

Render Therefore unto Caesar, Really?

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter number 20, as we get back into this series of questions and answers that are given from a group to Jesus and his response. Have you ever been to a job interview where the series of questions asked was supposed to determine if you were fit for the job, if you would be a good fit for the team?

I've shared before when I was in college, I went to a job interview and the name of the company was Manpower. It was a temp service. And as you know, they help people find jobs. Well, I wasn't familiar with that concept.

And so when I went to apply for a job there, they were saying, well, we help people find jobs. And I think I could help people find jobs. And I said, I could do this job. And they're like, we're not wanting to give you my job. We're trying to help you find a job.

And I said, that's really nice. I'm looking for a job. That's why I came here. And so I got I understood it was kind of like who's on first. We just kind of went round and round. And but in high school class a couple of weeks ago, Grant, and I won't tell what prestigious place in Dawsonville.

He was interviewing at. But he shared with us. Grant, raise your hand for those that don't know here. Grant was telling how he was talking to the people and they were asking him some questions.

[1 : 09] And it was kind of a weird interview. And so he told us, he says, I don't think it's going to work out there. And somebody else in the class said, did you not get the job? He said, no, I don't want the job. And so they failed in the interview process with Grant.

He decided I won't work for you. You people are crazy. And in a like manner here, we learn some things about the people that are asking questions about Jesus.

In Jesus's response, we find him always to be wonderful. We always find him to be lovely. We always find him to be trustworthy. We never see any shadow in Jesus. That's anything but wonderful.

But the people asking the questions, they tell us some things. It's fitting. It was customary as the Passover lamb, which is where we're headed into this Passover week, that the lamb would be taken and kept for several days for examination, that the lamb would be seen after several days to see if it's still spotless.

Jesus has submitted himself to the same type of scrutiny to the people here, where they are going to ask questions here. And we have this series. And so what do you think these questions say about those that are asking?

[2 : 19] is the first thing I want us to look at in the passage. And it's laid out for us. There's fear and self-preservation. Verse number 19. And the chief priest and the scribes, the same hour, sought to lay hands on him.

And they feared the people, for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. They feared the people, and they perceived that the parable had been spoken against them.

It was two weeks ago where Greg took us through the parable there. But it was Jesus, though, saying, a man owned a piece of property. He left it in the care of somebody, the husbandman. And he would send his servants and say, hey, you've been working my fields.

I want you to provide for me the fruit, the harvest that's been given. They took the servant, and they beat the servant. He sends another servant, and the same thing happens. And then he sends his own son, and he says, surely when they see my heir, they see my own son, they will realize the significance of this moment, and they will respond in a manner.

But when he came to the land, they said, if we kill the heir, then this land will become ours. And so those that were listening knew that Jesus was speaking about them. He knew that God had sent the prophets of the Old Testament, and now that they were sending his own son in Jesus, he was going to be crucified.

[3 : 37] And if they did anything that looked like what Jesus said that they were going to do, then he was going to create this self-fulfilling prophecy, which would bring the wrath of people upon their heads. And so they had to play this very carefully.

Jesus is welcomed into the city, into the town here by a large crowd, more than the board that you saw in Sunday school would have shown. There had been multitudes of people would have brought him in and rejoiced and sang Hosanna.

But now they have to change the culture and the popular culture of the day to get to a place where when they crucified him, that they would be cheered and everybody would be for them.

So it's quite the thing that they're wanting to do in such a short amount of time. And how were they going to go about it? So this is the plan that they devised. Verse 20 says, They watched him, and they sent forth spies, and they feigned themselves as just men.

They pretended to be interested, that they may take hold of the words of Jesus. Which is such a wonderful thought. I just picture taking hold of something. If you ever, we took the teams to the rodeo some years ago, and nobody could stay on the bull for more than three seconds.

[4 : 46] It was quite a lame rodeo for us, right? But I picture about grabbing hold of something. Somebody is going to attempt to grab a hold of the words of Jesus, and it will always end the same way.

He will always come triumphant. And so that's what they do. They say, We're going to get in there and want to lay hold of the words of Jesus. This group of people is made up of several different splendid groups of people.

