

Joshua 22:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.

Analysis

Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.

The phrase "not left your brethren" (lo azavtem et acheichem, לא עזבתם את אחיכם) uses azav (עזב), meaning to abandon, forsake, or leave behind. During "these many days" (approximately seven years of conquest), they never deserted their brothers despite personal cost. This verb appears throughout Scripture describing covenant unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 31:16; Judges 2:12), making their persistence remarkable—they refused to become covenant breakers.

The phrase "kept the charge" (shamarta et mishmeret, שמרת את משמרות) intensifies the obedience language. Mishmeret (משמרות) refers to a sacred obligation, duty, or trust—often used for priestly responsibilities (Numbers 3:7-8). Their military service wasn't mere duty but sacred trust before Yahweh. "The commandment of the LORD your God" roots their obedience in divine authority, not human preferences. They served not merely Joshua but Yahweh Himself.

Historical Context

Seven years of warfare meant these men spent their prime fighting years away from families, businesses, and the enjoyment of their inheritance. Ancient warfare involved seasonal campaigns during dry months, but conquest required sustained

effort across multiple years. The men of Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh missed births, marriages, deaths, harvests, and the ordinary rhythms of family life. Their wives raised children alone; their aged parents died without them present. Yet Joshua records no complaints, no desertions, no demands for early release. This stands in stark contrast to Israel's previous generation, who complained constantly during wilderness wandering and refused to enter Canaan at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13-14). The faithfulness of this generation vindicates God's judgment on the previous one.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What 'charge' or sacred trust has God given you that requires faithfulness over many years without shortcuts or early exit?
2. How do you maintain covenant loyalty to Christian brothers and sisters when it's personally costly and inconvenient?
3. When has extended obedience without immediate reward tested your faith, and what sustained you through the 'many days' of waiting?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	עִזְבָּתָ מ	אַתָּה	אֲחִיךָ מ	זֶה	כִּי יְמִינָה	עַד
H3808	Ye have not left	H853	your brethren	H2088	days	these many
	H5800		H251		H3117	H7227
days	H2088	but have kept	H853	the charge	of the commandment	
H3117		H8104		H4931		H4687
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:	יְהִי הָ					
of the LORD	your God					
H3068	H430					

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