

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* (רק, 'only') functions restrictively—courage alone is insufficient without Torah observance. The intensifier 'very courageous' (*emats me'od*, עֲמַץ מְאֹד) demands exceptional boldness specifically for keeping God's commandments. The purpose clause 'that thou mayest observe to do' uses *shamar la'asot* (שָׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת), combining careful guarding with active performance—both preservation and practice of the law. The comprehensive scope 'according to all the law' (*kekhol-hatorah*, כְּכֹל-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 bekhoh ashher 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

כִּזְקֶיךָ H7535	יִזְכָּק H2388	וְיִצְחָק H553	וְיִדָּו H3966	לְשֹׁמְרֵךְ H8104	
Only be thou strong	courageous	and very	that thou mayest observe		
לַעֲשׂוֹת H6213	כָּכָל H3605	הַתּוֹכָה H8451	אֲשֶׁר H834	צִוָּה H6680	מֹשֶׁה H4872
to do	according to all the law	commanded	which Moses		
עַבְדִּי H5650	אֵל H408	תָּס וּר H5493	מִמֶּנּוּ H4480	יָמִין H3225	וּשְׂמֹאל H8040
my servant	thee turn	not from it to the right hand	or to the left		
לִמְעַן H4616	תִּשְׁכַּח H7919	לֵבְךָ H3605	אֲשֶׁר H834	תִּלְךָ H1980	
that thou mayest prosper					

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: