

**Ecclesiastes 4 11; "How can one be Warm alone?", A Bible Study
prepared for the Evening of November 11th, 2009,
Delivered at the Rendall Home.**

We have been looking at the decided advantages of Christian Companionship. "Two are better than one, for they have a good return for their labor," it says. We have previously looked at the vanity of laboring and working alone; working for yourself, and living for yourself. It is a terribly God-dishonoring thing to isolate yourself if you are only seeking your own desires. It is very vain thing to seek to satisfy only yourself and never think of other people. But it is a very God-honoring thing to pray that God would give you Christian friends and companions who will strengthen your hands in the labors and the work that you do for Christ. There are many people who never ask the question, "Why am I doing what I am doing?" "For whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" The pleasure spoken of, is having Christian companionship. What a blessed thing it is to have a friend, even in an earthly sense. But if we have a Christian friend, how much better yet! They shall help us to walk in the ways of the Lord and point us in the right direction when we are not sure which way to go. Much more shall be accomplished for the Lord, when you labor together with a few other Christians than if you isolate yourself from them. You will have "a good return" for your labor. A Christian who would be faithful to his or her Lord will always come to the place where they ask themselves the question: "Who am I laboring for?" We want to be able to say that we are laboring for and with Christ, and that we are laboring for the everlasting good of people around us. Now, tonight we want to complete our study of the advantages of two working together being better than one, and then we want to go on in the next study to think about what is even better even yet; the advantages of 3 or more working together in the bonds of Christian love. (The cord of three strands) But tonight we want to look first, at the personal duty that we have to keep the cause of Christ warm by ministering to Him. And then secondly we want to see how this warmth is conveyed to ourselves, and also by ourselves to others. That is; that there is a decided advantage brought to the Church and the cause of Christ where "a cord of three strands" is formed. May God help us, not only see these advantages as objectively desirable, but also strive to secure them for Christ's sake and His glory as well.

1st of all - Let us look at our personal duty to keep the cause of Christ warm by ministering to Him. (Verse 11)___

"Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?" The principle is true no matter who it is that is being referred to; and the verse is worded indefinitely. It does not say who is lying down together. Two will keep warm if they lie down together. This verse does not militate against a group of Emperor Penguins in the arctic, huddling together in temperatures of 200 degrees below zero, so that they might stay alive. Rather, we would think as we read this verse, that they are to be commended for not wanting to "go their own way" and freeze to death because they wanted to go it alone. But people are not penguins; they are either sinful or they are righteous in their lying down with one another to keep

warm. Sinners of various sorts may lie down together in their selfish and sinful cause and keep warm; but it is not glorifying to God. It is rather much better for us here tonight, not to apply these verses in an indefinite sense, but a definite one. I believe that we should apply these verses to a righteous cause, the best of causes; keeping the work of Christ alive and warm. Let us apply it to working together in a holy way with other Christian friends and companions.

I suppose that we should begin with marriage, as it is God's institution of two "lying down together" to keep warm in a physical sense. Two are better than one in this holy sense. The whole forward progress of the kingdom of Christ, in some very important ways, is tied to the strength of marriage in any given society. This is because marriage is meant by God to be a picture of Christ and His Church. If marriages are weak; if the institution of marriage is not entered into, or if it is ignored; if there is no real Christian love exhibited in the love of many married couples; then all of the forward progress of the gospel in that society is being hindered. We should know from Hebrews 13: 4, if we have never heard it before, that marriage "is honorable among all, and the marriage bed undefiled...." This verse is not at all militating against the warmth of a man and a woman in holy matrimony lying down together to be warm together on a cold night, but it is rather establishing it. What a great blessing and advantage it is when a man finds a warm and friendly companion in his wife. God and Christ are not against the physical and sexual love of a man and a woman in marriage. They are for it, to establish it. It is this keeping of a husband warm, by His wife's love given to him, which promotes His doing God's good will in every sense. His needs for physical intimacy are met. The loving devotion of a godly wife is particularized to her husband. This is extremely beneficial and right in the sight of Almighty God. You and I need to do everything that we can to establish the truth of this God-given institution of marriage in a society which is increasingly "lying down together" to keep warm in a sinful sense. People may indeed keep warm by lying down together outside of the marriage relationship, but then they may not understand that they will end up lying down forever in the flames of hell. If the institution of marriage fails to be entered in to, in a society, then all of that society will reap the whirlwind of God's judgments.

