Joshua 1:1-9

[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."
Introduction

Everyone wants to be successful. I’ve never met anyone who said, “I want to fail.” But what is success? How does it work? How does a person achieve it? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this message entitled, “Success in the New Year.”

I remember memorizing Josh 1:8 which speaks of success. “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.” Although I memorized this verse, and always liked it, I’ve never looked in depth at the surrounding passage to see what it says about success. As I did so this past week, I felt very blessed, because I think it gives a general blueprint for anyone desiring to be successful. We are thus going to look at the subject of success through the eyes of Joshua who this passage is addressed to. In order to help us better understand the passage, let me give a brief historical background.

- Moses had led the people out of Egypt and they headed for the Promised Land
- On the way 12 spies were sent out to spy out the land
- all the spies except Joshua and Caleb gave a bad report and the people grumbled against God accusing God of leading them out of Egypt to a place where they would all die. They wanted to go back to Egypt.
- because of their complaining, God would not allow that generation to enter the Promised Land. God had the Children of Israel wander for 40 years in the dessert until that generation had died off. Only Joshua and Caleb from the old regime would be allowed to enter the land.
Moses had now died, and God appointed Joshua to lead the people into the land.

[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.

Joshua received an important task from God. He was to be Moses’ successor and lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. God was about to give Him instructions to help him be successful. Before we continue with the story, let’s first look at the meaning of success.

The Meaning of Success

What is success? Webter’s Dictionary defines success as the accomplishment of what is desired or aimed at. In simpler terms, success is a favorable result. For example, if a runner wants to run a race in a certain amount of time and works hard to do it. If he reaches the time, he would be considered a success. If a car dealership sets it’s goal to sell 1000 cars in the New Year, and does so, then it is a success. If a student plans to get his degree by a certain date and does so, then he or she is a success. If he almost gets it done by the desired date, he is a relative success. If he doesn’t even come close, he is not successful.
There are a number of different words in the Bible that are translated success. They carry the idea of pushing forward to accomplish an end, to do something in a smart way, to bring something about. Thus a biblical definition of success would be \textit{the accomplishment of what God desires through godly means}, i.e. doing what God wants in God’s way.

And I would add that success is not just reaching the desired goal, it has to do with how a person gets there. He must achieve the goal through godly means. If he goes after an honorable goal but does it in a dishonest way, he is not a success in God’s eyes even if he achieves what he set out to do. In the same way, if a person goes after a dishonorable goal, he is not a success either. If he decides to make money by cheating others or being a con-man, he is certainly not a success in God’s eyes, even if he makes a lot of money.

And I would go one step further to say that success has to do with the whole process. A person is a success all along the way of achieving a goal as long as he does what God wants in God’s way. For example, a person who believes that God wants him to grow a business to a certain size, may never grow it to that size, but if he is following godly business principles he is still a successful business man in God’s eyes. A person who does God’s will in God’s way is a success as he goes through the process, as well as when he achieves the desired goal. When he achieves the goal he is a double success.

As Christians we should be sure that the things we do are in line with what God wants for us.
God had a task for Joshua, to take the children of Israel into the Promised Land. If Joshua listened to God and did it the right way, he would be a success.

OT:6743 tsalach (tsaw-lakh'); or tsaleach (tsaw-lay'-akh); a primitive root; to push forward, in various senses (literal or figurative, transitive or intransitive):
KJV - break out, come (mightily), go over, be good, be meet, be profitable, (cause to, effect, make to, send) prosper (-ity, -ous, -ously).

OT:7919 sakal (saw-kal'); a primitive root; to be (causatively, make or act) circumspect and hence, intelligent:
KJV - consider, expert, instruct, prosper, (deal) prudent (-ly), (give) skill (-ful), have good success, teach, (have, make to) understand (-ing), wisdom, (be, behaveself, consider, make) wise (-ly), guide wittingly.

success = 7136 (Genesis 24:12)
OT:7136 qarah (kaw-raw');
a primitive root; to light upon (chiefly by accident); causatively, to bring about; specifically, to impose timbers (for roof or floor):
KJV - appoint, lay (make) beams, befall, bring, come (to pass unto), floor, [hap] was, happen (unto), meet, send good speed.

success = 6743 (Neh 2:20)
OT:6743 tsalach (tsaw-lakh'); or tsaleach (tsaw-lay'-akh); a primitive root; to push forward, in various senses (literal or figurative, transitive or intransitive):
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Let’s now look at the keys to success as revealed in the passage.

**The Keys to Success**

**1. Assurance of God’s Presence and Help – v5**

[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”.

God tells Joshua that God will give Him success by being with him and helping all along the way. Thus, the first key to success is having the mindset that if seek to achieve something we believe God wants us to do, He will be with us and help us every step of the way. Success must thus start in our minds.

- perhaps we are trying to finish a certain level of schooling
- perhaps we are starting a business
- perhaps we are moving to a new location

If God is in what we are doing, He will be with us and help us!
Knowing that we are not alone in what we are doing is a powerful thing.

When Jesus told the disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, He told them, “I am with you even to the end of the age.” This assurance of God’s presence inspires people to try and work hard at difficult things.
If you are trying to do something for God. Don’t forget, He is with you.

The second key to success is tenacity.

