

# Proverbs 15 Commentary

PREVIOUS

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom,  
And the man who gains understanding.  
Proverbs 3:13

NEXT

Proverbs Overview						
Purpose of Proverbs Pr 1:1-7	Proverbs to Youth Pr 1:8-9:18	Proverbs of Solomon Pr 10:1-24:34	Proverbs of Solomon (Hezekiah) Pr 25:1-29:27	Words of Agur Pr 30:1-30:33	Words of Lemuel Pr 31:1-31:31	
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<b>Title:</b> Proverbs Pr 1:1	Precepts of Wisdom	Proverbs of Solomon	Proverbs Copied by Hezekiah's Men	Proverbs of Agur	Proverbs of Lemuel Pr 31:1-9	Capable Wife 31:10-31
<b>Theme:</b> Proverbs Pr 1:7	Wisdom for Young Men	Proverbs for Everyone		Personal Notes from Agur & Lemuel		
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**What is a proverb?** First, what it is not - a proverb is not a promise or saying definitely guaranteeing the outcome that is being discussed (See MacArthur below). Second, proverb is the Hebrew word **mashal** which means comparison, similar, parallel. In short, a proverb is a figure of speech in which the author uses comparison in order to present a pithy, poignant observation or instruction. A proverb is a timeless truth in the form of a simple illustration that exposes a fundamental reality of life. Proverbs are practical (not theoretical), easy to memorize (Are you practicing the discipline of Biblical memorization?) and imminently applicable to real life situations.

**Are the Proverbs guaranteed Promises? No.** John MacArthur offers a good perspective: A final area of challenge comes in understanding that proverbs are divine guidelines and wise observations, i.e., teaching underlying principles (Pr 24:3, 4) which are not always inflexible laws or absolute promises. These expressions of general truth (cf. Pr 10:27; 22:4) generally do have "exceptions," due to the uncertainty of life and unpredictable behavior of fallen men. God does not guarantee uniform outcome or application for each proverb, but in studying them and applying them, one comes to contemplate the mind of God, His character, His attributes, His works, and His blessings. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge expressed in Proverbs are hidden in Christ (Col. 2:3).

**MacArthur adds:** The word "proverb" means "to be like," thus Proverbs is a book of comparisons between common, concrete images and life's most profound truths. Proverbs are simple, moral statements (or illustrations) that highlight and teach fundamental realities about life. Solomon sought God's wisdom (2Chr 1:8-12) and offered "pithy sayings" designed to make men contemplate 1) the fear of God and 2) living by His wisdom (Pr 1:7; 9:10). The sum of this wisdom is personified in the Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor. 1:30).

**Wilkinson:** Proverbs is the most intensely practical book in the Old Testament because it teaches skillful living in the multiple aspects of everyday life. Its specific precepts include instruction on wisdom and folly, the righteous and the wicked, the tongue, pride and humility, justice and vengeance, the family, laziness and work, poverty and wealth, friends and neighbors, love and lust, anger and strife, masters and servants, life and death. Proverbs touches upon every facet of human relationships, and its principles transcend the bounds of time and culture. (Talk thru the Bible)

**Theme of Proverbs:** The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of **knowledge**. Fools despise **wisdom** and **instruction**. (Pr 1:7-note).

The **Septuagint** rendering amplifies the meaning of Pr 1:7-note - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (sophia); and there is good understanding (sunesis = "putting together the pieces") to all that practice it: and piety (eusebeia) toward God is the beginning of discernment (aisthesis); but the ungodly (asebes) will set at naught wisdom and instruction (paideia = "child training")." The Greek emphasizes wisdom instead of knowledge. Notice that "fools" are equated with the ungodly.

The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of **wisdom**, and the **knowledge** of the Holy One is understanding. (Pr 9:10)

Note that this **fear** is not "shaking fear" but a reverential awe. It is like a child who fears disappointing their father or losing his approval and thus it is a "healthy" fear, good for our "spiritual health!"

**Key Words (NAS95):** Wisdom (48x/47v), Righteous(ness)(90x/89v), Guidance (3x), Wise (62x/58v), Fear of the LORD (14x), my son (23x), Knowledge (40x/39v), Understand(ing) (56x/55v), Instruction (16x), Discipline (17x), Commandment/command (11x), Tongue (18x), Foolish (12x/11v), Fool(s) (58x), Tongue (18x), Evil (58x/55v), Wicked (83x/82v), Life (46x), But (246x/242v).

## Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

- **Gentle:** Pr 25:15 Judges 8:1-3 1Sa 25:21-33
- **Harsh:** Pr 15:18, 10:12, 28:25, 29:22, Judges 12:3-6 1Sa 25:10,11,21,22 2Sa 19:43 1Ki 12:13-16
- [How Are You Handling Anger- Devotionals - Proverbs 15-1](#)
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE POWER OF — GENTLENESS

### CONTRASTING — COMMUNICATION

Gentle  
Answer

Harsh  
Word

**Turns away**  
**Wrath**

**Stirs up**  
**Anger**

**Kitchens** - This chapter displays several distinctive features. Pr 15:1, 2, 4, 7, 14, 23, 26, 28 all deal with the tongue. Nine out of the thirty-three verses of this chapter speak of Yahweh (Pr 15:3, 8, 9, 11, 16, 25, 26, 29, 33). The antithetical form of the proverbs grows less frequent beginning in this chapter (only in Pr 15:3, 10–11, 12, 23–24, 30–31, 33). **Speech** has the potential to quiet a riot or to fan the embers of anger (Prov. 12:18; 15:18; 25:15). A 'gentle' word is the way to respond to a threatening situation. The word 'gentle' means soft, tender or delicate. Here the idea is probably that of a conciliatory tone.<sup>4</sup> We should be 'gentle' in tone of voice, terms chosen and non-verbal communications that accompany our speech. ([Proverbs- A Mentor Commentary- recommended resource](#))

**Poole** gives this literal translation of Pr 15:1 - A soft return causes heat to turn; but a word of pain causes the nose to go up. The power of gentle, good humoured words is often wonderful in subduing angry passions, while those which are sharp and cutting are as apt to excite them. Compare Proverbs 14:29; Proverbs 25:15.

Proverbs 15:1 is one of those Proverbs we all need to memorize that it might be in our heart that we might not sin against the LORD with our tongue (Ps 119:9-11). I beg you to write it down on a card today, asking the Spirit to write these precious words on your heart, remembering that out of your mouth comes that which fills your heart (Mt 12:34). Fill your heart with the good Word of God and then, filled with God's good Spirit (see table on being **Filled with the Spirit and Indwelt by the Word**), His supernatural power will enable you to tame your otherwise untamable tongue! (James 3:4-11) This is another manifestation of God's provision of amazing grace! Thank You Lord God! Amen.

**Nisbet** - 'This is the chapter of passionate temper; it speaks of the grievous word that stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1), of the perverseness that breaks the spirit (Proverbs 15:4), of the contention stirred up by wrath (Proverbs 15:18). However peaceful a family or community may be, it is remarkable how soon a conflagration will break out if a man of a quarrelsome and contentious spirit is introduced. The passionate man is often led to say and do things which, in his sober mind, he bitterly regrets. Let us keep clear of people of passionate dispositions, and give them a wide berth, asking the Lord to give us meek and quiet spirits, which act strongly and decisively on occasions when wrong is being perpetrated, but without the heat of selfish passion.'

I love old **John Trapp's** picture - It is easier to stir strife than to stint it. Hard to hard, will never do; but lay a flint upon a pillow, and you may break it with ease....What is more boisterous than the winds? tamen iidem imbribus sopiuntur, saith Pliny, yet are they laid with soft showers. How soon was David disarmed by Abigail's gentle apology, and made as meek as a lamb! So were the hot and hasty Ephraimites by Gideon's mild and modest answer. [ 8:1-3] "By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone." [Proverbs 25:15] Howbeit, some persons must be more roughly dealt with, or they will never have done - nettles hardly handled sting not as they will if gently touched - in some eases especially, as when God's glory is engaged.

**Charles Bridges** - WHAT a mine of practical wisdom is this Book of God! Let us ponder this valuable rule for self-discipline, family peace, and Church unity. Scripture often illustrates the different effects of the tongue. The soft answer is the water to quench (See Jacob with Esau, Gen. 32, 33: Aaron with Moses, Lev. 10:16–20: the Reubenites with their brethren, Jos. 22:15–34: Gideon with the men of Ephraim, Judg. 8:1–3: David with Saul, 1 Sam. 24:9–21: 26:21, Abigail with David, 25:23–32.)—Grievous words are the oil to stir up, the file (See the instances of Jephthah, Judg. 12:1–6: Saul, 1 Sam. 20:30–34: Nabal, 25:10–13: Rehoboam, 1 Kings 12:12–15: the Apostles, Acts 15:39.). And this is, alas! man's natural propensity—to feed rather than to quench the angry flame. We yield to irritation; retort upon our neighbor; have recourse to self-justification; insist upon the last word; say all that we could say; and think we "do well to be angry." (Jonah 4:9.) Neither party gives up an atom of the will. Pride and passion on both sides strike together like two flints; and "behold! how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:4) Thus there is the self-pleasing sarcasm; as if we had rather lose a friend, than miss a clever stroke. All this the world excuses as a sensitive and lively temper. But the gospel sets before us our Saviour's example (1Pe 2:23); imbues with his spirit (2Cor. 3:18, Phil. 2:3–5.); and imparts that blessed "charity, that is not easily provoked;" (1 Cor. 13:5.) and therefore is careful not to provoke a chafed or wounded spirit. If others begin, let us forbear from continuing, the strife. (Pr 17:14. Even a Heathen could give this excellent advice—"Let dissension begin from others, but reconciliation from thee."—Seneca.) Soft and healing words (Pr 25:15. Comp. James 3:17, 18) gain a double victory—over ourselves,<sup>10</sup> and over our brother (Ro 12:19–21).

**Gentle** (soft - KJV) ([07390](#))(**rak** from **rakak** = to be tender, soft, weak of heart - "The psychological notion of "weak resolve," which is the basic and underlying meaning is easily understood in all of the contexts in which [rakak] occurs." - TWOT) is an adjective which means tender, gentle, delicate, soft. The first use in Ge 18:7 describes a "**tender** and choice calf" which was to be prepared for the guest (one of whom was likely a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus). Ge 29:27 describes Leah's eyes as "**weak**" (meaning uncertain - some say appealing, others say plain!; Lxx = asthenes = physically weak, suffering some incapacity). **Rak** describes a **refined** (and delicate) man or woman (Dt 28:54, 56), which some take to mean gentle or tender, and which speaks of one's way of life that reflects refinement (Lxx translates with **apalos** = adjective that speaks of that which is tender). In first Chronicles the nuance

of rak is that of one (young Solomon) who is "inexperienced (Lxx = apalos)." (1Chr 22:5, 29:1, cp Solomon's self description Pr 4:3 = the way a mother sees her son as a tender, beloved child). **Rak** describes words (or tongue) as soft (Job 41:3 - Lxx = malakos = softly, Pr 25:5) or gentle (Pr 15:1). Finally, **rak** describes the tender green growth of new branches on a tree (Ezek. 17:22).

The Hebrew word used to describe a **gentle answer** is derived from the root verb rakak which is used to describe Josiah's "**tender heart**" in 2Ki 22:19, which was good soil (Lk 8:15) and "received the word implanted." (James 1:21) King Josiah demonstrated humility and receptivity on hearing the Word, not obstinacy and rejection! The root verb rakak also describes how a wound is "soothed" or softened with oil (Isa 1:6 uses the root verb **rakak**). Thus a soothing answer is not ineffective (Pr 25:15). **Harsh word** is literally "word of pain."

Webster says **gentle** means kind, amiable, docile, free from harshness, sternness or violence, soft, meek, peaceable, soothing, pacific, not rough, severe, refractory or turbulent. **Have you ever spoken a "turbulent" word to a spouse, child, co-worker?**

**Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definition** - Rak - tender, soft, delicate, weak - tender, delicate (of flesh), weak of heart, timid, soft (of words), gentle words (subst)

**Rak** NAS Usage: gentle, faint(1), fainthearted\*(3), grow faint(1), softened(1), softer(1), tender(2).

**Rak** - 15v - Ge 18:7; Ge 29:17; Ge 33:13; Deut 28:54, 56; 2Sa 3:39; 1Chr 22:5; 29:1; 2Chr 13:7; Job 41:3; Pr 4:3; 15:1; 25:15; Isa 47:1; Ezek 17:22

Pr 25:15 By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, and a **soft** (Lxx = malakos = yielding to touch, soft, gentle, tender) tongue breaks the bone.

**Comment:** Gentle speech parallels long patience and persuaded parallels breaks the bone. Bone is used figuratively to depict "hard" opposition to what one says to another. The point is that gentle speech is able to break through the tough exterior. In this sense there is some overlap with the gentle word of Pr 15:1. Both these proverbs show the incredible power of a gentle word! How would you grade your speech today on the "gentleness scale" where 1 is not at all gentle and 10 is extremely gentle? How can we improve our "gentleness score?" If we recall that one of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit in us is "gentleness" (and self-control) (Gal 5:22-23-note), it seems clear that the best way to speak a gentle word is to yield to the Spirit each morning (and many times throughout the day), seeking to continually rely on His enabling power to produce supernatural gentleness in our speech! If you have a poor "gentleness score," (and most of us do from time to time!) please don't fall into the (legalistic) trap of trying to fix it by faking it, because fallen flesh cannot fix fallen flesh. The only way to overcome the desires of the flesh (in this case to speak in a non-gentle manner) is to walk supernaturally by the Spirit (Gal 5:16-note).

In Ezekiel **rak** is used in a prophetic description of the coming Messiah "Thus says the Lord GOD, "I shall also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I shall pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a **TENDER (Rak)** one, and I shall plant it on a high and lofty mountain." The **NET Note** comments that the horticultural (so to speak) "language (of Ezek 17:22) is analogous to Messianic imagery in Isa 11:1; Zech 3:8; 6:12 (**Ed**: all three mention Messiah the Branch. See also Jer 23:5, 33:15) although the technical terminology is not the same." Matthew Henry commenting on Ezek 17:22 says "The unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect. The parable of a tree, used in the threatening, is here presented in the promise. It appears only applicable to Jesus, the Son of David, the Messiah of God." —

**Answer** (04617)(**maaneh** from **anah** = to give a response, to answer) is a masculine noun which describes a response or answer, e.g., something spoken or written in reply to a question or something given as a reply to an assertions another makes (Job 32:3,5). It means to speak a response to something that is said, implying a proper or appropriate response. **Maaneh** is translated in the **Lxx** in this verse with the Greek noun **apokrisis** which describes an response, reply or answer (Lk 2:47, 20:26, Jn 1:22). In Pr 16:4 maaneh is translated "purpose" which indicates the ultimate goal and destiny of something or someone. (see note below on Pr 16:4). Swanson comments on Pr 16:4 the meaning is "purpose, i.e., an act. which is planned and thought about, implying reasoned, thoughtful decision."

**Maaneh** - 8 v - Job 32:3, 5; Pr 15:1, 23; 16:1, 4; 29:19; Mic 3:7 and is translated in NAS as answer(6), purpose(1), response(1). Here are all the uses in Proverbs...

Pr 15:1 A gentle **answer** turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Pr 15:23 A man has joy in an apt **answer**, And how delightful is a timely word!

Pr 16:1 The plans of the heart belong to man, But the **answer** of the tongue is from the LORD.

**Comment:** An interesting Proverb which suggests that a man may plan how he is going to answer but the

sovereign God overrules all men's words for the accomplishment of His purposes. In other words (pun intended) "Man proposes, but God disposes!" Think of Balaam who wanted to curse Israel, but instead spoke a blessing over them! (cp Nu 22:6, 12, 23:11) And Balaam even spoke a prophecy concerning the Messiah in Nu 24:17 ("I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A **star** shall come forth from Jacob, And a **scepter** [think "King"] shall rise from Israel") Or the high priest Caiaphas who spoke a deep truth that he himself failed (sadly) to comprehend stating in the context of Jesus' trial that it was "expedient...that one man die for the people and that the whole nation not perish. Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. (Jn 11:49-52)

**NET Note** - The contrasting prepositions enhance the contrasting ideas – the ideas belong to people, but the words come from the LORD. There are two ways this statement can be taken: (1) what one intends to say and what one actually says are the same, or (2) what one actually says differs from what the person intended to say. The second view fits the contrast better. The proverb then is giving a glimpse of how God even confounds the wise. When someone is trying to speak ["answer" in the book seems to refer to a verbal answer] before others, the LORD directs the words according to his sovereign will. —

Pr 16:4 The LORD has made everything for its own **purpose**, Even the wicked for the day of evil.

**NET Note on "purpose"** - Hebrew is literally "for its answer." The term לַמַּעֲנֵהוּ (lamma'anehu) has been taken to mean either "for his purpose" or "for its answer." The Hebrew word is מַעֲנָה (ma'aneh, "answer") and not לְמַעַן (léma'an, "purpose"). So the suffix likely refers to "everything" (כֹּל, kol). **God ensures that everyone's actions and the consequences of those actions correspond – certainly the wicked for the day of calamity. In God's order there is just retribution for every act.**

Pr 29:19 A slave will not be instructed by words [alone;] For though he understands, there will be no **response**.

**NET Note** - Servants could not be corrected by mere words; they had to be treated like children for they were frequently unresponsive. This, of course, would apply to certain kinds of servants. The Greek version translated this as "a stubborn servant." To say "there is no answer" means that this servant does not obey – he has to be trained in a different way. —

**Turns away** (07725)(shub/sub) means to turn from, to turn aside, to deflect. The Lxx uses **apostrepho** (in present tense = continually has this effect) to turn something away from something else.

Illustrations: Aaron (Leviticus 10:16-20); Reubenites (Joshua 22:15-34); Gideon (Judges 8:1-3. Judges 15:18); Hannah (1Samuel 1:15, 1Samuel 1:17); Abigail (1Samuel 25:23, &c).

**William Arnot** - The Roman battering-ram, when it had nearly effected a breach in walls of solid stone, was often baffled by bags of chaff and beds of down skillfully spread out to receive its stubborn blow. By that stratagem the besieged obtained a double benefit, and the besiegers suffered a double disappointment. The strokes that were given proved harmless, and the engine was soon withdrawn. In our department a similar law exists, and a similar experience will come out of it... After praying to "Our Father" for your offending brother and yourself, you may speak to him with safety... Pass your resentment through a period of communion with Him who bought you with His blood, and it will come out like Christ's, a simple grief for a brother's sin, and a holy jealousy for truth.

