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The Fruit of Slavery

Romans 6.20-23

Series: The Pure Gospel

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I. Introduction

- A. Sometimes the scriptures can be downright insulting
- B. Take for example the argument that the author of Hebrews makes
 - 1. When he starts to talk about that strange OT character Melchizedek, he says:
 - a. **Hebrews 5.11**: “About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.”
 - b. In other words, “You people are too dull to understand the first thing about this guy named Melchizedek”
 - 2. And then it gets worse:
 - a. **Hebrews 5.12-14**: “... You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”
 - b. Interpreted: “So, you people are a bunch of babies. You are Similac Christians. You’re not ready for rice and applesauce in your diet.”
- C. It’s the kind of thing that got Jesus into trouble that we explored last week
 - 1. **John 8:43–44** (ESV) —
 - a. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.
 - b. 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
 - 2. Remember, this prompted them to pick up rocks to stone Him!
- D. We find a similar situation in our study of Romans
 - 1. We’re in Chapter 6 – coming to a conclusion of the chapter
 - 2. And last week we studied 6.15-19
 - a. But I skipped explaining a sentence in v. 19
 - b. Just skipped right over it; like it wasn’t even there!
 - c. And nobody – I mean nobody – even asked me about it
 - d. Even though I never skip over anything!
 - 3. Paul says this in that sentence:

- a. **Romans 6:19** (ESV) — 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations...
 - 4. In other words, “This is important stuff, but I’ve had to dumb it down so you would understand it”
 - a. “Natural limitations” literally means “weak minds”
 - b. Ouch!
- E. So why does Paul have to do that?
 - 1. Well, in our defense, this is hard stuff
 - a. Because, you see, the gospel is about change
 - b. And nobody likes change
 - 2. But even more, it’s about transformation
 - a. It’s about changing from one form into another form
 - b. It’s about changing from a caterpillar into a butterfly, spiritually speaking
 - 3. That’s the radical change the Bible indicates for us when we become Christians
 - a. **2 Corinthians 5:17** (ESV) — 17 **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.** The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
 - b. A new creation – some translations say “new creature”
 - c. So you can see how appropriate is the analogy of caterpillars and butterflies
- F. All of Chapter 6 is meant to communicate – any way Paul can – that we are different people than we once were if we are genuine believers in Jesus
 - 1. And that this change is unalterable and permanent
 - a. That the transformation into this new creation is once and for all
 - b. And that there is no neutrality
 - c. No fence-sitting
 - d. No going back and forth
 - e. It is an all-encompassing change that affects every human faculty, and every area of life
- G. The way he does that is by two arguments
 - 1. The first is union with Christ
 - 2. **Romans 6:1** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
 - 3. **Romans 6:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?
 - 4. That’s a radical change, isn’t it!
 - a. Something has changed in us – we’ve died to sin
 - b. We’ve died to something we used to live in!
 - 5. And then he goes on to describe that by coming to faith in Jesus we are united to Christ
 - a. And he uses baptism as the illustration

- b. Baptism – the process by which cloth is died so that the cloth is forever changed
 - c. That you can't "un-die" a cloth that has been died
 - 6. I used the illustration of pickling a cucumber
 - a. That when you baptize the cucumber into the brine, it becomes a pickle
 - b. And it will never again be a normal cucumber
 - c. It's pickled – period!
- H. But the other argument in the chapter is slavery
 - 1. And this is a really touchy subject
 - a. It almost got Jesus killed when He told the Jews who supposedly had believed Him that they were slaves!
 - 2. And it still is a very touchy subject for us – especially these days
 - a. One of the most contentious issues in our nation is the degree to which slavery has cast its ugly shadow over our current state of affairs in our society and institutions
 - b. To even raise the issue is to evoke protests from one side of the political spectrum
 - c. But at the same time, we live in an age of slavery
 - d. Through human trafficking, there are more slaves today in the world than there ever were in the problematic period in our fledgling nation
 - e. Over 30 million!
- I. But you know what?
 - 1. You can understand slavery
 - a. You get what slavery means
 - b. How one's supposed freedom is stripped away
 - c. And how the slave is under ownership and obligation to another
 - d. And unless someone purchases one's freedom, that relationship is bound to continue as long as the owner determines
 - 2. You get that
 - a. So Paul says, Romans 6.19: "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations."
 - b. "You might not understand all the spiritual implications of your new relationship in Jesus"
 - c. "But you understand this"
 - d. Slavery is permanent unless there is a redemption
 - e. And even then, you belong to your redeemer!
- J. That's not to say that coming to Christ is slavery like the human institution of chattel slavery
 - 1. John Murray: ... he is borrowing an analogy from common life to assist those who might have trouble understanding spiritual things. And, like all analogies, it is not perfect. "After all, the new life in Christ is not 'slavery' as it exists among men; it is the highest and only freedom. But the institution of slavery does service to set forth the totality of our

