

Unafraid

Joshua 1:1–9 NASB

¹ Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying,

² "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.

³ "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

⁴ "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.

⁵ "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

⁶ "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

⁷ "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

⁹ "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Background:

Using his servant Moses, God has brought the children of Israel out of bondage under Egypt by way of plagues and miracles. As the Israelites were at the door of the promised land, they failed to trust in God and allowed their fear to override their faith. For this, God made them wander in the wilderness for 40 years, showing his faithfulness all along the way, before bringing them back to the land again. In this time, God gave them laws and ordinances to follow, providing the rules that would govern and cover the people of God. God's servant Moses defies him while in the wilderness, and as a result, God denies him entry into the land with the people. God allowed Moses to see the land flowing with milk and honey from Mount Nebo, and then he died there. Now that it is time to enter and conquer the land, God has called Moses' right-hand assistant and military general, Joshua, as his successor.

Intro: Growing up, I was unafraid as long as my dad was there; I had strength and courage because I knew he was there and able to always protect us.

Subject and Outline:

God himself is the source of our victories. We may be called to fight, but the ultimate victory belongs to God. Just as Joshua and the Hebrews, we also have seen and experienced God's ability to keep us and provide for us. God tells Joshua that he is now to lead the people into the land that he promised and will deliver to them. Called to lead the people on this daunting task of conquest, there are two commands the Lord required of Joshua; he is to obey and to be strong and courageous.

Joshua's strength and courage are not to be based on his training or former military successes; the ability to be unafraid of the daunting task is based on the reputation and power of the one who promised victory, God. Likewise, we too face daunting tasks and trials that we face. Much like Joshua, we have the assurance of God's presence with us (Matt 28:20) and the experiential knowledge that He will never fail.

3 Points (Body)

1. The Charge v.1-3

a. V.1-2 The Call

- i. God has allowed his faithful servant Moses to go up to Mount Nebo and to look over into the Promised Land. The scripture picks up where the Lord has called Joshua, Moses' right-hand assistant and military general.
- ii. God informs Joshua that Moses, the only leader that Israel has known, is now dead.
- iii. Moses is a towering figure for the people. This is the man who faced down Pharaoh on behalf of the people. This is the man who raised his staff and the sea parted into a dry passageway; the man whose face shone with glory after being in the presence of God. The man who has led this people from the Exodus to the promise is not gone.
- iv. Now the Lord has called Joshua to stand up and lead all the people in the same manner as Moses across the Jordan and into the Promised Land.
- v. Joshua was prepared for this moment:
 - a. Joshua had served Moses from his youth (Nu 11:28), led the people to victory against the Amalekites (Ex 17), accompanied Moses to the mountain of God (Ex 24:13), spied the land of Canaan with Caleb (Nu 14), and had been filled with the Spirit of God (Nu 27:18). Joshua was prepared to lead the people.
- vi. Just as Joshua, God has prepared you for what he has called you to.

b. V. 3 The transfer

- i. God speaks the same blessing over Joshua that he spoke over Moses in Deut. 11:24.
- ii. Joshua was chosen (Deut. 31:3, 7-8) and commissioned (Deut. 31:14, 23) by God to lead after Moses' death.
- iii. Joshua has been charged to lead the people with the promise that the same favor and provisions that Moses had are on him now.

2. The Mission v.4-6

a. V.4 The Land

- i. This is the vastness of the land that the Lord has given into the hand of Joshua in conquest.
- ii. God provides a map of sorts to the land that He would provide for them.
 - a. What has God promised you that only He can bring to fruition

b. V. 5-6 The Means

- i. God is the means of the victory that has been promised. God assures Joshua that with all the great people they would face, none would conquer them. God's presence and divine power would be with him as the source of his victories.
- ii. God promises that he will not fail or forsake Joshua in his conquest efforts.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 31:8:** "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you".
 - b. **Isaiah 41:10:** "Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."
- iii. The first instance of the command to be strong and courageous since Moses' death. God reminds Joshua that He will give the land He promised.
 - a. God is still the means of all of our successes and enables us to stand based on His power and provisions (Phil 4:12-13).

