

## **Joshua 1:1-9, The Lord Charges Joshua**

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### **Overview**

#### ***Overview of the Book***

Overall theme: Victorious living in an unbelieving world.

#### *1-5, Preparations For Battle*

Lesson: Don't go into battle without the proper preparation in advance.

#### *6-12, Prevailing over the Enemy*

Lesson: If God be for us, who can be against us? The invincibility of the spiritual believer (and along the way, lessons about the high cost of unspirituality).

#### *13-22, Partition Of The Inheritances*

Lesson: God's blessings need to be appropriated. The risk of leaving them unclaimed.

#### *23-24, Parting Exhortations*

Lessons: Each generation must establish its own walk with the Lord.

#### ***Overview of Preparations for Battle***

1. Joshua Commissioned. Change of command from Moses.
2. The Spies to Jericho
3. Crossing the Jordan
4. Building Memorials
5. Circumcision and Passover

#### ***Overview of Chapter 1***

1-9, The Lord charges Joshua. (Today)

10-15, Joshua charges the people.

16-18, The people submit to Joshua.

#### ***Overview of the Lord's Charge to Joshua***

Two main commands,

- each backed up by promises,
- each given in summary and detail (arranged chiastically);

The first command concerns the conquest of the land (the people's relation to their daily work). The second concerns the keeping of God's law (their relation to God).

*Application 1:* Satan would have us compartmentalize our lives, separating Sunday "religion" from the work we do the rest of the week. On the contrary, these two must always go together.

- We can never succeed in our work on this earth unless we are subject to God's law. Avoids error of end justifying the means.
- But we are here to work for God's people in the world, not just keep God's law. Warns against becoming hermits or withdrawing from tangible obligations.

Each of these command is summarized by "be strong and of a good courage," and this exhortation appears a third time as the summary of the entire section.

*Application 2:* Obedience to God is fundamentally a matter of courage, of strength of our will, rather than of desire. The believer wants to do what is right; what is lacking is courage, and that comes from heeding the Lord's encouragement through his Word and from encouraging one another. We need to be faithful in this ministry of encouraging one another.

## **1-2a, Context: Moses is Dead.**

Three details have prepared for this commissioning. Note the orderly transition.

1. Joshua is identified as "Moses' minister," a title he has held since Exod 24:13, when he accompanied Moses into the mount. Cf. role of John Mark with Paul and Silas in Acts 13:5. An assistant, apprentice, helper, but no title yet to be the next leader of the people.
2. In Num. 27:12-23, God identified him as Moses' successor, and Moses endorsed him to the people. From this point he is the heir apparent, in waiting, but does not take over as long as Moses is alive. Cf. Deut 3:28: God told Moses to charge and encourage him.
3. Finally, Moses dies, and the time comes for Joshua to take the lead. At this point, God speaks to him, confirming the choice made in Num. 27.

## **2b-5, First Command (Detail): Arise and Go Over Jordan**

### ***2b, Command***

God commands him to cross Jordan with the people and take possession of the land. This could be a frightening experience. The last time Joshua was there, he saw great giants and walled cities.

### ***3-5, Promise***

Three considerations are given to relieve any apprehension.

### **3-4, The Scope of the Land they are to receive.**

Defined in two ways.

v.4, by explicit description:

- the wilderness through which they have passed, to the south and east of the land.
- Lebanon, to the north of what we think of as Israel.
- To the Euphrates river on the east
- And the Mediterranean on the west.

v.3, operationally: wherever you walk. Makes a subtle but important point: they must claim it for it to be theirs. They never took Lebanon, and so that part of the promise remained void.

*Application:* We can enjoy God's promises only to the extent that we claim them, that the "sole of our feet" actually occupies them. No good in abstract. They require us to step out in faith and claim them.

### **5a, Victory over the Opposition**

God assures them that the indigenous peoples will not be able to resist them.

### **5b, God's personal presence.**

Described in three ways

1. As he was with Moses, something Joshua had observed on the mount and in the tent of the congregation. Direct, personal fellowship.
2. "I will not fail thee." His *strength* is adequate to keep us. He will not grow weak or be unable. He is the Lord, the God of all flesh; there is nothing too hard for him.
3. "Nor forsake thee." His *presence* is assured. He will not abandon us. "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

## **6, First Command (Summary)**

***The command: "Be strong and of a good courage."***

This formula is certainly an appropriate summary of the command to take the land, given the dangers discovered by Joshua and the other spies. At the same time, it is of much broader application, and occurs repeatedly in the OT, so it will be helpful to consider its broader meaning.

### *Meaning of the Words*

This exhortation uses two words with slightly different emphases.