They have a common enemy now that has brought them together. In Mark 3.6, it says that the Pharisees went forth, and they took counsel of Herodians that they might destroy.

So this would be kind of like the brain trust of the day that is plotting against Jesus. Let me name some of the groups that are there. You have chief priests among them, which is a position which is made up mostly of Sadducees.

They got involved. We heard about them first when Jesus went into the temple at the beginning of his earthly ministry. And now again, they're favorable to Rome. They really want to keep the status quo.

[5 : 46] They like the system they have in place. They're not wanting for things to change. But now they're consorting with a group of people, the Herodians, who are people that wanted to have the rule. They wanted to have their own king.

And then there's the, eventually we'll have the high priest involved. That is his servant that comes, that Peter chops the ear off, and a couple chapters from now. And then we have scribes. And they're not just copyists that are taking and reading and writing, but in their writing, they are supposed to be experts of the law.

Then the common character are the Pharisees. We've heard a lot about in the story. They have much zeal. And as I mentioned, Sadducees and the Herodians. And even with Jesus, there's a zealot, which is a person traveling with him, which was the party of no compromise.

They were very radical in their political beliefs. The thing about the Sadducees we'll learn more about next week is that they were defined by what they didn't believe in. There's not a whole lot said about them, but it says in verse number 27 of the same chapter that they denied the resurrection.

So these people here are very, on day-to-day operations, they're very much disagreeing political factions about how things should be done. Let's have our own king. No, let's submit ourselves more.

[7 : 03] Let's do, let's overtake the government. There's a wide variety of opinions, but now they're all directionally aligned, which is against Jesus. And the strategy reveals their hearts.

Vince Habner, pastor, many years ago, he said this. He says, We live what we believe. Everything else is just so much religious talk.

Their strategy revealed their heart. They lived out what they believed. Everything else is religious talk. What the spy believed, what they said about Jesus, the respect that they were showing to him, none of that really mattered.

What really mattered was the actions in which they were going to take. Jesus even goes as far to tell them in Matthew 22, parallel passes this. He says, Jesus answered and said unto them, You do err, knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

People that have dedicated their lives to the study of scripture, more so than coming in and flipping over tables and cleaning out their business, he looked at them and took a shot at their theology and says, You say that you know the scriptures, but you don't.

[8 : 10] And they had prided themselves in the interpretation of scriptures. And so not motivated by believing Jesus would change their lives, they were concerned about that.

It's not what they wanted. John 11, 47, Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees' council and said, What do we for this man do with miracles?

There's acknowledgement here. It says, This man does miracles. If you just kind of flip the order, how we might think about it, This man does miracles. What are we going to do about it?

And all of us in this room says, The man does miracles. Let's worship him. The man does miracles. Let's rejoice. Let's go out into the highways and hedges and get everybody in here. But they said, No, the man does miracles.

What are we going to have to do about this? You and I often speak and we share testimony. Met a man this morning who came to Christ recently. And of a church that I believe recently in the last 10 years at Emmanuel Baptist Church.

[9 : 10] And when we talk about change lives, that's something we get excited about, right? We say the gospel changes lives. I've celebrated with many of you as we've watched the gospel change a life, either your life or somebody else's.

We often speak about the gospel changing life, but Satan uses the same idea to create fear. So in this story, what's happening is, what are we going to do about this?

Jesus is about to change our lives completely. The book of Acts, it continues. In Acts chapter number 19, verse number 25, and it says, Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

Moreover, you see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands, so that not only this, our craft is in danger to be set at naught.

Their craft was in danger. Sir, we know that this craft is where we get our wealth. And if Jesus comes in here and there's no reason for us to make these false gods anymore, our lives are going to be changed.

[10 : 29] The truth that you and I celebrate is also the same lie that Satan gives the people, is that Jesus is about to change your story, and you need to do everything you can to push him out.

So these groups have some things in common. They knew what it was to pretend. They knew how to be a spy and pretend that they were in there. They had a mutual hatred for Jesus. They had a desire to turn the city against Jesus.

