

The background of the cover is a photograph of a person kneeling on a beach at sunset, with a large cross standing nearby. The person is in silhouette, facing away from the camera and towards the cross. The sky is a deep orange and red, and the water reflects the light. The cross is a simple wooden structure. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

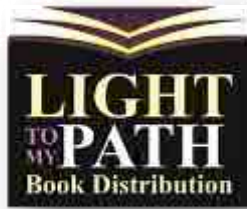
F. WAYNE MAC LEOD

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN

A LOOK AT THE TEACHING
OF SCRIPTURE ABOUT THE
PERSONAL RIGHTS OF THE BELIEVER

You Are Not Your Own

*A Look at the Teaching of Scripture
About the Personal Rights of the Believer*



F. Wayne Mac Leod

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Preface

We live in an age where the rights of the individual are often the centre of attention. In western society, where I currently live, the mother is said to have the right over her own body, thus justifying abortion. The rights of the child can strip away the parent's ability to punish or discipline his or her own child. Individual rights affect our sexual orientation or when we choose to die. The assumption is that each person has the right over their own bodies to do what they do with them.

How do these ideas line up with the teaching of the Scripture? In particular, with what the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

19 ... You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6)

Paul's words here are an affront to the idea that we have the right to do with our own bodies as we please. In fact, Paul tells us here that we do not even belong to ourselves. Using this passage as a springboard, the attempt of this study is to examine Scripture's teaching about the ownership of our bodies. If we in fact, as Paul says, we do not belong to ourselves, then we are accountable to God for our actions and everything that happens in these bodies.

The idea that we do not belong to ourselves is a hard truth to swallow but it is a very central truth of the Scripture. It is because of this truth that we are accountable to God for our lives. It is also because of this truth that we have great hope and confidence in the plan of God for our salvation. I trust that this study will not only reinforce in our minds our God-given responsibility to care for and use our bodies for the glory of His name but also remind us of the tremendous grace of God in purchasing us at such a cost for Himself.

I know there is much that can be said on this topic. My purpose is not every aspect of this important issue but rather to communicate the basic truth of Scriptures and presented by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. It is my hope the simplicity of this study will not reduce its importance or hinder the message of Scripture from speaking to the heart of each reader. May God give us grace to understand the simple truth Paul speaks about here and the strength to submit to its teaching.

F. Wayne MacLeod

Chapter 1 - You Are Not Your Own

19 ...You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Reading these verses some time ago, I was struck by the power of what the apostle Paul was saying. I began to reflect on what he was teaching when he said that we were not our own. What did the apostle mean by this statement and what is our response to this truth? These are the questions I want to examine in the course of the next few chapters. This is a study of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

The context of this statement is found in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. In these verses, Paul was addressing the matter of sexual immorality. It appears that the region of Corinth was filled with wickedness and this was spilling into the church. This is evident in Paul's rebuke to the church in the previous chapter:

1 It is reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. 2 And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. (1 Corinthians 5)

From this verse, we understand that the sexual immorality of Corinth had made its way into the church. In this case, we have a man in the church who was having a sexual relationship with his father's wife. The church had failed to discipline him for this evil.

Later in 1 Corinthians 5 Paul would remind the church of how he had already written to them about not associating with people who were sexually immoral:

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexual immoral people. (1 Corinthians 5:9)

Obviously, these believers were living in a city filled with immoral practices. It had become so common that even the church was accepting it as normal behaviour. Here was a case where the culture of the day was determining the morals of the church. Paul speaks out against this and calls the church back to the principles of God's Word. As Paul addresses this matter of sexual immorality, he reminds the believers of three very important details.

Your Body is Meant for the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:13)

"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. (1 Corinthians 6:13)

The first principle Paul brings to the attention of the Corinthians is that the body was not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord. There were people in Corinth who taught that the body and soul had nothing to do with the other. If I have a bowl of rice for breakfast, what impact will that have on my spiritual life? Will the food I put in my stomach

draw me any closer to the Lord? The people of Corinth took this a step further. They felt that just as the food they ate had no impact on their relationship with God so it was with anything else they did with their bodies. They saw no connection between sexual relationships and their spiritual relationship with God. They separated their spiritual life from their physical life to such an extent that they felt they could do anything with their physical bodies and it would have no impact on their relationship with God. They believed that a sexual relationship with a prostitute would have no more impact on their soul than what they ate for breakfast that morning.

Paul addresses this philosophy of life in 1 Corinthians 6:13 when he says: "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord." By telling the Corinthians that the body was meant for the Lord, Paul is removing this separation between body and soul. Yes, the body and the soul are two distinct parts of our being, but both belong to the Lord. In saying that the body was meant for the Lord, Paul is saying that what we do with this body does have an impact on our relationship with God.

We have been given these earthly bodies for a purpose. That purpose is to serve and honour the Lord. When we use these bodies in ways God never intended, we dishonour the Creator. Our bodies are the instruments God has given us to accomplish His purpose on this earth. Paul makes it clear that the purpose of God for our bodies is not sexual immorality.

If you belong to the Lord Jesus today, your body was given to you for a very particular reason. We must learn to use this body and all its parts to bring glory and honour to the Lord our Creator. Our mind needs to be trained to discern and know His purpose and plan. Our hands and feet must

be used to minister in His name. Our words must speak His glory and encourage others in their walk with Him. Certainly, how we use our physical body with all its capacity will have an impact on the kingdom of God and our relationship with Him. Our bodies were meant for the Lord and when they are used for the Lord, we know the fullness of purpose and the smile of God's approval.

