

Submission

In my last post, we concluded our study of the godly characteristic of being humble. In this post, we will look at a companion characteristic of being submissive.

Submission Defined

In the English language, **submission** is a little difficult to concisely define. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines **submission**, in part, as: "*the state of being obedient; the act of accepting the authority or control of someone else.*" They list among several that **surrender** is a synonym. The verb form, "**to submit**" is defined as: "*to stop trying to fight or resist something; to agree to do or accept something that you have been resisting or opposing.*" Likewise, **surrender** is also a synonym for **submit**. **Surrender** is defined as: "*the usually forced yielding of one's person or possessions to the control of another.*" And as usual, **submission** and **submitting** are listed also synonyms of **surrender**. Don't you just love it when definitions are so circular?

I want to look at what the Bible has to say about each of these words.

Surrender in the Bible ¹

Surrender appears numerous times in the Tanakh, but always in relation to a military engagement. *"Then David said, 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?' And the LORD said, 'They will surrender you.'"* (1 Samuel 23:12) *"But if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand."* (Jeremiah 38:17 ^{ESV}) **Surrender** appears only once in the Brit Hadashah. ² *"And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."* (1 Corinthians 13:3) Only the NASB and the older NIV translate the Greek word "paradidômi" as **surrender** in this passage. Most other translations use some form of *to hand over, to give or deliver over, or to betray*.

Submission in the Bible

Submission appears in only two passages of the Tanakh. *"Those who hate the LORD would pretend submission to Him; their doom would last forever."* (Psalm 81:15 ^{HCSB}) *"He will get control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the riches of Egypt. The Libyans and Cushites will also be in submission."* (Daniel 11:43 ^{HCSB}) Most other modern translations use "would cringe or grovel before him" in lieu of **submission** in their versions.

Submission is used slightly more frequently in the Brit Hadashah. *"The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says."* (1 Corinthians 14:34 ^{ESV}) *"By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others."* (2 Corinthians

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this series will be from the New American Standard Bible (NASB ~ 1995 Update)

² There are a few more occurrences in some of the more modern paraphrases and/or non-literal translations, including the Amplified Bible, but I do not consider them as authoritative.

9:13 ^{ESV}) "To them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you." (Galatians 2:5 ^{ESV}) "A woman should learn in silence with full submission." (1 Timothy 2:11 ^{HCSB}) "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission." (Hebrews 5:7 ^{NIV84}) Jesus "has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." (1 Peter 3:22 ^{NIV84})

Submit in the Bible

Of all the variations of being submissive that we are reviewing, **submit** is the most frequently used in both the Tanakh and the Brit Hadashah.

Submit in the Tanakh: "Then the angel of the LORD said to her [Hagar], 'Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.'" (Genesis 16:9) "You [Joseph] shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." (Genesis 41:40 ^{NIV84}) "Foreigners submit to me [David] grudgingly; as soon as they hear, they obey me." (2 Samuel 22:45 ^{HCSB}) "Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you." (Job 22:21 ^{NIV84}) (See also Psalm 18:44 ^{NASB}; Psalm 66:3 & 68:30 ^{KJV}; and Isaiah 41:21 ^{HCSB})

Submit in the Brit Hadashah: "The Seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name." (Luke 10:17 ^{HCSB}) "However, don't rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20 ^{HCSB}) "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." (Romans 8:7 ^{NIV84}) "Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (Romans 10:3 ^{NIV84}) "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." (Romans 13:1 ^{NIV84} ~ see also 13:5) "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1 ^{ESV})

Any of us who are engaged, married or divorced have certainly heard of or read Ephesians 5:21-33 regarding mutual love and submission one to another.

The writer of Hebrews also touches on this issue: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17) James exhorts us to: "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) And, Peter writes: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority." (1 Peter 2:13)

I believe the issue is crystal clear no matter what translation you may use, the Word of God teaches us to not only take on the humility of the Messiah, but to also have a submissive heart. Submit to God; then to the rightful authorities over you and, if married, to each other.

In my next post, we will begin to look at the practice of Christian meditation.