

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Sin + Grace = Freedom - Haunted

October 4, 2021

Romans 7:21-23

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.

Wow! Does this ring true with you? I know it does with me. The Apostle Paul’s words written so many years ago still provide insight to what haunts us today. I believe we all struggle with some level of what he describes. For some, it may be something as serious as an addiction to drugs, alcohol, or pornography, while for others it may be something seemingly less serious like an addiction to certain television shows, sports, social media, or maybe a favorite food. The truth is we all sin and fall short of the glory of God, and any of these addictions or other habits have the potential to take control of our lives and separate us from God and the life he intended for us.

It’s not that we want to be caught up in whatever sinful nature is haunting us—we want to be good, to do what is right. We tell ourselves that we will get it together, that we will do better. Then that power of temptation rears its ugly head, and again, we fail. Repeated failures can make us feel like a slave to sin, creating anxiety, depression, anger, and other unhealthy emotions. Hopelessness can set in, and we begin to feel like these other words from the Apostle Paul.

Romans 7:24

Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

Sadly, for way too many, not knowing the one true answer to this question is what leads them to isolate themselves from everything and everyone or even worse, suicide.

Thankfully there is a way out, a way to break the cycle of defeat in our mental war with sin, as Paul states here.

Romans 7:25a

Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Does this mean the answer is to exercise the familiar saying WWJD? No, none of us are perfect like he is, and striving for perfection only creates more anxiety. The answer is in the bottom line that Lead Pastor Ben Snyder shared last weekend:

The way to be free is to allow God's grace to fill me.

What this means is we need to realize that Jesus is not far away. He is with us always. Instead of giving in to the mental struggle of constantly trying to do what is right and failing, allow God's grace to fill your heart and guide you along your life's path. He is always with us whenever and wherever we need him—we just need to stop letting our mental struggles haunt us and accept the power of his amazing grace to fill us and give us freedom.

Does this mean we will never sin again or struggle? Of course not. But when we acknowledge that Jesus is always near and truly accept God's amazing grace into our lives, we are given a new life equipped with the power to overcome our mistakes and resist the constant weight of temptation within us. That is true freedom.

Questions:

Are you struggling with a sin that makes you feel like a failure?

Are you tired of waging that mental war over and over again?

Next Steps:

Commit to knowing and understanding that the one and only answer is Jesus.

Write down the bottom line: *The way to be free is to allow God's grace to fill me!* Keep it where you can reference it during times of struggle.

Join a group to help you along the way. There's strength in numbers!

Attend the rest of the *Haunted* series to get more insight on the tricks our minds can play on us.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I come to you today with struggles and the mental anguish that comes from trying to do what's right but, instead, doing what's wrong. I am a sinner. Lord, help me to realize your grace is a precious gift. Give me the courage and wisdom to accept this amazing grace and allow it to fill me and

*give me freedom from the struggles that haunt me. In your loving name, I pray
amen.*

This post was written by Ned Miller, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

STOP the Haunting - Haunted

October 5, 2021

Romans 8:1

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Last Sunday, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder took us into the scary, very real world of the thoughts that haunt us and how to thwart them. He asked, "What is chasing, shaming, or even haunting you and thus affecting your life in a negative way?"

Ben described many kinds of failed strategies (he called them "isms") that we employ in an effort to achieve success, safety, admiration, and temporary material goods. We do this in an effort to feel "in control" and to keep from having to exit our comfort zones, all while life inescapably reminds us that we are **not** in control.

Isms such as perfectionism, criticism, pessimism, and my personal favorite, protectionism. I'm not sure that's a word, but I'm referring to living on the defensive and by the premise, "The best defense is a good attack." None of these work to promote internal peace or improve coping skills, nor will they change our thoughts or behaviors in positive, meaningful ways. They promote mental anguish instead of relieving it. Unfortunately, you **will** remain haunted and driven by those negative, fear-mongering thoughts.

There IS good news though! When we embrace God's answer to our problems, failings, and fears, we find true love and eternal peace and purpose. The Apostle Paul spelled it out this way in Romans 7:24-25: "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord." He then goes on to say, "So you see how it is: In my mind, I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin" (emphasis added).

You see, God is not here to shame or condemn us. Our sin nature has already done that! Instead, God sent his perfect, divine, sinless son, Jesus Christ, to provide the means for us to escape from our love of sinning. Only Jesus—the perfect, sinless sacrifice—is able to pay the terrible price commanded for our sins.

