

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Introduction: I am going to say the words to a theme song from a popular show and at the end I want to see if you know the name of the show, but please don't say anything until I am finished. "Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came; You want to be where you can see, Our troubles are all the same; You want to be where everybody knows your name!" Ok, what is the name of the show (Cheers)? Isn't it sad that was written about a bar instead of the house of God? The house of God should be a place where we come and get to know each other, we share our triumphs and our troubles, it should not be a place of judgment but rather a place where the grace of God flows. That is what our text is about this morning, fellowship. Before we get into the text I want to give you definition of fellowship. Fellowship is defined as the "mutual association of persons on equal and friendly terms." In other words it is a place in which we recognize that we are all the same and we enjoy being around each other. We are all sinners who are in need of God's grace every single day and I am genuinely happy to see you because it reminds me that I am not alone in this struggle and that I can have someone go through it with me. I want to share this with you this morning and then we are going to look at our text, the devil does not want you here today, he does not want you to hear this message, because he wants you alone and isolated so he can go to work on your mind and convince you that you are alone and that no one cares what is going on in your life or that no one really cares if you go to heaven or not, but I am going to tell you that you are not alone and that we do care if where you spend eternity.

Breakdown of the Text:

✠ **V. 9:** When we hear these words we tend to think about marriage. After all it was God who after creating everything said "it is not good that man is alone, I will make him a help-meet" in Genesis 2:18. And while you certainly could apply this to marriage, I want us to look at it from a friendship standpoint this morning. Friendship and fellowship are important in life. In verse 9 the word "reward" has a monetary meaning, like you will receive a good wage. The phrase "good reward" is also

translated as “good return.” Therefore, we can see that Solomon is saying that friendship and fellowship is a good investment. The best investments we can make in life are not financial investments, but rather investing in relationships. Notice Solomon says that this investment is a result of our “labor.” Cultivating good relationships is hard work whether it is in marriage, work, or elsewhere. Society today is much more about isolation these days because of how competitive jobs are. The prevailing attitude is that you can’t trust anyone because they might use it against you or use it to further their career. In church life, many churches and Christians are afraid to work together or have events together because what happens if one of our members goes over to that church and they like it better and leave our church? The corporate world mentality is unfortunately crept into the church and really hurting it. It sometimes goes as far in churches as this class wants to do this project, but rather than asking for help from other classes, they want to do it on their own. Friendships and fellowship bring meaning into our life than stuff simply can’t touch. Look at Ecclesiastes 4:8, “There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saith he*, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travail.” Notice the person who is all alone has no one to share their success or life with and Solomon says it is vanity, in other words, it is pointless to be alone.

✠ **V. 10:** The word “fall” here can mean a physical fall, but it is also translated in other areas as an emotional fall. It can mean to be “down cast or to be overwhelmed.” How many of us have felt overwhelmed in life at one time or another? I would even bet that a decent amount of people here have felt down or out of sorts from time to time. A study published in 2011 by the Center for Disease Control stated that approximately 1 out of 10 adults or 10% of the adult population in the United States has gone through a period of depression. Depression isn’t anything new we even see it in the Bible in figures such as Elijah and David. We as church members and even church leaders need to recognize that depression is in the church. Solomon

notes in this verse that friendship or fellowship is beneficial when you are physically or emotionally down.

✠ **V. 11:** Again in this verse we can see the physical application. It reminds me of the movie *Forrest Gump* when Forrest and Bubba are in Vietnam and they are out on patrol at night and it is raining. Bubba comes up with a good idea, "I'll rest my back against you and you rest your back against me so we don't have to sleep with our heads in the mud." I agree with Forrest, "That was right fine idea." But don't miss the spiritual application as well. Spiritually speaking this verse speak of accountability. A friend can help keep you spiritually on fire. I love to be around new Christians, because they are on fire so much they are convinced they could charge the gates of hell with a water pistol and tell the devil he is in trouble. For some reason though as time goes on we become complacent and we lose our sense of excitement about the Gospel. It leads to what Jesus charged the church at Ephesus with in Revelation 2:4, "You have left your first love." You start taking God, salvation, and church for granted and you begin to think that commitment to God and the church or serving God and the church is optional. What that ultimately leads to is a Christian or a church becoming like the church at Laodicea. In Revelation 3 God says that the church at Laodicea was neither hot nor cold, but rather lukewarm. And in Revelation 3:16 God says that "He will spew them out of His mouth." In other words they won't be useful to God. So Solomon points out that friendship and fellowship is good to keep our spiritual fire stoked and keep us on fire for Christ and the Gospel.

✠ **V. 12:** This verse speaks of warfare either physical or spiritual. We must realize that our enemy is not another human being. Paul says in Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*." Everyone in the world is in a spiritual war and there are eternal consequences. For the unsaved, there is a war for your soul. The devil doesn't want you to hear the Gospel because he knows if you truly hear it, you will turn to Christ and the devil will have lost another soul. For a Christian there is a war for your allegiance. Your soul is

already spoken for and belongs to Christ. But if the devil can continue entice you to live in sin then he knows that the power of Christ and the power of the Gospel will not flow through your life. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." In this spiritual battle we need friends who will help us resist the tactics of the devil. So the last benefit of friendship or fellowship Solomon lists here is that it can help you win the spiritual battle you are facing.

Action Steps: The Bible tells us in James 1:22 to be doers of the word and not hearers only. So we want to apply the Word of God into our life this week. Here are some suggestions.

- ✝ This week I want to encourage you to find someone either in the church or outside of the church who is either having a bad day or struggling in life right now and find a way to encourage them. This could be as simple as you listening to them.
- ✝ I want to encourage you to ask yourself, am I as on fire for Christ today as I was when I first got saved? If so, thank the Lord for that. If not, I want you to pray and ask God to forgive you, but also I want you to find someone who is on fire for Christ and ask them to help you regain that fire.