**Wrath** (02534)(chemah from yacham = to be hot, Delitzsch says it is related to an Arabic word hamiy = to glow) is a noun which can refer to physical heat, but more often is used figuratively to convey the picture of inner, emotional "heat" which rises and is fanned to varying degrees. And thus chemah can mean hot displeasure, indignation, anger, wrath, and even poison (figuratively speaking). This type of anger is anger at its fever pitch so to speak.

The first use of **chemah** describes Esau's "**fury**" (Lxx = **thumos** - describes a tumultuous welling up of the whole spirit; a mighty emotion which seizes and moves the whole inner man. Greeks likened **thumos** to a fire amongst straw, which quickly blazed and just as quickly burned itself out.) which Rebekah knew would flare up when Esau discovered that Jacob had tricked him out of the inheritance of the first born (Ge 27:44) Chemah describes God's prophetic promise to Israel if she disobeys the covenant, for then He "will act with **wrathful** hostility!" (Lev 26:28 - God's hostility would be bad enough but for it to be modified by "wrathful" is almost incomprehensible!) When Phinehas speared the unfaithful Israelite man and his Midianite mistress (Nu 25:6-7), the divine plague was checked (Nu 25:8), God testifying that Phinehas had "turned away (His) **wrath** (Lxx = **thumos**) from the sons of Israel." (Nu 25:11) Moses "was afraid of the anger and **hot displeasure** (chemah)" of the LORD, which was to such a degree that He was going to destroy the entire nation (until Moses interceded). (Dt 9:19). Chemah describes Jehovah's **wrath** which caused Him to overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah (Dt 29:23). It was Jehovah's "**fury**" which cause Him to uproot Israel from their land and into exile (Dt 29:28).

In Dt 32:24, 33 **chemah** describes the "venom" of serpents. When Josiah heard the book of the Law which had been lost in the house of God (2Kings 22:8-11), he recognized that "great is the **wrath** of the LORD that" burned against Judah (2Ki 22:13). Because of Judah's idolatry, God said His "**wrath**" burned (2Ki 22:17). Chemah describes the great fury that kings of the North executed in their utter destruction (Dan. 11:44); a person's burning anger (2Sa 11:20). A man's jealousy is the source of his "**rage**" (Pr 6:34).

**Swanson** says that **chemah** describes "a very strong feeling of displeasure, hostility, and antagonism, usually in relation to a wrong, real or imagined, as an extension of the heat and burning feeling one can have when one is emotionally worked up and in strife and turmoil."

**Brown-Driver-Briggs'** Definition of **chemah** - heat, rage, hot displeasure, indignation, anger, wrath, poison (figuratively), bottles.

**Chemah NAS Usage:** anger(7), angry(1), burning anger(1), enrages(1), fury(9), heat(2), hot displeasure(1), hot-tempered(3), poison(2), rage(3), venom(5), wrath(86), wrath and raging(1), wrathful(2), wrathful\*(1). —

**Chemah** - 118v -

Gen 27:44; Lev 26:28; Num 25:11; Deut 9:19; 29:23, 28; 32:24, 33; 2 Sam 11:20; 2 Kgs 5:12; 22:13, 17; 2 Chr 12:7; 28:9; 34:21, 25; 36:16; Esther 1:12; 2:1; Esther 3:5; 5:9; 7:7, 10; Job 6:4; 19:29; 21:20; 36:18; Ps 6:1; 37:8; 38:1; Ps 58:4; 59:13; 76:10; Ps 78:38; 79:6; 88:7; 89:46; Ps 90:7; Ps 106:23; 140:3; Prov 6:34; 15:1, 18; 16:14; 19:19; 21:14; 22:24; 27:4; 29:22; Isa 27:4; 34:2; Isa 42:25; 51:13, 17, 20, 22; Isa 59:18; 63:3, 5-6; 66:15; Jer 4:4; 6:11; 7:20; Jer 10:25; 18:20; 21:5, 12; Jer 23:19; 25:15; 30:23; 32:31, 37; 33:5; 36:7; Jer 42:18; 44:6; Lam 2:4; 4:11; Ezek 3:14; 5:13, 15; 6:12; 7:8; 8:18; 9:8; Ezek 13:13, 15; 14:19; 16:38, 42; Ezek 19:12; 20:8, 13, 21, 33-34; Ezek 21:17; 22:20, 22; 23:25; Ezek 24:8, 13; 25:14, 17; 30:15; 36:6, 18; 38:18; Dan 8:6; 9:16; Da 11:44; Hos 7:5; Mic 5:15; Nah 1:2, 6; Hab 2:15; Zech 8:2

**Lawson** - WRATH is a fire that burns unto destruction, and it is our duty to bring water to quench this fire. A soft answer to provoking words is like water to a fire. By gentle language, joined to liberal presents, Jacob pacified the fierce resentments of his brother. Esau. He prayed to God, and trusted in him for the preservation of his family, but he did not neglect the proper means of calming his brother's angry spirit. There are some tempers so untractable that they cannot be pacified, but these are rare, and seem to be under some powerful influence of the devil, like that of Judas Iscariot, who was not reclaimed by the kind words of our Lord from executing his bloody purpose; or those miscreants that seized on our Saviour, although to his ordinary gentleness he added his miraculous power in healing the ear of Malchus. ([George Lawson - Exposition of the Book of Proverbs - go to top and select page 314](#))

**Adam Clarke** - Gentleness will often disarm the most furious, where positive derangement has not taken place; one angry word will always beget another, for the disposition of one spirit always begets its own likeness in another: thus kindness produces kindness, and rage produces rage. Universal experience confirms this proverb.

**Coffman** - Quiet, inoffensive speech has been effective in preventing many a violent encounter.

**John Gill** - Mild words, gentle expressions, delivered with kindness and tenderness, humility and submission; these will work upon a man's passions, weaken his resentments, and break and scatter the storm of wrath raised in his breast, just breaking forth in a very boisterous and blustering manner; so high winds are sometimes laid by soft showers. Thus the Ephraimites were pacified by Gideon's mild answer; and David by Abigail's very submissive and respectful address, Judges 8:1;

**But - term of contrast** - Used 22x out of 31v in Proverbs 15! Strong, striking contrasts saturate this section!

## JUST ONE — WORD!

One **harsh word**, one word meant to cause pain is all it takes!

**Kitchens** - A 'harsh word' is not simply one spoken with abrasiveness or out of irritation, but it is one designed to wound the other person. Note also that it is one single 'word' that wields such power.<sup>6</sup> How many arguments, rifts and fights could have been avoided by simply refraining from a single word! (Ibid)

**Harsh** (06089) (**etseb** from verb **asab** = to hurt, to grieve, physically or emotionally) is a masculine noun which means a hurt, pain, toil. The first use in Ge 3:16 describes physical pain of childbirth. While we men don't fully understand the degree and depth of this pain, we who have been with our wives understand how marked this can be! Now think of this same word used of the words we speak! The psalmist describes painful labors (Ps 127:2). In Pr 10:22 **etseb** describes **sorrow** (Lxx = **lupe**).

The Lxx translates **etseb** in Pr 15:1 with the adjective **luperos** which means painful, grievous, sorrowful.



**Harsh** in English means causing a disagreeable or painful sensory reaction: irritating. Rough to the ear; grating; discordant; jarring; as a harsh sound; harsh notes; a harsh voice. Rough; rude; abusive; as harsh words; a harsh reflection.

**NET Note** - The noun עָצֵב ('etsev) has a basic two-fold range of meanings: (1) "toil; labor" which produces pain and sorrow, and (2) "pain; sorrow" which is the result of toil and labor (BDB 780 s.v.). This is the word used of the curse of "toil" in man's labor (Ge 3:17) and the "pain" in the woman's child-bearing (Ge 3:16). God's blessing is pure and untarnished – it does not bring physical pain or emotional sorrow.

**Etseb** - 6v - Ge 3:16; Ps 127:2; Pr 5:10; 10:22; 14:23; 15:1. **NAS Usage:** hard-earned goods(1), harsh(1), labor(1), pain(1), painful labors(1), sorrow(1).

**Stirs up** (make to ascend) (05827) (**alah**) is a verb which means to go up, to ascend, both conveying the thought of an upward motion and here is used somewhat figuratively, with the Lxx translating it with the verb egeiro which means to cause someone to awaken (in this case to anger!) They stir up like a smoldering fire is kindled to full flame! The make anger "ascend" "as fire in a chimney, when blown up with bellows. Some men have quick and hot spirits; yea, some good men, as those two brethren, "sons of thunder," how soon was their choler up. [Luke 9:55] Now, hard and harsh words do cast oil upon the flame, and set their passions afloat; and then there is no ho with them....The best answer to words of scorn and petulance (saith one), is Isaac's apology to his brother Ishmael, patience and silence. Either reply not at all, or else so that all may be well between you." (Trapp)

**Illustrations:** the Ephraimites (Judges 12:1-4); men of Israel and Judah (2 Samuel 19:41-43. 2 Samuel 30:33); Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:30-34); Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 10:13-16. 2 Chronicles 26:21); Eliphaz (Job 22:5, &c.); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:39).

**John Gill** harsh words "are rough and menacing, scornful and sneering, reproachful and reviling, proud, haughty, and overbearing; like those of Jephthah to the Ephraimites; and of the Ephraimites to the Gileadites; and of Nabal to David's servants, concerning him; and of Rehoboam, who answered the people roughly: in all which instances anger was stirred up, and either were or like to have been attended with bad consequences, Judges 12:1.

**Matthew Henry** - Nothing stirs up anger, and sows discord, like grievous words, calling foul names, as Raca, and Thou fool, upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction or education, or any thing that lessens them and makes them mean; scornful spiteful reflections, by which men affect to show their wit and malice, stir up the anger of others, which does but increase and inflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest some will lose a friend and make an enemy.

**Anger** (0693)(**aph** from **anaph** = to breathe hard, to be angry) is a masculine noun meaning nose, nostril, snout (pigs - Pr 11:22), face (2Sa 25:23) and anger. Both senses are found in Proverbs 30:22 - "For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the **nose** (aph) brings forth blood; so the churning of **anger** (aph) produces strife." In the first use God "breathed into (man's) nostrils the breath of life." (Ge 2:7) **Aph** sometimes refers to the entire e whole face (Ge 3:19), especially in the expression, *to bow one's face to the ground* (Ge 19:1; 1Sa 24:8). To have *length of nose* is to be *slow to wrath* (Pr 14:29, 16:32). To have *shortness of nose* is to be *quick tempered* (Pr. 14:17; Jer. 15:14, 15). Aph is used in a phrase (goba aph) which means pride, arrogance, formally, high of nose, an improper haughtiness and self-confidence (Ps 10:4). Often speaks of divine anger or wrath (Ps 2:5, 2:12, 6:1, 30:5, 74:1, 77:9, 78:21) and thankfully is "Slow to **anger**." (Ps 103:8; 145:8, both Lxx = makrothumos = long-suffering)

The Lxx uses **orge** to translate **aph** in Pr 15:1 (and many of the other uses that connote anger). Some uses of aph are translated with **thumos** (Pr 24:18).

**Swanson** on why **aph** describes **anger** - anger, wrath, resentment, formally, nose, i.e., have a strong feeling of displeasure over a person or a situation, as a figurative extension of the nose as an area that can change color when blood rushes to it while one is angry.

**TWOT** - By the act of breathing, emotions can be expressed. Perhaps it was observed that the nose dilates in anger. God is said to be "erek appayim" (lit. "long of anger," i.e. long before getting angry) in such passages as Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 86:15; Neh 9:17. The thought is that God takes a long, deep breath as he holds his anger in abeyance. A ruler is said to be persuaded by a display of forbearance, patience, i.e. "the long of breath" (Prov 25:15). The main use of aph is to refer to the anger of men and of God. This anger is expressed in the appearance of the nostrils. aph gives specific emphasis to the emotional aspect of anger and wrath, whereas its synonyms and terms related to them give particular expression to other aspects. The anger of God is particularly related to the sin of his people, which pains and deeply displeases him (2Kgs 13:3). Sin offends and wounds his love. The emotional response to this is divine anger. This anger, though fierce (Jer 25:37) is not sinful, evil, or the source of capricious attitudes or deeds. However, it is expressed in chastisement (Ps 6:1; Isa 12:1) and punishment (II Sam 6:7; Jer 44:6). Man's anger can be legitimate (II Sam 12:5). But the OT Scriptures warn that anger can be outrageous (Pr 27:4) and, stirs up strife (Prov 29:22). In contrast, it is said that the man slow to anger appeases strife (Pr 15:18) and a wise man turns from it (Prov 29:8).

**Aph NAS** Usage: anger(205), angry(2), angry\*(5), before(2), breath(1), countenance(1), double(1), face(15), faces(4), forbearance\* (1), ground(1), nose(10), noses(1), nostril(1), nostrils(13), quick-tempered\*(1), snout(1), wrath(8), wrath with his anger(1).

**Aph** - 268v -

Ge 2:7; 3:19; Ge 7:22; 19:1; 24:47; 27:45; 30:2; 39:19; 42:6; 44:18; 48:12; Ge 49:6-7; Ex 4:14; 11:8; 15:8; 22:24; Ex 32:10-12, 19, 22; 34:6; Num 11:1, 10, 20, 33; 12:9; 14:18; 22:22, 27, 31; 24:10; Nu 25:3-4; 32:10, 13-14; Dt 6:15; 7:4; Dt 9:19; 11:17; 13:17; 29:20, Dt 29:23-24, 27-28; 31:17; 32:22; 33:10; Josh 7:1, 26; 23:16; Jdg 2:14, 20; 3:8; 6:39; 9:30; 10:7; 14:19; 1Sa 1:5; 11:6; 17:28; 20:30, 34, 41; 24:8; 25:23, 41; 28:14, 18; 2Sa 6:7; 12:5; 14:4, 33; 18:28; 22:9, 16; 24:1, 20; 1Kgs 1:23, 31; 2Kgs 13:3; 19:28; 23:26; 2Ki 24:20; 1Chr 13:10; 21:21; 2Chr 7:3; 12:12; 20:18; 25:10, 15; 28:11, 13; 29:10; 30:8; Ezra 8:22; 10:14; Neh 8:6; 9:17; Job 4:9; 9:5, 13; Job 14:13; 16:9; 18:4; 19:11; Job 20:23, 28; 21:17; 27:3; 32:2-3, 5; 35:15; Job 36:13; 40:11, 24; 41:2; 42:7; Ps 2:5, 12; 6:1; 7:6; 10:4; 18:8, 15; Ps 21:9; 27:9; 30:5; 37:8; 55:3; 56:7; Ps 69:24; 74:1; 76:7; 77:9; Ps 78:21, 31, 38, 49-50; Ps 85:3, 5; 86:15; Ps 90:7, 11; 95:11; 103:8; 106:40; Ps 110:5; 115:6; 124:3; Ps 138:7; 145:8; Pr 11:22; 14:17, 29; 15:1, 18; 16:32; 19:11; 21:14; Pr 22:24; 24:18; 25:15; 27:4; 29:8, 22; 30:33; Song 7:4, 8; Isa 2:22; 3:21; 5:25; 7:4; 9:12, 17, 21; Isa 10:4-5, 25; 12:1; 13:3, 9, 13; 14:6; Isa 30:27, 30; 37:29; 42:25; Isa 48:9; 49:23; Isa 63:3, 6; 65:5; 66:15; Jer 2:35; 4:8, 26; 7:20; 10:24; Jer 12:13; 15:14; 17:4; 18:23; 21:5; Jer 23:20; Jer 25:37-8; 30:24; 32:31, 37; Jer 33:5; 36:7; 42:18; 44:6; 49:37; Jer 51:45; 52:3; Lam 1:12; 2:1, 3, 6, Lam 2:21-22; 3:43, 66; Lam 4:11, 20; Ezek 5:13, 15; 7:3, 8; 8:17; 13:13; 16:12; Ezek 20:8, 21; 22:20; Ezek 23:25; 25:14; Ezek 35:11; 38:18; 43:8; Dan 9:16; 11:20; Hos 8:5; 11:9; Hos 13:11; 14:4; Joel 2:13; Amos 1:11; 4:10; Jonah 3:9; 4:2; Mic 5:15; 7:18; Nah 1:3, 6; Hab 3:8, 12; Zeph 2:2-3; 3:8; Zech 10:3

All uses of **aph** in Proverbs...

Prov 11:22 [As] a ring of gold in a swine's **snout**, [So is] a beautiful woman who lacks discretion. — Prov 14:17 A **quick-tempered** (2 words - **qatser** = short + **aph**) man acts foolishly, And a man of evil devices is hated. — Prov 14:29 He who is slow (arek - long) to **anger** has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. — Prov 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up **anger**. — Prov 15:18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to **anger** pacifies contention. — Prov 16:32 He who is slow to **anger** is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. — Prov 19:11 A man's discretion makes him slow to **anger**, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression. — Prov 21:14 A gift in secret subdues **anger**, And a bribe in the bosom, strong wrath. — Prov 22:24 Do not associate with a man [given] to **anger**; Or go with a hot-tempered man, — Prov 24:18 Lest the LORD see [it] and be displeased, And He turn away His **anger** from him. — Prov 25:15 By **forbearance** (2 words **arek** - long + **aph**; Lxx = **makrothumia** ~ "long burn") a ruler may be persuaded, And a soft tongue breaks the bone. — Prov 27:4 Wrath is fierce and **anger** (Lxx - orge) is a flood, But who can stand before jealousy? — Prov 29:8 Scorners set a city aflame, But wise men turn away **anger**. (Lxx - orge) — Prov 29:22 An **angry** (Lxx - **thumos**) man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression. — Prov 30:33 For the churning of milk produces butter, And pressing the **nose** brings forth blood; So the churning of **anger** produces strife.