The only way to free yourself from the isms that keep you locked in sin and condemned for playing god in this life is to accept God's love, kingship, and his offer to pay that terrible price for you through the sacrifice of his son. By doing

so, you are saved and free to live a life of *peace that surpasses understanding* and has eternal meaning and value (Philippians 4:7).

I hope you will take your loving, heavenly Father up on his offer.

Isaiah 26:3 (NIV)

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you.

QUESTIONS:

What are you haunted by, afraid of, and/or need to control or run from? Make a list.

Will you turn from your fears, anger, entitlement, self-loathing, regret, and/or condemnation of others? If not, why?

NEXT STEPS:

You cannot do this alone! There are people here who love Christ and want to love and grow with you—your church family. Don't isolate yourself. The family of God is a judgement-free zone. Sign-up for [GrowthTrack](#) and find out just how much God loves you as you start the journey of a lifetime, getting to know and grow closer to the one who loves you best, the One True God, and his divine Son, Jesus Christ, while being guided deeper into faith by the Holy Spirit.

If you have questions, we have people who would love to help seek those answers with you. Contact your campus pastor or stop at the customer service booth in the lobby at any of our locations and ask.

Every journey to salvation and a deeply meaningful, powerful life starts with one fearless step in the direction of God. Take your first, or your next one today. Right now.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for your love that will save me if I merely reach out and take it. Lord, give me the vision to choose you, the one true God, to provide healing, help, love, and eternal joy and purpose as I grow ever closer to you. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

This post was written by Martha Smith, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

He Paid the Price for Freedom - Haunted

October 6, 2021

Over 20 years ago, I began attending CedarCreek Church. I didn't volunteer, and I didn't belong to a [Group](#). I was not connected at all to CedarCreek, or Jesus. I was experiencing many of the "isms" Lead Pastor Ben spoke about last weekend, especially pessimism. I was a slave to negative thinking. In short, I was a mess.

I decided I needed to find a new church, so my daughters and I visited a church near our home. The service began with praise and worship. I still remember several singers who were singing and jumping around out of sequence. It was different from what we were used to and felt chaotic. All of a sudden, a woman was running up and down the aisles waving a banner and screaming: "He paid the price for freedom." I was shocked! I looked to my right at my oldest daughter, who can be very serious, and her eyes looked like they were going to bug out of her head. Then I looked to my left at my jovial daughter, and she was laughing hysterically. I visited that church looking for hope and peace, but I left feeling overwhelmed and confused.

Jesus led me back to CedarCreek. The next week, I spoke to Pastor Rick Dushane before the service and set up an appointment to meet with him the next day. We spoke for over two hours. He helped me so much. He stressed the importance of getting connected and suggested I join Kathy and Rick Shortridge's Group. I learned about and experienced Jesus in that Group. I was loved and accepted by my fellow Christ-followers, and eventually, I went on to lead my own Group.

Since then, God has blessed my life in so many ways. He continues to change me as I spend time with him and other Christians. I am overwhelmed with joy and gratitude for all the amazing people who loved and supported me along my journey. Most of all, I am so grateful for God's grace. He met me where I was and changed me. He handled my mess and filled me with his love, peace, and joy. I am no longer a slave to fear or inadequacy. I am God's beloved daughter.

Romans 8:15

So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we can call him, "Abba, Father."

I will never forget attending that church or the lady who was running around yelling, "He paid the price for freedom." She was so right. Jesus paid the price for our freedom! Looking back, that event was the beginning of the amazing, life-changing journey God planned for me, and I am forever changed because of it.

Questions:

What are you a slave to? What do you need to surrender to Jesus? How did Jesus pay the price for your freedom?

Next Steps:

Attend [GrowthTrack](#), join a [Group](#), and become a member of the [DreamTeam](#). Read your Bible and pray daily. Write down verses that tell you how much Jesus loves you, and meditate on them.

Prayer:

Jesus, I praise you for your amazing grace. You love me so much that you are willing to meet me in my mess and change me. Please fill me with your love, joy, peace, and hope. You paid the price for my freedom. Praise God, I am free. Free to love you and others. Free to let you work through me. Free to fulfill the purpose you have for my life. You are such an awesome God. Amen.