You and I need to pray and ask God that we might have the grace and ability to turn people back from their folly in this regard. It is folly for a man and a woman to live together without God's blessing upon their sexual union. God blesses marriage. He does not bless living together without recognizing Him. Let us try to explain to people that getting married is a promise and vow of commitment which is then blessed by God. It is the answer to the cold and lonely hearts of men and women, if they will live together in marital love in accordance with the principles of the Bible. "Marriage is honorable among all." In choosing to get married, you are asking God's blessing upon your lying down together to keep warm. It is your asking Him to bless your sexual relationship in the context of covenant faithfulness to that one person in particular, whom you will love as long as you or they are alive. God is well-pleased with this. But those who live together without being married, and those who are

fornicators and adulterers and homosexuals; God will judge. They who lie down together in this carnal and sexual way, outside of the bonds of marriage; those who will not seek God's approval and blessing upon their union; shall certainly lie down in everlasting burnings. Better to freeze in the cold here upon the earth than to think that all is well without taking the covenant vows of marriage, and then ending up in hell. Listen to the example that Thomas Brooks relates on this. "I have read of a chaste virgin, who being strongly tempted and solicited by a lewd ruffian to uncleanness, after some discourse, she called for a pan of burning coals, requesting him for her sake to hold his finger in them but one hour ; he answered, it is an unkind and unreasonable request : in truth, saith she, it is so ; but you ask me a more unkind and unreasonable request, viz., to satisfy you in a thing for which I shall not only burn an hour, but burn both body and soul in hell-fire for ever and ever ; and so she overcame the temptation." (Vol. 4, P. 76 Works) In gaining warmth from another person, we need to be sure that we will not be burning forever. Isaiah 33: 14 says, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: 'Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?' "And who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Let us determine not to lie down to be warm with another if it will compromise our moral chastity or purity. "Can a man take fire to his bosom and not be burned?" God has something much more blessed and satisfying. If we lie down together in a holy way, in the warmth of marriage, we shall indeed be blessed.

Let us think for a few moments together about how you and I can keep the cause of the kingdom of God and Christ warm in our own hearts. "If two lie down to together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?" Turn with me to 1 Kings Chapter 1. "Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm." Therefore his servants said to him, 'Let a young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that our lord the king may be warm.' "So they sought for a lovely woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought to the king." "The young woman was very lovely; and she cared for the king, but the king did not know her." Now this is really a very touching scene, is it not? It is a holy service that this young woman is performing for the king. I believe that this woman was actually married to the king, but she was not pre-occupied with anything sexual in relation to him. She just needs to keep him warm. She is keeping him warm because He cannot get heat any more himself because he is so old. You and I, as believers in Christ, are much like Abishag. We, by faith lie in the arms of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has been very strong and valiant on behalf of sinners; even as the One who is greater David; in establishing the kingdom of God. David slew the giant Goliath and thus saved Israel. The Lord Jesus has destroyed Satan at the cross, and He has fought the battles of the Lord for Justice and Truth and the salvation of sinners. He has mercifully assigned us to keep His cause and His kingdom warm upon the earth. He is been raised from the dead and has all power and authority in heaven and earth. He is not weak and old like David was in this passage. But His cause is what is suffering in this day. His

cause is a very old one, but it is a very good one. It is the cause of meekness and truth and righteousness. But in our day, and often throughout the history of the Church, it has been a suffering cause. If we lie down in the embrace of this holy cause; that of the welfare of how His gospel is progressing upon the earth and in the hearts and lives of others around us; if we are moved and motivated by what He has done in bringing us out of the kingdom of darkness and into His marvelous light, we should be able to give ourselves to Him in this holy and pure way in order to keep His cause and kingdom warm. We have found eternal life coming to us because of His past victories, and so now we think about how we can minister to Him in relation to others. Our spiritual duty is to warm His spiritual body the Church. We warm the Church by our love and service in the Church. We stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Ours is also to bring to people around us who do not know Christ, through our service of good works to them, that knowledge of Christ which comes through the gospel. We declare through our love for Him, that God saves sinners. We declare to everyone the truth that God raises the dead, both physically and spiritually, and He will give them eternal life. We are not ashamed of the gospel, and we are not ashamed of the present weakness of His cause. We will keep His "body" warm by the power and love of the grace which He has first given to us. "If two lie down together, they will keep warm."

Secondly - we want to see how this warmth is conveyed to ourselves, and also by ourselves to others.