commitment to God in that emancipation from the bondage of sin which union with Christ involves”

- K. So between our union with Christ and the analogy of slavery, we are to understand the “totality of commitment to God in that emancipation from the bondage of sin”
1. John R.W. Stott: Here then are two completely different lives, lives totally opposed to one another—the life of the old self, and the life of the new. ... Paul calls them two slaveries. By birth we are slaves of sin; by grace and faith we have become slaves of God. The slavery of sin yields no return, except a steady, moral deterioration and finally death. The slavery of God yields the precious return of sanctification and finally eternal life. The argument of this section, then, is that our conversion—this act of yielding or surrender to God—leads to a status of slavery, and slavery involves obedience.

II. **The Indicatives of Chapter 6**

- A. Now as we come to a conclusion of Chapter 6, perhaps it would be good to review the basic argument Paul makes
1. You are now a new creation in Christ if you are a believer in Jesus
 - a. You’ve changed; you’ve been transformed
 - b. You’re no longer a caterpillar – a glorified worm
 - c. You’re now a beautiful butterfly!
 2. **And since you are a new creation – Act like it!**
 - a. Act like who you are!
- B. That becomes evident in this chapter through the **Indicatives and the Imperatives**
1. Indicatives – these are statements about who you are; the facts
 2. Imperatives – these are commands and instructions about how you are to respond to who you are; what you are to do
 3. And by reviewing the indicatives and the imperatives we get a wonderful summary of the chapter
 4. First – the indicatives
- C. **Indicatives**
1. **We have died to sin (6.2)**
 2. **We have been baptized into Christ Jesus (6.3)**
 3. **We have been baptized into Christ’s death (6.3)**
 4. **We have been united with him in a death like his (6.5)**
 5. **Our old self was crucified with him (6.6)**
 6. **We have been set free from sin (6.6, 18)**
 7. **We are no longer under law but under grace (6.14)**
 8. **We, who were once slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which we were committed (6.17)**
 9. **We have become slaves of righteousness (6.18)**
- D. What a list!
1. Can you not see how radical our transformation is if we are believers in Jesus?
 2. At the same time, old habits die hard

- a. Our tendency is to act the way we used to act
- b. To act like glorified worms!
- 3. So Chapter 6 lays out the imperatives
 - a. In view of who we now are in Jesus, this is how we are to act, how we are to respond!

III. **The Imperatives of Chapter 6**

- A. So let's list them!
- B. **Imperatives**
 - 1. **You must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (6.11)**
 - 2. **Let not sin reign in your bodies (6.12)**
 - 3. **Do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness (6.13)**
 - 4. **Present yourselves to God (6.13)**
 - 5. **Present your members to God as instruments of righteousness (6.13)**
 - 6. **Present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification (6.19)**

IV. **The Blessed Enslavement**

- A. So now, as we examine the final section of Chapter 6, we're about to raise the issue that is bound to make the hair stand up on the back of the necks of everyone who has no spiritual understanding
 - 1. And that is the blessings of slavery!
 - a. To speak of the blessings of slavery is, in the normal sense, an oxymoron – a contradiction in terms
 - b. Unthinkable! Unimaginable!
 - 2. How can slavery ever be a blessing
- B. But remember, Paul is “speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations” (or your weak brains!)
 - 1. It's an analogy meant to communicate the totality of our commitment to a new master
 - a. In this case, the most benevolent master
 - b. A benevolent master beyond any that we could imagine
 - c. A master who gives us true freedom to be the people we were meant to be
 - 2. And the unbeliever will never be able to understand that!
 - 3. Here's the text:
- C. **Romans 6:20–23** (ESV) —
 - 1. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.
 - 2. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?
 - 3. For the end of those things is death.

4. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.
5. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

D. This is truly a blessed enslavement that Paul is talking about

1. It's an enslavement that leads to sanctification
 - a. That is, a life of holiness
 - b. A life of Christ-likeness
2. It's not a life of coercion and forced labor
 - a. It's a life where our desires are congruent and commensurate with all that is true and good and beautiful
 - b. It's a life where our inclinations and wills are conformed to the will of the Lord Jesus
 - c. It's a life where our obedience to the commands of our dear Savior lead us to perfect satisfaction, to perfect pleasure in our Savior
 - d. So it's nothing like the human institution of slavery
3. And it's also an enslavement that leads to eternal life
 - a. And eternal life is not just a really, really long life (though it does last forever!)
 - b. Eternal life is defined in the Bible qualitatively, not just quantitatively
 - c. **John 17:3** (ESV) — 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
 - d. A knowledge and intimacy of the Triune God is the essence of eternal life
 - e. A relationship of love and satisfaction
 - f. A relationship of pleasure and enjoyment
 - g. Westminster Shorter Catechism: **The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.**
 - h. It's a relationship of joy unending
 - i. Of being in the presence of the Being who is love
 - j. Of being in the presence of the One who loved us enough to die for us
 - k. Of being in the presence of the Spirit of love
 - l. Of being in the presence of all those who are the objects of His love
 - m. Of the presence of all those who have been transformed into the image of the Savior of love
4. That is truly a blessed enslavement!
 - a. Let's unpack that for a moment

V. **The Fruit of Slavery**

A. **Fruit**

1. The text speaks of this blessed enslavement in terms of fruit
 - a. Fruit – the outcome or the result of slavery

2. And biblically fruit is universally seen in positive terms
 - a. For example, in Galatians 5, where the fruit of the Spirit is identified, fruit of the Spirit is contrasted with the flesh – that which comes from our sinful natures
 - b. But the flesh is not spoken of in terms of fruit
 - c. It's called the works of the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, enmity, jealousy, divisions and so forth
 - d. But the positive things are the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
 3. So that's key to this text
- B. **No Fruit**
1. It starts this way:
 - a. **Romans 6:20** (ESV) — 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.
 - b. In other words, in your old life – your caterpillar life – when you were slaves of sin, under obligation to serve sin – you were free in regard to righteousness
 - c. You had not obligation to be righteous or to do righteous things
 2. But then it says this:
 - a. **Romans 6:21** (ESV) — 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.
 3. What fruit did you get from that former life?
 - a. You didn't get any fruit; you got no fruit!
 4. The way we would put it today is this: "How's that sin thing working out for you?"
 - a. Not very well!
 - b. It's not doing you any good
 - c. Oh, there might be some momentary pleasure
 - d. But it's short-lived and empty
 - e. Any supposed benefit is illusory
 - f. It's a figment of your imagination
 5. "For the end of those things is death"
 - a. Note – not the "fruit of those things is death" – for being a slave to sin bears no fruit, for fruit is positive, leading to the welfare of the believer
 - b. But for the unbeliever, it all leads to death
 6. What fruit were you getting in those days when you were slaves of sin?
 - a. None!
 - b. Nothing but death and destruction
 - c. And that's no fruit at all
- C. **Fruitful Fruit**
1. When our kids were growing up we discovered a new product that became very useful

- a. I was initially suspicious of the name
- b. It was marketed to kids
- c. I wondered if it was on the up-and-up
- 2. It was called Juicy Juice
 - a. Well, it turns out, it was legit
 - b. It was all juice – blends of different kinds
 - c. But no added sugar like so many of the other things on the market
- 3. For some reason I thought of that in this text which is about fruit
- 4. **Romans 6:22** (ESV) —
 - a. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, **the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.**
- 5. Now that may not be Juicy Juice – but its fruitful fruit!
 - a. It’s nothing but fruit
 - b. It’s the very essence of spiritual fruit
 - c. Spiritual blessing after spiritual blessing
- 6. Sanctification and eternal life!
 - a. There is nothing more uplifting, more God-glorifying, more humanizing and human-edifying than the fruit of becoming slaves of God!
- D. And imagine the contrast!
 - 1. **Slaves of sin = death**
 - a. No fruit at all
 - 2. **Slaves of God = sanctification and eternal life**
 - a. The most blessed, soul-satisfying, joy-provoking, God-honoring fruit imaginable!

