

**“The Real Undercover Boss”
The Supremacy of Christ Series**

Colossians 3:22-4:1

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Every Christian can honor God through their work by embracing the three convictions taught by Paul in Colossians 3:22-4:1.

Conviction 1 Obey your earthly masters.

Conviction 2 Work for the Lord not men.

Conviction 3 Honor those who work for you.

“SLAVE, SERVANT: Person totally responsible to and dependent upon another person.

Slavery was prevalent and widely accepted in the ancient world. The economy of Egypt, Greece, and Rome was based on slave labor. In the first Christian century, one out of three persons in Italy and one out of five elsewhere was a slave. Huge gangs toiled in the fields and mines and on building projects.

Many were domestic and civil servants. Some were temple slaves and others were craftsmen. Some were forced to become gladiators. Some were highly intelligent and held responsible positions. Legally, a slave had no rights; but, except for the gangs, most were treated humanely and were better off than many free persons.

Domestics were considered part of the family, and some were greatly loved by their masters. Canaan, Aram, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia had fewer slaves because it proved less expensive to hire free persons. Still, the institution of slavery was unquestioned.

The Stoics insisted that slaves were humans and should be treated accordingly. Israel’s law protected slaves in various ways. A person could become a slave as a result of capture in war, default on a debt, inability to support and “voluntarily” selling oneself, being sold as a child by destitute parents, birth to slave parents, conviction of a crime, or kidnapping and piracy. Slavery cut across races and nationalities.

Manumission or freeing of slaves was possible and common in Roman times. Masters in their wills often freed their slaves, and sometimes they did so during their lifetimes. Industrious slaves could make and save money and purchase their own freedom. By the first Christian century, a large class of freedmen had developed. There was even a synagogue of Freedmen in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9).”

Harper’s Bible Dictionary Software

“Metaphorical Uses of Slavery In most ancient societies few things were more despicable than to be a slave. In Israel, however, the idea emerged that it was a great privilege to be a servant or slave of God (the various Hebrew and Greek words could be translated either).”

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Great heroes of the Christian faith were called “slaves of God.”

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob Exodus 32:13
- Moses (30 times) Deuteronomy 34:5
- David (70 times) 2 Samuel 7:5
- Prophets 2 Kings 21:10

Scriptures relating to Jesus as “master”:

Matthew 8:19; 10:25; 23:8; 26:18, 25, 49
Mark 14:45
Luke 8:24
John 13:13, 14

Scriptures relating to masters of servants:

Exodus 21:20-21, 26-27 Leviticus 19:13; 25:43
Deuteronomy 5:14; 24:14-15 Job 31:13-15
Proverbs 22:16; 29:12, 21 Jeremiah 22:13
Malachi 3:5 Romans 4:4
Ephesians 6:9 Colossians 4:1
1 Timothy 5:18 Philemon 10-16
James 5:4

Characteristics of a bad servant:

- Idleness 2 Timothy 3:11; Proverbs 18:9;
Ephesians 4:28
- Dishonesty Luke 16:12; Colossians 3:22
- Disloyalty Luke 16:13
- Quarrelsome Matthew 24:48-49
- Discontentment Luke 3:14
- Refusing Correction Proverbs 29:19