

Joshua 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Analysis

This verse adds a crucial qualifier to the commands for courage: strength and courage must be directed toward obedience to God's law. The Hebrew *raq* (ךְ, 'only') functions restrictively—courage alone is insufficient without Torah observance. The intensifier 'very courageous' (*emats me'od*, תְּאַמֵּץ עַזְּזָה) demands exceptional boldness specifically for keeping God's commandments. The purpose clause 'that thou mayest observe to do' uses *shamar la'asot* (שָׁמַר לְעַשּׂת), combining careful guarding with active performance—both preservation and practice of the law. The comprehensive scope 'according to all the law' (*kekhol-hatorah*, בְּכָל-הַתּוֹרָה) excludes selective obedience. The prohibition 'turn not from it to the right hand or to the left' (*lo tasur mimenu yamin usmol*) demands unwavering adherence without deviation in either direction—neither adding to nor subtracting from God's commands. The promise 'that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest' (*lemaan taskil bekholt asher telekh*) links success directly to covenant fidelity, establishing the principle that true prosperity flows from obedience.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern kings often received royal inscriptions or law codes to guide governance, but Israel's uniqueness was Torah's divine origin and comprehensive

scope. Unlike Hammurabi's Code (primarily civil law) or Egyptian wisdom literature, Torah governed all of life—worship, ethics, social relations, diet, and warfare. Joshua's charge to observe 'all the law' emphasizes the indivisibility of God's commands. The prohibition against turning right or left echoes Deuteronomy 5:32 and 28:14, establishing a consistent pattern: blessing follows complete obedience, curse follows disobedience. This verse established precedent for theocratic leadership in Israel—military and political authority remained subordinate to divine revelation. Successful conquest depended not primarily on military prowess but on Torah observance, inverting typical ancient Near Eastern assumptions about power and success.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. In what areas of your life are you tempted to selective obedience—obeying the commands you find comfortable while rationalizing away more difficult ones?
2. How does the connection between obedience and prosperity challenge modern prosperity gospel teaching that promises blessing without emphasizing holiness?
3. What does it mean practically to 'turn not to the right hand or to the left' in your daily decisions and commitments?

Interlinear Text

בָּרָא	בְּרִית	יְהִי	יְאַמֵּן	תִּמְאֵן	וְאַמְתִּין	רַקְמָה	לְשֵׁם	רַקְמָה	לְשֵׁם	רַקְמָה	לְשֵׁם	רַקְמָה
H7535	Only be thou strong	H2388	courageous	H553	and very	H3966	that thou mayest observe	H8104				
לְעֹשֹׂת	כָּל	לְעֹשֹׂת	כָּל	בְּתֻמָּה	הַ	בְּתֻמָּה	הַ	אֲשֶׁר	אֲשֶׁר	אֲשֶׁר	מִשְׁמָה	הַ
to do	H3605	according to all the law	H8451			H834	commanded	H6680	which Moses	H4872		
עָבֵד	עָבֵד	עָבֵד	עָבֵד	מִתְּכִרְתָּה	מִתְּכִרְתָּה	מִתְּכִרְתָּה	מִתְּכִרְתָּה	יְמִינְךָ	יְמִינְךָ	יְמִינְךָ	יְשִׁמְךָ	אוֹלֶל
my servant	H408	thee turn	H5493	H4480	not from it to the right hand	H3225		H8040	or to the left	H8040		
לְמַעַן	תַּשְׁכַּח	יְלָמַד	תַּשְׁכַּח	בְּכֶל	אֲשֶׁר	בְּכֶל	תַּלְהָה	H1980				
H4616	that thou mayest prosper	H7919		H3605	H834	H834						

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 22:13 (References Moses): Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

Deuteronomy 5:32 (Parallel theme): Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Joshua 1:8 (Word): This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Proverbs 4:27 (Parallel theme): Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Joshua 11:15 (References Moses): As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

Deuteronomy 12:32 (Parallel theme): What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Deuteronomy 31:7 (References Moses): And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

Deuteronomy 29:9 (Word): Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

Deuteronomy 28:14 (Word): And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Proverbs 8:20 (Parallel theme): I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: