

# Colossians 4:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

## Analysis

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**Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.** Paul addresses slaveholders, balancing servants' duties (3:22-25) with masters' responsibilities. "Give unto your servants that which is just and equal" (to dikaion kai tēn isotēta tois doulois parechesthe, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε) commands fair, equitable treatment—providing what's right and balanced, not exploiting power advantage.

"Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven" (eidotes hoti kai hymeis echete Kyrrion en ouranō, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔχετε Κύριον ἐν οὐρανῷ) provides accountability: earthly masters answer to heavenly Master who judges impartially (3:25). No earthly authority exempts from divine accountability. This radically limited masters' power and elevated slaves' dignity—both serve the same Lord, creating brotherhood transcending social hierarchy.

## Historical Context

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Roman masters had nearly unlimited power over slaves, including physical punishment, sexual use, and execution. Paul doesn't directly attack slavery's institution but transforms the relationship through mutual Christian identity. Masters treating slaves justly and equitably was countercultural and subversive to Roman social order. Over centuries, Christianity's influence eventually delegitimized and abolished slavery by undermining its moral and theological justifications.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. How do you treat those under your authority—employees, children, students—with justice and equality?
2. Does remembering your accountability to God affect how you exercise earthly authority?
3. What modern forms of exploitation parallel ancient slavery that Christians should oppose?

## Interlinear Text

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Οἱ	κύριον	τὸ	δίκαιον	καὶ	τὴν	ἰσότητα	τοῖς
G3588	<b>Masters</b>	G3588	<b>that which is just</b>	<b>also</b>	G3588	<b>equal</b>	G3588
	G2962		G1342	G2532		G2471	
	δούλοις	παρέχεσθε	εἰδότες	ὅτι	καὶ	ὕμεῖς	ἔχετε
	<b>unto your servants</b>	<b>give</b>	<b>knowing</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>also</b>	<b>ye</b>	<b>have</b>
	G1401	G3930	G1492	G3754	G2532	G5210	G2192
κύριον	ἐν	οὐρανοῖς					
<b>Masters</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>heaven</b>					
G2962	G1722	G3772					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Revelation 17:14** (Parallel theme): These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

**James 2:13** (Parallel theme): For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

**Ecclesiastes 5:8** (Righteousness): If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

**Revelation 19:16** (Parallel theme): And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

**James 5:4** (Parallel theme): Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

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