”*

is always connected with present sufferings, whether self inflicted, inflicted by their adversary, or even inflicted by God. Millions of people believe they are *“born again,”* and have spent many years trying to die. They are trying by every means to *“learn how”* to live for God, but continually fail in their efforts. The simple fact is, they have never *“taken up their cross.”*

When Jesus told His disciples to *“take up your cross, and follow me,”* His face was already set to go to Golgotha (Calvary). He had told them only three verses (moments) before *“...how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day”* (**Matthew 16:21**). He knew that His death would be by crucifixion just as he told His disciples in **Matthew 26:2**, *“Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”* Over three years before, Jesus had called these same men, simply saying, *“Follow me.”* They forsook everything to follow Him wherever He went. On this day He is telling them, *“Take up your cross, and follow me.”* This call is different. It is a call to not only forsake every *“thing,”* but their own lives also. It was more than a call to *“follow me to Jerusalem;”* it was a call to *“follow me to Calvary;”* yet even more, *“follow me to death, even the death of the cross.”* He continued His discourse saying, *“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”*

We are not *“born again”* with a cross to bear; instead, we are *“born”* with a cross. It is the death sentence that every person born into this world carries through life because of sin. That *“death sentence”* will be carried out. If you carry your cross to the grave, your *“death”* will be *“eternal damnation, and separation from God.”* If, as Jesus commanded His disciples, you *“carry your cross”* to Calvary, there to be *“crucified with Christ,”* your *“death”* will be to *“sin, Satan, and the world.”* The *“cross”* is the *“end of sin (Daniel 9:24)”* to the believer, for it is at the cross of Christ we *“died to sin.”* It must be understood that the cross is not the *“source”* of anything; but it is the *“end”* of everything. Paul said, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...”* (**II Corinthians 5:17-18**). *“Old things”* speaks of *“the original,”* or, *“the old creation.”* *“The old has passed away... .”* This is the language of death. What happened to the *“old man?”* He *“passed away,”* and we *“buried him.”* This is the means of our salvation. We are *“born again”* through *“death, burial, and resurrection”* with (in union with) Christ.

# Freedom From or Power Over ...SIN?

For he that is dead is freed from sin. Romans 6:7

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. Romans 6:18

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Romans 6:22

Is your experience with the Lord based upon "*freedom from sin*," or "*power over sin*?" The way that you answer that question will tell much about what you believe, as well as the nature of your walk with God. If you are one who believes the only way you can cease from sinning as a child of God is to obtain "*power over sin*," your walk with God is through constant vigilance, constant struggle, and with often failure. Actually, there is not a single verse of scripture in the bible that speaks of power over sin. If, on the other hand, your experience is based upon "*freedom from sin*" as the three verses above relate, you are one that has entered into the "*rest*" Jesus promised to all who would "*come unto Him*." You have not found the Christian life to be one of constant struggle with sin. You have found the deliverance, the man in Romans chapter seven cried for in verse twenty-four; "*who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*"

**To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Romans 3:26-28**

Where is boasting? Paul said it is "*excluded*" by the "*law of faith*." Yet, there are many who boast. Again, I ask, "*Where is boasting?*" Is it the one who rejoices in Christ Jesus who has "*made them free*" through His death on the cross? Or is it the one who openly confesses that they are still a sinner, while also claiming God has given them "*power over sin*." The truth is, there has not been a man or woman since the transgression of Adam that has had "*power over sin*," but there have been many who have discovered "*freedom from sin*" through the wonderful redemption that is in Christ Jesus. There can be no boasting in those who truly experience "*freedom*" from sin, because it is not through their works, their struggles, their will power, nor through anything that is of their own self that they rest in freedom from

sin. It can only be through faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified; He *“died for us,”* in order that we would *“die with Him.”*

Let me illustrate. A vicious man-eating lion has escaped and found its way into your house. You arrive home to find this killer waiting for you. If you are a lion-tamer, you may not fear the lion, because you *“have power over”* it. You can control the lion; you can make it sit; roll over, and even purr like a kitten. You have reason to boast, because you are able to control the beast that has devoured others. Yet, there is one thing you can never do. Even though you have power over the lion, you can never rest. You cannot lie down to sleep in peace at night, for fear the vicious beast will devour you. I, on the other hand, am not a lion tamer. I fear the lion like I fear death itself. I cannot go into my house because I know the lion is there. I have no rest day or night. I have lost all the comforts of home to the man-eating lion. The lion tamer encourages me that I also can learn how to tame the lion, but every attempt to do so ends in near disaster. Then one day a lion-hunter comes to my house. He boldly enters my house and slays the lion. Now, the lion is dead, and I have no fear to enter. I am well able to throw the carcass of the dead lion out of the house and bury it in the ground. I am at rest and peace because the lion is dead. I have nothing to boast about of myself, but oh how I rejoice that the lion-hunter came to my house. Now I rest and rejoice in the glorious liberty the lion-hunter has given me. The lion-tamer continues to boast in his ability to control the vicious beast in his house, and scoffs at the very idea that I live in a house where there is no lion because it has been slain and its stinking carcass buried in the ground. *“Nobody,”* he sneers, *“is free from the lion.”*