VI. **The Golden Sentence**

- A. And that leads us to the final verse in Chapter 6
 - 1. And it is one of those verses that captures the essence of the gospel
 - a. The summary of all that we have been studying in the entire book of Romans
 - 2. It is one of those verses that many of you have memorized
 - a. One of the verse that we often use to lead people to understand the gospel and to respond to the invitation of Jesus to come to Him
 - 3. It’s called by Charles Haddon Spurgeon “The Golden Sentence”
 - a. Golden – because in just about 20 words the message of the Bible becomes clear
 - b. 20 words, nearly all of which are simple, one syllable words
 - c. The only words that have more than one syllable are wages (and everybody understands what wages are, plus, it’s still a simple word – not like propitiation!); eternal (and I’ve already defined that a few moments ago); and Jesus (and you know who He is!)
 - d. Only those three words are multi-syllabic – and they’re not difficult
 - 4. **Romans 6:23** (ESV) —

- a. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

B. **Doctrine of the Two Ways**

1. We find in this golden sentence the doctrine of the two ways
 - a. There are only two paths for humanity
 - b. There are only two destinies for humanity
 - c. There are only two ways by which humanity can find its destiny
2. And these two ways are not unique to the NT
 - a. Indeed – every Hebrew who knows the OT scriptures find it to be familiar
 - b. In Deuteronomy, the way of life and the way of death are given to Israel – and they are told to “Choose life”
 - c. In the Psalms the two ways are pervasive
3. **Psalm 1** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
 - b. 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
 - c. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.
 - d. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
 - e. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
 - f. 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.
4. Jesus speaks of the two ways in the Sermon on the Mount
 - a. Two gates
 - b. Two roads
 - c. Two trees and their two types of fruit
 - d. Two houses and two foundations
5. **Matthew 7:13–14** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.
 - b. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.
6. The way of life and the way of life
 - a. From the beginning of the Bible to its end, all the way to the Revelation
 - b. It’s a thread tying the entire message together
 - c. Whether you’re a Jew or Gentile, you must see this in the scriptures!
7. The Doctrine of the Two Ways

C. **The Way of Death**

1. What does it say about the way of death?
 - a. It speaks of the wages
 - b. Wages are the just compensation for one's labor
 - c. Wages are what the worker deserves
 2. The wages of sin is death
 - a. That's what the worker of iniquity deserves
 - b. That's the just compensation of the sinner, unredeemed
- D. **The Way of Life**
1. By contrast, the way of life generates no wages
 - a. What? No wages?
 - b. No compensation?
 - c. No remuneration for services rendered?
 2. No!
 - a. The Way of Life is a free gift
 - b. The way of life is all by grace
 - c. The way of life is undeserved
 3. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life!
 - a. It's all driven by the love of God
 - b. It's got nothing to do with our labor, our merit
 4. **Ephesians 2:8–9** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
 - b. 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
 5. This way of life leads to eternal life
 - a. The eternal-kind-of-life
 - b. The life of love in the presence of the author of love and life
 6. And it's all in Christ Jesus our Lord
 - a. All by our union with Him!
 - b. There it is again – union with Christ!
 - c. “In Christ Jesus our Lord”

VII. Conclusion

- A. **Are you on the Way of Life?**
1. If not, the path is simple
 - a. Cast yourself on the mercy of Jesus Christ
 - b. Trust in Him alone for your salvation – not on anything in you, for you have nothing to give to Him except your sin
 - c. But Christ has been pleased to take your sin upon Himself
 2. Only by faith in the Son of God can you experience the way of life
 - a. It's a free gift of God
 - b. Not a compensation for works rendered – for you could render no works commensurate with the holiness of God
 - c. All by grace; all in Christ Jesus
 3. Trust Him today!