**Lawson** - There are some who cast oil upon the flame of anger, and make it to burn more fiercely by their grievous and provoking words. What can such persons expect, but to be consumed by their own rashness? **Anger is a short madness, and when two mad persons are engaged in combat, they both are in danger of receiving deadly wounds.** Let us, therefore, (**Ed**: enabled by the Spirit, because naturally we cannot) endeavour to bridle our passions, and guard ourselves by the meekness of wisdom from the fierce passions of other men, lest, by biting and devouring one another, we be consumed one of another (**Ed**: Gal 5:15 - note that the "*antidote*" is Gal 5:16-note which refers to the Spirit). The fierce words of the men of Judah and Israel, when they were bringing back David to his throne, kindled a new war, which, without active and prudent management in David and his generals, might have produced fatal consequences\*. ([George Lawson - Exposition of the Book of Proverbs - go to top and select page 314](#))

**C H Spurgeon** gives an illustration of a canine giving a '**gentle answer**'! - "I once lived where my neighbor's garden was divided from me only by a very imperfect hedge. He kept a dog, and his dog was a shockingly bad gardener, and did not improve my plants. So, one evening, while I walked alone, I saw this dog doing mischief and being a long way off, I threw a stick at him, with some earnest advice as to his going home. This dog, instead of going home, picked up my stick, and came to me with it in his mouth, wagging his tail. He dropped the stick at my feet and looked up to me most kindly. What could I do but pat him and call him a good dog, and regret that I had ever spoken roughly to him?"

**Matthew Henry** - A right cause will be better pleaded with meekness than with passion. Nothing stirs up anger like grievous words.

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."—15:1 (14:29; 16:32;



30:33).

**Interpretation.**—The word “wrath” here signifies extreme anger—anger at a white heat. Even this may be “turned away” or “put back” by a “soft,” a healing, word. Whereas, “anger,” or irritation, is “stirred up” by grievous words—words which give pain and are intended to give pain. These, like coals upon fire, cause that to blaze up which might otherwise have died out.

**Illustrations.**—Jacob, anticipating his brother’s reproaches, tried the experiment of a soft answer betimes, and gained his brother. Aaron in like manner turned away the wrath of Moses (Lev. 10:16–20). The Reubenites, by a conciliatory reply, averted a civil war (Josh. 22:15, etc.), as did Gideon later on (Judg. 8:1), unlike Jephthah (Judg. 12). Hannah answered meekly under an offensive imputation, as did St. Peter long afterwards on behalf of himself and others under the same. But our blessed Lord, in this as in all respects is our great Exemplar, “Who when He was reviled reviled not again,” but by His forgiving words on the cross won a blasphemer’s soul.

**Application.**—I may not assume that a soft answer will always turn away wrath. Under some circumstances it may, even at the time, have proved an additional provocation, though in the end its virtue will be acknowledged. But its tendency is to soothe and heal, and as a rule it will produce this effect. The words are to be understood with limitations. The “soft answer” may be a reply to words spoken, or may be uttered in deprecation of anger known to exist in the breast, perhaps displayed in the countenance of another. It is usually better, when such anger has been aroused, to speak than to maintain a sullen silence, and to speak without much delay. But how to speak, this is the question. Human nature thinks scorn of a soft answer, as though indicative of a poor spirit. Left to myself, I should retaliate with hot and scornful words. Then, as between two flints, how great a fire would be kindled! I might even be tempted, rather than lose the pleasure of making a smart retort, or of having the last word, to lose my friend. I should certainly, by giving the reins to my temper, be in danger of making God my enemy. Therefore let me take heed not to be left to myself. To secure preventing grace in my morning prayer, my early Communion, and by a petition darted upwards at the time. Then I may hope to be able, at the moment of trial, to act with the patience and dignity of a Christian. To be meek, yet wise and firm. To ply hard arguments (if needful), but with soft words. To say no more than is required, and that in love. ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

**Devotional by Robert Morgan - Proverbs 15:1 - A Still, Small Voice - April 10** - The cold, hard eyes of Adolf Hitler locked onto [Martin Niemöller](#), but the courageous clergyman didn’t flinch. “We, too, as Christians and churchmen, have a responsibility to the German people,” said Neimoller. “That responsibility was entrusted to us by God, and neither you nor anyone in this world has the power to take it from us.” The Fuhrer angrily turned away. That evening Neimoller’s rectory was ransacked, and a bomb later went off in his hall. Shortly after, Neimoller mounted the pulpit of his church in Berlin, saying, “It is a testing time, and God is giving Satan a free hand.” In June, 1937, Neimoller was seized by the [Gestapo](#) and held in solitary confinement until his trial the following February. His situation was perilous, for the indictment against him comprised fourteen typewritten pages. On the morning of his trial, he was led from his cell by a green-uniformed official. Through eerie underground passageways they went, the two of them, from the prison to the Nazi court. A sense of terror overwhelmed Neimoller, a dread for himself, his family, his church. He feared the death camps. The maze of tunnels was dark and silent but for the echoes of their footsteps. As the two men ascended their last flight of stairs, Neimoller seemed to hear a voice, hushed and whispered, repeating some words. He strained to listen, and they came again more clearly. “**The name of the Lord is a strong tower,**” (Pr 18:10-note) said the voice. “The righteous run to it and are safe.” It was the guard, speaking under his breath. Neimoller gave no sign of hearing the words, but from that moment his fear was gone, replaced by an indescribable peace and assurance that never left him, even during the next seven years of suffering, even through his darkest days at [Dachau concentration camp](#). ([From This Verse- 365 Inspiring Stories About the Power of God's Word- Robert J. Morgan](#))

**Biblical Illustrator** - Taking a stroll in the country one bright spring morning, sudden turn in the road brought me to a clear, running stream. A little rustic bridge was thrown across it, and the whole scene formed such a pretty picture, I stopped to gaze upon it. While thus engaged a steady-looking errand-boy came posting over the bridge, with a shallow basket full of packages hanging on his arm. At the same instant a merry little lad appeared in the opposite direction, and carelessly running past the other, inadvertently pushed against his basket, and knocking it over, more than half the contents were sent rolling in the dust. The colour mounted to the errand-boy’s cheeks in a moment — his eyes flashed, he threw down the basket, and prepared to avenge the affront and give battle-royal to his adversary. The innocent author of the mischief, however, looked up in his face with a pleasant smile, and exclaimed, “Now, really, I’m so sorry; but I’ll help you to pick them all up again as fast as I can, and you see it wasn’t as if I’d done it on purpose!” All anger thereupon vanished from the countenance of the aggrieved party, who was not one of those implacable beings on whom “a soft answer” is thrown away. The two boys set cheerfully to work, and soon replaced the fallen goods, after which, with light hearts, they went whistling on their different roads. I pursued mine, musing on the wisdom of the cottage lad, and thinking how many quarrels, great and small, might be avoided by timely acknowledgment and ready explanation. There seemed something beyond mere good-nature in our little rustic; was not perhaps his simple reply an “answer of the tongue from the Lord”?

**Longman** - The proverb speaks to the most effective way to interact during a disagreement or argument. Though the sage does not

shirk from receiving a rebuke when necessary (17:10), it is more typically the case that a soft or tender response will create the conditions that allow for a fruitful conversation. On the other hand, if a person responds with a comment that evokes pain in the other person, then that other person will respond defensively and angrily, so no dialogue can continue. The sage is well aware that there are some who will respond angrily or defensively no matter what, and for cases like this, the recommendation is not to engage those persons at all (26:4). This proverb fits in with the general teaching in Proverbs that coolheadedness is superior to hotheadedness. This proverb also illustrates the book's concern for social cohesion. The proper response is one that maintains and promotes relationship. —

**Ray Ortlund** asks - What is the wise response to an angry person who says something cruel, false or demanding? Proverbs 15:1 helps us in those awkward moments at home, at work, in our churches. The key is **“a soft answer.”** So, you're standing there, stunned by those words that have just exploded in your face. In that instant of decision, as your mind is forming a response, “a soft answer” is the category you need. What is that? The word **“soft”** means tender, delicate, gentle, even weak. We don't like being weak, especially when we find ourselves in the crosshairs of anger. We would rather justify ourselves. It is hard to be wronged. It is doubly hard to be wronged and not fight back but respond softly. Of course, if the angry person is a heretic, bent on wrecking your church, he or she must be confronted strongly. But if that person is not a danger but only immature, then a tender, delicate, soft, weak answer might help that person see things in a new way. **Maybe not. Maybe nothing will help.** When God Himself answered Jonah's anger softly, Jonah wasn't satisfied (Jonah 4:1–11). But with the wisdom of Proverbs 15:1, the tension in the air might not escalate. The awkward moment might even be turned into something positive. But dishing out anger in response to anger will surely go badly. Here is what we can always expect: “a harsh word stirs up [more] anger.” A **harsh** – literally, “painful” – response can include words with sharp edges, a tone of sarcasm, implied threats of retaliation. There are many ways for the encounter to escalate quickly. **God Gets the Last Word** - The Bible gives us many encouragements to restrain ourselves when people are unkind. For example, “You shall reason frankly with your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:17). “Let your reasonableness be known to all” (Philippians 4:4). “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (Colossians 3:15). Most wonderfully, we have in our Savior the perfect example of wisdom: “When Christ was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” (1Peter 2:23). **That helps, doesn't it? It helps to remember that God sees, and God judges justly. Sometimes people judge unjustly.** They don't mean to. They just do. But God always judges justly. So, we don't have to get in the last word. On that great and final day, God will finish every conversation in this life that didn't go well. He will do so with perfect justice, fully satisfying to every redeemed heart. Let's trust him for that now, whenever we are under this kind of pressure. Venting is the world's foolish way, intensifying conflict. Restraint is the Lord's wise way, spreading shalom. And the Lord's way succeeds. It might satisfy our aggressor, and it will surely safeguard us. ([Going Soft Against Wrath - Desiring God](#))

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**How We React** - Syndicated columnist Sidney Harris tells of going with a friend to a newspaper stand. The friend bought a newspaper. The vendor was abrupt, gruff, and the friend responded in kindness. Harris was perplexed and said, “Is he always so unkind?” “Yes.” ““Do you always reply like that?” “Yes.” “Why?” “I can't determine how he will act, but I can determine how I will react.”

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**An Insult is Like Mud** - What dangerous fires of hatred are kindled by words spoken in haste! That's why taking time to think about what we should say is so important. Restraint can bring peace to many an ugly situation, as is illustrated by this story: An old Englishman, known as Father Graham in his village, was greatly loved because of his positive influence. One day an angry young man who had just been badly insulted came to see Father Graham. As he explained the situation, he said he was on his way to demand an apology from the one who had wronged him. “My dear boy,” Father Graham said, “take a word of advice from an old man who loves peace. An insult is like mud; it will brush off better when it is dry. Wait a little, till he and you are both cool, and the problem will be easily solved. If you go now, you will only quarrel.” The young man heeded the wise advice, and soon he was able to go to the other person and resolve the issue. How often the tongue pours fuel on a fire that would go out if left alone! Solomon said, “Do not be rash with your mouth,...let your words be few” (Eccl. 5:2). And hymnwriter William Longstaff put it well when he wrote, “Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul; each thought and each motive beneath His control.” Perhaps you have a problem with someone and have decided to “tell him off.” Why not wait? It's easier to brush off mud when it's dry. And pray for the one who offended you. It may dry the mud a little faster. -P. R. Van Gorder

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**James Scudder - Kind Words** - Proverbs 15:1 - The great poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, once struggled for hours with his son trying to wrestle a colt into the barn. Emerson had nearly given up, when a little servant girl walked up to the two tired men. With a sweet smile, she poked a finger into the horse's mouth. Lured by this affectionate gesture, the horse peacefully followed the girl into the barn. Sometimes the greatest of enemies can be won over by an act of kindness. It is no wonder that Proverbs says that a “soft answer” is the best approach as opposed to “grievous words.” A gentle approach doesn't mean we should be doormats, allowing anyone and everyone to push us around. Our demeanor also shouldn't resemble that of a bull in a china shop, either. Jesus gave us the formula for control of our temperament with his commandment that we be “wise as serpents” but “harmless as doves.” Nasty,

cutting words only put distance between you and the other person. You may even win the battle, but you'll ultimately lose the war. If that person is unsaved, you may turn them off to hearing the Gospel. Many conflicts could be avoided, even with difficult people, if only we would choose to utter the nice, gentle word instead of the sarcastic, critical remark. Who do you most identify with? Are you like the poet, trying to wrestle the colt into the barn? Or is your demeanor like the servant girl, who accomplished the task with kindness? — A kind heart is a fountain of gladness, making everyone in its vicinity freshen into smiles - Washington Irving

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**David Jeremiah - SPEAK SOFTLY** - PROVERBS 15:1 - The mouth of the righteous is a well of life” (Proverbs 10:11) and is as valuable as choice silver (Pr 10:20). The words of the righteous are wisdom, they are like food for those hungry to know how to live (Pr 10:21, 31). And most of all, the lips of the righteous are discerning, knowing what is acceptable to say (Pr 10:32). I believe the sensitive, Spirit-led Christian can depend upon the Holy Spirit to give him freedom to speak or freedom not to speak, depending on whether the words are acceptable (appropriate) in the given situation. Perhaps the most underutilized word of healing that Proverbs discusses is the “soft answer [which] turns away wrath.” It takes two people to have a heated, angry argument. If one of them decides to use a soft answer and not participate in the shouting match, the heated argument must by definition come to a halt. If you enter a situation where an angry argument is taking place, you can diffuse the tension and lower the decibel level by your soft words. It is a blessing beyond description to see the spirits of a person rise, the life restored to their eyes, as a result of a healing word from your own lips.

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**Words—Do They Matter?** - Proverbs 15:1-7 - If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. —James 1:26 - I heard a teenager from a Christian family declare, “My mom doesn’t think swear words are bad.” He then indicated which words she found acceptable—words that have long been considered inappropriate. Society’s standard of language has declined in recent years, but we don’t have to decline with it. As we strive to be “very careful . . . how [we] live” (Eph. 5:15 NIV), we should think about how to honor God with our words. We please the Lord with our tongue when we show discernment. “He who restrains his lips is wise,” Proverbs 10:19 reminds us. When we do speak, we are to filter the words that escape our lips: “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles” (Pr 21:23). It is important to use kind, positive words—even to address tough subjects. “A harsh word stirs up anger,” but “the tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly” (Pr 15:1-2). Finally, avoid words that reflect poorly on who we are as God’s children. Paul’s admonition to “let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth” (Eph. 4:29) sets a strong standard for the righteous use of words. ([Words—Do They Matter - Our Daily Bread](#))

To honor God in each part of life, use words that are pleasing and acceptable to a holy God.

The tongue can be a blessing  
And the tongue can be a curse;  
Say, friend, how are you using yours:  
For better or for worse?  
Anon.

What we say reveals who we are.

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**The Power Of Soft Answers** - Read: Proverbs 15:1-4 - A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. — Proverbs 15:1 My car broke down in a tunnel during rush hour in downtown Boston. Angry drivers expressed their frustration as they struggled past me. Eventually, the car was towed to a station for repairs. Later it broke down again, stranding me along the Interstate at 2 a.m. Back to the shop it went. Unfortunately, the repair shop also doubled as a parking lot during Red Sox baseball games. When I arrived after work the next day to pick up my car, it was hemmed in by 30 other vehicles! Let’s just say I was less than Christlike in my initial reaction. I ranted and raved, and then, realizing it was only making them less willing to help me at the close of their day, I decided to give up. I stormed toward the glass doors and struggled to get them open. My anger increased when the station workers laughed at me. I had barely made it out when I realized how unlike Christ I’d been. Chastened, I rapped on the locked doors and mouthed “I’m sorry” to the staff inside. They were stunned! They let me back in, and I meekly told them that Christians shouldn’t behave as I had. Minutes later, they were shifting cars to free up mine. I learned the truth that soft rather than harsh words can change circumstances (Prov. 15:1). ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O may I find in anger’s grip  
The strength to temper tongue and lip;  
But failing that, may God grant me  
The courage for apology.  
Kilgore

A soft answer has often been  
the means of breaking a hard heart.

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**Misunderstanding** - Two influential preachers, Charles Spurgeon and Joseph Parker, occupied pulpits in London during the 19th century. On one occasion, Parker commented about the poor condition of children admitted to Spurgeon's orphanage. It was reported to Spurgeon, however, that Parker had criticized the orphanage itself. Being a man of fiery temperament, Spurgeon blasted Parker from his pulpit. That attack, printed in the newspaper, became the talk of the town. Londoners flocked to Parker's church the next Sunday to hear his rebuttal. "I understand Dr. Spurgeon is not in his pulpit today, and this is the Sunday they use to take an offering for the orphanage," Parker said. "I suggest we take a love offering here for the orphanage." The crowd was delighted; ushers had to empty the collection plates three times. Later that week, there was a knock at Parker's study. It was Spurgeon. "You know, Parker, you have practiced grace on me," he said. "You have given me not what I deserved; you have given me what I needed."

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**A War Of Words** - A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. —Proverbs 15:1

On July 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in response to the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie. Within 90 days, other European countries had taken sides to honor their military alliances and pursue their own ambitions. A single event escalated into World War I, one of the most destructive military conflicts of modern time. The tragedy of war is staggering, yet our relationships and families can begin to fracture with only a few hateful words. James wrote, "See how great a forest a little fire kindles!" (James 3:5). A key to avoiding verbal conflict is found in Proverbs: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Pr 15:1). A small comment can start a large fight. When we, by God's grace, choose not to retaliate with our words, we honor Jesus our Savior. When He was abused and insulted, He fulfilled the prophetic words of Isaiah, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7). Proverbs urges us to speak the truth and seek peace through our words. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, . . . and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (Pr 15:4,23). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A careless word may kindle strife,  
A cruel word may wreck a life;  
A timely word may lessen stress,  
A loving word may heal and bless.  
Anon.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

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**A Soft Answer** - Proverbs 15:1 tells us that "a soft answer turns away wrath." While it's true that a humble response to wrath will normally cause it to subside, it's equally true that some people will never be pacified. Because of long-term bitterness and resentment, the tide of their wrath runs too high. The only thing we can do—and the thing we must always do—is be meek and lowly in the face of their anger and leave the consequences with God. This doesn't mean we must stay in an abusive situation, for no one has the right to mistreat another human being. But it does mean we can by God's grace respond calmly to another's anger. Paul stated the matter this way: "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). We must be peacemakers even if others refuse to be. Obedience is our job; the rest we leave to God. We want a word that always works, an easy solution, a quick fix. But some things in this broken world can't be fixed no matter what we do, so we must rely on God's grace to deal with them from day to day. Calm, quiet words may not always turn away another's wrath. You may be grieved because they go unheeded, but you can never go wrong with a soft answer. David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Help me guard my lips, O Savior;  
Keep me sweet when sorely tried,  
Answers soft to others giving,  
Meekly swallowing my pride.  
—Bosch

To handle a hard situation, try a soft answer.

