

Joshua 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

Analysis

The tribes declare capital punishment for rebellion: 'Whosoever...doth rebel...shall be put to death' (kol-ish asher-yamreh...yumat, כל-איש אשר-ימreh...יומת). This severe penalty emphasizes military discipline's necessity during conquest. The phrase 'rebel against thy commandment' (yamreh et-picha, ימreh את-פיכך) literally means 'rebels against thy mouth'—refusing orders. Their closing encouragement 'only be strong and of a good courage' (raq chazaq ve'emats, רק חזק ואמץ) echoes God's threefold command to Joshua (verses 6, 7, 9), showing they recognize his need for divine courage. From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates that authority carries responsibility requiring divine enablement, and submission includes encouraging leaders toward faithfulness.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern military discipline required harsh penalties for insubordination—armies without discipline faced defeat. Israel's tribal confederation needed strong unity for successful conquest. The death penalty for rebellion wasn't tyranny but military necessity. Later, Achan's rebellion (chapter 7) brought judgment demonstrating this wasn't empty threat. The tribes' encouragement to Joshua shows healthy relationship between leader and followers—mutual accountability and encouragement.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What rebellions against godly authority need confrontation in your life?
2. How can you encourage spiritual leaders toward courage and faithfulness?
3. What balance between submission and accountability marks your relationship with spiritual authority?

Interlinear Text

כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִמְרֶךְ הָאֶת פְּרִיבָּה
H3605 Whosoever H834 he be that doth rebel H853 against thy commandment
H376 H4784 H6310

וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע אֲתָה לְכָל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּרְתָּ
H3808 and will not hearken H853 unto thy words H3605 H834
H8085 H1697

בְּכָל כֵּן יִמְתַּת בְּקָרְבָּן
in all that thou commandest him he shall be put to death H7535 only be strong
H6680 H4191 H2388

וְאִמְצָא:
and of a good courage
H553

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 12:25 (Parallel theme): See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Ephesians 6:10 (Parallel theme): Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (Parallel theme): Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Deuteronomy 17:12 (Parallel theme): And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.

Luke 19:27 (Parallel theme): But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Joshua 1:9 (Good): 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.

Ezra 10:4 (Good): Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.

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