"But how can one be warm alone?" The implication is that he cannot. Turn with me to 2 Kings 4 and you will find an Old Testament example of this truth. Here we have the story of another Shunammite woman who cared enough for the prophet Elisha that she saw His need; that he needed a place to stay and lodge in that city. She ministered to his need because he was a holy man of God. Verse 8 says, "Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food." "So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food." "And she said to her husband, 'Look now, I know that this is holy man of God, who passes by us regularly.'" "Please let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there." "And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there." "Then he said to Gehazi his servant, 'Call this Shunammite woman.'" "When he called her, she stood before him." And he said to him, 'Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care.'" "What can I now do for you?" "Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?" "She answered, 'I dwell among my own people.'" "So he said, 'What is to be done for her?'" "And Gehazi answered, 'Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old.'" "So he said, 'Call her.'" "When he had called her, she stood in the doorway." "Then he said, 'About this time next year you shall embrace a son.'" "And she said, 'No, my lord.'" "Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant." "But the woman conceived and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which

Elisha had told her." "And the child grew." "Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers." "And he said to his father, 'My head, my head!'" "So he said to a servant, 'Carry him to his mother.'" "When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." "And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him and went out." "Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back." "So he said, 'Why are you going to him today?" "It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath." "And she said, 'It is well." "Then she saddled a donkey and said to her servant, 'Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." "And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel." "So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, 'Look, the Shunammite woman!" "Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with your husband?" "Is it well with the child?" "And she answered, 'It is well." "Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away." "But the man of God said, 'Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has told me." "So she said, 'Did I ask a son of my lord?" "Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?" "Then he said to Gehazi, 'Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way." "If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child." "And the mother of the child said, 'As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." "So he arose and followed her." "Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing." "Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him saying, "The child has not awakened." "When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed." "He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord." "And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm." "He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes."

Now there are many things that could be said about this amazing passage. Elisha had a prophetic ministry and it was to faithfully represent to the people, the Word, the power, and the presence of God to them. He was a great enough prophet that he had received a double portion of God's Spirit and as such had the ability to do miracles. He had the ability to be a type of Christ to the people in this way. This woman took notice of his ministry and wanted to provide for it. She and her husband wanted to "warm" his heart spiritually by providing for his needs. It was very simple provision, but very welcome to the prophet. He wanted to find some way to do something for her. Not getting any answer from her on what he could do for her, he asks Gehazi and he tells Elisha that she has no son. And so, having the assurance in his spirit that God would bless her in this way, verse 17 says that she conceived and bore a son at the appointed time. The child grew, but one day he came

home from the field with a terrible headache and then after a few hours died. She lays him out on the bed of the man of God and shuts the door and goes out and tells her husband that she is wanting to run to the man of God and come back. She has the faith to answer when her husband asks her why, "It is well." She has the faith to believe that when she gets to Elisha's servant and he asks her whether all is well with the child; she says, "It is well." But when she finally gets to Elisha himself, and she lays hold of his feet and Gehazi goes to push her away, Elisha says, "Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me." How can one be warm alone? No, Elisha needed to know the truth of what was on her heart. Two were better than one. And so she told him. "Did I ask for a son," she says? And did I not tell you not to deceive me in terms of my having one? And so Elisha does this amazing thing of sending his servant with his staff to lay it on the face of the boy and heal him. But Gehazi fails. So Elisha comes himself and stretches himself out on the boy and puts mouth on mouth, eyes on eyes, hands on hands and the flesh of the child became warm. In closing this study tonight, I want you to see that it is only when two lie down together; two who are of one mind and one heart; that they can keep warm in the darkest of providences. The raising of this child from the dead was because Elisha stretched himself out upon the child in this way which was prophetic of Christ. It was Christ's power that warmed his heart and he conveyed it to the dead child. It was Christ's power that had formed the bond of companionship between Elisha the man of God and this Shunammite woman. And it is Christ's power that gives us companions in the Lord and friends in the Lord that we can share our deepest thoughts and feeling, joys and sorrows with. Thereby we are enabled miraculously to "warm" one another in our journey of following Christ. Along life's way, there will be disappointment and things which we cannot understand why the Lord has permitted them; but two are better than one when they are trusting in Christ. Remember the two on the road to Emmaus? They thought that all was lost when Christ was crucified and they saw Him dead and taken down and buried. They didn't realize the greatness of the power of Christ to warm their hearts on the road, after His resurrection as He spoke to them of how He must fulfill the Scriptures, and explained many of the prophetic passages. "Were not our hearts strangely warmed?" That was because Christ has the warmth of life and grace which He conveys to all who believe in Him. And if they "lie down with Him" in His death, they shall also rise up with Him because of His life. How can one be warm alone? But one can be warm with Christ. This is how we then minister to one another and minister with one another. We lie down together with Christ in His tomb in death; but we rise together to labor with other Christians because of his life. One cannot be warm alone, but we have Christ.