3. The Command v.7-9

a. V. 7-8 Obedience

- i. The second instance of the command to be strong and courageous; however, this time, the caveat of obedience is added.
- ii. Moses commissioned Joshua and, as a continuance of his leadership, he is to observe the Law that came through Moses. Joshua is to constantly have God's word on the forefront of his mind, day and night.
 - a. There is power and blessings in keeping and obeying the Law.
- iii. Following the Law will enable Joshua, through the power of God, to have success in his endeavors.
 - a. We too have been commanded and promised blessings for obedience (Jn 14:15, Lk 11:28).

b. V.9 Unafraid

- i. The third call to courage addressed to Joshua was based on the promise of *God's presence*. This did not minimize the task Joshua faced. He would encounter giants and fortified cities, but God's presence would make all the difference.¹
- ii. Joshua is commanded not to tremble or be dismayed... to be unafraid based on the presence of God with him as they conquer the land.
 - a. Paul was also challenged; he faced trials, tribulation, and sufferings, but was unafraid because Jesus was with him. (2 Cor. 4:8-9), and His power is perfected in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9)
- iii. We have the same promise of his presence with us (Matt 28:20), and with his presence, his power as well. It is because of His presence and power that we too can be unafraid.
- iv. We can think new, live changed, and stand committed knowing God is with us!

Word Study/Context Study:

1. Fail – רפה *rph*, *v.*, grow slack, release, let go. to **abandon** *v.*, *to forsake or leave behind*.²

¹ Donald K. Campbell, "Joshua," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 329.

² *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

2. **Forsake** – עָזַב *‘zb 1, v.*, leave; **leave behind**, leave over, **let go**, give up, **abandon**. To forsake or leave behind.³
3. **Strong** – חֲזַק *hṣq, v.*, be, grow or make strong; prevail, have or show courage; seize, grasp, keep hold of. to be strong, *to be or become strong or powerful beyond the average or expected; whether physically or in one’s constitution*.⁴
4. **Courageous** – אָמַץ (*‘āmaṣ*). vb. to be strong, courageous, strengthened, powerful, resolute. Used in several Hebrew stems to convey a state of being strong or the act of strengthening.⁵

חָזַק (*hāzaq*) in order to accomplish what God has spoken: “Be strong and courageous” (e.g., Deut 31:6; Josh 1:6). This word is often used in situations in which God leads his people in military conquest to obtain the inheritance of the promised land. It is also used in David’s songs to refer to the military strength of his enemies from whom the Lord delivered him (2 Sam 22:18; compare Pss 18:17; 142:6).⁶

5. **Meditate** – הִתְהַוָּה (*hā·ḡā(h)*): v.; ≡ Str 1897; TWOT 467— 2. LN 30.1–30.38 (qal) meditate, ponder, **give serious thought and consideration to selected information**, with a possible implication of speaking in low tones reviewing the material (Jos 1:8)⁷
6. **Tremble** – עָרַץ *‘rṣ, v.*, be terrified, be in dread; terrify; be in awe. to fear (**dread**) *v.*, *to be afraid or scared of; be frightened of*.⁸
7. **Dismayed** – חָתַת *ḥtt, v.*, be shattered, filled with terror; **dishearten; shatter**. to be dismayed (**downhearted**) *v.*, *to be made low in spirits; be made downhearted*.⁹

Biblical Commentary Study:

v.1

³ *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

⁴ *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

⁵ Ingrid Spellnes Faro, “Strength,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

⁶ Ingrid Spellnes Faro, “Strength,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

⁷ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁸ *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

⁹ *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

This statement joins the book of Joshua with the event narrated at the end of Deuteronomy. It is a time of transition in which Moses, who was the chief human character of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, will no longer feature. The term *servant of the Lord* appeared in Deuteronomy 34:5, describing Moses at his death. This expression will occur another thirteen times in the book of Joshua as an epithet of Moses. The expression ‘servant of X’, where X is a deity, appears frequently outside the Bible. However, until the death of Joshua (when it is also applied to him), only Moses is called *servant of the Lord*. Besides expressing the relationship of servanthood which Moses would have towards the Lord, it also stresses the personal relationship which the Lord had towards Moses, as described in the final verses of Deuteronomy.

