

## 10.7 New Testament on Slavery

**Sources:** King James Version of the New Testament,  
<https://www.bible.com/search/bible?q=Colossians%203:22>

**Instructions:** Passages from the Christian New Testament have been used to justify the enslavement of other human beings. Frederick Douglass in *Life of an American Slave* (1845) responded to a Christian defense of slavery arguing: “Between the Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ; I therefore hate the corrupt, slave-holding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, I can see no reason but the most deceitful one for calling the religion of this land Christianity.”

**Question:** How would you respond to someone who used these passages to defend slavery and other forms of human inequality?

Luke, 12:47: “And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.”

John, 15:20: “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

Colossians, 3:22: “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”

Romans, 13, 1-4: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.<sup>2</sup>Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. <sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same

Ephesians, 6.5-6.8. “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”