Your Body is a Member of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15)

The second point Paul makes about the body is that it is a member of Christ:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! (1 Corinthians 6:15)

What is important for us to understand as believers is that the Lord Jesus is pleased to call us His own. As we live on this earth we walk in earthly bodies. The apostle Paul marvelled at the fact that the Lord Jesus would choose to reveal Himself in these earthly bodies:

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:7-10)

There are some very important details Paul brings out in these verses in 2 Corinthians. He reminds us that while these earthly bodies are merely fragile "jars of clay", they

contain the rich treasure of the presence and power of Jesus. Jesus has chosen to make His presence known in these frail bodies. These bodies are His instruments in this world. He has made us one with Him in this purpose of extending His kingdom. He has chosen to place His Spirit in us to empower and enable us to be effective in service. It is not just our souls that are part of the purpose of God, but our bodies also. As sinful and as frail as these earthly bodies are, they are the instruments through which He has chosen to extend His kingdom on this world.

Paul would go on in 1 Corinthians 6:15 to say, "Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!" We have been set apart and joined with Christ in His great overall purpose for this world. Our bodies are the instruments He chooses to use to accomplish this great purpose. Paul could not imagine how anyone who understood this wonderful truth could ever defile his or her body. Our bodies are part of Christ's great work. They have been set apart and sanctified by Christ for this great purpose. To mistreat the ambassador is to insult the king who sent him. In a similar way, to misuse or abuse the body Christ has chosen to be part of His purpose is to insult the King of kings. These bodies are instruments chosen by God to accomplish His holy purpose on the earth.

Your Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)

There is one final point Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 6:19 about our physical bodies.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.

Our bodies, as frail and weak as they are, are temples of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. Because we belong to God, our bodies are not our own. When we came to know the Lord Jesus, we surrendered the control and ownership of our lives to Him. He is Lord of our lives. At that point in time, the Holy Spirit took up residence in our lives. He is not just a tenant but the actual owner. Our bodies are no longer ours—they house God's Holy Spirit. This means that we do not have the right to do as we please with our bodies. The Holy Spirit is the owner and master of our bodies and we are to walk in tune with Him and His purpose for those bodies.

This is a point that we do not always understand. At times we continue to live as if our bodies were ours to do with as we please. Paul reminds us, however, that we no longer have this right. The Holy Spirit is now the master of our bodies. We must seek Him and His will for how we use those bodies.

Glorify God in Your Body (1 Corinthians 6:20)

What is Paul's word to those who say that what I do with my body is my own business and has nothing to do with my walk with God? He makes it quite clear that our role and purpose as believers on this earth is to glorify God in our bodies which belong to Him.

For Consideration:

- What was the condition of the church in Corinth in the days of Paul according to the verses we have examined in this chapter? To what extent was the community influencing the morals of the church?

What impact does your society have on the state of the church today?

- The church in Corinth seemed to be influenced by those who taught that what I do with my body has nothing to do with my relationship with God. How does Paul address this teaching in 1 Corinthians 6?
- What is the purpose of our body according to 1 Corinthians 6:13?
- How does God reveal Himself through our human bodies? How does He use them for His glory?
- Do we have any true right to our bodies? What did Paul mean when he told the Corinthians that their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit and that they were no longer their own?
- Have you come to a place of surrender in your life? Have you given to Christ what is already His or have you been fighting for possession and your own right to do what you want with your body?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to seek His will first and foremost, even when this goes against what our society considers normal.
- Ask the Lord to show you more fully what His purpose is for you and your body.

- Take a moment to confess that there have been times when you have not been completely surrendered to the Lordship of Christ over your life and body.
- Commit yourself afresh to walk in obedience and submission to the work and call of God on your life. Surrender your body to Him to use as He pleases.

Chapter 2 - His by Creation

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Paul addressed the issue of sexual immorality in the church of Corinth. He reminded the Corinthians that by virtue of the fact that their bodies were meant for the Lord, were members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, they no longer had the right to do as they pleased with them. He told them plainly in 1 Corinthians 6:19: "You are not your own."

This phrase: "you are not your own" seems radical in our day. We live in an age that asserts independence and personal rights. In the country where I live we are told that a woman has the right over her own body. The legal implication of this is that she has a right to terminate a pregnancy through abortion. If she doesn't want the baby in her womb, she has the right to destroy it.

Even Christians struggle with this idea that they are not their own. We like to think that we can decide our own course in life. The idea that God has authority over every part of my life is a hard one to swallow. Not many of us have ever come to a place of absolute surrender to God and an acceptance that we belong to Him in every aspect of life.

If there is one thing that is quite clear in the Scripture, it is the fact that we were created by God. We are His by means of creation. Adam was formed from the dust of the ground and God breathed the breath of life into Him. He had nothing to do with this creation—it was all of God.

What was true of the first man is also true for each one of us. While we may not have been formed from the dust of the ground like Adam, we were nonetheless still individually created by God. The Psalmist understood this when he said:

13 For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was
being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depth of the earth. (Psalm
139:13-15)

The psalmist tells us clearly that God formed us in our mother's womb. There we were shaped and given life by the Creator Himself. We are the work of His hands –evidence of the creative genius of the Lord God.

We had nothing to do with our creation. God shaped us individually, endowed us with personality and individual characteristics. God does so with a particular purpose in mind. The Psalmist would continue in his reflection of how God knitted him together in his mother's womb by saying:

Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm
139:16)

Consider what the Psalmist is saying here. Not only did God form our body, mind, and spirit in the womb of our

mother but he also determined the days that I would live. He shaped each day for me. Each of my days would have a purpose. He would bring the right circumstances into those days and use them to shape and use me for His glory. I was formed for a purpose.

In the days of the apostle Paul, this idea that God had a specific purpose for each believer was difficult for many to accept. Writing to the Romans Paul would address this issue when he said:

20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump, one vessel for honourable use and another for dishonourable use? (Romans 9:20-21)

God has the right, as the creator, to make whatever type of vessel He needs, just as a potter has the right to do what he wishes with the clay on the potter's wheel. Each of these creations has a particular purpose. The clay does not determine what it will become. This is in the hands of the potter.