Joshua, the book’s main human character, is introduced as *son of Nun*. This identifies him with the Joshua of Deuteronomy who will succeed Moses. The designation of Joshua as *Moses’ assistant* (Heb. *mēšārēt*) serves two purposes. Firstly, it links this Joshua with the figure in Exodus 24:13; 33:11 and in Numbers 11:28. This term does not appear again in Deuteronomy. This Joshua is the same person who ascended the mountain of God with Moses and who served as Moses’ assistant in the wilderness wanderings. Secondly, this term is different from the more common word for *servant* (Heb. *‘ebed*), which is used of Moses. Although the two terms overlap in their meaning and usage, the concern here is to preserve the distinctive relationship of Moses and the Lord and to affirm that the relationship between Joshua and Moses was different from this. However, it was a special relationship and one that further qualified Joshua for the task he received. In this verse, the Lord speaks directly to Joshua, just as he did with Moses. It further confirms the special role of Joshua as a successor of Moses¹⁰

v.2

A note of Moses’ death is repeated to confirm that Joshua’s leadership can now begin. The land is presented as a gift which the Lord is *about to give to his people*. However, the two occurrences of this verb alternate with verbs describing how Joshua and the Israelites are *to cross* (Heb. *‘ābar*) the Jordan River and how they will possess wherever they *set their feet* (*tidrōk*). There is a twofold aspect to this. God promises the land but the people must take it for themselves. They must fight in accordance with God’s explicit direction and their allotment of the land must follow his guidance. The parallel passage of Deuteronomy 11:24–25 is also set within the context of commands of loyalty to God and his commandments. Joshua adds the command to ‘cross over’, something that the people are prepared to do.

A second twofold aspect of the book’s message is implied in the two occurrences of the adjective *all* (Heb. *kol*) in *all these people* and in *every place*. The importance of the participation of all of the Israelites will become apparent in the responsibilities of the Transjordanian tribes and in the sin of Achan. The significance of God’s gift of the whole land will explain the wars in both the south and the north and the allotment of the land with no gaps between tribal territories.

The reference to God’s promise to Moses is surprising. Promises of land were first made to the patriarchs of Genesis (e.g. Gen. 15:18), but they are not often made to anyone else. God reaffirms this patriarchal promise to Moses in Deuteronomy 34:4 and it is alluded to in Joshua 1:6. The reason for the mention of Moses in 1:3 is to emphasize the closeness and certainty of Joshua’s position as

¹⁰ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 73–74.

successor to Moses in leading the people according to God's plan. What God had promised Moses was now going to come true through the leadership of Joshua.¹¹

God stated in v. 2 that he was "about to give" the land to the Israelites (so NIV; cf. RSV, NASB: "I am giving"). According to v. 3, "every place upon which the sole of your foot will tread, to you I have given it" (literal translation). In both verses the pronouns are plural, embracing not just Joshua, but all Israel. Also in these verses, the two forms of the verb "give" are different in Hebrew, and their use here reflects two significant truths about God's giving of the land to his people. In one sense God was still in process of giving Israel the land. After all, Israel had not yet even crossed the Jordan River, and only the land east of the Jordan actually had been taken by Israel. Most of the land remained to be taken. But in another sense God had *already given* Israel the land. It is as though Israel already possessed legal title to the land (ever since Abraham's day), but they were awaiting God's timing for the actual possession. In Gen 15:16 God promised Abraham that it would be several generations before his descendants would actually possess the land, since "the sin of the Amorites [i.e., Canaanites] has not yet reached its full measure."¹²