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**The Critic** - When I was a teenager, a family joined our congregation. The wife was quiet, but the husband was loud, critical, and overbearing. I was standing nearby one Sunday morning when he stormed up to the pastor and verbally attacked him for something he had said in the sermon. The man's voice was loud, his tone disrespectful. The pastor didn't do what I expected. He spoke softly,

thanked the critic for his insights, and promised to think through the issue again. Later, I asked my pastor why he didn't argue right back. He gave me some valuable advice I still try to follow. He said, "Every piece of criticism can be helpful. God may be in it, and if He is, I need to hear what He's saying. The critic just might be right." When someone criticizes you, here are some biblical principles to follow: First, don't respond in anger (Proverbs 15:1). It will only accelerate the tension between you. Second, realize that you have been presented with a golden opportunity to model Christlike behavior—love, unselfishness, humility, and concern for others (Philippians 2:1-4). Third, the critic may be right; you may need to change. A wise person welcomes advice (Proverbs 9:8-9). Treat a critic as a friend, and you both win. —David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If criticism comes your way,  
Consider its intent;  
It may be that some truth from God  
To you is being sent.  
-D. DeHaan

Criticism is a good teacher if we are willing to learn from

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**A Kind Word** - A newspaper obituary caught my eye with this statement: "Services for affable fix-it man are today." Instead of focusing on one of the movers and shakers of society, the article told the story of a 79-year-old appliance repairman who was known for his integrity, character, and unquenchable happiness. The president of the company for which the man had worked said, "Half of his job was to go to people's houses and fix the appliances, and the other half was to fix the people. We had a lot of people with problems who requested him by name. He was very jovial, very friendly, and always had a kind word." — — No matter what our job, perhaps the most important work we do is helping and encouraging people, especially by what we say. The book of Proverbs speaks often of the tongue's power to hurt or to heal. For example: "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. . . . A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (Proverbs 15:4,23). We will represent Christ today through everything we say. What an honor it would be if we were known as happy people who have a smile and a kind word for everyone. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A careless word may kindle strife,  
A cruel word may wreck a life;  
A timely word may lessen stress,  
A loving word may heal and bless.  
--Anon.

Kind words are always the right kind

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**Reverse The Trend** - Researchers at Kenyon College conducted a test in cooperation with the US Navy. The purpose was to discover how the tone of the voice affected sailors when they were given orders. The experiments revealed that the way a person was addressed determined to a large extent the kind of response he would make. — — For example, when an individual was spoken to in a soft voice, he would answer in a similar manner. But when he was shouted at, his reply came back in the same sharp tone. This was true whether the communication was given face-to-face, over the intercom, or by telephone. — — This study reminds me of Proverbs 15:1, which states, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." What we say and how we say it not only makes a difference in the reaction we'll receive, but it also determines whether conflict or peace will result. Many arguments could be avoided and tense situations relaxed if we practiced the truth of this verse. — — The next time someone speaks to you in a harsh or angry tone, reverse the trend by expressing meekness, quietness of spirit, and loving concern. What a difference a soft answer can make in our relationships! —Richard De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

So many folks use words that are harsh,  
When angry, they speak their mind;  
But Christ would have us reverse this trend  
With words that are always kind.  
D. Deut Haan

To get out of a hard situation, try a soft answer.

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**Calm In An Age Of Rage** - Our daughter Melissa is at the "learning to drive" stage, and therefore has to listen to Mom's and Dad's



numerous safety speeches. On one occasion, we told her, "If someone cuts you off, stay calm. Don't make the other driver angry. You don't know what he or she might do." That comment seemed so natural. But as I thought about its implications, I realized how much has changed over time. When I was learning to drive, there was never any mention of "road rage" or being "cut off." Angry drivers weren't a big problem. But now angry outbursts are so much a part of our lives that we almost expect them. Hateful words are common on TV and radio shows. Students and teachers get into heated arguments. People who don't even know each other trade insults in public places. Athletes and fans shout in irate tones at sporting events. We live in an age of rage. But we can help solve the problem—one person at a time. When we're on the receiving end of someone's wrath, we can return a soft answer (Proverbs 15:1). A calm, reasoned approach can stop anger in its tracks. Christ stayed calm in the face of hateful accusations at His trial (Luke 23:1-12), and we should follow His example by staying calm in an age of rage. Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Help me guard my lips, O Savior,

Keep me sweet when I am tried;

Answers soft to others giving,

Meekly swallowing my pride.

Bosch

He who conquers his anger conquers a strong enemy

### Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.

- tongue: Pr 15:23,28 12:23 13:16 16:23 25:11,12 Ps 45:1 Ec 10:12,13 Isa 50:4
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE CONTRAST: — TONGUE OF WISE — MOUTH OF FOOLS

**NLT** Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge appealing, but the mouth of a fool belches out foolishness.

**Lxx English** Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise knows what is good: but the mouth of the foolish tells out evil things.

**ESV** Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

**NET** Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise treats knowledge correctly, but the mouth of the fool spouts out folly.

**NET Note** - How wise people are can be determined from what they say.

**MacDonald** - A wise man's tongue pours forth helpful information. He knows what, when, where, and how to speak.

**Matthew Poole** says the wise expresses "what he knows prudently and gracefully; taking due care both what, and when, and to whom, and in what manner he speaks."

**John Trapp** - Eloquence wisely ordered is very commendable, and avails much.

**Pulpit Commentary** - This means either, brings it forth opportunely, at the right time and place, or illustrates it, makes it beautiful and pleasant, as Proverbs 15:13. The wise man not only has knowledge, but can give it appropriate expression (comp. Proverbs 16:23). The wise man, by producing his sentiments and opinions in appropriate language and on proper occasions, commends wisdom, and renders it acceptable to his hearers.

**Constable** - The contrast here is not between the quantity of words that the wise and the fool utter. It is the fact that the wise man considers what he says before he says it, but the fool does not. Consequently what the wise says is "acceptable" (lit. "good") and what the fool says is "folly" (unwise). This proverb deals with responsible speech.

**Wiersbe** - When you summarize what Proverbs teaches about human speech, you end up with four important propositions: (1) speech is an awesome gift from God; (2) speech can be used to do good; (3) speech can be used to do evil; and, (4) only God can help us use speech to do good."

**Lawson** - The wise man knows when he ought to be silent, and when he should speak; and will not cast his pearls before swine, and give his holy things to dogs. His words are good, for they are spoken in due season, and he knows how to address himself in a

proper manner to different persons, according to their tempers and circumstances. Gideon used very different language to the angry Ephraimites, from that which he used to the men of Succoth and Penuel, otherwise the end of the Midianitish war had been the beginning of a more dangerous civil war. But our Lord is the most glorious instance of the right use of knowledge. The different answers he made to his friends and enemies, whether open or disguised, whilst they give proof of his admirable wisdom, afford us a pattern of prudence, joined with inflexible integrity. **But fools turn the little wisdom and knowledge they have into folly, by their way of using it; for the very instruction of fools is folly.** Their mouths pour out foolishness, as a fountain casteth out her streams. They are not masters of their tongues, but their tongues are masters of them. Whilst wise men have the fear of God set for a sentinel upon the door of their lips, their lips have neither a door nor a watch, but every thing that is within comes out; and as their hearts are little worth, their conversation is empty and vain.

**John Gill** - As the heart of a wise and good man is filled with useful knowledge, civil, moral, spiritual, and evangelical; so he takes care to communicate it, at proper times and seasons, in proper places, and to proper persons; adapting it to their case and circumstances, so as it may be for their comfort, edification, and instruction, and minister grace unto them; which is using knowledge "well", as the word **F19** signifies: such an use of it recommends it, and makes it appear beautiful and lovely, decorates and adorns it. Thus every good man, out of the good treasure of knowledge in his heart, brings forth his good things seasonably, to the use of edifying; in like manner, ministers of the word, scribes well instructed in the things of God, bring forth both new and old, to the profit of those to whom they minister; so Christ, as man and Mediator, had the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to weary souls

**Bridges** - In the previous proverb we had the tongue of love. Here we have the tongue of wisdom. The tongue reveals the person. The wise is in control of his tongue. The fool is controlled by his tongue. You may possess a mass of knowledge. But because you do not know how to use it in the right way, it runs to waste. Wisdom is shown, not by the quantity of knowledge, but by applying it in the right way.

**Kitchen** - Continuing the theme of speech, this antithetical proverb does not merely contrast wise and foolish speech. Rather, it compares the presentation of each. The 'tongue of the wise' is not simply found in what it says, but how it says it. It 'makes knowledge acceptable.' The verb means to make something pleasing or to do something well. It is used elsewhere of well-groomed hair (2 Kings 9:30), walking in a stately manner (Prov. 30:29), and playing an instrument so as to soothe and please others (Ezek. 33:32). The person of wisdom skillfully employs his words, so as to win others over to wisdom's side (Prov. 15:7; 16:21). This involves prudence in when to speak (Prov. 15:23), selection of the words used (Prov. 15:28), and the tone of voice (Prov. 15:1) (Ibid)

**Knowledge** (**01847**)(**daat**) means knowledge, knowing, learning, discernment, insight, is common in Proverbs (40/91 total uses) and is associated with the Biblical concept of wisdom. The Lxx translates **daat** with the verb **epistamai** in the present tense the wise continually understand or comprehend what is good.

**Acceptable** (03190)(**yatab**) means to be good, to be well, to be pleasing. As **Swanson** says **yatab** means to "be in a state of having proper characteristics or performing an expected function." The Lxx translates the verb **yatab** with the adjective **kalos** which describes the wise man's words as good, beautiful, useful, sound, fit, all of which is the antithesis of **kakos** which is bad or evil and is the word used in the Lxx to translate the fool's "**folly**" in Pr 15:2.

**But** - Marks the contrast between the wise and the foolish.

**Bridges** on the fool - But judge what must be the waters flowing from such a fool's fountain (Matt. 15:19). Listen to Baal's worshippers (1Ki 18:26); Rabshakeh's proud boasting (2Ki 18:26–29): the fretting murmurings of the people of God (Nu 14:2–10, 16:13)—all pouring out foolishness. Oh! for a large infusion of sound knowledge in the treasure-house within, that the tongue may be at once disciplined and consecrated!

**Gill** - their knowledge, as they take it to be, but it is no other than folly; this they throw out in great plenty, in a hurry, without fear or wit; they "babble" it out, as the word signifies, as water out of a fountain; their hearts are full of it, and their mouths proclaim it, Proverbs 12:23 = A prudent man conceals knowledge, But the heart of fools proclaims folly.

**Trapp** on **spouts** - Bubbles it out; blurts it out, as a fountain casts out its waters, with a great force and swiftness. They are talkative above measure, and eager to utter whatsoever comes into their chaps (Webster says chaps = The upper and lower part of the mouth; the jaw. It is applied to beasts, and vulgarly to men)

**Poole** on **spouts** - plentifully, continually, promiscuously, and vehemently.

Prov 13:16 Every prudent man acts with knowledge, But a fool displays folly.

Prov 15:28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours out (same word as Pr 15:2 - **naba**) evil things. —

**Spouts** (05042)(naba) means to to flow, spring, bubble up, spew out, to pour out, to utter, to emit. It refers to something pouring forth, bubbling out. The picture of a fools speech is that of a bubbling brook. Unlike the discretion of the wise, the fool simply opens his mouth and out flows whatever comes to his lips, which is usually folly! In Pr 15:28 "the mouth of the wicked **pours out** (naba) evil things." Used in a positive sense we read that God "will **pour** out (his) spirit" (Pr 1:23) and that "The fountain of wisdom is a **bubbling** (naba) brook (Lxx has "a spring of life")." (Pr 18:4)

**Lxx** translates **naba** in Pr 15:2 with **anaggello/anangelo** which means to bring back word and later to announce, to report.

**TWOT** says **naba** "connotes an **uncontrollable or uncontrolled gushing forth** as, e.g. the swollen waters of a wadi (Pr 18:4: cf. nāhal), the rush of words from a fool's mouth (Pr 15:2; antonym, hāgâ [**ponders**], Pr 15:28).

**NAS Usage:** belch forth(1), bubbling(1), eagerly utter(1), pour(1), pour forth(1), pours(1), pours forth(1), spouts(1), utter(2). —

**Naba** - 10v - Ps 19:2; 59:7; 78:2; 94:4; 119:171; 145:7; Prov 1:23; 15:2, 28; 18:4

Ps 19:2 Day to day **pours forth** speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. — Ps 59:7 Behold, they (treacherous nations - Ps 59:5) **belch forth** with their mouth; Swords are in their lips, For, [they say,] "Who hears?" — Ps 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will **utter** dark sayings of old, — Ps 94:4 They **pour forth** [words], they speak arrogantly; All who do wickedness vaunt themselves. — Ps 119:171 Let my lips **utter** praise, For Thou dost teach me Thy statutes. — Ps 145:7 They shall eagerly **utter** the memory of Thine abundant goodness, And shall shout joyfully of Thy righteousness.

**Swanson** - 1. (qal) gush, bubble forth, i.e., to have a mass of liquid or air move freely and profusely (Pr 18:4; Ecc 10:1); 2. (hif) utter, pour out, spew, i.e., speak profusely uttering words or statements, as an extension of a prolific effusion or free movement of a mass (Ps 19:2; 59:7; 78:2; 94:4; 119:171; 145:7; Pr 1:23; 15:2, 28)

## Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good

- Ge 16:13 Dt 11:12 Dt 21:9 2Ch 6:20 Ps 33:18 34:15, Ps 113:6, Ps 139:2,3, Job 34:21,31:4, Pr 5:21 Pr 15:3 Jer 16:17, Jer 23:24, Jer 32:19 Zec 4:10 Heb 4:13 1Pe 3:12 Ge 6:8
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE EYES OF JEHOVAH

**This proverb is Good News for those who do good,  
but Bad News for those who do bad!**

Note that in the sentence the phrase **in every place** stands at the forefront of the sentence and so reads "In every place, the eyes of Yahweh" which places emphasis on His omniscience.

**Eyes of the LORD** - This phrase is found 11x in Scripture - Ge 6:8; Deut 11:12; 21:9; 2Chr 16:9; Ps 34:15; Prov 5:21; 15:3; 22:12; Amos 9:8; Zech 4:10; 1Pet 3:12

Gen 6:8 But Noah found favor (grace) in the **eyes of the LORD**.

— 2Chr 16:9 "For the **eyes of the LORD** move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."

Beloved this is a promise all saints need to lay hold of in these dark last days in which we live. —

Ps 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, And His ears are [open] to their cry.

**Spurgeon** - He observes them with approval and tender consideration; they are so dear to Him that He cannot take His eyes off them; He watches each one of them as carefully and intently as if there were only that one creature in the universe. His ears are open unto their cry. His eyes and ears are thus both turned by the Lord towards His saints; His whole mind is occupied about them (**Ed**: That is a bit of the picture of the Hebrew and Greek words for "watching" in Pr 15:3): if slighted by all others they are not neglected by Him. Their cry He hears at once, even as a mother is sure to hear her sick babe; the cry may be broken, plaintive, unhappy, feeble, unbelieving, yet the Father's quick ear catches each note of lament or appeal, and He is not slow to

answer His children's voice.

Prov 5:21 For the ways of a man are before the **eyes of the LORD**, And He watches all his paths. —

Prov 22:12 The **eyes of the LORD** preserve knowledge, But He overthrows the words of the treacherous man.

1Pet 3:12 "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE UPON THE RIGHTEOUS (**dikaiois**), AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER (**deesis**) , BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

**Other Cross References on the eyes of the LORD**- Ge 16:13 2Chr 6:20, Ps 33:18, Ps 113:6, Ps 139:2,3, Job 34:21, Job 31:4, Jer 16:17, Jer 23:24, Jer 32:19 Zec 4:10 Heb 4:13-**note**

Ps 33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness

**Spurgeon - Behold.** For this is a greater wonder than hosts and horses, a surer confidence than chariots or shields. **The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him** That eye of peculiar care is their glory and defense. None can take them at unawares, for the celestial watcher foresees the designs of their enemies, and provides against them. **They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them. Upon them that hope in his mercy.** This one would think to be a small evidence of grace, and yet it is a valid one. **Humble hope** shall have its share as well as **courageous faith**. Say, my soul, is not this an encouragement to thee? Dost thou not hope in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus? Then the Father's eye is as much upon thee as upon the elder born of the family. These gentle words, like soft bread, are meant for babes in grace, who need infant's food. —

**HCSB** - The Hebrew word for observing (watching) or being vigilant implies that proper action will be taken with regard to what is observed. It is used of the capable wife who watches over her household (Pr 31:27), of the watchman in Ezekiel who is obligated to sound the alarm (Ezek 33:6), and of God Himself who watches and judges the nations (Ps 66:7).

Psalm 139 is a good "commentary" on this proverb.

**Adam Clarke** - He not only sees all things, by His omnipresence, but His providence is everywhere. The the consideration that His eye is in every place has a tendency to appall (discourage with fear) those whose hearts are not right before Him, and who seek for privacy, that they may commit iniquity. On the other hand the fact that His providence is everywhere, has a great tendency to encourage the upright, and all who may be in perilous or distressing circumstances.

**Albert Barnes** adds that "The teaching which began with the fear of the Lord Proverbs 1:7 would not be complete without this assertion of His omnipresent knowledge."

**Matthew Henry** - The great truths of divinity are of great use to enforce the precepts of morality, and none more than this - That the eye of God is always upon the children of men. 1. An eye to discern all, not only from which nothing can be concealed, but by which every thing is actually inspected, and nothing overlooked or looked slightly upon: The eyes of the Lord are in every place; for he not only sees all from on high (Psalm 33:13), but he is every where present. Angels are full of eyes (Revelation 4:8), but God is all eye. It denotes not only his omniscience, that he sees all, but his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. **Secret sins, services, and sorrows, are under his eye.** 2. An eye to distinguish both persons and actions. He beholds the evil and the good, is displeased with the evil and approves of the good, and will judge men according to the sight of his eyes, Psalm 1:6; Psalm 11:4. **The wicked shall not go unpunished, nor the righteous unrewarded, for God has his eye upon both and knows their true character; this speaks as much comfort to saints as terror to sinners.**

**John Trapp** - He is *panophthalmos*, all-eye: and his providence like a well drawn picture, that vieweth all that come into the room. I know thy works, and thy labor; [Rev 2:2] not thy works only, but thy labour in doing them. And as for the offender, though he think to hide himself from God, by hiding God from himself, yet God is nearer to him than the bark is to the tree; "for in him all things subsist," [Colossians 1:17] "and move"; - understand [Acts 17:28] it to be the mind's motions also....No man needs a window in his breast (as the heathen Momus wished), for God to look in at; every man before God is all window. [Job 34:22] The eyes of Christ are "as a flaming fire." [Revelation 1:14] And the school of nature teacheth that the fiery eye needs no outward light, that sees by sending out a ray

**Keil & Delitzsch** - This universal inspection, this omniscience of God, has an alarming but also a comforting side. The proverb seeks first to warn, therefore it speaks first of the evil.