Writing to the Ephesian church the apostle would say:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

Notice what Paul tells the Ephesians here. He told them that they were created in Christ Jesus for good works. They were created with a purpose in mind. Notice also that those good works were prepared beforehand. In other

words, God had a particular purpose in mind for us when He created us. Paul experienced this personally in his own life. Speaking to the Galatians, the apostle would write:

15 By when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult anyone. (Galatians 1:15-16)

Paul understood that God had set him apart before He was born for the purpose of preaching among the Gentiles. This was in the heart of God as He formed Paul in the womb of his mother. What is true of Paul is true for each of us today. God created us in our mother's womb knowing fully the purpose He had for our lives.

There is something else we need to understand about being created by God. Not only do we have a purpose, but we belong to the one who created us. The Creator owns His own creations. In the passage quoted above from Ephesians 2:10 Paul tells us that we are God's workmanship. As His workmanship, we belong to Him. Listen to what God said through the Psalmist in Psalm 50:10-11:

10 For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
11 I know all the birds of the hills,
and all that moves in the field is mine.

Every beast of the field, the cattle on the hills and the birds of the air all belong to the Lord God who created them. What is true of the animals of this earth is also true of human beings. Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord God says:

Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. (Ezekiel 18:4)

We are the Lord's by virtue of the fact that He has created us. We do not belong to ourselves. It is true that God has given us free will by which we can make our own decisions. The ability to make decisions, however, does not prove ownership. Large companies hire directors and executives to make decisions for them. These individuals are given the freedom to make the decisions necessary for the good of the company. While they make decisions on behalf of the company, they do not own the company. They are held accountable by the owners for their actions. God gives us the freedom to make decisions in life but this does not mean that we can do what we want. Yes, He has given us freedom, but we still belong to Him and are accountable to Him for how we live our lives and use what He has put in our hands.

There is one final point I would like to make in this regard. Speaking through His servant Jeremiah, the Lord God says:

It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. (Jeremiah 27:5)

He who created and owns this earth with its men, women, and animals has the right to do with it as He sees fit. He has absolute authority over all of His creation. If He chooses to take from one person and give to another, He has the right to do so. If He chooses to bless one person and not another He has the right to do so. He has this right because He is the Creator of all things.

As a creation, I am subject to the Creator. I have been created for a purpose. I did not choose that purpose myself—it was chosen for me. As the Creator, God has the right to do as He pleases with my life. I belong to Him and was created Him and His purpose. In accepting this I will find my highest delight and satisfaction in life.

I am not my own because I was created by God. I am His and He has every right over my life and time. What will be my response to this? Will I resist and fight for the right to do what I want with this life and body or will I submit and become all He has called me to be?

For Consideration:

- Why is Paul's statement, "You are not your own" so difficult for us to accept in our day?
- Does God, as our Creator have the right to determine His will for us as His creation?
- Does the fact that we were created with a free will mean that we can do what we want with the lives God has given us? Who is the rightful owner of our lives and time?
- How does understanding that we belong to God by means of creation impact how we live and make decisions?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to recognize God as the Creator of your life and time? Thank Him for the gift of life.

- Ask the Lord to help you to accept His purpose for your life. Ask Him to help you to find deep fulfilment in that purpose.
- Thank the Lord that your life has purpose and meaning because you were created by Him.
- Take a moment to confess that you have not always lived your life in the will of your Creator. Ask Him to forgive you and help you to learn to walk in deeper submission to Him.

Chapter 3 - His by Provision

In the previous chapter, we examined the fact that we are not our own because we are the creation of God. I would like to take this a step further. Not only are we created by God and for God but we are completely dependent on Him for every breath we breathe. Consider the prayer of David in 1 Chronicles 29:14:

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

Notice what David is saying here. He is telling us that everything we have is from God –"for all things come from you." Let's consider this for a moment.

We owe our lives to the Lord who formed us in the womb. Now that we have been given life, how is that life sustained? To answer this question, we need to consider what would happen if God ceased to provide for our needs. If God ceased to provide what we need, we would perish. He holds this universe together and gives it life. This is the clear teaching of the apostle Paul to the Colossians when he wrote:

16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things

were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16-17)

Notice in particular the phrase: "and in Him, all things hold together." It is by His genius and power that everything in this universe is held together and works in harmony. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, speaking about Jesus, says this:

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3)

The word "uphold" gives us the idea that He carries the weight of the universe on His shoulders. He gives life and without Him, nothing would exist.

Writing in the book of Revelation the apostle John said:

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (Revelation 4:11)

It is by the will of God that all things exist. They continue to exist only because He wills it and because He holds them together. Without His provision and blessing, all things would cease to exist.

We are absolutely dependent on God for everything we have. Every breath I breathe and every beat of my heart is because He sustains me and keeps me alive. I have noth-

ing that I cannot trace back to God and His provision. Jesus illustrates this quite clearly in the parable of the vine and the branches in John 15:5:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Jesus compares us here to a branch on a vine. The life of the branch is in the vine. The moment the branch is disconnected from the vine it begins to die. It cannot survive apart from the vine. Let's consider this illustration for a moment. Imagine that a branch on the vine was to say: "I belong to myself. I'm not going to remain on this vine. I'm going to leave the vine and do things my own way." What would happen to that branch? It would surely shrivel up and die. It needs to be in constant connection with the vine if it is to survive. The branch is dependent on the vine.

If you think you belong to yourself, then try separating yourself from God and His provision. Like that branch on the vine, you will soon find out how dependent you are on Him for everything. You only exist because you belong to Him—apart from Him you perish. Can we say that we belong to ourselves if apart from God we cannot even take a single breath? It is only because the branch belongs to the vine that it can survive.

What is true of ourselves is true also of our belongings. What do you have that does not come from God? Listen to what the apostle James had to say about this:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.
(James 1:17)

Every good and perfect gift we have ever received is from the Father in heaven. He is the giver of all good. Can I ever pat myself on the back and say: "Look at what I have done?" What could I have accomplished were it not for God, His strength and His provision? I offer to Him only what I have received from Him.