2. Tenacity – Be Strong and Courageous – v6

[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...

A tenacious person is one who holds firm to something. That is precisely what the word be strong means. It means to fasten on to something and not let go. Grab onto whatever it is you believe God wants you to do and hold onto it like a bull dog holds onto a bone. Don’t let anyone take it from you. The word courageous means to be mentally strong as well as physically strong. Don’t be afraid to do the hard thing.

In this passage God tells Joshua over and over again, be strong and courageous... be strong and very courageous.

Success then isn’t just about sitting back and letting God do something for us. It involves our own physical and mental toughness. It involved getting back up when we get knocked down.

Someone once asked Paul Harvey, the journalist and radio commentator, to reveal the secret of his success. "I get up when I fall down," said Harvey. 

I asked a successful businessman this week what it takes to succeed. He said, “We all make mistakes. It is a matter of learning from them, and with faith continuing to press forward.

A football coach was talking to a fellow coach about the kind of player he wanted on his team. He said, “You know the kind of guy who gets knocked down and gets back up. And gets knocked down again and again and keeps getting back up.” The other coach replied, “Yeah, I know what you mean. You want that kind of guy on your football team.” The first coach then said, “Yes, I guess I do want that kind of guy on my team, but the guy I really want is the guy who keeps knocking him down.”

OT:2388 chazaq (khaw-zak’); a primitive root; to fasten upon; hence, to seize, be strong (figuratively, courageous, causatively strengthen, cure, help, repair, fortify), obstinate; to bind, restrain, conquer:
KJV - aid, amend, calker, catch, cleeve, confirm, be constant, constrain, continue, be of good (take) courage (‐ous, ‐ly), encourage (self), be established, fasten, force, fortify, make hard, harden, help, (lay) hold (fast), lean, maintain, play the man, mend, become (wax) mighty, prevail, be recovered, repair, retain, seize, be (wax) sore, strengthen (self), be stout, be (make, shew, wax) strong (‐er), be sure, take (hold), be urgent, behaveself valiantly, withstand.

OT:553 'amats (aw-mats'); a primitive root; to be alert, physically (on foot) or mentally (in courage):
KJV - confirm, be courageous (of good courage, stedfastly minded, strong, stronger), establish, fortify, harden, increase, prevail, strengthen (self), make strong (obstinate, speed).
3. Obedience to all of God’s law – v7

[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.

Whatever God’s word says to do, we need to do it. Whatever God’s Word says to avoid, we need to avoid it. Let me give you just a few of the principles that will bring you success in the New Year.

Here are seven things for the New Year.

Seek Wise Counsel –
Proverbs 15:22, “Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.”

Work Hard – Col. 3:23
Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men;

Take Time to Rest - Psalm 127:2
It is vain for you to rise up early,
To retire late,
To eat the bread of painful labors;
For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

Be Honest – Proverbs 16:11
A just balance and scales belong to the Lord;
All the weights of the bag are His concern.
Be a good listener – James 1:19
This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;

Treat people well – Matthew 7:12
"Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Submit to authority – Romans 13:1
Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

There are hundreds of other truths as well...

4. Meditation on God’s truth

[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.

We need a mechanism to keep God’s truth and principles in front of us. We need a way to continually bathe our minds in His truth. How can this be done? We need to learn to meditate on His Word. This means to park our minds on the Word on mull it over, asking, “How does this apply to me?”

OT:4185 muwsh (moosh); a primitive root [perhaps rather the same as OT:4184 through the idea of receding by contact]; to withdraw (both literally and figuratively, whether intransitive or transitive):
KJV - cease, **depart**, go back, remove, take away.

OT:1897 hagah (daw-gaw'); a primitive root [compare OT:1901]; to murmur (in pleasure or anger); by implication, to ponder:
KJV - imagine, **meditate**, mourn, mutter, roar, sore, speak, study, talk, utter.

**Final Remarks**

God reiterates the importance of Joshua hanging in there.

[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."

**Pray for success**

Abraham’s servant prayed for success.  
**Genesis 24:12**  
And he said, "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.

Nehemiah prayed for success.  
**Neh. 2:20**  
So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem."

When James Garfield (later President of the U.S.) was principal of Hiram College in Ohio, a father asked him if the course of study could be simplified so that his son might be able to go through by a shorter route. "Certainly," Garfield replied. "But it all depends
on what you want to make of your boy. When God wants to make
an oak tree, He takes a hundred years. When He wants to make a
squash he requires only two months."

We are producing too many squashes and not enough oak trees in
our day.

Angus J. MacQueen.

I spell success ATOM like atomic power.

A – assurance that God is with you

T – tenacity

O – Obedience

M - Meditation

Eccles. 10:10
If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must
exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

advantage = OT:3504 yithrown (yith-rone'); from OT:3498;
preeminence, gain:
KJV - better, excellency (-leth), profit (-able).
success = OT:3787
OT:3787 kasher (kaw-share'); a primitive root properly, to be straight or right; by implication, to be acceptable; also to succeed or prosper:

KJV - direct, be right, prosper.

Daniel 6:28
So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

success = OT:6744
OT:6744 tselach (Aramaic) (tsel-akh'); corresponding to OT:6743; to advance (transitive or intransitive):
KJV - promote, prosper.