

Deuteronomy 31:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Analysis

This verse intensifies the promise of verse 6 with additional assurance. The phrase 'the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee' (YHWH hu haholek lephanekha) advances beyond accompaniment to leadership—God doesn't merely walk beside but goes ahead, preparing the way and facing enemies first. This military imagery portrays God as the divine commander leading His army into battle. The promise 'he will be with thee' (hu yihyeh immakh) combines pioneering leadership with intimate presence—God both precedes and accompanies. The reiterated double negative—'he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee' (lo yarphka ve'lo ya'azveka)—employs the identical Hebrew verbs as verse 6, emphasizing God's unwavering faithfulness. The final exhortation—'fear not, neither be dismayed' (lo tira ve'lo techath)—uses a different second verb (chathath, חָתַח) meaning 'be shattered' or 'be broken down,' addressing not just fear but the paralyzing discouragement that shatters resolve. The theological structure is consistent: divine action precedes human response—because God goes before and remains with us, we can be courageous.

Historical Context

These words were addressed to all Israel (not just Joshua) in Deuteronomy 31:7-8, though similar words were spoken directly to Joshua in verse 23 and Joshua 1:5-9. Moses repeated this promise multiple times because the people desperately needed to hear it—they stood at a pivotal, frightening moment in redemptive

history. The phrase 'go before thee' had immediate military significance: in ancient Near Eastern warfare, the king or divine patron deity was portrayed as leading armies into battle. For Israel, this wasn't metaphorical but literal—the ark of the covenant, representing God's presence, would precede them into battle (Joshua 3-6). The promise's fulfillment is recorded throughout Joshua: Jericho's walls collapsed, Canaanite coalitions were defeated, and the land was progressively conquered because God went before Israel and remained with them. Later biblical authors quote this promise (1 Chronicles 28:20; Hebrews 13:5), demonstrating its enduring relevance for God's people in every generation.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What difference does it make that God goes before us rather than simply accompanying us through challenges?
2. How can meditating on God's past faithfulness ('he will not fail thee') strengthen confidence in His future faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי הַ	ה וְאֵן	קִהְלֵךְ	לִפְנֵי יְ	ה וְאֵן	וַיְהִי הַ	עַמֶּךָ
And the LORD	H1931	he it is that doth go	before	H1931	H1961	H5973
H3068		H1980	H6440			
ל א		יִרְפֶּךָ	וְל א	יַעֲזֹבְךָ		ל א
H3808	thee he will be with thee he will not fail	H7503	H3808	thee neither forsake		H3808
				H5800		
וְל א	תִּיכָּא	תִּתַּחַת:				
thee fear	H3808	not neither be dismayed				
H3372		H2865				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 33:14 (Parallel theme): And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (References Lord): Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Joshua 1:9 (References Lord): Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Romans 8:31 (Parallel theme): What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Joshua 1:5 (Parallel theme): There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

1 Chronicles 28:20 (References Lord): And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 9:3 (References Lord): Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.

Deuteronomy 31:3 (References Lord): The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.