In the book of Hosea, the prophet accuses the people of his day of forgetting the source of their blessings:

8 And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold which they used for Baal. 9 Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness. (Hosea 2:8-9)

Consider what the Lord was saying through Hosea. God was accusing His people of forgetting that their grain, wine, oil, silver, and gold had all come from Him. Somehow they began to feel that they could do what they wanted with these objects. Because they had failed to recognize these gifts as being from God and used them instead in Baal worship, God would take them back. What is particularly interesting in these two verses is the repetition of the word "my" in reference to God. Notice what God says: I will take back my grain, my wine, my wool, and my flax. It could not be any clearer. The grain, wine, wool, and flax all belonged to God. All of these blessings were from God, who had the right to give and take back all that was not used for His glory.

The book of Job describes a man who lost everything. Satan stripped away Job's wealth and killed his children. When news of this came to Job he responded:

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:20-21)

Here was a man who understood that when he was born on this earth he came with nothing. Every blessing he received came from the Lord, but God also had the right to take those blessing from him. In taking away these blessings, God was not guilty of any crime. He had the right to do what He wanted with all that belonged to Him. Job belonged to God but so did everything he owned.

Consider for a moment that you own a small store. In order to keep the store open, you hire someone to work with you. Imagine now that this worker came in one day and decided to help himself to the supplies in your store. Imagine that he needed some money for personal reasons so he took money from the store. What would you think of this man? He has access to all the supplies in your store. He is required to handle the money, but these responsibilities do not give him ownership of these things. The finances and the items in the store are not his to do with as he pleases. These things belong to the owner who alone has the right to use them as he sees fit.

Let's use the illustration of the vine and the branches again. If the branch belongs to the vine and cannot survive without that vine, what about the fruit it produces? Can the branch say, "Okay, I accept that I belong to this vine and I can't survive apart from it but the fruit that is produced on my branch belongs to me?" Wouldn't it be foolish for the branch to think this way? What applies to the branch also applies to the fruit on the branch. If the branch belongs to

the vine, so does the fruit on the branch. Neither one could survive without the vine. The principle is this: If I belong to Christ then everything I have belongs to him also.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:20 that we are not our own. We are not our own because we cannot exist without God. We are dependent on His provision and blessing. We cannot survive apart from Him. Every good and perfect gift we have ever received comes from Him and belongs to Him. We own nothing that is truly ours to do with as we please. At best we are managers of the blessings God has put at our disposal. We are His because apart from His provision, we could not survive.

For Consideration:

- Can we offer to God anything that does not already belong to Him?
- How dependent is this universe on God? Could it exist without His ongoing provision and blessing?
- How does the parable of the vine and the branches show us that we are not our own? What is the connection between provision and belonging in this parable?
- Can we who belong to Christ claim any right to do as we please with what He has given us? Explain.

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to recognize God as the provider of all good gifts. Thank Him for His wonderful provision.
- Thank the Lord that He continues to sustain you every day.
- Ask the Lord to help you to realize that you are His because apart from Him you can do nothing. Ask Him to help you to embrace this dependence on Him and trust Him more fully.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for any time you may have believed that you had any real claim on the good things He has given you. Take a moment to surrender afresh all that you have to the Lord for His use and purpose.

Chapter 4 - His by Salvation

To this point in our study, we have seen that we belong to God by means of His creation and provision. He created us and provides everything we need for life. One would have thought that those who belong to God would recognize this and commit their lives to Him as the source of life. This was not the case, however. Humankind turned its back on its Creator and fell under His condemnation and judgment. The punishment for this sin was death (see Romans 6:23). Throughout the Old Testament, we read of countless sacrifices being made to pay for the sins of God's people. These animals died on behalf of God's people for the forgiveness of their sin.

A wonderful thing happened, however, when the Lord Jesus came to this earth. Listen to what the writer to the Hebrews tells us:

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9)

The writer speaks of Jesus entering into the holy places in a more perfect tent not made with human hands. Old Testament sacrifices were made in the earthly tabernacle

where the priests would enter to make an offering for the sins of the people. Notice, however, that Jesus entered holy places not made with hands. The holy place He entered was not in the tabernacle on this earth but in heaven. Just as the priests of the Old Testament would offer a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin and then enter the presence of God to minister on behalf of the people, so Christ, after offering Himself as a sacrifice, entered the presence of God to minister on our behalf. In other words, the Lord Jesus laid down His life to pay the penalty for the sins that separated us from the Father and held us under condemnation and eternal judgment.

Paul told the Colossians:

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:13-15)

Paul told the Colossian believers that they had been dead in their sins, under the judgement of God, and bound to be separated from Him for all eternity. Jesus, however, paid their debt by his death on the cross. The payment of this debt to God now gives us new life and hope.

Listen to what Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:22:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Because Jesus paid our penalty we now have life and hope. All who accept this payment can know the forgiveness of sin and enter the presence of the Father without guilt.

Speaking to the Ephesians the apostle would say:

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

What do we see from these verses? We were under the control and power of sin. Sin had destroyed us and our relationship with God. We were under its condemnation and destined for an eternity of separation from God. Jesus, however, came to this earth, laid His own life down on the cross to pay the price for our salvation. He paid that debt we could not pay. He gave us new life and hope. He seated us with God in heavenly places. He secured our eternal salvation. He disarmed those enemies that had us in their grip and set us free forever from their control and domination. He rescued us by giving His own life and restored us to the Father who adopts us as His own children.

It is important to note here that it was a legal transaction that took place on the cross. Scripture speaks of this transaction as a legal and binding purchase. In 1 Corinthians 6:20 the apostle tells us that we were "bought with a price." This same phrase is used in 1 Corinthians 7:23:

You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.

This idea of a legal purchase is repeated in 2 Peter 2:1 when he said:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

Notice the phrase "denying the Master who bought them." It is quite clear from Scripture that what took place on the cross was payment for a legally binding contract. On the cross, Jesus paid the supreme price to purchase us from the devil to whom we belonged. This transaction rescues us from the hands of our enemy and brings us into the kingdom of God as His children and heirs.

