

Joshua 8:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:

Analysis

And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:

Following the devastating defeat at Ai due to Achan's sin (chapter 7), God graciously renews His promise to Joshua. The divine command "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed" uses two Hebrew terms: *al-tira* (אַל-תִּירָא, "do not fear") addresses emotional dread, while *al-techath* (אַל-תִּחַת, "do not be dismayed") addresses loss of courage or shattering of resolve. This dual reassurance acknowledges the psychological trauma of defeat while redirecting focus to divine sovereignty.

The phrase "I have given" (*natati*, נָתַתִּי) employs the prophetic perfect tense, expressing future victory as already accomplished fact from God's perspective. This grammatical construction appears throughout Joshua, emphasizing that Yahweh's promises are certain despite present circumstances. The comprehensive list—"king... people... city... land"—indicates total conquest, leaving nothing outside God's gift.

Significantly, God commands Joshua to take "all the people of war" this time, contrasting with the previous failed assault using only a portion of the army

(7:3-4). This teaches that presumption (acting without full obedience) differs from faith (acting on God's explicit command). God's sovereign grace in providing another opportunity demonstrates the covenant faithfulness central to Reformed theology.

Historical Context

Following the defeat at Ai (7:1-5), Israel executed judgment on Achan and his household (7:24-26), restoring covenant purity. The name "Ai" (אֵי, ha'ai) means "the ruin" or "heap of ruins," likely referring to an earlier Bronze Age city. Archaeological excavations at et-Tell (identified by many with Ai) show occupation gaps, though this identification remains debated. Some scholars propose Ai was a military outpost of Bethel.

The strategy of feigned retreat reflects common ancient Near Eastern military tactics, as documented in Egyptian and Mesopotamian records. Joshua's plan demonstrates that faith does not eliminate wise planning; rather, God uses human means to accomplish His purposes. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim (visible from Ai's vicinity) would soon become the setting for covenant renewal (8:30-35), fulfilling Moses' command in Deuteronomy 27.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's encouragement after failure demonstrate His covenant faithfulness when we experience setbacks due to sin?

2. What does the prophetic perfect tense ("I have given") teach us about resting in God's promises before seeing their fulfillment?
3. How does this passage balance divine sovereignty (God's gift) with human responsibility (military action)?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה ה	אֶל	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ ע	אֶל	תִּיבָא א	וְאֶל
said	And the LORD		unto Joshua		Fear	
H559	H3068	H413	H3091	H408	H3372	H408
וְלֹא תִתַּח	וְלֹא תִתַּח	קַח	עִמָּךְ	אֶת	כָּל	עַם ו
not neither be thou dismayed		take				all the people
H2865		H3947	H5973	H853	H3605	H5971
הַמִּלְחָמָה	וְעִמָּךְ	וְעִמָּךְ	עֲלֵה	הָעִיר	רְאֵה ה	נָתַתִּי
of war	with thee and arise		go up	of Ai	see	I have given
H4421	H6965		H5927	H5857	H7200	H5414
בְּיָדְךָ	אֶת	מֶלֶךְ	וְעִמָּךְ	עַם ו	וְאֶת	עִירוֹ
into thy hand		the king	of Ai	all the people		and his city
H3027	H853	H4428	H5857	H5971	H853	H5892
וְאֶת	אֶרְצוֹ:					
	and his land					
H853	H776					

Additional Cross-References

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.

Deuteronomy 7:18 (References Lord): Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;

Deuteronomy 1:21 (References Lord): Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

Deuteronomy 31:8 (References Lord): 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.

Joshua 6:2 (Kingdom): And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

Isaiah 43:2 (Parallel theme): When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.