Packed for Success - Haunted

October 7, 2021

I have done a decent amount of camping throughout my adult life, and I have learned a lot about what is needed to have a successful camping experience. My early camping trips were less than impressive, though.

For my first camping trip, I went with my friends to Pinery Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada. We made a last-minute decision on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend to go, and we did so without reservations. This was not a winning plan. Once there, we learned that there were no campsites available, which left us scrambling to find somewhere to stay.

We eventually found space on a beach and set up camp in the dark. This was when we realized that we didn't have matches or a lighter to start a fire. After setting up the tent, it began to rain, so we headed in for the night. Our one-night camping trip was a total failure.

Fast forward 25 years, my friends and I now have several successful trips under our belts. Our favorite place to visit is Algonquin Provincial Park. It is about four hours north of Pinery and a much larger and more remote park. Campsites are accessible only by foot or canoe, so you have to pack light, which can be a challenge when you're going out into the vast park for five nights.

These trips were very special and created some of my fondest memories. But as I reflect back on them, I see a glaringly obvious difference between the first and the others. Our first trip was doomed to fail because we didn't have everything we needed. We went last minute and didn't have a plan, reservations, matches, or rain gear.

Unlike that first trip, we spent hours planning for the later trips. We mapped out which campsites we would hike or canoe to each night. We collaborated on who was bringing what items so we could pack light. And most importantly, we used a packing list to make sure we didn't forget anything. We knew that having everything we needed was the only way to ensure our trip would be successful.

While camping can be a challenge, it is nothing compared to the challenge that Paul talks about in Romans 7.

Romans 7:21-24

²¹ I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² I love God’s law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴ Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

As mentioned in this weekend’s message, this challenge of Godly living can haunt us. Like Paul, we wrestle with wanting to do the right thing, but we end up failing time and time again. This challenge can seem doomed for failure, but the truth is God gives us everything we need for success.

2 Peter 1:3

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.

As Christians, we get everything we need when we take our first steps to know God. That step happens when we confess that we fall short of God’s perfect standard, ask for forgiveness, and make Jesus the Lord of our life. It doesn’t end there, though.

God invites us to continue to fill our lives with him, and as we do, it pushes our desires to sin, our “isms” (we talked about these in Tuesday’s LivingItOut), and negative thoughts about ourselves out of our lives. Jesus is everything we need for the adventure God has for our lives, and he is the answer to all of our challenges.

Romans 7:25a

Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Questions:

Do you feel like you have everything you need to live the adventure God has for you?

When did you take your first steps to know God? What are you doing today to be filled by him?

Next Steps:

Attend church regularly. [Commit to praying](#) before each activity, decision, and

interaction in your day. Finally, hang out with others who can help point you to God. If you don't have relationships that do that, consider joining a [Group](#).

Prayer:

Dear God. Thanks for giving me everything I need to live out the adventure you have for me. Forgive me for the times that I try to do it on my own without you. Please fill me with your Spirit as I take steps to know you more. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Ben Bockert, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

God's Unchained Melody - Haunted

October 8, 2021

Do you believe in curses? I had a conversation with a family member some time ago about their belief that our family is cursed. They wanted to convince me that anything good escaped our reality. "We're cursed," they said. "We're not meant for better things." It must be hard to live in a place that draws life from you—to honestly believe that there's no escape and no coming back from the things you've done.

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I reminded my family member that bad things happen, but we don't have to live in a place where all life is terrible. I replied to their comment, "You're right. We aren't meant for better things, because all of us are meant to do great things. So you should aspire for more."

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder said, "You can keep viewing life your way or trust the way God views you." It's never too late to come back. There's nothing in this world that will cause God to look at us differently. He sees us with love, and we need to see ourselves and each other the same way. Godspeed your love.

Questions:

Do you see life the way you want or the way God wants you to see life? Do you use your past as an excuse to hide from God's love?

Next Steps:

Read stories in the Bible that are relatable to you to see how others struggled with life before finding purpose. Join a Group to live life with other Christians who were once where you are. Learn from each other. Apply what you learn on Sundays to your everyday routine.

Prayer:

God, I pray that those who are lost in pain find their freedom in you. Help them grow into their purpose. Please, continue to guide me when I allow the pressures of life to hold me in a season that I have outgrown. Amen.

This post was written by Jaron Camp, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.