The implication of this purchase, according to Paul, is that we are not our own. We have been purchased at the cost of Jesus' life and so we belong to Him. As those who belong to the Lord Jesus, we are now under legal obligation to Him. There is an interesting passage in the book of Hosea that illustrates this.

1 And the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. 3 And I said to her, "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to

another man; so will I also be to you." (Hosea 3:1-3)

Hosea's wife Gomer was an unfaithful wife. The Lord had asked Hosea to marry her to illustrate His relationship with His people. Like Gomer, Israel had been unfaithful to her God. On this occasion, we see that Gomer was with another man. God speaks to Hosea and tells him to go and get his wife back from this man. In Hosea 3:2 that Hosea literally bought his wife back. The process of bringing her back to live with him cost Hosea something. It was, however, a legal transaction. Because this was a legal transaction, there were certain obligations attached. Notice in Hosea 3:3 that the prophet tells his wife that she was to dwell as his for many days and she was not to play the whore or belong to another man. These were the legal requirements attached to this transaction. What is true of Hosea's transaction is also true of our transaction with the Lord. Let's consider the agreement between Hosea and His wife and compare this to our relationship with the Lord.

First, Gomer was to dwell as Hosea's wife for many days. Because Hosea paid the price to get his wife back, she was under a legal obligation to dwell with him. To dwell with him implied that she was to remain in his home with him. She was to make it her commitment to always remain with him and never leave him.

Second Gomer was not to play the whore or belong to any other man. This meant that she was to be faithful to Hosea alone. She was not to turn to any other man. All her devotion and attention was to be given to him alone.

These obligations were on her because she had been legally bought back by Hosea. In a similar way, we too are under a legal obligation toward our Lord. We are to remain

with Him. We are to serve Him, honour Him and make Him our priority in life. We are to turn from every other god and all other distraction to commit ourselves to Him and to Him alone.

It is possible for us to wander from the Lord, but the purchase of our salvation by the Lord Jesus places us under a legally binding agreement with Him. Imagine that you were living in a home for which you could no longer pay. A friend takes pity on you and decides to buy the home and let you live in it for the rest of your life. We live in this home now, but it no longer belongs to us. The fact that we live in it doesn't make it ours. All the paperwork shows that the house now belongs to your friend. Because we no longer own the home, we are responsible to care for it. We do not have the legal right to do with it as we please.

In a similar way, the Lord Jesus has bought us. We live now as one who belongs to another. We are no longer our own. We are no longer free to do as we please. Because we have been bought with a price, we are under obligation to the one who bought us. This is both a tremendous privilege and obligation. We are His because He purchased us at the cost of His own life. He holds the deed and title to our bodies and souls. He is the legal Master and Owner.

For Consideration:

- What was our condition before we came to Christ?
- How did the Lord Jesus purchase us? What was the cost of that purchase?

- What does the Scripture teach about the legal transaction that took place on the cross?
- What is our obligation now that we have been purchased by Christ?
- Can we legally do as we please with our lives now that we belong to Christ?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord that He willingly laid down His life for us to ransom us from the devil.
- Ask the Lord to help you to understand your legal requirements now that you belong to Him.
- Ask the Lord to teach you to live your life as one who belongs to the Lord Jesus.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you have failed to walk in obedience to Him.

Chapter 5 - His by Law

In the last chapter, we touched briefly on the matter of the price that was paid for our salvation and how the Lord God paid the ransom for our freedom. This was a legal transaction.

One of the most difficult things for us to understand is this matter of legality in the spiritual realm. Just as this world is run by legal obligations so it is in the spiritual realm. From creation, this law is evident. Consider when the Lord put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. There in the garden, the Lord also put the Tree of the Knowledge of God and Evil. Listen to the command of God with regard to this tree:

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17)

Right there in the Garden of Eden God began by letting Adam and Eve know that there were rules and laws to be obeyed and consequences for disobedience. In this case, eating fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would result in death. The Old Testament is filled with laws, regulations, covenants, and vows. The people of Israel were under the Law of Moses and were required to live in accordance with the laws God had given. To disobey His law was to suffer the consequences. These laws covered everything from sexual behaviour and health to

relationships with people and animals in the land or what they could or could not eat as the people of God.

While we are no longer under the Law of Moses in our day, this does not mean that God no longer has a standard for us to live by. God is certainly a God of law and order. Listen to what Paul tells us in Romans 6:23:

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

There is a law against sin and those who continue in sin will be punished. Sin is a crime punishable by death according to the law of God. This is not just an Old Testament principle, but one that is very clear in the New Testament as well. God binds Himself to this law of sin and death. It is by this law that He governs the world. It was because of this law that the Lord Jesus had to come to earth to die.

Consider this for a moment. Why did Jesus have to die? He had to die because the law of God stated that sin was punishable by death. God took this law very seriously. A penalty needed to be paid if we were going to be freed from the sentence of death. Out of love and compassion for us, the Lord God sent His Son to take our place as the perfect, sinless sacrifice so that the legal requirement of the law would be met. Only when our debt was paid could we be freed from this terrible sentence. This law of sin and death is key to understanding what took place for our salvation. There was no other way for our salvation to be procured because this universe is bound to the law that states that the soul that sins will die.

God is a God of law, and the world in which we live is bound by those laws. Not only does God obligate Himself to His laws, but even the powers of hell are bound by these

same laws. Satan and his demons will be punished by the law of God. They cannot take what has been legally purchased and redeemed by Jesus.

Consider what the apostle Paul had to say to the believers about what the Lord Jesus had done for them on the cross:

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it on the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

Notice the language used here. Paul speaks of trespasses and of those who were under the judgement of death because of their sin. He reminds us that we were forgiven by means of the cancelling of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. The law demanded payment of our debt or else we would suffer the consequences. Jesus paid this legal penalty by dying in our place. He met the legal requirement for us to be forgiven our debt.

