

Deuteronomy 22:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

Analysis

Safety regulations: 'When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.' Flat roofs required protective walls (ma'aqeh, מִגְדָּן, railing/parapet) preventing falls. This applies covenant love to daily safety—'love thy neighbor' includes practical protection. The phrase 'bring not blood upon thine house' indicates legal/moral guilt for preventable deaths. Negligence equals guilt. This establishes principle: responsibility for others' safety extends to property design. Modern building codes, workplace safety, and liability law reflect this principle. Love demands practical care, not just sentiment.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern homes had flat roofs used for sleeping, drying food, and socializing. Without parapets, falls caused injury/death. This law required homeowners to prevent foreseeable harm. The principle extends beyond literal application: any foreseeable danger requiring reasonable prevention. James applies this spiritually: 'to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin' (James 4:17)—omitting good is sin. Christian love proactively protects others' welfare, not merely avoiding direct harm.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the parapet law demonstrate that love requires practical action, not just avoiding harm?
2. What modern 'parapets' (safety measures, preventative actions) does Christian love require?
3. How does responsibility for others' safety reflect the second great commandment (love neighbor)?

Interlinear Text

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|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| כִּי | תִבְנֶה | בְּבֵיתְךָ | חֵדָשׁ | וַעֲשֵׂה יֵת | מַעֲקֵה | | |
| H3588 | When thou buildest | house | a new | then thou shalt make | a battlement | | |
| | H1129 | H1004 | H2319 | H6213 | H4624 | | |
| לְגַגְךָ | וְלֹא | תָשִׂים | דָּמִים | בְּבֵיתְךָ | כִּי | הִנֵּפִי ל | הִנֵּפִי ל |
| for thy roof | H3808 | that thou bring | not blood | house | H3588 | fall | fall |
| H1406 | | H7760 | H1818 | H1004 | | H5307 | H5307 |
| מִמֶּנּוּ: | | | | | | | |
| H4480 | | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Mark 2:4 (Parallel theme): And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

Isaiah 22:1 (Parallel theme): The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?

Acts 10:9 (Parallel theme): On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

Jeremiah 19:13 (Parallel theme): And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods.

Matthew 10:27 (Parallel theme): What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 (Parallel theme): Abstain from all appearance of evil.

2 Samuel 11:2 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.