



15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. 16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself. 17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. 18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured. 19 As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. 20 Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. 21 As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise. 22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. 23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. 24 For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? 25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. 26 The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. 27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens. (Proverbs 27:15-27)

In reading the repeated warnings of Solomon against the nagging and contentiousness of women, I am forced to believe that his experiences emerge from an unnatural desire for more than one of them. Naturally, no woman is going to keep her peace with a husband who is carousing with one thousand mistresses. God intended one wife for one man, and one man for one woman. Solomon learned God was wise above all others in such a natural state of matrimony. 15 "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." The old southern proverb – "Ain't nobody happy if mama ain't happy" – holds true to form and is consistent with that which Solomon expresses. Just as on a stormy day, one stands in the house and hears the drip, drip, dripping of many leaks in the roof, so is the troubling nagging of a wife; especially a wife who has been slighted. It is miserable to remain in such a house, but the immoderate rains preclude one from travelling outside. 16 "Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself." Trying to

calm such a woman is like trying to hold the wind back – impossible; or else the devotion of the man for his perfumed spouse may overcome him if the restrained winds fail.

17. *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* Social intercourse sharpens the wit of man. Without social intercourse, there is no mental growth or social grace. Man was never intended to be alone: *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* (Gen 2:18) To dispute on points of law, science, and religion sharpens our ability to defend our positions. It takes the hardness of iron to sharpen other iron just as it takes a like nature of man to sharpen the wits of another. If you wish to improve your tennis game, do not play with a partner of less talent than yourself else your skills will suffer; pick one who is better so that you may grow better. Copper is too soft to sharpen iron, and an effeminate and wimpy soldier will never inspire the war-making skills of a fellow soldier.

18 *“Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.”* Our social graces are honed by loyalty and service. Just as the profits of the fig orchard depend upon the attentiveness and care of the servant who tends the orchard, so does the attentive servant who obeys his superior and diligently applies himself to every task shall be honored by that supervisor. In a larger sense, this proverb applies to the Child of God and his Master in Heaven. If we are faithful in all, we will at last hear: *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”* (Matthew 25:21).

Do we see ourselves in others? We must if we are to have compassion on others. When we see in the pain of others our own pain and suffering, we will be moved with ‘com” (together) passion (feeling). Compassion means to feel the pain of others. So much so that we act upon it to relieve the suffering. 19 *“As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.”* When we gaze into a still brook, we can see our own face looking back. When we look into the face of a poor and hungry orphan, we must see our own face looking back at us. The old Anglican priest, John Donne, got it right:

*No man is an island, Entire of itself, Every man is a piece of the continent, A part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less. As well as if a promontory were. As well as if a manor of thy friend’s Or of thine own were: Any man’s death diminishes me, Because I am involved in mankind, And therefore send not to know for whom the bell tolls; Behold, *It tolls for thee.**

20 *“Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.”* On March 1st of 2007, a devastating tornado struck my home town and destroyed the high school. Eight souls were taken from the land of the living at that time. It was the worst catastrophe this little town had ever witnessed. Standing in line at Winn Dixie a few days later, there was a lady paying for her groceries conversing with the cashier. She said, “This storm was the Judgment of God.” A distinguished black minister, who was standing in line behind her said, “Honey child, you ain’t seen NOTHING yet.” How right he was. The dimensions of destruction can always be exceeded and added to – there is no set limit to suffering. May I add as well that Hell shall always be large enough to accommodate the billions who will find themselves confined there at the moment of God’s own choosing. Just because you are not as bad as some of your neighbors is no guarantee that you will not “bust Hell wide open” one day. There is ALWAYS room for ONE MORE. I pray that ONE MORE is not you or me.

21 "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." A refining pot for silver and a furnace for gold will bring out the true quality of the precious metals. So does the public reputation of a man bear record of his quality of character and philanthropy. The weak man, believe it or not, cannot stand praise. It will go to the head of the proud and vain so that it will ruin whatever man once occupied the body.

22 "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." Merciless beatings will not erase the fool's foolish ways. In ancient times, incorrigible men were often placed in a mortar among the grains of wheat and beaten with a stone pestle. Even if they died of their wounds, they died fools. Foolishness is a part of the nature and character of a fool. He only can appreciate the presence of a whip to discourage his present foolish behavior. Perhaps as a child he was allowed to grow among the thorns and thistles so that when grown to adulthood, his branches and fruit are stunted. That is why a child must be raised up in the way that he should go. When he is old, that restraining nature will be his guide and defender.

23 "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. 24 For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? 25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. 26 The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. 27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens." These last five verses are an appeal to the beauty and solitude of simplicity in life – the pasturelands, the cultivated fields, and the barns of plenty as opposed to the false lights of the city. There is no graft or corruption in the shepherd's work of watching the flock as there is on city streets abundant with vendors, black-marketers, and street-walkers. The luxuries of the city are a mirage that dissipates with age. There is no kingdom, save ONE, whose crown has endured the years of eternity. We find ample medicine in the mountain herbs, and plenty of warm clothing from the little lambs. All of our household will have healthy food and drink that comes from the gift of God's Nature – this, the city cannot offer. The city can only afford pollution and poisons to the weary soul. Better to view the night sky from the pristine atmosphere of the desert than the glimmering and unsteady lights of the city.