v.3

Every place that the sole of your foot doth tread upon. These words are a quotation, almost word for word, from Deut. 11:24, but the original promise is to be found in Gen. 12:1–7, with which we may compare Gen. 13:14–17; 15:18; 17:8. Comp. also Josh. 14:9; Exod. 23:30, 31, &c. It was God's purpose that the whole land should belong to the children of Israel; a purpose which, as usual in Hebrew prophecy, is signified by the use of the perfect tense here. The conquest was intended to be complete. Not a foot's breadth was to rest in the hands of its former owners. But here, as elsewhere in Holy Writ, we may mark the way in which man's sin and want of faith has marred the purposes of God. In the Book of Judges we read that the Canaanites were not only not driven out, but that the children of Israel made marriages with them, worshipped their gods, and practised their abominations. Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Jebusites until the time of David, while the Philistines remained in possession of their portion of Palestine until it was reduced under the power of the king of Babylon. We may observe that, according to all the ordinary laws of criticism, this citation of Deuteronomy is a proof that that Book existed when the Book of Joshua was written. For the cumbrous scheme of Elohist, Jehovist, Deuteronomist, and the like, by which this natural conclusion is overruled, see Introduction. **Have I given it.** The preterite here denotes God's purpose (cf. Gen. 1:29).¹³

Though the land was God's gift to Israel, it could be won only by hard fighting. The Lord gave them title to the territory but they had to possess it by marching on every part. The boundaries established by God and promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18–21) and Moses (Deut. 1:6–8) were to extend from the wilderness on the south to the **Lebanon** mountain range on the north, and from **the Euphrates** River on the east **to the Great Sea**, the Mediterranean, **on the west**. The added expression, **all the Hittite country**, probably refers not to the extensive empire of that name north of Canaan but to the fact that in ancient times the whole population of Canaan or any part of it was sometimes called "Hittite" (cf. Gen. 15:20). "Pockets" of Hittite peoples existed here and there in Canaan.

¹¹ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 75–76.

¹² David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 76.

¹³ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Joshua*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 3.

Thirty-eight years earlier Joshua had explored this good and fruitful land as 1 of the 12 spies (Num. 13:1–16; there [Num. 13:8] he is called “Hoshea,” a variant spelling of his name). The memory of its beauty and fertility had not dimmed. Now he was to lead the armies of Israel to conquer that territory. What is the extent of these boundaries? The territory actually conquered and possessed in the time of Joshua was much less than what was promised in Genesis 15:18–21. Even in the time of David and Solomon, when the land reached its greatest extent, the outlying districts were only within Israel’s sphere of influence.

When will the nation of Israel fully possess the land? The prophets have declared that at the time of Christ’s return to earth He will regather the Jews and reign in the land over a converted and redeemed Israel. Full and complete possession of the land awaits that day (cf. Jer. 16:14–16; Amos 9:11–15; Zech. 8:4–8).¹⁴

v.4

The detail of the land as comprising *the desert* and *Lebanon* and extending to the boundary of *the great river, the Euphrates*, may be compared with Genesis 10:19, Numbers 13:17, 21–22, and 34:3–12. In Genesis and Numbers, the southern territories of Canaan are specified since these are of concern in the contexts. In Genesis 10:19 and Numbers 34:3–5, the southern boundary of Canaan lies in an arc beginning in the region of Gaza and the Wadi of Egypt in the west and proceeding eastward to the Dead Sea (Salt Sea) and the presumed region of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is not contradicted by Numbers 13:17 and 21–22, where the southern border of Canaan must lie north of Kadesh Barnea but south of Hebron. This is true no matter how the Negev (which includes only the northern part of the modern Israeli Negev) and the Desert of Zin are understood to fit into the picture. The northern border of Canaan seems to vary, Lasha (= the town of Dan) in Genesis, Lebo Hamath (or Hamath) and Mount Hor in Numbers, and the Euphrates River in Joshua. The concern in all three cases is more with regions in southern Canaan than with the north. In no example is a northern boundary detailed.