They had a desire to preserve their way of life. Just kind of as a side note here as I consider this, isn't it troubling to us how well people can blend into a Christian crowd?

The disciples would have known firsthand what it was like, that Judas would have been among them, that a person here, there's a conversation that says, we're going to send you into this group.

We're going to have you feign that you're a just man. Pretend that you're a just man. Show interest in what was going on. Pretend that you're involved in this revolution that is happening, but it isn't really in your heart.

[11 : 30] I'm grateful today that in our children's ministry, that they're not in there teaching them how to be good boys and good girls, or how to pretend, or how it's just not just behavior modification, but the gospel goes to the root of the message, that it goes all the way, or the root of our heart.

The message goes all the way to our heart to show us that we should live from the inside out. And so how were they going to do this? The crowds had welcomed Jesus, and they didn't have the authority to put Jesus on trial.

That's why they say, we need to deliver him into the power and the authority of the governor. They knew they didn't have the power and the authority to crucify Jesus. So they had to be able to deliver him to the government, and so they had to put him in a situation where they could.

And they desired to catch him, as it said, that they would take hold of his words. And so they believed Jesus had to die or they would perish. And they just say it as plain as that.

John chapter number 11, verse number 50, they say, Nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perisheth not.

[12 : 35] They were saying, Jesus has to go, or our way of life is going to go. So they had a plan, and this is their plan. This is something that they were aware of. If we're going to deliver him into the hands of the government, what is it that Rome was very hyper-sensitive about?

It was an insurrection. If we could show that Jesus came to create a revolt against the government, then we would be able to deliver him into their hands.

And so they had hid their motives, and they had shown a respect that wasn't there. And then they flatter him in verse number 21. And they ask him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly.

Neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly. Master, teacher, a sign of respect. They believe that Jesus, like any other man, if you say these things to me, I'd feel puffed up in my pride, right?

If you wanted to ask something of me, this would be a great way to come to me and say, you do such a good job teaching. We really like the way that you do that. And then you just teach for all people, and you love, and you teach the way of God so clearly.

[13 : 43] I'm like, what do you want, all right? But Jesus is not like fallen man, right? He doesn't get puffed up with pride. He isn't going to speak just in a prideful manner.

And they wanted people around them to believe that they were in agreement with him. And one of the most overlooked and unconsidered characters in the Bible is the crowd.

They wanted to please the crowd in doing this. So they have that empty flattery. You teach and speak correctly. You're not partial to anyone, but you teach the way of God's truth.

Let me step out of this story and step into 2023 for a moment. Still the most dangerous sort of men are those that would feign a mutual respect for Jesus, but would have a hidden motive to undermine him.

And you and I should acknowledge the possibility that people would teach, would have false teaching. But not only is it a possibility, but the Bible tells us that it is a certainty.

[14 : 43] Till Jesus' return, that there would be people that would feign, that would pretend to have a respect towards Christianity or towards the things of Christ, but they desire to undermine everything that we believe in from God's word.

Would you look with me in Acts chapter number 20? In just the three verses here, it's going to show you kind of a description of the different types of people that are given. I'm sorry, look at 2 Peter chapter number 2.

Acts chapter number 20 speaks about them drawing the disciples away, as if they were wolves among the sheep that would draw the disciples away. And here in 2 Peter, we have a description.

They go by different names, but they have the same agenda as this unholy alliance. And this is what we're warning in 2 Peter chapter 2. It says, But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

And many shall follow this pernicious ways. And I practice pernicious, all right? I can't forget to remember the word that I couldn't say the other day, but I think I'm right on this one, all right?

[15 : 58] They're pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken, and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you, whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Just three things briefly from that passage. These people that came to deny the Lord, that had feigned in their words here. The first thing that we see in this false teaching has to do with the topic that we're looking at.

They denied the Lord's authority, that they were people who would deny that the Lord had brought them. Denying the lordship or the kingship of Jesus is something that false teachers will always do.

And then it says in a pernicious way, in a subtle way, and it's where it not just is subtle, but especially in regard to immoral sexual conduct, that they just subtly try to move things along.