The apostle Paul would remind us that what Jesus did for our salvation upheld the Law:

27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one –who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By

no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law (Romans 3:27-31)

While there is much we could say about this passage, notice what Paul tells us in Romans 3:31. He reminds us that God did not overthrow the law when He provided salvation by faith. In fact, He upheld the law. How did He uphold the law? He did so by requiring that the full penalty for sin be met through the death of His Son.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-4)

The condemnation of the law has been removed by the Son of God who took on human flesh in order to meet the "righteous requirements of the law" by dying in our place. Is it not clear that God binds Himself to this law of sin and death? The penalty had to be paid for salvation and forgiveness to be possible.

Indeed, under the law, almost everything was purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. (Hebrews 9:22)

Now that the penalty for sin has been paid by Christ, all who accept this payment are forgiven by means of the work of Christ on their behalf. In fact, God has entered a

new and legally binding covenant with us promising us forgiveness and eternal life through the work of His Son Jesus.

15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance since a death has occurred that redeemed them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:15)

It is in this context that we need to understand 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Paul tells us in those two verses that we are not our own because we were bought with a price. That purchase of God was a legal transaction and had legal implications for us. Writing to the Colossians Paul told them:

13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

The price paid by Jesus transferred us from one kingdom to another. We were purchased from the kingdom of darkness and now belong to the kingdom of God's beloved Son. By His death, we have become children of God with all the rights and privileges. We no longer belong to this world of sin and darkness. Our obligations are now toward God and the kingdom of His Son. To live and walk as men and women of this world and give our allegiance to this world is to betray our true kingdom and allegiance.

We have been given a free will, but that freedom does not give us the legal right to betray our calling and obligations in this new kingdom. As members of this new kingdom, we are to uphold the standards that God has set out in His Word. As believers, we need to understand the difference

now between our freedom and our legal right. A person is free to take the life of another human being, but they do not have the legal right to do so. This is true in our walk with God as well. When we were transferred into the kingdom of God's Son, we were placed under a legal obligation to walk as children of that kingdom. We have the freedom to rebel and sin against God but we do not have the legal right to do so.

Notice how Paul introduced himself in Romans 1:1:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.

Paul calls himself a servant. The Greek word used in Romans 1:1 is the word "doulos" and refers to a slave who is either voluntarily or involuntarily in service to another. He is subject to the will of the master. Paul saw himself as a slave to the Lord Jesus. He did not see this in a negative way but in a very positive way. He delighted to serve the Lord but saw it as his obligation as one who had been purchased with a price. He challenged every believer to live as a servant of God and to present themselves as living sacrifices to God:

I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)

As those who have been purchased by Christ and transferred into His kingdom, we are now to present ourselves to Him as His servants. We are to offer ourselves completely and entirely to Him and to honour Him with our bodies and minds. This is our legal obligation.

We who were once slaves to sin have now become slaves to righteousness:

17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18)

We may not like the idea of being a slave but the reality of the matter is that we legally belong to God and His kingdom. We have the ability to do as we please but we do not have the legal right to do so. As servants of God, we are now subject to Him and His will. Our legal obligation now is to Him and His purpose.

I want to emphasise this point once again. We can walk away from God and do what we please with our lives. God does not force us to walk in obedience. He calls us to walk willingly in submission to Him. While the freedom is there for us to walk away, we are held legally accountable for our actions. When we disobey God and walk in our own way, we are violating our privilege as a citizen of His kingdom. He has purchased us by His blood to give us a hope and an eternity in His presence. He paid the highest price possible for our redemption. He transferred us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God with all its rights, privileges and obligations. He legally bound us to Him and we are His servants. The decision now is for us to decide if we are going to walk in that calling or if we are going to resist and demand our own way.

Many have rebelled against their spiritual obligations to God. We will not take the time in this study to examine the many stories in Scripture of those like King Saul, Jonah,

the apostle Paul (then Saul) or the entire nation of Israel who chose for a time to rebel against God and their obligations to His kingdom. Each of these individuals discovered that the cost of this rebellion was more than they had bargained for. Full surrender to God and the principles of His kingdom is the only way to know His blessing and true satisfaction in life.

We are not our own because we have been legally purchased by God and transferred at the cost of His Son into His kingdom. That transaction legally binds us to Him and the principles of His kingdom. This is to this kingdom we are subject to today. This is both our legal obligation and privilege.

For Consideration:

- God is a God of law and order. He binds Himself to legal relationships and covenants. How does this fact give us assurance and hope in this life and the life to come?
- In Romans 6:23 Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death. Does God hold Himself to this spiritual law? What did He do to pay the penalty for our sin?
- Colossians 1:13-14 reminds us that we have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's Son. What was the cost of this transfer? What are the implications for those of us who have been granted citizenship in the kingdom of Jesus?

- Paul calls himself a servant or slave of the Lord Jesus. He challenges all believers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God? What does this tell us about our legal obligation to God?
- Does our freedom to rebel mean that we have the right to rebel? What is the difference between freedom and right?
- Is there any true contentment and satisfaction apart from submission to Christ and His will?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He binds Himself to us in a covenant relationship that He will not break. Thank Him for the assurance that this gives.
- Thank the Lord that He upheld the law and offered His Only Son to pay the penalty for your sin and mine.
- Take a moment to praise the Lord that He transferred your citizenship from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of His Son.
- Ask the Lord to give you the grace to accept the privilege of being His servant. Ask Him to help you to willingly offer yourselves to Him as a living sacrifice.
- Thank the Lord that in Him there is full assurance of eternal life and blessings forevermore.

- Ask the Lord to give you the grace to accept your obligations to Him. Thank the Lord that these obligations are not a burden but a tremendous privilege.