The desert (Heb. *hammidbār*) describes uncultivated land, but is not restricted to the Sinai desert and the other regions of the wilderness wanderings. In the book of Joshua, it includes the area around Bethel and Ai (8:15, 20; 16:1; 18:12) and the Judean desert (12:8; 15:61). It is a general description of the region west of the Jordan and to the south, just as the Lebanon describes the forested mountains that would form the region west of the Jordan and to the north. The Jordan defines the eastern border. The text designates the *Great Sea* or Mediterranean Sea as the western border, thereby including regions west of *the desert*. The reference to *all the Hittite country* is missing in the Septuagint. Located in what is now the country of Turkey, the Hittites were a ‘superpower’ during the age of Joshua. The area north of the Lebanon was under Hittite control at various times in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries bc. Alternatively, perhaps the phrase intends the entire region west of the Jordan River occupied in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries by groups migrating south during the last days, or after the collapse, of the Hittite empire.¹⁵

v.5

This verse is the spiritual climax and highlight of the first part of God’s charge to Joshua. It is a heart-warming promise to Joshua himself that (1) his and the Israelites’ efforts would succeed and (2) God would never leave him. It is doubly encouraging when we see that God promised to be with Joshua *in the same way* that he was with Moses. The words in the first part of the verse are identical to those in

¹⁴ Donald K. Campbell, “Joshua,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 328.

¹⁵ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 76–77.

God's promise to Moses in Deut 7:24b: "No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them." The promise is repeated almost verbatim in Deut 11:25a: "No man will be able to stand against you."

God's impressive promise to Joshua in the second half of the verse that he would be with him just as he was with Moses begins to answer the question whether Joshua would be able to fill Moses' shoes as a leader (see comments on v. 1). On the one hand, as we have noted, no one could ever do this. Yet, God's presence would accompany Joshua just as it had Moses. The words "I will be with you" recall identical promises made to Isaac (Gen 26:3), Jacob (31:3), Moses (Exod 3:12), and Joshua himself (Deut 31:8, 23). The promise to Moses in Exod 3:12 is especially significant, since it is tied in with the revelation of God's very name, "Yahweh" (Exod 3:14–15). This God whose name was Yahweh promised Moses that he would be with him; indeed, his name was inextricably tied in with this idea of his keeping covenant to be with his people.

The promises to Joshua in Deuteronomy likewise are most significant. In 31:8, Moses assured Joshua that God would be with him, and in 31:23, God himself stated the same thing. The verbatim repetitions of God's promise here are yet another way in which the Book of Joshua shows how God was being faithful to his words spoken in earlier times. He was faithful to whatever generation of Abraham's descendants he was dealing with. Jesus told his disciples that "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:19–20), showing that God's presence was not just promised to particular generations, but to every generation of faithful believers. In the last clause of the verse, God expands on this promise to Joshua of his presence: he would never leave nor forsake him. This too echoes earlier promises, most notably in Deut 11:25a and Deut 31:6, 8.

The second part of God's charge to Joshua consists of his instructions and encouragement. Three things stand out prominently here. First, as in the first section, much of the language derives from God's earlier instructions and encouragement. Second, the threefold command to "be strong and courageous" (vv. 6, 7, 9) is important, and it also helps to give structure to the section. Third, the emphasis on Joshua's keeping of the law in order to succeed in his responsibilities (vv. 7–8) is significant.