They just try to move you off syndrome just a little bit, and the end goal for them is covetousness or greedy. So 2 Peter warns us that just like there was people in the story in Luke chapter number 20, and just like there's people in the book of Acts, there's always going to be people among us in our culture that want to take us to a place where we don't recognize Jesus as Lord, who tried to move us subtly away from the things of God, and they do that for filthy gain.

[17 : 24] So the same characteristics in every generation, but they no longer live outside of the temple, but now they live and they exist in YouTube channels, in a college classroom, or anywhere they can be that could influence the next generation.

And they say they teach Christianity, but they don't. Which leads us to the big question for the day, verse number 22. So we see the dilemma that they have. They're a splendid group of people that are all now together, and they're saying, what are we going to do before we can see him crucified, before we can turn him over to the government?

We are going to have to divide the group. We're going to have to have some type of issue that polarizes Jesus. Right now he has a wide variety of following, but if we can get him to answer one question that will become divisive, then we can conquer here.

And that gets to verse number 22. When they look at him, after working together, coming out of the huddle, this is the question that they come up with, and it's this. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar or no?

Do we pay our taxes to Caesar or do we not? If Jesus did not oppose the Roman crowd, then some of the crowd wouldn't follow him. They were expecting that he would be the king and would overthrow the government.

[18 : 38] So some of the crowd would have left that day if he would have said, yes, we pay taxes. And if Jesus appears to oppose Rome, then he would be killed. So if he says yes, then he would lose some of the following.

If he says no, then he would lose some people as well. And Jesus even says here in verse 23 that he perceived their craftiness. This was a well-crafted question.

And he says, why tempt me? Why test me? This is about our fifth or sixth time for that expression to be seen in the book of Luke. Why do you continue to test me? Why do you play games?

Jesus knows their motive, that they envied him and they wanted to deliver him into the hands of the government. So they kind of had, if you grew up playing baseball, kind of the game of pickle, right?

Between second base and between third base. If you run too far one way, you're going to get out. If you run too far the other way, you might get out. And so that's really where they believed that they had Jesus at.

[19 : 34] And that was their strategy. They're so committed to it. I'm going to give you a few chapters ahead from now. But in Luke chapter number 23, the beginning of that chapter, they're going to say, this man forgives, he forbids that we pay our taxes.

He forbids that we give tribute to Caesar. So regardless of how he answers, this is already their strategy. So then we look at Jesus' response here.

And he says, take out a penny, show me a penny, and whose image has a superscription on it? Who in here has a penny? I'm quite curious to know today that any of you have a penny on you today.

I'm going to take up the smallest offering if you do, okay? Does anybody in here have a penny on them? All right? We have a few of you that still carry cash. Oh, you do, Zach? You got a nickel. That will do. That's five times better, okay?

All right, toss it here. Let's see if I can. Thank you, sir. All right, he has a nickel. And then Thatcher, if you'll go ahead and show us the picture, the day they didn't have a nickel of the time. But he's saying, look at it and see who was on the front of it.

[20 : 34] And just like you don't have much change anymore, we all have different reasons we don't carry cash. I don't carry cash because my wife and kids take it from me, all right? And so I'm not putting that, giving them that temptation.

And so they have the coin here, and they're looking at it, but it'd been very likely that Tiberius, the Caesar of Rome, good administrator, obviously not a follower of Christ, but they would have had this coin.

It'd been likely that very few of the people would have carried one of these coins. They would have liked other forms of currency because in having this, they had the emblem here of a Caesar upon it.

And this isn't something that they would want to do. It would not have been their preferred currency to carry. Some years ago, I was in Thailand, and they told us the picture of the king is on the dollars, is on the coin.

And they say, make sure that if you drop a coin or a dollar, you never put your foot down on it. Because if you do, then you're disrespecting the king.

[21 : 38] And it's funny, I've never thought about stepping on money until you hand me some money and say, don't step on it, all right? And I'm like, I gotta step on it, all right? And so, but they knew that it would be a disrespect to the king at the time.

In like manner, we have here this revolutionary thought that Jesus was calling the Jews to render to a pagan Caesar some kind of honor.