This has been an analogy. The *“house”* is my human nature. The *“lion”* is sin that entered my human nature through Adam’s disobedience. The *“lion-tamer”* is the doctrines and traditions of men, who come with many different techniques, varying from the *“Law of Moses,”* to *“philosophy,”* to the thousands of so-called *“principles of life”* so many Christians trust in today to control sin in their human nature. *“I”* am just an ordinary person; a fallen man, who can never free himself from sin, nor find any control over it. The *“lion-hunter”* is the Son of God, who came to *“take away the sin of the world”* (**John 1:29**). Now, relate each of these *“characters”* to what Paul said in **Romans 8:3**; *“For what the law (the lion-tamer) could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (human nature), God sending his own Son (the lion-hunter) in the likeness of sinful flesh (human nature), and for sin (the man-eating lion), condemned (tried, condemned, and punished with death), sin (the man-eating lion) in the flesh (our human nature).”*

## A Word to the “Lion-tamers!”

Do not be angry if you hear some soul rejoicing, “*Jesus has made me free!*” If you cannot believe it, can you not rejoice, saying, “*Wouldn’t it be wonderful if it were true?*” It is true! Jesus came into this world to “*take sin away.*” In the **eighth chapter of John**, He told the Jews who said they believed, “*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” They protested, “*We are Abraham’s seed; we’ve never been in bondage to any man.*” Jesus answered them, “*He that commits sin is the slave of sin... if the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed (from sin).*” If you are a true “*lion-tamer,*” you really have something to boast in. You have a strong determination, a good “*will-power,*” and a true commitment to the task of “*controlling the lion.*” Yet, you do not believe the scriptures that so clearly teach “*freedom from sin*” because of your own experience. There was a time in my own ministry that it seemed my favorite “*text,*” which I quoted often, was “*I know by experience... .*” My “*experience*” became the judge of what truth was. I could not comprehend that anyone experienced anything more or better than I experienced, because I knew that I was very “*sincere*” in all those things I believed and did. I believed, as do so many others, that what Jesus did for me was only “*positional,*” and it was up to me to raise my “*condition*” to the level of my “*position.*” Sadly, every effort to do so only took me deeper into the struggle against sin. Seeking God one day, I heard the Spirit say, “*You know nothing by experience; you can only ‘know’ by my word.*” I had spent years trying to “*crucify*” my flesh so I could say with Paul, “*I am crucified with Christ...*” (**Galatians 2:20**). The result of those struggles was a negative attitude about Paul, thinking he must have been incredible conceited. I tried to explain away all the sayings of the apostle John; sayings like, “*Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him neither known Him...*” (**I John 3:6**), “*He that committeth sin is of the devil...*” (**I John 3:8**), and finally, **I John 5:18**, “*We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.*” I could not possibly believe these scriptures at face value because of “*my experience*” which judged the apostle and found that he was mistaken. I knew that God had saved me and baptized me with the Holy Ghost years before, yet my experience was so far beneath what I read from the apostles. Did that prove that I was lost, that I had never been saved? No! But it did prove that I did not know the truth that Jesus said would make me free. Also, I would never know the truth as long as I continued to “*twist*” the scriptures to fit my experience. Today, I know, along with Paul before me, my “*old man is crucified with Christ*” (**Romans 6:6-7**). I know that I am “*dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus*

*Christ my Lord" (Romans 6:11). I "know" because I, like Abraham before me, have "believed God." I have "believed the record that God gave of His Son" (I John 5:10). It is not through any strength of my own that I am free, but rather through "weakness." It does not take human strength to be "dead to sin." II Corinthians 13:4 says this, "For though he was **crucified through weakness**, yet **he liveth by the power of God**. For **we also are weak in him**, but **we shall live with him by the power of God** toward you." These things I know. These things I experience because I know, and I know because I believe God. This is the "reality" I enjoy. I close this message, saying with the apostle Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen" (Galatians 6:14-18).*