The command to "be strong and courageous" brackets this paragraph, introducing it and bringing it to a close (vv. 6, 9). The middle occurrence of this command is highlighted by the addition of the modifier "very" (*mē'ōd*, "be strong and *very* courageous"). This introduces the heart of the paragraph, God's instructions about Joshua's keeping the law (vv. 7–8).¹⁶

v.6

The verb "to be strong" (*h̄zq*) is common in Hebrew (occurring almost three hundred times), but the verb "to be courageous" (*ʿms̄*) occurs only forty-one times. Both words are actually similar in meaning. The context in Joshua 1 shifts back and forth between "courage" and "resoluteness" for the latter verb. "Courage" is perhaps more appropriate in vv. 6 and 9, which are coupled with statements about conflict ("no one will be able to stand up against you" [v. 5]; "do not be terrified; do not be discouraged" [v. 9]). However, God's commands to Joshua in vv. 7–8 about keeping the law call for "resoluteness" rather than "courage." In about one-third of its uses, the latter verb (*ʿms̄*) is used as a command (fourteen times). Whenever this is the case, it is invariably coupled with *h̄zq*.

¹⁶ David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 83–84.

God was echoing identical exhortations that he and Moses gave to Joshua earlier (Deut 31:6, 7, 23). With these words Moses had exhorted the people (Deut 31:6), the people would exhort Joshua (Josh 1:18), and Joshua would later encourage the people (10:25). Each statement is accompanied by an assurance that God would be with Joshua or the Israelites, or that he would fight for them. This motif of God's presence is an important one throughout the Old Testament.

The need for Joshua to be strong and resolute was acute because he was the instrument for the people to inherit the land. The Hebrew grammatical construction here highlights Joshua himself: if he, of all people, was weak and irresolute, then the cause was in deep trouble. **Not only did God promise Moses that he would give the land to the Israelites (v. 3), but this had been promised to earlier generations too, and God specifically acknowledged this here (on these promises, see on v. 3).**¹⁷

Flowing from this strong affirmation that God would never let Joshua down was God's threefold call to courage. First, **Joshua was commanded to be strong and courageous (cf. vv. 7, 9, 18) because of God's promise of the land.** Strength and fortitude would be required for the strenuous military campaign just ahead, but Joshua was to keep uppermost in his mind the fact that he would succeed in causing Israel **to inherit the land** because it had been promised **to their forefathers**, that is, to Abraham (Gen. 13:14–17; 15:18–21; 17:7–8; 22:16–18), Isaac (Gen. 26:3–5), Jacob (Gen. 28:13; 35:12), and the entire nation, the seed of Abraham (Ex. 6:8), as an eternal possession. And Joshua now at last was to **lead** the children of Israel into possession of this Promised Land. What a strategic role he was to play at this crucial time in his nation's history!

While in any given generation the fulfillment of this great and significant promise depends on Israel's obedience to God, there can be no question that the Bible affirms her right to the land. By divine contract the title is hers even though she will not possess it totally and enjoy it fully until she is right with God.¹⁸

v.7-8

In Joshua 1, the appearance of *be strong and courageous* and its relationship to leading the people are overshadowed by the emphatic repetition of the command in the next sentence. There it is tied to the *law* (Heb. *tôrâ*) of Moses. Given the close parallels with Deuteronomy already noted, the reference is probably to Deuteronomic law. This is supported by the warning not to turn to the right or to the left, which also occurs throughout Deuteronomy (2:27; 5:29; 17:11, 20; 28:14). Verses 7–9 form a special instruction to Joshua in the light of the charge given to him in verse 6. **He is to be strong and very courageous in order to lead the Israelites into their land. By itself, this could be interpreted as a charge to Joshua to prepare for military leadership. However, verses 7–9 reveal that he cannot do this without obedience to the law of Moses. Unless Joshua makes meditation upon, and obedience to, God's law his first priority, his leadership will fail (cf. Ps. 1:1–3).** This is made clear by (1) the position of the two commands to *be strong and very courageous* in verses 6 and 7; (2) the clauses of result at the end of verses 7 and 8 which both promise success in his mission (i.e. *wherever you go and you will be prosperous and successful*); and (3) the threefold mention of the law of Moses in these verses: *the law* (Heb. *hattôrâ*), *the Book of the Law* (Heb. *sēper hattôrâ*), and *everything written in it* (Heb. *hakkātûb bô*).¹⁹

¹⁷ David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 84–85.

¹⁸ Donald K. Campbell, "Joshua," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 328–329.