So that's what he said. You see that coin? See the picture that's on it? You render under Caesar what belongs on the Caesar. If he would have stopped there, then there would have been so much response, right?

Everybody been running around, can you believe what he said? But then he says, and unto God, the things that belong to God. And so he answers in a way that they could not expect. In the case you missed this clear teaching, Jesus here is affirming the role of government, the right of government to collect taxes for its support because it ordained by God for man's well-being and protection.

I expect that you rode on roads here and you will drive home on roads as well and that we would give of our taxes to meet the needs of the support that we are given. If you miss it in this story, let's read it to you in 1 Peter chapter number two, where it so plainly says, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.

[22 : 55] And whether it be to a king as supreme or on the governors and to them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well. To governors or to the king supreme, regardless of what situation, we are very blessed in all of our problems that we are blessed in the type of government we have in comparison to many believers around the world.

But in this passage it says, regardless of the makeup, you should show honor to those that would punish evil and the praise of them that would do well, the role of government in our lives.

It also teaches us here that rendering the Caesar is limited and defined by rendering to God. It leaves a scope unanswered. It says the things that are. Rendering the Caesar the things that are.

Then it leaves a relationship unanswered and to God. It seems that Jesus would want us to think about it. It seems like the application needs to be made to us in whatever generation, in whatever context we find ourselves in.

And then the response of the people to what he said in verse number 26, and they could not take hold of his words before the people, and they marveled at his answer, and they held their peace.

[24 : 03] The wisdom of his answer. His way of thinking. He came here to truly turn the world upside down. The last time that he answered, they kind of stumbled around and they left and they feared, but this time they marveled.

I wonder, do you marvel at the wisdom of God? And if not, are you part of what this unholy alliance, which is this people that ask questions to Jesus and they never expect that he will have an answer for them?

So we see in the scriptures here their response, but now the question for us, what are the gospel implications? What are our response to what Jesus said to these people 2,000 years ago?

And here it is personally. I must be devoted to the holy and eternal rather than to the profane and the temporal. I have earthly obligations and I have heavenly obligations.

If you think about the disciples here, I just love it. I said there's a mixed group of people that are coming after Jesus that day. In the following of Jesus, you have big government Matthew, who once had been a text collector.

[25 : 11] And then you have Simon the Zealot on the other side that says, Jesus, are you not sure that we should just create a revolt at this time? And so in the group of people, there was a wide spectrum of understanding, but every one of them were called to render unto God what belongs to him.

And that should be the easy part. Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and render unto God what belongs to God. What belongs to God, and in one word, everything. God has made us and he bought us for himself.

We are slaves of no man and no government. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are aliens and exiles on this earth. We are not home here, but we await the Lord from heaven.

First Peter says, as free and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of God. With our newfound freedom, we are servants of God. The Bible is very clear on that, and I think we would know that.

The next question is, what belongs to the government? What do we render unto Caesar? Romans 12, 18 tells us, if it be possible, as much lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

[26 : 19] As much as possible, live peaceably with all men. So as Christians, we should be humble, submissive people. We should be people that keep the laws of our land.

If we're children, we should obey our parents. If we're employees, we should get there on time. We should leave on time. We should do the work expected of us. We should even pay our taxes.

A step further, this is going to be painful. We should even submit ourselves to the rules of the HOA that we agreed upon when we moved into the place. All right? Yeah. Sit on that for a second.

We are people who are joyfully submit ourselves to God through earthly authority. We are people who joyfully submit ourselves to God through earthly authority.

And here in a moment, I believe you'll want to say amen. But let me encourage you not to say it any louder than you would say amen to this. We are people who joyfully submit to God through earthly, submitting to our earthly authorities.

[27 : 20] And we always do it for Christ's sake, which turns our obedience to human authorities into worship to God, which makes something that would be so negative into something that is so wonderful.

The power is given of God. When Pilate, in John chapter number 19, he speaks to him, saying that he is a man that has power against him, Jesus says to him, he says, I have a power to release you is what he tells Jesus.