**Watching** (06822)(**tsaphah**) is a verb which means to look out, to spy, to keep watch, to keep an eye on something or someone. The picture is to intently watch a situation. In the first use in Genesis, Jacob and Laban have just cut a covenant and then named the place Mizpah (means "Watchtower") signifying that God would "**watch** between" them when they were apart (Ge 31:49). The psalmist

says God watches over the nations (Ps 66:7). **Sapah** describes the men who watch as **watchmen** (1Sa 14:16; 2Sa 13:34; Isa. 21:6; Mic 7:4). A watchman was stationed on a city wall and given the responsibility to inform the people of any oncoming danger. It was a serious task and failure to perform the duty could result in the death penalty! So needless to say the idea of a watchman watching speaks of their intense scrutiny of the situation! Sapah also refers to the prophets (Jer 6:17, Ezek 3:17, 33:7, Hos 9:8). Some passages use the idea of watching to refer to the person waiting, as did the prophet Habakkuk who declared "I will keep **watch** to see what He will speak to me." (Hab 2:1) Sadly some of those God called to be watchmen were blind to their divine mission (Isa 56:10), which is one of the reasons Israel eventually fell to the Assyrians and Babylonians.

**Watching** in Pr 15:3 is translated in the Lxx with **skopeo** from **skopos** = distant mark looked at, goal or end one has in view; English "scope" as in microscope or telescope) and which means to "spy out", to look at, to observe, to contemplate, to mark (to fix or trace out the bounds or limits of). **Skopeo** implies mental consideration and so conveys the picture of attentively fixing one's attention upon something (in this case someone) with desire for (emulation) or interest in. The idea can be to "aim at". Contemplate, look into, examine, inspect, continue to regard closely, to notice carefully, pay attention to, keep one's attention on. Here in Pr 15:3, **skopeo** is in the **present tense** which signifies that God is continually watching closely over all His creation. **What effect should this awesome truth have on so-called "Secret Sins (Spurgeon sermon)" we might be tempted to carry out deceptively thinking they were clandestine, when in fact they were "clarion" (brilliantly clear) to God's all seeing eye!**

For God our Maker, ever nigh, — Surveys us with a watchful eye; — Our every thought and act he knows, — From early dawn to daylight's close.

**TWOT** - conveys the idea of being fully aware of a situation in order to gain some advantage or keep from being surprised by an enemy. The verb appears in the sense "to lie watching in ambush"; the wicked watches the righteous to slay him (Ps 37:32). Conversely the wise woman watches (looks to) the ways of her household; i.e, she diligently takes care of its every need (Prov 31:27). So too Yahweh is alert to what happens on earth in order that he may properly judge its inhabitants (Prov 15:3; cf. Ps 66:7). It also expresses the posture of faith; Micah says, "As for me, I will look to Yahweh, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (7:7). Dhorme takes the form in Job 15:22 as a passive ptc. (šāpû) meaning the result of being looked over, "choice" or "marked."

**Sapah** NAS Usage: destined(1), keep watch(3), lookout(1), looks well(1), spies(1), watch(3), watch expectantly(1), watched(1), watching(2), watchman(14), watchman's(1), watchmen(5).

**Sapah** - 32v - Gen 31:49; 1Sam 4:13; 14:16; 2Sam 13:34; 2Sa 18:24-26; 2Ki 9:17-18, 2Ki 9:20; Job 15:22; Ps 5:3; Ps 37:32; Ps 66:7; Prov 15:3; 31:27; Isa 21:6; 52:8; Isa 56:10; Jer 6:17; 48:19; Lam 4:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:2, 6f; Hos 9:8; Mic 7:4, 7; Nah 2:1; Hab 2:1

**Pulpit Commentary** - The **omnipresence** and **omniscience** of Jehovah, the covenant God, is strongly insisted upon, and the sacred name recurs continually in this and the next chapter, and indeed throughout this Book of the Proverbs (see Wordsworth, in loc.). The LXX renders the verb **skopeo** "are watching," as from a tower or high place.

**A W Tozer** - God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones, and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell. (From Tozer, A. W., & Verploegh, H. The Quotable Tozer I: Wise Words with a Prophetic Edge. Includes index. Camp Hill, PA.: WingSpread annotated as from [The Knowledge Of The Holy](#))

**Charles Bridges** on Pr 15:3 - Adored be this All-seeing God! (Psalm 139:1-6.) His inspection of the universe, so minute, exact, unwearied! (Jer. 23:23, 24, Ps. 11:4, 5.) The first mark of the apostasy was a dread of his presence (Gen. 3:8, 4:16). The ungodly try to forget it, (Ps. 10:11; 73:11, 94:5-7, Ez. 8:12, Hos. 7:2.) and often succeed in banishing him out of their thoughts (Ps. 10:4). Yet in despite of all their efforts to hide, he does see them. His eyes are in every place. Heaven, hell—the secret places of the earth—are all open before him (Pr 15:11, Ps. 139:7-10, Amos 9:2, 3). He beholds the evil—whether the King on his throne (Acts 12:21-23), or in his palace; (Dan. 4:29, 5:5) or the servant indulging his secret sin (Pr 5:20, 21, 2 Kings 5:20). Yes—he may shut out the sun from his retreat, but he cannot shut out the eye of God, "from whom the darkness hideth not." (Job 24:15, 16; 34:21, 22, Psalm 139:11, 12, Jer. 16:17) Reckless indeed is he to do or think what he would hide from God; and then—such is the secret root of atheism! (Ps. 14:1)—thinking he can do so. (Isa. 29:15) **But his eyes also behold the good.** He sees them in outward destitution (Gen. 16:7, 13, Ps. 27:10), in secret retirement, (John 1:48, Acts 10:9-13) in deep affliction (Ex. 3:7, Psalm 91:1). He pierces the prison walls. (Gen. 39:21, 2 Chron. 33:12, 13, Acts 12:7, 16:25) He "covers their heads in the day of battle." (Ps. 140:7) He is with them in the furnace, (Dan. 3:25, Isa. 43:2) and in the tempest. His eye guides them as their journeying God (Psalm 32:8, Gen. 28:15), and will guide them safe home; (Psalm 23:4, 48:14, Isa. 42:16) full of blessing (Gen. 26:3), protection, (2Chr 16:9, Ps. 33:18, 19; 34:15, 1 Pet. 3:12) and support. (Isa. 41:10, 14) 'He fills hell with his severity, heaven with his glory, his people with his grace.' (Charnock) **But**



**how shall I meet these eyes! As a rebel or as a child? Do they inspire me with terror, or with love? Do I walk carefully under their lively impression?** (Ge 17:1) Conscious corruption leads me to shrink from the eyes of man. But Oh! my God! I would lay myself naked and open to thee (Heb 4:13). Search me; try me; show me to myself. Bring out my hidden iniquities, and slay them before me. (Psalm 139:23, 24, Ps 19:12-13) How is the overwhelming thought of this piercing eye more than counterbalanced by the view of the great High Priest, who covers and cleanses all infirmities and defilements, and pleads and maintains my acceptance notwithstanding all discouragement! (Heb. 4:13, 14)

**Lawson** - The eyes of men can be but in one place, because themselves are circumscribed in one place. But the eyes of that God who fills heaven and earth are every where. Angels are full of eyes before and behind, but God is all eye, and darkness and the shadow of death hideth not from him. He is in heaven by his glorious presence; and that high and holy place is like a watch-tower, from whence he espies the evil and the good. Evil men flatter themselves that none sees or knows their wickedness, as if God could not see through the dark clouds; but he is a witness of what they speak and do in their bed-chambers, nor does a single thought of their heart escape his notice. "Beware, Cato looks on," was a proverb among the Romans; but a greater than any man on earth is still looking on us, and shall we do that before the eye of God, which we durst not be guilty of in the presence of a child? Alas! how is the God who sees all things despised and insulted by the sons of men! But he will not be mocked; he beholds and judges, and will punish the evil-doer\*.

**His eyes behold the good also;** and this is their great consolation, when they are overlooked or ungratefully used by men. God knows their integrity, and beholds with a pleasant countenance their humble and sincere endeavors to please him, and to do good to men. Every thought of his name, and every good word that they speak, is written before him in a book of remembrance†. He beholds with an eye of pity all their secret sorrows, and puts their tears in his bottle; and not a moment does he withdraw his eyes from the righteous‡.

**Good men need not fear that God will forget any of his gracious promises.** They will be all accomplished to them in due season; for his eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in their behalf; and his providence is constantly employed to glorify his faithfulness, in fulfilling that word which he hath magnified above or upon all his name.

**William Arnot** - The doctrine of Divine omniscience, although owned and argued for by men's lips, is neglected or resisted in their lives. The unholy do not like to have a holy eye ever open upon them, whatever their profession may be. If fallen man, apart from the one Mediator, say or think that the presence of God is pleasant to them, it is because they have radically mistaken either their own character or His. They have either falsely lifted up their own attainments or falsely dragged down the character of the judge.... In every place our hearts and lives are open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do. The proposition is absolutely universal. We must beware, however, lest that feature of the word which should make it powerful only renders it indefinite and meaningless. Man's fickle mind treats universal truths that come from heaven as the eye treats the visible heaven itself. At a distance from the observer all around the blue canopy seems to descend and lean upon the earth, but where he stands it is far above, out of his sight. It touches not him at all; and when he goes forward to the line where now it seems to touch other men, he finds it still far above, and the point which applies to this lower world is distant as ever. Heavenly truth, like heaven, seems to touch all the world around, but not his own immediate sphere, or himself its centre. The grandest truths are practically lost in this way when they are left whole. We must rightly divide the word, and let the bits come into every crook of our own character. Besides the assent to general truth, there must be specific personal application. A man may own omniscience and yet live without God in the world.

**Ridley Pearson Devotional** - "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."—15:3.

**Interpretation.**—In adaptation to human understanding, the omniscience of the Deity is here and elsewhere compared to eyes—"seven eyes," indicating perfectness (2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 4:10). They are said to observe, to examine, to behold (as from a watch-tower) the evil and the good everywhere. The doctrine has both its alarming and its comfortable side, but as it is intended first to warn, "the evil" are first spoken of.

**Illustrations.**—The omniscient eye of God observed our first parents in the garden, Joseph and Manasseh in prison, Achan within his tent, Hezekiah on his sick-bed, Nebuchadnezzar in his palace, the three youths in the furnace, Jonah in the whale, Nathanael under the fig-tree, St. Peter on the housetop, Herod on his throne, Lydia by the river-side, St. Paul in the tempest and before Nero, St. John in exile.

**Application.**—It is evident from Holy Scripture that nothing escapes the penetrating eye of God. He sees not only every man, but all his doings and all his thoughts. As our Governor, above all as our Judge, it is essential all should be "naked and open" to His Eyes. He must know all, that He may "rule in righteousness" and "judge righteous judgment." Man in his sinfulness would prefer an impersonal God, would make of the machinery of Nature a God which he might observe without being himself observed. But the proofs of God's all-seeing Eye are too irrefutable, and conscience bears witness to It too feelingly, to allow of there being as much atheism spoken as is acted. Yet the inner spirit of the guilty, until reconciled, is atheistic, and he saith with Job's adulterer, "No eye shall see me" (Job 24:15). The same man would call upon God in time of danger. So easy is it to own omniscience and yet live

“without God.” But, indeed, the thought of the all-seeing Eye is too terrible, when realized, to be endured unless we recognize in It the beamings of compassionate love. Am I, in the spirit of adoption, able to look up to God and cry, “Abba, Father”? Then, while the certainty that at every moment “Thou, God, seest me,” will make me watchful not to offend, in private as well as in public, in the church, in the counting-house, in the shop, in the street, wherever I am, it will not fill me with dismay. For I shall remember that He sees “the good” as well as “the evil,” and will reward the honest effort of His child to be good. He sees my faults. He sees my repentance also. He sees me “in the Beloved,” and accepts me for His sake.

**Bullinger** - Beholding = taking note, or observing. Illustrations: Adam (Genesis 3:8, Genesis 3:9); Hagar (Genesis 16:7, Genesis 16:13); Ethiopian (Acts 8:29); Abraham (Genesis 22:11, Genesis 22:15-18); Jacob (Genesis 28:11-16; Genesis 46:1-4); Joseph (Genesis 39:21); Achan (Joshua 7:10-18); Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:1-3, 2 Chronicles 7:12-16); David (Psalms 139:7-13); Asa (2 Chronicles 14:11, 2 Chronicles 14:12); Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 18:31); Ahab (1 Kings 22:34, 1 Kings 22:35); Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:5, 2 Kings 20:13-18); Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33:12, 2 Chronicles 33:13); Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:22); Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:29, Daniel 4:32); Belshazzar (Daniel 5:5); Jonah (Jonah 2:10); Nathanael (John 1:48); Stephen (Acts 7:55); Peter (Acts 10:9-16); Herod (Acts 12:23); Lydia (Acts 16:13, Acts 16:14); Paul (Acts 27:23, Acts 27:24; 2 Timothy 4:17); the wedding guests (Matthew 22:11-13, 1 Corinthians 11:28).

#### Related Resources:

- [Proverbs 15:3 The Omnipresence of God - Charles Simeon](#)
- Omnipresence - Attribute of God
- Omniscience - Attribute of God

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**He's Watching** - In this age of electronics, we have all become aware of bugging devices. A person's office, hotel room, or telephone can be monitored so that every sound is picked up. This is accomplished through highly sensitive microphones that are so small they can easily be hidden. Heads of state, government officials, and business people in strategic positions must be exceedingly careful of what they say, especially when entering a strange setting. The awareness that they might be overheard is sure to make them think twice before they speak.

Did you ever stop to think that God sees everything we do and hears everything we say every moment of the day? Hebrews 4:13 says that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

This truth is both comforting and sobering--comforting because God stands ready to deliver us when we are in trouble (Ps. 33:18-19), and sobering because "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). What a profound effect this should have on the way we live!

The next time you are tempted or in trouble, remember that God is watching and listening. —Richard Deut Haan

There is no time of day or night,  
No place on land or sea  
That God, whose eye is never dim,  
Does not see you and me.  
-DJD

**To know that God sees us brings both conviction and comfort**

#### Proverbs 15:4 A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit

- Pr 12:18 Pr 16:24 Mal 4:2
- Pr 3:18 Ge 3:22-24 1Ti 6:3 Rev 2:7
- Pr 18:8,14 26:22 Ps 52:2-4 109:22
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### OUR TONGUE CAN BRING HEALING OR CRUSHING

**Soothing tongue** - Literally "*a tongue of healing*." The Septuagint translates "soothing" with the noun **iasis** which describes "a restoration to health after a physical malady! Deliverance from a variety of ills or conditions that lie beyond physical maladies = cure,

deliverance." (BDAG) Indeed, "the tongue of the wise brings **healing**." (Pr 12:18) and "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and **healing** to the bones." (Pr 16:24) God's words are "are life to those who find them, And health to all their whole body." (Pr 4:22)

Wow! What awesome power is present in our tiny tongue - power for good or for evil! (cp tongue in James 3:2-12) As **Kitchen** says "What potential lies within our words! We are endowed by our Creator with the capacity to bring either genuine, substantive help to those around us or to inflict incalculable lasting harm upon them—all of that by simply opening our mouths!"

**May God grant us grace to frequently offer up the prayer of David**"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips" (Ps 141:3)

**Spurgeon** - That mouth had been used in prayer, it would be a pity it should ever be defiled with untruth, or pride, or wrath; yet so it will become unless carefully watched, for these intruders are ever lurking about the door. **David feels that with all his own watchfulness he may be surprised into sin, and so he begs the Lord Himself to keep him. When Jehovah sets the watch the city is well guarded: when the Lord becomes the guard of our mouth the whole man is well garrisoned.** Keep the door of my lips. God has made our lips the door of the mouth, but **we cannot keep that door of ourselves**, therefore do we entreat the Lord to take the rule of it. O that the Lord would both open and shut our lips, for **we can do neither the one nor the other aright if left to ourselves**. In times of persecution by ungodly men we are peculiarly liable to speak hastily, or evasively, and therefore we should be especially careful to be preserved from every form of sin in those precarious situations. How condescending is the Lord! We are ennobled by being door keepers for Him, and yet He deigns to be a Door Keeper for us. **Incline not my heart to any evil thing** (Ps 141:4). It is equivalent to the petition, "**Lead us not into temptation.**" O that nothing may arise in providence which would excite our desires in a wrong direction. The Psalmist is here careful of his heart. He who (**Ed**: or what) holds the heart is lord (master) of the man: but if the tongue and the heart are under God's care all is safe. Let us pray that He may never leave us to our own inclinations, or we shall soon decline from the right way.

**NET Note** explains that "A healing tongue refers to speech that is therapeutic or soothing. It is a source of vitality."

**Personal Application - Is my speech "healing" or "destroying?" - Does it tear down and destroy (or even make ill)?**

Compare speech which is "**unwholesome**" (**sapros**) or "rotten." "Let no **unwholesome** word **proceed** (command to be our lifestyle! Just try to obey this in your old natural power! We desperately need to fling ourselves on the enabling supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Fill us Holy Spirit that our speech might bring glory to the Lamb. Amen.) from your mouth, but only such [a word] as is good for edification according to the need [of the moment,] that it may give grace to those who hear." (Eph 4:29-**note**)

**Soothing** (04832)(**marpe** from = ) is a masculine noun which means health, healing, a remedy. The idea is restoration, cure, or renewal of from illness. **Is that the effect your tongue has on your spouse, your children, your co-workers, etc?**E.g., in 2Chr 21:18 Jehoram had a sickness for which there was no cure. In one of the saddest verses in the Old Testament we read that Israel "continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy. (2 Chr. 36:16; cp similar use in Jer. 14:19 = "beyond healing"!)." Pr 4:22 says God's Words "are life to those who find them, And health to all their whole body." Pr 6:15 says "there is there will be no healing" for a sluggard. Repeatedly we see that a wise word brings healing (Pr. 12:18; 13:17; 15:4; 16:24). **Marpe** is translated in Pr 15:4 in the Lxx with **iasis** which means healing or cure (Lk 13:32, Acts 4:11, 30, used in Lxx of Pr 3:8, 4:22). BDAG on **iasis** (1) restoration to health after a physical malady, healing, cure (Jn 5:7, Acts 4:30)

**A tree of life** - It is like a "life giving" tree. This phrase occurs 11x in Scripture - Ge 2:9; 3:22, 24; Pr 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19. The idea here in Pr 15:4 is the amazing truth that our words that may be the source of life for another soul.