Chapter 6 - Stewards of His Resources

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

We have seen that we belong to the Lord by creation, provision, salvation, and law. Though we belong to God, He has blessed us in many wonderful ways. What do we have that has not come from this wonderful Provider? The question I want to address in this chapter, however, is this: What is my obligation to God and the blessings He has given?

To answer this question let's begin with Genesis 2:15 as quoted above. Here we see how God, after creating man, put him in the garden. Notice the reason the Lord put Adam in the garden – “to work it and keep it.” The word “keep” can be confusing. It is often used to speak of something that I possess and can do with as I please. This is not the sense of this word here. The sense here in Genesis 2:15 has more to do with the upkeep and care of the garden. To keep the garden was to guard and protect it. It was to nurture it to assure its productivity.

What is important for us to note here is that when God put Adam in the garden and gave it to him as his home, God put an obligation on him. He was to care for this garden. He was to nurture it and guard it by hard work. Adam was not free to do as he pleased with this garden. In fact, we read in Genesis 2:17 that there was a tree in the Garden

that he was not to eat from lest he die. When Adam and Eve ate from that tree, God took the garden from them.

What do we understand from this account of the Garden of Eden? We understand that the Garden of Eden was God's to do with as He pleased. He chose to put Adam and his wife in that garden and gave them the responsibility to care for it. He set the rules for living in the garden and reserved the right to remove them from it if they did not walk in obedience to His commands. Adam and Eve were blessed to live in this Garden but they did not own it. They experienced the delights of this garden but did not have the right to do as they pleased in it.

Probably no one in the Old Testament understood this principle better than Job. In Job 1 we meet a man who had been richly blessed by God. Job had seven sons and three daughters (Job 1:1). He was a very rich man with 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yokes of oxen, 500 female donkeys and very many servants. He was considered to be the "greatest of all the people of the east" (Job 1:3).

Job 1 recounts the story of how Satan came to God and asked permission to tempt him. He told God that the only reason Job feared Him was because of all the blessing He had given him. Satan believed that the moment those blessings were removed Job would curse God to His face (Job 1:11). Listen to the response of God to Satan in Job 1:12:

And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

This verse is very important. It shows us how God gave Satan permission to do what he wanted with the blessings of Job. God has the full right to give and to take away blessings. If these blessings were ours He would not have this legal right. The fact of the matter, however, is that none of the blessings of God are truly ours. They have been loaned to us for a time and a purpose. God is the legal and rightful owner of every blessing you have and has the right to give and take them back as he sees fit. In the case of Job, God gave Satan permission to strip Job of his blessings.

Over the course of time, Satan killed Job's children and took away all his wealth. Everything he had was stripped from him. Notice the response of Job to this:

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshipped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20-22)

That day, standing before this total loss of everything he had, Job bowed down and worshipped the Lord. He recognized that when he was born he came into the world with nothing. Everything he had came from God and God reserved the right to take everything back.

Verse 22 is particularly significant in this regard. "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." The implication in this verse is that Job would have sinned had he accused God of wrongdoing by taking his children and his wealth from him. God was not guilty of wrongdoing in taking these

things. They were God's possessions. They did not belong to Job. He was merely a caretaker of all these blessings.

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus told a parable about a master who was going away on a journey. Jesus introduced the parable in Matthew 25:14 by saying:

For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

There is an important detail we cannot miss in this verse. Notice that the man entrusted "his" property to these servants. The property that was given to them was not theirs. The man maintained his ownership of the property that was entrusted to these servants. They were accountable to care for this property during his absence. When one of the servants proved unfaithful the master said to him:

Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest. (Matthew 25:27)

Notice the words the master uses here. "You ought to have invested my money." "I should have received what was my own with interest" The question of ownership is very clear in this passage. The money belonged to the master. The servants were caretakers and investors of that money but they did not own it themselves.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians compares the Christian life to the building of a great house.

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one had done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

According to Paul, each of us is accountable to God for the use of the blessings, gifts, and talents He provides. The day is coming when we will be called to give an accounting like the servants in the parable of Jesus in Matthew 25. The fact that we are held accountable for the use of what God gives to us shows that we are not free to do as we please. All we have has been entrusted to us. It has been loaned for a time and a purpose. While we have been given a free will, we do not have the legal right to do as we please with these blessings.

This truth is not an easy one for us to accept. We like to believe that we have the right to do as we please with what has been given to us. We pat ourselves on the back for giving a portion of what God has given us back to Him, while we are merely giving to God what is His anyway. We must learn to live our lives with the reality that everything we have belongs to Him and has been given to us to be invested for the purpose of His kingdom. Like Adam and Eve, we are caregivers of what God has blessed us with.

All I have belongs to God. How will I invest these resources? What kind of a caregiver will I be?

For Consideration:

- Why did God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? Did this garden belong to them?
- What was the response of Job to the loss of his family and wealth? What does his response teach us about the rightful owner of these possessions?
- In the parable of the talents, to whom did the money belong? What was the responsibility of the servants?
- What blessings have you received from God? How have you been using these blessings for the sake of His kingdom?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the many blessings He has given to you.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for assuming that these blessings were yours to do with as you please. Ask God to help you to see that you and all that God gives belong to Him.
- Ask the Lord for wisdom to seek Him more about how He would have you use the resources He has given you.

- Take a moment now to recognize before God that all you have belongs to Him. Ask Him to help you to be a good caretaker of these things.

Chapter 7 - Our Response

In this final chapter, I would like to conclude with some simple reflections about our response to the truth we have examined in this study. We have seen that we are not our own. All we have comes from the Lord and is His to do with as He pleases. What should be our attitude and response to this reality?

Responsibility, not Right

Because nothing is truly ours to do with as we please, we are responsible to God for how we use everything He has loaned to us. We are accountable to God for the life we live. We are answerable to Him for the way we use our gifts and talents.

There can be no true growth in our spiritual lives until we understand this important reality that we are not our own. We are servants of God, called to do His will and purpose on this earth. It is only as we surrender our perceived rights to Him that we can truly walk in victory.