And Jesus says, you wouldn't have any power unless it was given to you. Nobody in this world would ever be given power unless it was given to them. So it's appointed to them.

It's God given. Also, it's limited as well. Acts 5 29, then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than man.

And this was the answer to them when they said, you shouldn't keep telling everybody about the resurrection. You shouldn't be speaking about the gospel. Do you understand what it's doing to the city here? And they said, you have to understand it's better for us to obey God rather than man.

[28 : 23] So the limit of the government is to do their God-appointed role in our lives, which is to punish evil and encourage good. Revelation 13, which some of the life groups are in Revelation, it speaks of a state that oversteps its bounds and that is most certainly possible.

So our submission should be shaped by our desire to honor God. 1 Peter 2 13, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man and the next four words are so important, for the Lord's sake.

And that's why we do what we do. It is to honor Him, which means we render the Caesar nothing that we cannot render for the Lord's sake. You know, tonight we will have a special time of prayer with a missionary that's going to a creative access country and he has honored the government.

He has filled out the necessary paperwork and they've got quite good at that around here. Some of them, through the practice of it, they have taken all the steps to do in the rendering unto their Caesar unto the things that they must render unto Caesar.

But they will go and they will boldly declare Jesus, even where it is not allowed by the government because they must render unto God what belongs to God.

[29 : 41] And so the gospel goes forward regardless of what government or king or any dictator attempts. The government doesn't have the right to coerce people, nor does the government have the right to restrict because worship comes from the heart.

It says it like this in 2 Corinthians 2.17. For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God but as of sincerity but as of God in the sight of God speak we Christ.

That's what we will pray for them the night as they go out. That they will go out and they will do their job as unto the Lord. That they will render unto God what belongs to God. So here's our implications today.

Just three very quickly. Don't play games with the Lord. Verse 23. But they perceive this craftiness and they said why tempt ye me? They were just continually testing Jesus and asking him questions and they would never see the wonder of Christ.

They always were playing a game in which they decided in advance that Jesus had lost. From an old song that says the games people play every night every day never thinking what they say never saying what they mean till you wall away the hours in your intellectual ivory towers and you find yourself covered up with flowers in the back of a black limousine.

[31 : 00] These people were going to play games their entire life until their death. And so many people that we know and love are playing games with the Lord.

They are asking questions of Him but they are not listening to His answer. Secondly here our political agendas take a distant second place when we become disciples of Jesus.

We're citizens of heaven. We are His servants. We're engaged citizens who obey authorities and we honor the Lord. And whether you be Matthew or the Zealot in here every one of us have to show honor unto all men.

We love the brotherhood we fear God and we honor the King in 1 Peter chapter 2 verse number 17 and even in the way in which we can hold our elected officials accountable we do it as unto the Lord has given us that.

I will go down this week I do it once a year I go down to the capital with a group of pastors and I will be down there with Wayne Noggle from Families for Families that was here last week and I will influence and I will tell them up in Alpharetta I pastor a church of about 15,000 and we're very involved in voting.

[32 : 11] Just kidding I won't say that. Alright but I will tell them that we believe in values it matters to us what you do down here and I will pray with those that I'm able to pray with and I will share the gospel with those that I'm going to pray with but I can be involved in an honorable way but I know that it will always take a second place to the fact that I'm a disciple of Jesus.

Then lastly here there are limits to the honor that is due to Caesar we only have one Lord and if we're required to call Caesar Lord then our voices will die under the sound of the roar of the lion just like many other generations have because we're prepared to render unto Caesar what is due to Caesar but to nothing more.

So we show respect unto our local and governments and we render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar but what belongs to God belongs to him. So as I close here today and we respond doesn't it just amaze you at how Jesus answered that?

Isn't it just absolutely incredible in a world that believes the options are A and B Jesus came in and says there is a new way of life and they certainly did not trap him in his words but his words went forward and doesn't it just make you love him even more?

And so Jesus comes out with words of edification to help you put your priority where it ought to be which is this God made me and I belong to him and I will submit when he tells me to submit and I will honor him in submitting to the authorities in my life because I will do it as unto the Lord.