Prov 3:18 She (Wisdom) is a **tree of life** to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast.

Prov 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a **tree of life**, And he who is wise wins souls.

Prov 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a **tree of life**.

Prov 15:4 A soothing tongue is a **tree of life**, But perversion in it crushes the spirit.

## Resources on Tree of Life

- [Tree of Life - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Tree of life - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament \(In Depth\)](#)
- [Tree of Life - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia \(In Depth\)](#)
- [Tree of Life in Revelation 22:2 - Discussion by Tony Garland](#)

**Warren Wiersbe** - Right words are like nourishing, health-giving food. "The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit" (Pr 15:4, NIV). What a wonderful thing it is to say the right words and help to heal a broken spirit! The phrase, "**tree of life**," means "source of life" and goes back to Ge 2:9. (According to Ge 3:1–7, Satan tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden tree so she would become like God, "knowing good and evil." But it isn't necessary to disobey God to develop discernment; His divine wisdom instructs us concerning good and evil, and is our "tree of life" - See Pr 3:18). "The lips of the righteous feed many" (Pr 10:21; see Pr 18:20). "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (16:24, NKJV; see Ps 119:103). "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Pr 12:18; see Pr 12:14; Pr 13:2).

**Charles Bridges** on a **soothing tongue** - It is like salt that is thrown into a spring and cleanses polluted water (2 Kings 2:21). So when there is grace in the heart, there will be healing in the tongue. Words will be full of grace, seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6-**note** = Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, [as it were,] with salt [**Beloved the only way to accomplish this end is by continually being filled with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit!**], so that you may know how you should respond to each person.). Large indeed is the sphere, and abundant the blessing. When employed in soothing the afflicted, calming the troubled waters with words of peace, it creates a paradise around. It is not like 'the thorny bush, pricking and hurting those that are about us, but a fruitful tree—a tree of life.'

**John Gill** on a **soothing tongue** - A tongue that delivers out salutary instructions, wholesome advice and counsel; a "healing tongue", as it may be rendered, which pacifies contending parties, and heals the divisions between them; to have the benefit of such a man's company and conversation is like being in paradise. Such is the tongue of a Gospel minister, which delivers out the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ; sound speech and doctrines, which cannot be condemned; healing truths to wounded consciences, such as peace, pardon, righteousness, and atonement by the blood of Christ. These are the means of quickening dead sinners, reviving and comforting distressed ones, and show the way of eternal life unto them; ([Proverbs 15 Commentary](#))

**George Lawson** - The tongue that administers proper and seasonable counsels, comforts, and reproofs, is a wholesome tongue. Unmerited rebukes, reproaches, unkind words, and cruel mockings, are perverseness in that little member, which boasteth and can really effect great things. The advantages derived from a healing tongue are like the fruits of the tree of life,—the erring are reclaimed, the dejected are comforted, the weak are animated and invigorated by it. When Job was in deep distress, he was very sensible how pleasant these fruits were which he had no opportunity to taste, and tells his friends, that if they had been in his situation, he would have strengthened them by his words, and assuaged their grief by the moving of his lips. The words of God have a divine virtue for healing the diseases and the wounds of the spirit. This is the dispensary from which we are to derive healing words for the broken in spirit\*.

**Matthew Henry** - A good tongue is healing, healing to wounded consciences by comforting them, to sin-sick souls by convincing them, to peace and love when it is broken by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the healing of the tongue, which is a tree of life, the leaves of which have a sanative (aving the power to cure or heal) virtue, Revelation 22:2. **He that knows how to discourse will make the place he lives in a paradise**

**Longman** - A healthy tongue is one that speaks the straightforward truth. Not that it blurts out the truth without concern for the circumstances or without the requisite tenderness (Pr 15:1), but it does speak what is right and thus promotes life. For the metaphor of the tree of life, see Pr 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; the point is that a healthy tongue encourages life. On the other hand, a duplicitous tongue is one that lies and misleads. Far from positive effects, it breaks the spirits of those who listen to it. This proverb illustrates the book's sensitivity and concern for the psychological consequences of speech and actions.

**NET Note** - A tongue that is twisted, perverse, or deceitful is a way of describing deceitful speech. Such words will crush the spirit (e.g., Isa 65:14).

Here is an excellent example of **words that were perverted** for they falsely claimed to heal the people of Judah - "They have healed (rapha) the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace But there is no peace.'" (Jer 6:14, cp Jer 8:11)

**Perversion** (05558)(**selep** from verb **salap** = to twist, pervert, subvert, overthrow, distort - 7 uses in OT = Ex 23:8; Dt 16:19; Job 12:19; Pr 13:6; 19:3; 21:12; Pr 22:12) is a masculine noun which means crookedness, crooked dealing, deceit (deceitfulness), perversity, subversion, duplicity. Here in Pr 15:4 **selep** describes spoken words that are crooked and perverted from the truth and thus false. Kitchen notes that "Twisting words so that they serve our own evil intent 'crushes the spirit' of those we are in relationship with."

**Selep** is used only one other time in Scripture = Proverbs 11:3 The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the **crookedness** ("duplicity, i.e., what is essentially false, with a focus on lack of integrity in a person" - Swanson) of the treacherous will destroy them.

**Webster** on **perversion** - The act of perverting; a turning from truth or propriety; a diverting from the true intent or object; change to

something worse. We speak of the perversion of the laws, when they are misinterpreted or misapplied; a perversion of reason, when it is misemployed; a perversion of Scripture, when it is willfully misinterpreted or misapplied, &c.

**Crushes** (07667)(**seber** from **sabar** = to break in pieces as used in Pr 6:15; 25:15; 29:1) a masculine noun which means destruction, ruin, breaking, fracture, affliction, crushing, breach, crash. **Seber** is used primarily in three ways - literal breaking (limbs, pottery, etc), in a metaphorical sense of the crushing of a spirit (Isa 65:14) or of a people (Jer 8:21) and finally in a general sense to a collapse, destruction or ruin (Isa 1:28, Jer 4:6, Amos 6:6).

The first two uses in Lev 21:19, 24:20 describe a literal break or fracture. Isaiah 1:28 says "transgressors and sinners will be **crushed together** (Lxx = **suntribo**)." Isaiah 30:13 figuratively describes iniquity as like "A bulge in a high wall, Whose **collapse** comes suddenly in an instant." Used elsewhere in proverbs for destruction that comes to the proud and haughty (Pr 16:18, 18:12). Describes "destruction" God is bringing on Zion (Jer 4:6) and in Jer 4:20 "**Disaster** (**seber**; Lxx = **talaiporia** = hardship, inner torment, wretchedness, misery - Ro 3:16, James 5:1) on **disaster** (**seber**) is proclaimed." In Jer 6:14 God says "they have healed the **brokenness** of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace." (cp Jer 8:11,21). Note that the majority of the uses are found in the prophets, frequently in the context of the impending collapse of the Northern (Israel - 10 Northern tribes) or Southern kingdom (Judah and Benjamin). Nahum describes Nineveh - "There is no relief for your breakdown, Your wound is incurable."

**Swanson** - **1. crippling**, i.e., a state of a fracturing injury which has on-going effects, as a disfiguration (Lev 21:19); **2. wound, fracture, bruise**, the injury of soft-tissue on an object, either breaking the skin, or bruising the muscle and tissue, or fracturing the bone (Lev 24:20; Isa 30:26; Jer 6:14; 8:11; 10:19; 14:17; 30:12, 15; La 2:13; Na 3:19+); **3. breaking**, i.e., the breaking of a solid object into pieces (Isa 30:14; Eze 27:26); **4. destruction**, i.e., the state or condition of ruining an object, with a special focus on breaking up something completely (Job 41:25; Pr 16:18; 17:19; Isa 1:28; 15:5; 51:19; 59:7; 60:18; Jer 4:6, 20; 6:1; 8:21; Jer 48:3, 5; 50:22; 51:54; La 2:11; La 3:47, 48; 4:10; Eze 32:9; Am 6:6); **5. fissure, fracture**, i.e., an area of the earth which is below the ground, often caused by earthquake (Ps 60:2); **6. downfall, formally, crushing**, i.e., a state or condition of moving from a high status to a low status (Pr 18:12); **7. crashing**, i.e., the sound of objects impacting one another in terse, sharp, staccato sounds, but not in a particular pattern (Zeph 1:10), note: in context this is the sounds of invading armies from the environs around a city.

**Seber** NAS Usage: (1), breaches(1), breakdown(1), broken(2), brokenness(3), collapse(1), crash(1), crashing(1), crushed(1), crushes(1), **destruction**(17), disaster(2), fracture(3), injury(2), interpretation(1), ruin(3), smashing(1).

**Seber** - 39v - Lev 21:19; Lev 24:20; Jdg 7:15; Neh 7:8; Job 41:25; Ps 60:2; Pr 15:4; 16:18; 17:19; Pr 18:12; Isa 1:28; 15:5; 30:13-14, 26; Isa 51:19; 59:7; 60:18; Jer 4:6, Jer 4:20; 6:1, 14; 8:11, 21; 10:19; Jer 30:15; 48:3, 5; Jer 50:22; 51:54; Lam 2:11, Lam 2:13; 3:47-48; 4:10; Ezek 32:9; Amos 6:6; Nah 3:19; Zeph 1:10

**Charles Bridges** - But if the gracious tongue be healings, the evil tongue is wounding. The meekest of men felt its perverseness a breach in the spirit. (Num. 16:1-14, with Nu 12:5) The tongue of Job's friends broke "the bruised reed," which needed to be bound up. (Job 13:1-5) Even our beloved Lord, who never shrunk from external evil, keenly felt the piercing edge of this sword in his inmost soul (Psalm 69:9, 19, 20). May it be with me, as with my Divine Master, that "grace may be poured upon my lips," (Ps 45:2) so that it may be a wholesome tongue, full of blessing and of good fruits!

**Matthew Henry** - An evil tongue is wounding (perverseness, passion, falsehood, and filthiness there, are a breach in the spirit); it wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned breaches in the spirit. **Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart has been broken by them**

**George Lawson** - **perverseness in the tongue is a breach in the spirit** It wounds and pierces, it breaks and bruises, the heart of him that is reproached by it. Job would not have exposed himself so much to the censures of Elihu, if his more aged friends had behaved more kindly to him. His patient spirit felt most sensibly the piercing edge of their unjust reproofs. David felt none of his afflictions more bitterly, than the keen reproaches and insults of his enemies. And our Lord Jesus Christ exemplified his unconquerable patience in bearing the contradictions of sinners, and enduring with all meekness, though not without afflicting sensibility, the indignities that were poured upon him†. When we are exposed to the scourge of the tongue, let us remember that He was tempted like as we are, and imitate his patience, and trust in him for the supplies of needful grace.

**John Phillips** - A wound from a tongue can be deeper, sorer, and harder to heal than a wound from a sword. Harsh and bitter words, mean and untrue words, words spoken sarcastically or maliciously can hurt a person deep in his soul. Yet they often hurt those who speak more than those who are spoken to. Think for example of Peter (John 18:15-27; Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:54-62).

**Proverbs 15:5 A fool rejects his father's discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible**



- **fool:** Pr 10:1 13:1,18 1Sa 2:23-25 2Sa 15:1-6 1Ch 22:11-13 28:9,20
- **but:** Pr 15:31,32 1:23 6:23 19:20 25:12 Ps 141:5 Tit 1:13 2:15)
- For other proverbs that deal with a related theme see Pr 6:23; 10:1, 17; 12:1; 13:1, 18; 15:10, 31, 32; Pr 19:20; 25:12.
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE FOOLISH REJECTION

**Charles Bridges** writes that "subjection to parents is the law of nature, recognized by the most uncivilized nations. Much more is it the law of God (Ex. 20:12, Eph. 6:1, 2. Comp. Deut 21:18–21). **The authority of parents is the authority of God.** The wayward resistance of the ungodly will be fearfully scourged. (1Sa 2:22–25) And even the Christian penitent has felt the smart of the rod to the end of life. If example would put this folly to shame, do we not read of One child able to teach—yea to command—his parents, who yet exhibited the lovely pattern of filial subjection? (Luke 2:49–51) **But pride must be broken down, and the “clothing of humility worn,”** (1Pe 5:5) **before the child will see that his parents know better than himself;** and that to count their word law—to “bear the yoke in the youth,” (Lam. 3:27) and to regard counsel, and even reproof—as it is the path of honor (Pr 13:18)—so it is the path of prudence (Pr 15:31, 32, 19:20). Solomon’s wisdom, though the special gift of God, was doubtless connected with this filial regard to his wise father’s instruction (1Ch 22:11–13; 29:9, 20). Will those, who despise their earthly father’s instruction, be ready to listen to their heavenly Father? How surely therefore will this intractable (Not to be governed or managed; violent; stubborn; obstinate; refractory) spirit excludes people from the Kingdom of God! (Mt. 18:3, 4)

**Lawson - A father’s instruction proceeds from love, and it is folly and ingratitude to despise it; and yet some children are such enemies to themselves, and so unnatural to their best friends, that they break the spirits of their affectionate parents, by spurning at those admonitions that are needful for their own welfare.** They are like froward patients, who are angry at the physician for giving them medicines which are salutary, but unpalatable. In a father’s instructions there is authority. The authority of parents over their children has been acknowledged by the wildest nations, and is ratified in that law which was spoken by the mouth, and written by the finger of God. When they reprove their children, the authority of God is joined to the authority of parents, to enforce their admonitions; for they are expressly required to attempt the reformation of their children by rebukes and corrections. He that despises his father’s reproofs, despises not only man, but God. **This is folly in the extreme, and he that was a fool before he received instruction, becomes mad when he resists it.**

As **Longman** says "If one cannot bear to hear about one’s mistakes and take steps to correct them, then one is doomed to be perpetually wrong. Thus, it is stupid not to hear those in authority give advice."

**Gill on fools** - They are fools that despise any instruction that is wise, good, and profitable; and especially a father’s instruction, whose love, tender affection, and care, will not suffer him, knowingly, to give any but what is good and wholesome: wherefore to despise it is not only a **contempt of his authority**, but a **slight of his love**; which are both very aggravating, and sufficiently demonstrate his folly; and of which he may be himself convinced when it is too late, and say, "how have I hated instruction and despised reproof?" Proverbs 5:12. He is a **fool** that despises the instruction of anyone superior to him in years and experience; of ministers of the word; and especially of our Father Who art in heaven, declared in the sacred Scriptures, which are written for instruction in righteousness

**Wiersbe** - A fool’s own father can’t instruct him (Pr 15:5), and if you try to debate with him, it will only lead to trouble (Pr 29:9). Why? Because fools actually enjoy their folly and think they’re really living! "Folly is a joy to him who is destitute of discernment" (Pr 15:21; see Pr 1:22; Pr 12:15; Pr 18:2). Warn them about sin and they laugh at you (Pr 14:9)....Disrespect for parents usually begins with disrespect for the Word of God that parents seek to teach to their children....If children maintain this haughty attitude, they’ll eventually rob their parents (Pr 28:24), curse their parents (Pr 20:20), and bring shame to their parents (Pr 19:26).

**Fool** ([0191](#)) ('evil) refers to a person characterized by moral folly. The uses in Proverbs give us a "descriptive definition" (see verses below to compile your own "definition") of a Biblical fool = lacks understanding (Pr 10:21), does not store up knowledge (Pr 10:14), fails to attain wisdom (Pr 24:7), refuses correction (Pr 15:5; 27:22), is arrogant (Pr 26:5), speaks loosely (Pr 14:3) is contentious (Pr 20:3). A fool is easily deceived and spiritually flawed! A fool may possess mental capability but they manifest morally ineptitude! (So they really aren’t very "smart" in divine matters, those things that matter the most in this life.)

In Proverbs, a **fool** is one who is morally deficient from the standpoint of being able to make reasoned moral judgments. He willfully refuses to make moral choices, choosing neither good nor rejecting evil. He arrogantly refuses to receive moral instruction and to learn from his mistakes (Pr 1:7; 12:15; 15:5). The fool is characterized by foolishness ("iwweleth), an internal moral corruption that renders the fool impotent to make reasonable moral judgments in life (Pr 15:21; 16:22). His moral deficiency manifests itself in matters of speech, morality, discipline, religion, and daily life. He speaks either the wrong thing or at the wrong time (Pr

10:8,10,14,21; 14:3), and he is quick to show his anger (Pr 12:16; 20:3) and to refuse resolution (Pr 29:9).

The person who rejects discipline is defined as a fool. Response to correction or discipline is a common theme in Proverbs.

Prov 3:11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD, Or loathe His reproof,

Prov 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid.

Prov 15:31 He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof Will dwell among the wise. 32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding. 33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor [comes] humility.

See:

- [Fool, Foolishness, Folly in Holman](#)
- [Fool, Foolishness, Folly in Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

**Rejects** (05006)(**naas**) means to revile, to scorn, to reject, despise, abhor (hate extremely or with contempt), spurn, treat with contempt, revile. God tells Moses His people "**spurn**" Him (Nu 14:11) and that those who "**spurned**" Him would not enter the promised land (Nu 14:23) The rebellion of Korah and those with him in effect "**spurned** the LORD" (Nu 16:30) by challenging Moses' divinely appointed role as leader (Nu 16:1-3). God prophesied that His people would "**spurn**" Him by turning to other gods and serving them and thus breaking His (Mosaic) covenant (Dt 31:20). Israel made Jehovah jealous with strange gods, provoking Him to anger (even sacrificing to demons!) and thus Jehovah "**spurned** them because of the provocation." (Dt 32:19, context Dt 32:16-18) The sons of Eli were worthless men who did not know Jehovah and as a result "**despised** the offering of the LORD." (1Sa 2:17). Naas is used in the Psalms of a greedy man who "spurns Jehovah" (Ps 10:3), the wicked who "spurned God" (Ps 10:13), "the enemy" who spurned His Name (Ps 74:10), foolish people who "spurned" His Name (Ps 74:18) and His people who "spurned the counsel of the Most High." (Ps 107:11). Israel was disciplined because they "**despised** the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:24, cp Isa 1:4 "**despised** the Holy One of Israel").

