

Ecclesiastes 4:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

Analysis

This verse illustrates the practical value of companionship through the metaphor of falling. The Hebrew 'naphal' (fall) can mean literal stumbling or metaphorical failure/misfortune. The companion 'will lift up his fellow' (Hebrew 'yaqim et-chavero'), demonstrating active mutual support. The solemn warning 'woe to him that is alone when he falleth' uses the Hebrew 'oy' (woe/alas), expressing grief over preventable tragedy. The one without companionship 'hath not another to help him up'—emphasizing the dire consequences of isolation. This verse moves beyond pragmatic partnership to compassionate care: friends not only work together but rescue one another. It anticipates Christian koinonia (fellowship) where believers 'bear one another's burdens' (Galatians 6:2).

Historical Context

Travel in ancient Palestine was dangerous—roads threatened by bandits, cliffs, wild animals. A lone traveler who fell unconscious from heatstroke, injury, or assault might die unnoticed. Shepherds worked in teams; merchants traveled in caravans. The Good Samaritan parable (Luke 10:25-37) illustrates this reality: the injured man would have died without intervention. Ecclesiastes' warning resonates with James's exhortation to confess sins to one another (James 5:16) and restore fallen brothers gently (Galatians 6:1). Modern Western isolation—living alone, commuting alone, working remotely—creates spiritual danger Ecclesiastes warns against: falling with no one to notice or help.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Who in your life is walking alongside you such that if you 'fall' (into sin, discouragement, or crisis), they would notice and help you up?
2. Are you providing this kind of watchful companionship for others, or have you withdrawn into isolated self-sufficiency?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אִם	שָׁפַל וְ	הָאֶחָד	לְהַקְיֵמוֹ:	אֶת	חֲבֵירוֹ	וְאִלּוּ
H3588	H518	For if they fall	the one	to help him up	H853	his fellow	but woe
		H5307	H259	H6965		H2270	H337
הָאֶחָד	שָׁפַל וְ	וְאִלּוּ	שֶׁנִּי	לְהַקְיֵמוֹ:			
the one	For if they fall	H369	for he hath not another	to help him up			
H259	H5307		H8145	H6965			

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (Parallel theme): Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (Parallel theme): Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Galatians 6:1 (Parallel theme): Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.