

Romans 13:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Analysis

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour—Apodote pasin tas opheilas, tō ton phoron ton phoron, tō to telos to telos, tō ton phobon ton phobon, tō tēn timēn tēn timēn (ἀπόδοτε πᾶσιν τὰς ὄφειλάς, τῷ τὸν φόρον τὸν φόρον, τῷ τὸ τέλος τὸ τέλος, τῷ τὸν φόβον τὸν φόβον, τῷ τὴν τιμὴν τὴν τιμήν). The imperative apodote (render/pay back) echoes Jesus' 'render unto Caesar' (Matthew 22:21).

Opheilas (dues/debts) frames civic obligation as moral debt. Four categories: phoron (tribute—direct taxes), telos (custom—indirect taxes/tolls), phobon (fear—healthy respect for authority's power), and timēn (honor—esteem for office and person). The fourfold repetition (tribute...tribute, custom...custom) emphasizes specificity—give exactly what is owed to whom it's owed. Christians don't grudgingly submit but joyfully honor authority as God's institution.

Historical Context

Rome's tax system was complex: tributum (direct land/property taxes) and vectigalia (indirect customs/tolls). Tax collectors (telōnai) were despised as collaborators, yet Jesus and Paul command payment. This radical teaching distinguished Christianity from revolutionary movements. The early church became known for scrupulous civic obedience (even under persecution), leading

Tertullian to write: 'We pray for emperors, for their ministers and powers, for the state of the world, for peace.' Christian integrity in taxation witnessed to gospel transformation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the command to give '*phobon*' (fear) and '*timēn*' (honor) to authorities apply when you disagree with their policies or character?
2. In what ways might you withhold honor or respect from governing authorities while claiming to submit to them?
3. What is the relationship between 'rendering to Caesar' (civic duty) and 'rendering to God' (ultimate allegiance)—where's the line?

Interlinear Text

ἀπόδοτε	οὖν	πᾶσιν	τὴν	όφειλάς,	τὴν	τὴν
Render	therefore	to all	to whom	their dues	to whom	to whom
G591	G3767	G3956	G3588	G3782	G3588	G3588
φόρον	τὴν	φόρον	τὴν	τὴν	τέλος	τὴν
tribute	to whom	tribute	to whom	to whom	custom	to whom
G5411	G3588	G5411	G3588	G3588	G5056	G3588
τὴν	τὴν	φόβον	τὴν	φόβον	τὴν	τιμήν
to whom	to whom	fear	to whom	fear	to whom	to whom
G3588	G3588	G5401	G3588	G5401	G3588	G3588
τὴν	τιμήν					
to whom	honour					
G3588	G5092					

Additional Cross-References

Luke 20:25 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

Proverbs 24:21 (Parallel theme): My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:

Matthew 17:25 (Parallel theme): He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

1 Timothy 5:17 (Parallel theme): Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Matthew 22:21 (Parallel theme): They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Ephesians 5:33 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 6:5 (Parallel theme): 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;

Mark 12:17 (Parallel theme): And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

Exodus 20:12 (Parallel theme): Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

1 Timothy 6:1 (Parallel theme): Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.