**TWOT** says this Hebrew root "signifies the action or attitude whereby the former recipient of favorable disposition and/or service is consciously viewed and/or treated with disdain."

Webster says **spurn** is from a root meaning to kick and means literally to kick; to drive back or away as with one's foot. To reject with disdain; to scorn to receive or accept. To treat with contempt. To manifest disdain in rejecting any thing; as to spurn at the gracious offers of pardon. To make contemptuous opposition; to manifest disdain in resistance.

**Scorn** - Extreme contempt; that disdain which springs from a person's opinion of the meanness of an object, and a consciousness or belief of his own superiority or worth. A subject of extreme contempt, disdain or derision; that which is treated with contempt. To think unworthy; to disdain. To slight; to disregard; to neglect.

**Despise** - feel contempt or strong dislike for an object, rejecting as having little or no value either or both by words and actions

The other two uses of **naas** in Proverbs speak of rejecting reproof (idea of presenting evidence or charging a person with wrongdoing)

Prov 1:30 "They would not accept my counsel, They **spurned** (naas; Lxx = **mukterizo** = turn up one's nose at, treat with contempt as in Gal 6:7) all my reproof (Lxx = **elegchos**).

Prov 5:12 And you say, "How I have hated instruction! And my heart **spurned** (naas; Lxx = **ekklino** = made a volitional choice to turn aside away from) reproof (Lxx = **elegchos**)!

**Naas** NAS Usage: blaspheme(1), blasphemed(1), despise(3), despised(5), given(1), rejects(1), spurn(3), spurned(8), spurns(1).

**Naas** - 23v - Nu 14:11, 23; Nu 16:30; Deut 31:20; 32:19; 1Sa 2:17; 2Sa 12:14; Ps 10:3, 13; 74:10, 18; Ps 107:11; Prov 1:30; 5:12; 15:5; Isa 1:4; 5:24; 52:5; 60:14; Jer 14:21; Jer 23:17; 33:24; Lam 2:6

**Discipline** (instruction) (04148)(**musar** from **yasar** = to discipline, chasten, admonish) refers to discipline, chastening, correction. God's chastening is always for purposes of instruction, and should not be ignored or resented. (Job 5:17 cp Job 42:2). Solomon instructs us "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof." (Pr 3:11) One of major purposes of wisdom literature is to teach wisdom and instruction (musar) (Pr 1:2) Isaiah describes the divine chastisement poured out on the Suffering Messiah (Isa 53:5). **Musar** is translated in the Septuagint with the noun **paideia** which is used of rearing and guiding a child to maturity (Heb 12:11) and refers to God's fatherly discipline (Heb 12:5). Paideia means to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior, of providing guidance for responsible living, of rearing and guiding a child toward maturity.

**Kitchen** adds that **discipline** "describes a process of instruction that takes place through correction. A fool leaves no room for learning by failure. He refuses to believe that anyone else may see things more clearly than he. He is determined to prove to the world he needs no one."

## THE SENSIBLE CONTRAST

**Regards** is **shamar** (08104) which conveys the idea of to watch, to keep, to preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one's guard. **Shamar** is what Adam and Eve were supposed to do in the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:15)! Clearly this verb indicates more than just accepts reproof, but observes it carefully.

The **Lxx** translates **shamar** with the verb **phulasso** which means (here in the **present tense** = continually) to watch, even as would a military guard or sentinel (cp Acts 23:35, 28:16). In the NT **phulasso** is used metaphorically (as it is here in Pr 15:5) of guarding **TRUTH** - "**Guard** (**phulasso** in the **aurist imperative** = conveys a sense of urgency. Do this now! Do it effectively! And the only way to obey this command is by reliance on the Holy Spirit), through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure (in context = THE GOSPEL) which has been entrusted to you. (2Ti 1:14-note, cp 1Ti 5:21, 6:20)

**Reproof** (08433)(**tokeha** from **yakah** = to argue, convince, convict, judge, reprove) is a noun which describes a rebuke, a correction, a chastening (Ps 73:14) a reproof (Ps 39:11) or an argument (Job 13:6, 23:4). The main idea of **tokeha** is correcting a wrong. In the Lxx of Pr 15:5 **tokeha** is translated with the noun **entole** which refers to that which has been authoritatively ordered or commanded.

**Is sensible** (prudent) (06191)(**aram**) is a verb which means to be shrewd and context determines whether it is a positive trait (as here in Pr 15:5 or Pr 19:25) or negative in this sense of crafty, cunning, tricky (1Sa 23:22, Ps 83:3). **Swanson** explains the the positive sense means "to show wisdom and prudence in a situation that shows a capacity to properly understand and respond to a situation with discernment." The verb **aram** is related to the noun **prudence** (**ormah** - 06195) in Pr 1:4; 8:5, 12 and an adjective **prudent** (**arum** - 06175) in Pr 12:23; 13:16; 14:8, 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12.

**George Lawson** - Persons may receive instruction, when it does not touch their pride, and yet have no solid wisdom; but he that receives reproof with calmness, and makes use of it for the correction of his life, gives, a sure proof of his prudence. There are many persons who come to church, and sit as God's people sit, and appear very attentive to the preaching of the word; but if there is any occasion to administer the censures of the church to them, they are like a horse or mule when their sores are touched; and the bit and bridle will scarcely hold them in from coming nigh unto their reprovers.

**Matthew Henry** - If instruction is despised, reprove men rather than suffer them to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin.

**Prudent** (Webster) - having or showing sound judgment. Cautions; circumspect; practically wise; careful of the consequences of enterprises, measures or actions; cautious not to act when the end is of doubtful utility, or probably impracticable. Prudent suggests exercise of the restraint of sound practical wisdom and discretion

**John Trapp** on the one who **is prudent** - Wise he is, and wiser he will be. This made David prize and pray for a reprover. [Ps 141:5]

### Proverbs 15:6 Great wealth is in the house of the righteous, But trouble is in the income of the wicked

- **house:** Pr 15:16 8:21 13:22 21:20 Ps 112:3 Heb 11:26
- **income:** Pr 10:22 Pr 16:8 Job 20:19-23 Ps 37:16 Eccl 4:6 Eccl 5:10-14 Jas 5:1-3
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TREASURE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

**Moffatt** translates it - "In a good man's house there is ample treasure, but revenues of bad men go to wreck."

We see a similar contrast in Isaiah 3:10-11 - "Say to the **righteous** that it will go well with them, For they will eat the fruit of their actions. Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he deserves will be done to him." As Solomon said "There is one fate for the **righteous** and for the wicked."

**Great** (07227)(**rab**) is a commonly used (420 uses) adjective meaning much, many, abundance, or numerous. The primary meaning is many, which occurs initially in Ge 21:34. It can mean much in amount such as gold (1Ki 10:2); silver (2Ki 12:10); wine (Esther 1:7).

**James Coffman** - A little is often sufficient in the house of good people; and it is always preferable to great riches in a house of wickedness. See Pr 15:16,17, which are parallel with this verse.

**John Trapp** - Every righteous man is a rich man, whether he hath more or less of the things of this life. For, first, he hath plenty of that which is precious. Secondly, Propriety; what he hath is his own; he holds all in capite tenure (a) in Christ; he shall not be called to account as a usurper. "All is yours," [1 Corinthians 3:22] "because you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And although he hath little, many times, in present possession, yet he is rich in reversion; rich in bills and bonds, rich in an apparent pledge, that is worth all the world besides - that is, in Christ; for, having given us his Son, "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" [Romans 8:32]

**Wealth** (02633)(**hosen**) refers to a treasure, riches, wealth. The root of **hosen** has the idea of a store or the laying up of valued goods. The Lord is called the "**wealth** (Lxx = **thesauros** = storehouse, place where something is stored for safekeeping [Thus "house of the righteous" becomes a great "storehouse."] - cp 1Pe 1:5-**note**) of salvation" in Isa. 33:6. Indeed, as discussed below Jehovah is the ultimate treasure to be desired! Wealth or **riches** are not forever (Pr 27:24). God will give over the wealth of Jerusalem to her enemies (Jer 20:5). **Hosen** in Ezek 22:25 refers to "treasure" illicitly taken.

The Lxx translates Pr 15:6 with a slightly different sense (more emphasis on ethical than material) than English translation of the Hebrew = "In the houses of the righteous is much strength" (In abounding righteousness is great strength.)

**Hosen** - 5x - Pr 15:6; 27:24; Isa 33:6; Jer 20:5; Ezek 22:25

**Kitchen** - Proverbs often speaks of the physical and material blessings that God sends the way of those who walk in wisdom or righteousness (Pr. 3:10, 16; Pr 8:18, 21; Pr 10:22; 14:24; Pr 22:4; 24:4). It is true that, on occasion, as it may serve God's higher purposes, He may allow the righteous to suffer deprivation, but it is not the norm that Proverbs would lead them to expect. (Ibid)

**Righteous** (06662)(**saddiq** from **sadaq** = to be just or righteous) is an adjective which describes one as upright or just. This root basically connotes conformity to an ethical or moral standard. And so **saddiq** pertains to a person being in accordance with a proper (right) standard (God's standard being the ultimate arbiter of what defines righteousness acceptable to God). **Saddiq** can also convey the sense of innocence (guiltless) when describing one having no sin or wrongdoing according to a right (righteous) standard (Ex 23:7). In the first use of **saddiq** in Scripture God says "Noah was a **righteous** (Lxx = **dikaios**) man." (Ge 6:9, 7:1 cp 2Pe 2:5-**note**) **Saddiq** describes Jehovah (Isa 26:7, 45:21, Jer 12:1, Lam 1:18, etc) In Ex 9:27 Pharaoh testified (correctly) "Jehovah is the **Righteous One!**" Messiah is called a "**righteous Branch**" (Jer 23:5), the "**Righteous One**" (Isa 24:16, Isa 53:11). In Jer 20:12 we see that the Righteous one "tests the **righteous.**" Mal 3:18 gives an interesting working "definition" of righteous - "the righteous and the wicked...one who serves God and one who does not serve Him." The coming King (Messiah - first advent) is "**just**" (Lxx = **dikaios**) (Zech 9:9) (Of course He is also righteous in His Second Advent but that return is prophesied in Zech 9:10). In one of the most notable uses Hab 2:4-**note** says "the **righteous** (Lxx = **dikaios**) will live by his faith." Israel was accused by Jehovah of selling "the righteous for money." (Amos 2:6, cp Amos 5:12, Hab 1:4, 13-**note**, Isa 5:23-**note**) Hosea helps us understand "practical righteousness" writing that "the ways of the LORD are right (Hebrew = yashar = to be straight), and the **righteous** (Lxx = **dikaios**) will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them." (Jer 12:1, Hos 14:9) In a prophecy to be fulfilled when Messiah returns "Then all your people will be **righteous** (this parallels Ro 11:26-27-**note** when the **remnant** of the nation of Israel is delivered! cp Isa 26:2); They will possess the land forever (finally fulfilling the land promise to Jacob - national Israel will possess the land), the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified (**The ultimate purpose = God's Glory!**)."

In Eccl 7:20 (OT equivalent of Ro 3:23-**note**) God through Solomon declares "there is not a **righteous** (Lxx = **dikaios**) man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." And yet we read "The LORD loves the **righteous.**" (Ps 146:8) So how does one become "righteous" in the OT? The Gospel! Compare Gal 3:8 with Ge 15:5-6 where the father of the faith, Abraham, was declared righteous by faith. The Gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...in it the righteousness of God is revealed." (Ro 1:16-17-**note**).

To get a Biblical "**definition**" of **righteous**, take a moment and work through the passages from **Psalms** and **Proverbs** (see below).

In Pr 15:6 **righteous** is translated in the Lxx with the noun **dikaiosune** which conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. (cp Mt 5:20-**note**). **Dikaiosune** is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. **Righteousness** of God could be succinctly stated as all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides through Christ (**Click here** to read Pastor Ray Pritchard's interesting analysis of **righteousness** in the Gospel of Matthew).

**Saddiq** NAS Usage: blameless(1), innocent(1), just(5), man that the righteous(1), one in the right(1), right(2), righteous(164), righteous man(19), righteous men(2), Righteous One(2), righteous one(2), righteous ones(3), righteously(1), who are in the right(1).

**Saddiq** - Over 200x in 196v -

Ge 6:9; 7:1; Ge 18:23-25, 28; 20:4; Ex 9:27; 23:7-8; Dt 4:8; 16:19; Dt 25:1; 32:4; 1Sa 24:17; 2Sa 4:11; 23:3; 1Kgs 2:32; 8:32; 2Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 6:23; 12:6; Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:8, 33; Job 12:4; 17:9; 22:19; 27:17; 32:1; Job 34:17; 36:7; Ps 1:5-6; 5:12; 7:9, 11; Ps 11:3, 5, 7; 14:5; Ps 31:18; 32:11; 33:1; Ps 34:15, 19, 21; Ps 37:12, 16-17, 21, 25, 29-30, 32, 39; Ps 52:6; 55:22; Ps 58:10-11; 64:10; Ps 68:3; 69:28; Ps 72:7; 75:10; Ps 92:12; 94:21; Ps 97:11-12; 112:4, 6; Ps 116:5; 118:15, 20; Ps 119:137; 125:3; 129:4; Ps 140:13; 141:5; 142:7; Ps 145:17; 146:8; Prov 2:20; 3:33; Pr 4:18; 9:9; Pr 10:3, 6-7, 11, 16, 20-21, 24-25, 28, 30-33; Pr 11:8-10, 21, 23, 28, 30-32; Pr 12:3, 5, 7, 10, 12-13, 21, 26; Pr 13:5, 9, 21-22, 25; Pr 14:19, 32; 15:6, 28-29; 17:15, 26; Pr 18:5, 10, 17; 20:7; Pr 21:12, 15, 18, 26; Pr 23:24; 24:15-16, 24; Pr 25:26; 28:1, 12, 28; Pr 29:2, 6-7, 16, 27; Eccl 3:17; 7:15-16, 20; Eccl 8:14; 9:1-2; Isa 3:10; 5:23; Isa 24:16; Isa 26:2, 7; Isa 29:21; Isa 41:26; 45:21; 53:11; Isa 57:1; 60:21; Jer 12:1; 20:12; 23:5; Lam 1:18; 4:13; Ezek 3:20-21; Ezek 13:22; 18:5, 9, 20, 24, 26; Ezek 21:3-4; 23:45; Ezek 33:12-13, 18; Da 9:14; Hos 14:9; Amos 2:6; 5:12; Hab 1:4, 13; 2:4; Zeph 3:5; Zech 9:9; Mal 3:18

**Beware!** Wealth may not necessarily be material **wealth** (although that could also be present). Real **wealth** refers to spiritual **wealth** (cp use of same Hebrew word **hosen** in Isa 33:6) for in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:3-**note**) "For **riches** (same word as "wealth" in Pr 15:6) are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations" (Pr 27:24) However spiritual riches **ARE FOREVER**, for Jesus Himself charged us "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But **lay up** for yourselves **treasures** (**present imperative** = command to make this your lifestyle, which is not natural, but is only supernaturally possible as you allow the Spirit to fill and empower you Eph 5:18-**note** and as you abide in the Vine - Jn 15:5) in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Mt 6:19-21-**note**)

**John D Rockefeller** - "It is wrong to assume that men of immense wealth are always happy." (Attributed as a statement to his Bible class April 1, 1905 in "The Loneliness of John D. Rockefeller", Current Literature (November 1906) vol. 41 no. 5). Rockefeller also said "I believe it is a religious duty to get all the money you can, fairly and honestly; to keep all you can, and to give away all you can." ([Wikipedia](#))

**John Gill** - God sometimes blesses the righteous with great riches, as he did Abraham; or, however, if they have but little, it is better than the riches of many wicked; because they have what they have with a blessing, and they are content with it: and they have abundance of spiritual treasure; they have God for their portion; Christ, and all good things along with him; the rich graces of the Spirit; a rich experience of the grace of God; and all this is but a pledge and earnest of what they shall possess hereafter;

**Lawson** - That there is much treasure in the house of some righteous persons, is certain; but it is equally certain that some of those who are **rich in faith, have no silver and gold**, and can scarcely find daily bread. Solomon was not ignorant of this, and explains this proverb, Pr 15:16, 17. There is incomparably more of solid treasure in the little that a righteous man hath, than in the substance of many wicked. Another explication of this maxim may be drawn from Pr 14:11, 3:34. **The blessing of the Lord is in the house of the righteous, and that is a more precious treasure than the gold and diamonds in a thousand mines.** The riches of the wicked, in which they pride themselves, often consist of paper; and if bonds and charters make a man rich, the righteous cannot be poor, when they have bonds upon God Himself for every thing they need, and the charter which shows their sure title to the everlasting inheritance. **The devil robbed Job, but he could not make him poor, for his chief treasure lay quite out of the reach of that enemy. Had he served God, as the devil said, for hire, he had been poor indeed; but a good conscience, and faith in the living Redeemer, could not be torn from him as long as he lived.**

**Charles Bridges** - The comparison between the righteous and the wicked always turns in favor of the righteous (Pr 3:33; 14:11, 32). Even in treasure (Pr 15:16, 17, 8:21)—the world's idol, he exceeds. For though his house may be destitute of money, yet is there much treasure; often unseen (2Cor. 6:10), yet such that the revenues of the wicked, compared with it, sink into nothing. 'Drop millions of gold, boundless revenues, ample territories, crowns and sceptres; and a poor contemptible worm lays his One God against all of them.' **The treasures of the wicked are too much for their good, and too little for their lust.** They cannot satisfy their senses—much less their souls. (Eccl 5:10, 11) They may "take wings" (Pr 23:5) at any moment; and while they continue,—unlike the treasures of the righteous (Pr 10:22)—they are burdened with trouble (Eccl 4:6; 5:12–14, James 5:1–4.). But is it not the crown of the Christian's crown, and the glory of his glory, that his portion is so full, that he cannot desire more? All the excellences of the creation are only dark shadows of its more substantial excellence. What a mercy to be delivered from the idolatrous bait—so ruinous alike to our present peace and eternal welfare! (1Ti 6:9, 10-**note**) **But a greater mercy still, to be enriched with that treasure—beyond the reach of harm (1Pe 1:4-**note**), that raises to heaven, a portion in God—his favor—his image—his everlasting joy.**

**Matthew Henry** - Where righteousness is riches are, and the comforts of them: In the house of the righteous is much treasure. Religion teaches men to be diligent, temperate, and just, and by these means, ordinarily, the estate is increased. But that is not all:



God blesses the habitation of the just, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this world's goods, yet where there is grace there is true treasure; and those who have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content, and to enjoy the comfort of that little, it is enough; it is all riches. The righteous perhaps are not themselves enriched, but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store, which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked worldly man is only for having his belly filled with those treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified (Psalm 17:14); but a righteous man's first care is for his soul and then for his seed, to have treasure in his heart and then in his house, which his relations and those about him may have the benefit of.