Those who assert their right to do as they please will build a barrier between themselves and God. Only when we accept our responsibility to be caretakers of the resources of God can we truly reach the potential to which He has called us.

His Will, not Our Own

How easy it is to talk about doing the will of God, but living out this reality is not so easy. Our sinful and selfish nature is at war with God. The lusts of our flesh and the temptations around us are often more than we can handle in our own strength.

Understanding that my body and mind belong to God, helps me to realize that I cannot do as I please with what does not belong to me. I am a caretaker of my body and mind. I must set up a guard against anything that would come in and defile the temple of God or the mind of Christ in me.

If we are going to grow in our relationship with the Lord, this question must be settled. We are not our own. Our lives and all we have belong to Him. It is our purpose in life to walk in His will. It is not for me to assert my own will and do what I want with what belongs to God. If I am to walk in harmony with Him I must commit myself to this reality—His will not my own.

Privilege, not Obligation

For some people, the idea that they are a servant to someone else is nothing less than slavery. They resent the fact that God claims everything they have. What we need to understand, however, is that belonging to God and living our lives for Him alone is a wonderful privilege. What honour is there in selfishness and self-centeredness? What honour is there in thinking only of ourselves or doing only what we please in life?

God knows that there is more blessing in giving than in receiving. He knows that there is more satisfaction in serving than in being served. He has our best interest at heart when He calls us to look beyond ourselves, die to ourselves and minister in His name. There is more satisfaction and joy in serving God and surrendering to His will than in doing everything we want in life.

Beyond this, however, consider the fellowship we have with God as we surrender to Him. As we move in His will to do His purpose, He fills us with His strength and power. As we face the obstacles before us He imparts His wisdom. When the storms of life surround us He releases His comfort and assurance. As we walk in His will we know His presence. This is not a presence we can know if we are outside His purpose and plan. God keeps us close to Him so that we can fellowship and enjoy Him. It is not an obligation to serve the Lord and surrender to His will—it is a tremendous privilege.

Acceptance, not Complaining

I am thankful that God always has my best interest at heart. I praise Him for the love that willingly sacrificed His Son for me on the cross of Calvary as a proof of that love. The One who knows the number of hairs on my head knows what I can handle and what is best for me.

Why should God claim us as His own? What is there in us that would make Him desire us? What qualities do we have that make us good servants of the Almighty? If we are honest with ourselves, we would have to agree that we are weak and lack the wisdom we need to do the work of God on this earth. We have often failed our Lord and hinder the work of His kingdom. Nothing but love could explain why

the Creator of this universe would choose to partner with us in the expansion of His kingdom.

Knowing this love ought to give us great confidence in His purpose for our lives. The Creator knows what is best for me. His love for me is beyond question. This means that as I walk in obedience I can trust Him with whatever He brings my way. I can know for sure that He is working out all things for my good.

Complaining and grumbling about our lot in life is not an option for those who understand this loving care of God. Those who understand God's love for them will trust His purpose and accept what He brings their way. They willingly surrender to this love without complaining. They trust Him in all things because they know He has their best interest at heart.

One of the key battles in the Christian life is the battle between ourselves and God. The truth of this study is not an easy one for us to accept. We live in a society that wants to assert its rights. We are bombarded on all sides by those who teach that we need to put ourselves first and do whatever we want in life. With all of this focus on self, we have not produced a better society. God's way is very different. It is a way of self-denial. It is a way of surrender to His purpose. What would happen in our churches and society if we all chose to live in the reality that we are not our own but belong to God for His purpose? What would happen if we surrendered to His will? Would this world not be transformed? Would relationships not be healed?

The God who created us wants to use us for His glory and the blessing of this world. Only in surrender to Him can we become all we were designed to be. Only in willing submission can we experience the fullness of life He intended

for us. When I assert my personal rights and focus on myself, I will always suffer. My fellowship with God will be hindered. My society will be hurt. It is my obligation and privilege to submit to God so that in me, He can accomplish His great plan. May the Lord make us willing servants of the Almighty.

The Biblical truths we have examined here in this brief study are not new. We have heard them many times before. I put them together in this study, however, to remind us of our obligation and accountability to God. These are truths that we need to be reminded of over again in our day. If we are to live our lives to the full and experience all that God has for us, we must settle this matter in our minds. He must have the right over every part of us. It is easy to call Him Lord but so few of us ever get to a point where we are completely surrendered to this Lordship in our lives. May the Lord be pleased to use this study to remind us afresh of His Lordship and may it stimulate us to bow down in humble submission to Him in every area of our lives.

For Consideration:

- How does asserting our rights build a barrier between us and God?
- Is there honour in selfishness and self-centeredness? Is there more blessing in giving or receiving? Do you have an example of this in your personal life?
- How is the love of God demonstrated for us? Can you trust a God who willingly surrenders His Son to

the cross for your salvation? How does our complaining demonstrate that we do not fully trust the Lord?

- What are some of the blessings of being a servant of God?
- Can you trust God with your life? What comfort do you find in the fact that you belong to God?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to forgive you for the times you have chosen to assert your perceived right rather than surrender to His purpose.
- Ask God to enable you to willingly surrender to Him and His purpose for your life.
- Thank the Lord that His love for us is such that we can trust Him fully. Thank Him that no matter what happens, He has our best interest at heart.
- Ask God to help you to live your life fully satisfied in His purpose. Ask Him to use you and enable you to reach your full potential in Him.

Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne MacLeod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

To date, tens of thousands of books are being used in preaching, teaching, evangelism, and encouragement of local believers in over sixty countries. Books have now been translated into a number of languages. The goal is to make them available to as many believers as possible.

The ministry of LTMP is a faith-based ministry and we trust the Lord for the resources necessary to distribute the books for the encouragement and strengthening of believers around the world. Would you pray that the Lord would open doors for the translation and further distribution of these books?

For more information about Light To My Path Book Distribution visit our website at <http://ltmp-homepage.blogspot.ca>