"Be strong" *xzq*

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- This focuses more on the steadfastness of purpose, which in the extreme becomes hardness of heart, unwillingness to turn.
- It answers the weakness of uncertainty; the voice of Satan in the Garden, “yea, has God said?”
- Solution: Each one of needs to become confident in our handling of God’s Word and our relation with his spirit, able to discern his will, sort out a question, and then stand confident in what he has showed us.

“Be ... of a good courage” *mts*

- This is the underlying courage and willingness to suffer affliction.
- It answers the weakness of fear, the desire to be comfortable and avoid pain or embarrassment.
- Solution: We need to remind ourselves and one another of the great blessings God has laid up for those who obey him so that “for the joy that is set before” us (Heb. 12:1) we can endure “this light affliction” (2 Cor. 4:17).

### *Occurrences of the Formula*

Leader to people in a challenging time

- Moses to Israel when he announces his departure in Dt 31:6
- Joshua to Israel after victory over southern kings in Jos 10:25
- Hezekiah to Israel under Assyrian attack in 2 Chr 32:7

Leader to successor

- Moses to Joshua in Dt 31:7, 23; cf. 3:8 (“charge, encourage, strengthen”)
- David to Solomon in 1 Chr 22:13; 28:20

This chapter is only example of two other important modes:

- Lord directly to his servant (1:6, 7, 9)
- The people to the leader (1:18)

### *Application*

It is vitally important that we encourage one another. The activities of Deut 3:28 are wrapped up in the NT word *parakalew* “exhort, encourage, comfort,” which includes both charging and encouraging. It is the root of the name of the HS as the “comforter”; this is pre-eminently his ministry, and it is as his channels that we exercise it to one another. Cf. 1 Cor 14:3; 1 Thes 2:11; 5:14; Heb. 12:12 (from Isa 35:3, which uses our two words).

### *Observations (not in sermon)*

Most commonly used together, in this order.

*Xzq* + *lb* is always negative, “hard of heart.” On the other hand, *)mts* is used positively with *lb*, as in Ps 27:14; 31:24; “be of good courage [*xzq*] and he shall strengthen [*)mts*] thine heart.” Suggests that *xzq* may focus on physical strength, *)mts* on psychological or spiritual? Or is the uniformly positive and rarer *)mts* used to disambiguate *xzq*?

2 Chr 11:17 says that the people *xzq*’d the kingdom and *)mts*’d Rehoboam, suggesting that the first is more physical and outward, the second more inward.

Isa 35:3: *xzq* applies to the hands (with which one does work), *)mts* to the knees, (which sense fear and insecurity). Note also parallel in the next verse, where *xzq* remains but *)mts* is replaced with negative of *yr*. (But Nahum 2:1 seems just the opposite.)

Deut 3:28 makes these two of the three things that Moses is to do toward Joshua:

1. Charge him; give him a command.
2. Encourage him.
3. Strengthen him.

***The promise: Successful inheritance.***

Repeats the basic theme of the detailed command.

**7a, Second Command (Summary): Remember the Law**

This time the summary has no promise. The promise is associated with the detail, which is doubled.

It is easy to think of courage as necessary in fighting the Canaanites. Now the Lord reminds Joshua that it is needed in observing God’s word as well. Both uncertainty and fear would turn us away from God’s commands:

- Uncertainty promulgated by “scholars” who raise so many questions about the Bible that the bewildered believer wonders whether anything is to be believed;
- Fear promulgated by unbelieving associates who mock and persecute us for our adherence to God’s law.

**7b-8, Second Command (Detail)**

Two cycles of command + promise, one for each of the verbs in the summary. Note the similarity of the promises of prosperity everywhere one goes.

*Command (“Be Strong”)*: Recall that the emphasis of this verb is on steadfastness, not wavering, and now note the detail in 7b: “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left.”

*Promise*: Prosperity wherever you go. *Taskiyl* has the sense of doing wisely, prudently; success borne of wisdom.

*Command (“Be of good courage”)*: This command emphasizes our daily subjective interaction with the Word of God. We are to say it over and over to ourselves, meditating on it day and night, musing over it, so that it permeates our thought and our feelings. Then it will come to dominate our inner thoughts and guide all our actions.

*Promise:* Once again, prosperity and success in the path that we take.

### **9, Overall Summary Command: Be Strong and of Good Courage**

So both commands that God has for Joshua boil down to being strong and of good courage. This encouragement is the key to success in conquering the land, and in the spiritual faithfulness that enables this conquest. It is so important that here the Lord repeats it once more, in an expanded form.

*Command:* Be strong and of a good courage; fear not, neither be dismayed.

*Promise:* The Lord's continual presence to uphold them.