¹⁹ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 79–80.

Vers. 7, 8, admonish Joshua to a careful observance of the law, in order that the great work laid on him by the Lord may be successfully accomplished. **Not depart out of thy mouth**, is the same as “to be continually in the mouth.” Joshua must, on the one hand, speak to the people in the words of the law, in order rightly to impress on them its sacred design, and on the other, must also ground *himself* always more deeply therein. Hence it is added:—

Thou shalt meditate therein day and night. We are not to think of this meditation as a learned study, but rather as a mature reflection upon the law by which Joshua penetrates more deeply into its meaning, and thus becomes qualified to speak more clearly, pointedly, and powerfully to the people. For to that particularly, and not to the “reading aloud,” as Bunsen explains it, is the reference in the command, that the law should not depart out of his mouth. Comp. Deut. 6:7; 11:19; 17:19. Comp. further, Ps. 1:2, and on תצליח, ver. 3 especially.²⁰

v.9

God’s charge to Joshua ends by reiterating words of encouragement and commitment (see esp. vv. 5–6). **Joshua was not to fear or be discouraged precisely because the Almighty God promised him his presence** (see on v. 5).²¹

Have I not commanded you? asserts that there can be no doubt in Joshua’s mind. He has been chosen for this mission and he cannot avoid the responsibility. The final *be strong and courageous* signals that this divine address to Joshua of his responsibilities is now coming to a close. **The last line, the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go**, ends the second part of the divine address in a way similar to the conclusion of the first part, with the promise of God’s presence. However, in the first part (v. 5), this was one more promise among several that had been made. In the second part of the address, it forms the only promise to Joshua. **Cast with the last three words, wherever you go, it parallels the last line of verse 7 and the promise of success that is given as a result of Joshua’s obedience.** Structured in this manner, the text affirms that Joshua will not be alone in striving for obedience to the law. Rather, the obedience and the success will be enjoyed in the presence of the Lord God who gave both the law and the promises. Joshua will not succeed because he obeys God’s instruction; he will succeed because God is with him to enable him to obey his instruction. For Christian leaders, the importance of the study of God’s Word was recognized in the apostle’s charge to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:11–14). In Romans 5–6, Paul also addresses the role of God’s grace in forgiveness and salvation and as a means to victory over sin. Like Joshua, Christians do not succeed spiritually because they obey God’s law. Instead, God through Christ enables them to have victory over sin (1 Cor. 15:57).

The divine discourse ends and Joshua begins to speak and act for the people. He will complete five tasks before the Lord again addresses him (in Josh. 3:7–8): (1) commission officers to direct and to organize the Israelites; (2) confirm the participation of the Trans-jordanian tribes in the ‘conquest’ of the land; (3) send messengers to spy out the land and receive their report; (4) address the people concerning preparation for crossing the Jordan River; and (5) address the priests concerning the first act of crossing. None of these items is explicitly mentioned in the Lord’s charge to Joshua. They all depend upon prior knowledge of the events of Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Joshua 1:1–9 introduces the entire book with promises and instructions for Joshua and for all Israel. The literary relationship with Deuteronomy suggests that what follows is the implementation of the

²⁰ John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Joshua* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 42.

²¹ David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 90.

Deuteronomic programme. These opening verses summarize the instruction of God to Moses by repeating it to Joshua. They also serve a political purpose which is found throughout the first few chapters, that Joshua is the leader of Israel recognized by God as the successor to Moses. Times of transition in leadership are occasions of potential instability and disaster for the security of any group. In these opening chapters of Joshua, the reader finds text after text that legitimates Joshua's authority and thus guarantees that Moses' passing would not be the beginning of a struggle for power, as had occurred repeatedly in the wilderness. Instead, the texts show Joshua as successor to Moses, receiving the divine promises and instructions for the leadership of the people which had also been given to Moses. Joshua's leadership roles in political, military and religious matters are in evidence before the crossing of the Jordan takes place.²²

²² Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 80–81.