As **Jeremiah Burroughs** said "Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."

**Sinclair Ferguson** adds that "Contentment is the direct fruit of having no higher ambition than to belong to the Lord, at His disposal." (1Ti 6:6)

#### Related Resources:

- See Numerous Quotes Related to Contentment
- Christian Contentment
- More discussion of Christian Contentment
- [Contentment - Monergism](#)
- [Jeremiah Burroughs - The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment](#) - Recommended

## TROUBLE OF THE WICKED

**John Gill** aptly describes the troubled wicked wealthy - They have much trouble in **getting** their riches, by which they pierce themselves through with many sorrows; they have much trouble in **keeping** them; cannot rest nor sleep because of their abundance, lest it should be taken away from them; and they have much trouble in **parting** with them, when they are, by one providence or another, stripped of them; and, besides, they have them with a curse, and are ever attended with uneasiness, on one account or another.

**Gill's** comments on the troubling remind me of the great Stock Market crash of 1929 [See front page of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle - "Wall St. in panic as stocks crash"](#).

**Trouble** (05916)(akar) is a verb meaning to cause trouble, stir up resentment, cause hatred. It usually describes the trouble brought upon one from another person. The first use is by Jacob addressing his sons Simeon and Levi declaring "You have brought **trouble** (Lxx = **miseo** = to be hated) on me." (By killing Hamor and his son Shechem who had defiled their sister Dinah - Ge 34:26-27). (Ge 34:30) In Pr 11:17 "the cruel man does himself **harm** (Lxx = **exollumi** - to destroy utterly in the present tense = continually destroys himself!)" In Pr 11:29 Solomon warns that "He who **troubles** his own house will inherit wind," which "refers to actions which make life difficult for one's family." His reward is "empty air," nothing that can be grasped, nothing he can put his hands on. In 1Sa 14:29 Jonathan (son of Saul) declared that Saul had "**troubled** the land" by telling the soldiers none could eat food (1Sa 14:28) Ahab called Elijah a "**troubler** of Israel." (1Ki 18:17, 18).

In Pr 15:6 **akar** is translated in the Lxx with **apollumi** which means to destroy utterly (but not to cause to cease to exist). **Apollumi** describes that which is ruined and is no longer usable for its intended purpose.

**Swanson** says that to make **trouble** means to "cause hardship and distress for another, implying social chaos from the interaction or situation."

**TWOT** says **akar** "reflects the social dimension of an individual's action. A person's negative action (this word always has a negative concept) has a harmful influence not only on himself, but also upon others. A person can "trouble" another person or the entire nation, bringing either man's or God's judgment upon others. KB (p. 703) followed by Holladay (p. 273) define the word to mean "taboo; cast out from (social) intercourse"

The story of **Achan** is an excellent illustration of this proverb, for in this sad saga we see that the troubler (Achan) reaped trouble from his ill gotten gain! Joshua (Josh 6:18) warned Israel not to take any loot that was under the ban for if they did Israel would be accursed and it would "bring **trouble** (Lxx = **ektribo** = to cause removal by irritation, image of wearing something out by rubbing. To rub out. To destroy. To ruin.)." Later, Joshua asked Achan (who had disobeyed Joshua's warning) "Why have you **troubled** (Lxx = **olethreuo** = to destroy, to corrupt, to kill) us? The LORD will **trouble** (Lxx = **exolethreuo** = eliminate by destruction, utterly destroy, Acts 3:23) you this day." (Josh 7:25) And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones." In 1Chr 2:7 alludes to this event - "the son of Carmi was **Achar** (refers to Achan [which also means troubler or troublesome!]) the Hebrew word that means "trouble!"), the **troubler** (akar) of Israel, who violated the ban."

**Akar** NAS Usage: bring trouble(1), brought trouble(1), does...harm(1), grew worse(1), trouble(3), troubled(3), troubler(2), troubles(2).

**Akar** - 13v - Ge 34:30; Josh 6:18; Josh 7:25; Jdg 11:35; 1Sa 14:29; 1Ki 18:17-18; 1Chr 2:7; Ps 39:2; Pr 11:17, 29; Pr 15:6, 27

**Matthew Henry** - Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them: In the revenues of the wicked, the great incomes they have, there is **trouble**; for there is guilt and a curse; there is pride and passion, and envy and contention; and those are troublesome lusts, which rob them of the joy of their revenues and make them troublesome to their neighbors. **The wealth of worldly men increases their fears and suspicions, adds strength to their passions, and renders the fear of death more distressing.**

**John Trapp** - For besides the curse of unsatisfiability, in the very pursuit of them, he meets with many grievances, fears, jealousies, disgraces, interruptions, discontentments, and then, after the unsanctified enjoyment of them, follows the sting of conscience that dissweetens all, and that will inexpressibly vex and torment him through all eternity. "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly." [Job 20:15] Disgorge he shall surely those murdering morsels, either by remorse and restitution in the meantime, or with despair and impenitent horror hereafter.

**Matthew Poole** - though he may obtain great revenues, yet they are attended with much trouble and vexation; either because they are strangely blasted and taken from them, or because they are embittered to them by their own insatiable desires, or tormenting cares and fears, or the horrors of their guilty consciences, or by divers other ways.

**Wicked** (07563)(**rasha'**) is an adjective meaning unrighteous, unjust, an evil person, wrong wicked, guilty (legally not innocent of a violation of the law - Ex 23:1, Ps 109:7), in the wrong, criminal, transgressor. **Rasha'** often describes unbelievers, who hate God and are habitually hostile toward Him. The wicked/ungodly conduct their lives as if God does not exist and with no regard for Him. **Rasha'** describes someone as evil with a focus on their being guilty or in the wrong (2Sa 4:11). **Rasha'** is the opposite of righteous (**saddiq**).

**Lawson** - "But in the revenues of the wicked is trouble." When good men have nothing, they possess all things; when bad men have much, they are in straits, for their craving desires are still larger than their possessions, and whatever they have, they want satisfaction, and are still crying, "**Give, give.**" They have, besides, a bad conscience, and a drop of that bitter ingredient is sufficient to swallow up an ocean of earthly delights. Do we wish to be rich? let us learn from the Bible what it is to be rich, that we may not spend our time and labour in the pursuit of feathers and vanities.

A wealthy American businessman was once asked what it would take for him to be content, to which he quipped "Just one dollar more!" Money can never satisfy our soul's deepest needs. Only Jesus satisfies that need. Jesus said ""Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (Jn 4:13-14-note).

**Preacher's Homiletical Commentary** - The wicked man is troubled by a sense of being out of harmony with all that is holy, and just, and true in the universe of God, and with a foreboding of future retribution. The wealth of the spirit is so much more than material wealth as the spirit is so much more than the body. It is wealth to have "a conscience purged from, dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14), and to "lay up treasure" without being thus "rich toward God" (Luk 12:21) is only to "spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not." (See on chap. Pro 3:14-15; Pro 8:11-19, etc.)

**John Phillips** has an illustration - Al Capone, the most famous gangster in American history, illustrates this truth. He was introduced to organized crime by Johnny Torrio, the boss of the Chicago underworld who first realized the potential of prohibition. Small-time bootleggers were springing up everywhere and Torrio set out to control and monopolize this lucrative trade. The venture was to be a mammoth task so Torrio needed an assistant—someone who could combine organizing genius with utter ruthlessness. When he spotted Alphonse "Scarface" Capone, Torrio made him his partner. Within ten years Capone would earn the label "Public Enemy Number One." He would become known as the most wicked and one of the richest men of his time. Capone left the slums of Brooklyn, New York, where he had been raised. He was still loudmouthed but now he was impeccably groomed. Money poured in from the sale of beer and liquor, from gambling saloons and dog tracks, from dance halls and roadhouses, from prostitution and an assortment of other rackets. He climbed to the top of the heap by engineering five hundred callous murders and he stayed on top through murder and through corruption of politicians, judges, and policemen. His crime empire was backed by the Thompson submachine gun, the revolver, and the sawed-off shotgun. Rival gangs offered enormous sums of money to anyone who would kill Capone, but he had seven hundred of the toughest gangsters in America at his command. At the height of his career he was raking in 6.5 million dollars a week. Capone was rich, but not without trouble. On one occasion three gunmen sprayed his car with gunfire. Their intended victim escaped because minutes earlier he had stepped into a restaurant. Thereafter Capone rode in a steel-lined car that weighed more than seven tons and was equipped with bulletproof glass and special locks. A scout car always went ahead of this armored car and a gang of marksmen rode after it. On another occasion in broad daylight eight carloads of gangland storm

troopers assaulted Capone's headquarters. In seconds they pumped a thousand shots into it, but again they missed their target. In the end Capone was punished for his wickedness. He was sent to a federal penitentiary—for tax evasion! Even in prison he lived in style but his past caught up with him. The syphilis he had contracted early in life destroyed his brain. During his final madness, friends who gathered to play cards with him always let him win; if anyone won by mistake, Capone would cry, "Get the boys and rub this guy out!" Strange to say, he died in bed, but he made his bed in Hell and from that bed there is no rising up.

### Proverbs 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not so

- **lips:** Ps 37:30 45:2 51:13-15 71:15-18 78:2-6 119:13 Ec 12:9,10 Song 4:11 Mt 10:27 28:18-20 Mk 16:15 Ac 18:9,10 Ro 10:14-17 Ro 15:18-21 Eph 4:29 2Ti 2:2
- **hearts:** Pr 10:20,21 Mt 12:34 Jas 3:6
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

This proverb is surprising to some writers in that it contrasts **lips** with **hearts**. This association should however not be surprising for as Jesus said "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil [man] out of the evil [treasure] brings forth what is evil; for his **mouth** speaks from that which fills his **heart**." (Lk 6:45) And in Matthew Jesus said "the things that proceed out of the **mouth** come from the **heart**." (Mt 15:18) The lips (the mouth) usually reveals what's going on in the heart. A wise person has a wise heart and thus when he or she speaks, they are always worth giving an ear, so to speak. What the fool speaks out of his mouth comes from his foolish, wicked heart. In addition we have already seen a connection of heart and lips in Proverbs 4:23-24 - "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it [flow] the springs of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put devious lips far from you."

The **Lxx** is translated in English as "The lips of the wise are bound by discretion: but the hearts of the foolish are not safe."

The verb **spread** (Hebrew zara) (disseminate, give out) describes the winnowing of grain to remove the chaff. The motion would release the chaff into the air, where it would be carried away and scattered by the wind. The lips of the wise are open to scatter knowledge, which can instruct the ignorant (cp Pr 16:21).

**Wesley** says the idea is "Freely communicate to others what they know."

**Wiersbe** cautions - All of us must be careful what kind of conversation we listen to, because Jesus said, "Take heed what you hear" (Mark 4:24).

**POSB** - Lips are the gates that either contain or release words. In this proverb, the lips of the wise are open: they are speaking words and sharing knowledge. The words themselves-the knowledge-come from a heart that has been filled with God's Word....**Knowledge**, not ignorance or foolishness, is what the wise spread or scatter. This knowledge comes from God's Word and from living in the Word as well as from individuals' relationships with the Lord (the trust and fear of the Lord). It is only natural, then, that the wise release that knowledge. Of equal importance is the fact that their lips are closed to the speaking or scattering of foolishness. The wise still have the sin nature, but **through the power of the Holy Spirit within**, they are able to overcome the urge to act on it or speak of it. They speak only of knowledge; they are careful to contain the foolishness of the sin nature.

**John Trapp** on **spread knowledge** - They are the "lights of the world," φωστῆρες, [Philippians 2:15] and they diffuse light wherever they come, shining as lamps or luminaries, and seeking to save themselves, and those that hear them. How did those learned scribes, our famous reformers, bring forth their rich treasure, and liberally disperse it? By preaching, writing, and every way trading their talents for the church's good.

**John Gill** - Scatter it about for the benefit of others; they are communicative and diffusive of it unto others, that fruit may abound to their account: so the first ministers of the Gospel diffused the savor of the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel in every place; their words went into all the earth, and their sound to the end of the world; and so every Gospel minister will speak according to the oracles of God, and according to the abilities and measure of the gift which he has received; and to the utmost of his power feeds souls with knowledge and understanding

**Matthew Henry** - This is to the same purport (design) as Proverbs 15:2, and shows what a blessing a wise man is and what a burden a fool is to those about him. Only here observe further, 1. That we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it, not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but give a portion of this spiritual alms to seven and also to eight, not only be communicative, but diffusive, of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge, must teach some that they may teach others, and so it is dispersed.

**David Hubbard** - As farmers scatter ("disperse") seed and the whole community benefits from the crop, so the "knowledge" of God's

will and ways (as Hebrew *da'at* means; see 1:2–7) is sown in the soil of society by “wise” persons in a way that foolish people (“fool” translates a plural Hebrew word) have neither means nor desire to accomplish. “Heart” reminds us that wise speech is not a matter of verbal fluency but of inner goodness and integrity given expression through the “lips.” The role of the heart in the task of communicating is central.

**Lawson** - The wise man does not boast of his wisdom, or make a vain parade of his knowledge, but he is far from grudging the benefit of it to others. He does not behave like that foolish man who grudges to the fields the precious grain, and keeps it shut up in his storehouses, till it is destroyed by vermin. He scatters the good seed of knowledge, where there is any probability that it will do good; and as the husbandman, although he will not sow upon the rock, will nevertheless commit his seed to that ground where he is not certain of a good increase, and is not deterred by every cloud from his work; so the wise man will endeavour to do good, even to those that may possibly disappoint his kind intentions, and prove ungrateful for his offices of love. He that disperses knowledge wisely, shall not be disappointed of a harvest of gracious recompences to himself\*.

**Charles Bridges** - The “right use of knowledge” is—first to “lay it up” in a storehouse (Pr 10:14, with Pr 15:2.); then out of the storehouse to disperse it. The sower scatters the seed in the furrow, and calculates upon a proportionate harvest (2Cor. 9:6). Thus the lips of the wise disperse the precious seed, “giving a portion to seven, and also to eight,” not discouraged by trifling difficulties, but “sowing morning and evening,” and committing the result to God (Eccl. 11:2, 4, 6). The Ministry of our Lord thus dispersed the heavenly knowledge of his gospel. (Matt. 4:23, 9:35, Ps. 40:9, 10) He commanded his Apostles to scatter the seed through the vast field of the world. (Matt. 28:19, 20) The persecution of the Church was overruled for this great end. (Acts 8:1–4) The Reformers widely dispersed their treasures both by preaching and writing; and rich indeed was the fruit. Do we remember—that our gifts and talents are the riches of the Church (1Cor. 12:7, 1Pet. 4:10), that we are blessed—like our father Abraham—not for our own sakes—but to “be a blessing.” (Ge 12:2) And does not conscience speak of the waste of many—of important—opportunities, when Christians meet, and not an atom of knowledge is dispersed? We contend for no eccentric irregularity. We wish for no passing of our proper boundary—no intrenchment upon paramount obligations. But be careful, lest in quenching unnatural fire, we inadvertently damp some genuine spark of holy flame. Be mindful of small opportunities. The careful cultivation of the smallest field ensures an abundant harvest. The acceptance is not to the number, but to the improvement of the talents; not necessarily “where much have been given,” but where we “have been faithful in a few things.” (Matt. 25:21. Comp. Luke 16:10)

## THE CONTRAST

**Fool** ([03684](#))(**kesil**) is a stupid fellow, a morally insensitive dullard, whether it be in spiritual, intellectual, or moral matters. These are stupid people who are totally confident in own wisdom, thinking they have it all figured out without God's assistance. Swanson adds that *kesil* refers to (1) foolishness, stupidity, insolence, i.e., the state of being in complete lack of understanding, implying rebellion (Pr 10:1); (2) fool, insolent person, i.e., one completely lacking understanding, implying to be a rebel against standard or person (Pr 10:18).

**Vine** - The **kesil** is “insolent” in religion and “stupid or dull” in wise living (living out a religion he professes)...They have knowledge of God but do not properly evaluate or understand what they know...(In Proverbs the fool) rejects the claims and teachings of wisdom. However, in the Bible wisdom is the practical outworking of one's religion. Therefore, even in these contexts there is a clear connotation of insolence in religion.

**POSB** - The lips of the foolish do not spread knowledge because their hearts have no knowledge to spread. It is impossible for them to speak anything of worth. Additionally, because of the condition of their hearts, fools have no desire to scatter knowledge....Unprincipled, uncontrolled speech causes more problems than any other evil in life. The foolish things we say often gets us into trouble and causes difficult problems for others.

**John Trapp** on the fools **are not so** - It is “little worth,” [Pr 10:20] as having no true treasure in them, but froth and filth, vanity and villany: hence they do not only not disperse knowledge, which they have not, [Ps 14:4] but patronise and promote ignorance and error, sow cockle as fast as wiser men do corn, and are as busy in digging descents to hell, as others are in building staircases for heaven.

**Lawson** - But the wicked man cannot disperse knowledge, for he has not a right heart. There is no good treasure in his soul to furnish useful instructions to others, but an evil treasure within, from which he brings forth evil things. He sows the seed of tares and hemlock, and shall reap destruction to himself. Our tongues are our glory, and should be used for the glory of God, and for the good of men; and therefore we ought diligently to store our hearts with that knowledge and wisdom which will be of infinite advantage to ourselves, and make us useful to others.

**Charles Bridges** - The sin of the wicked is, not always that they “pour out foolishness;” but that they do not so. They neglect to disperse. They do not abuse their talent, but they omit to improve it. If not blots, they are blanks in the Church. They do no harm, but they do nothing. (Matt 25:25–28) Indeed, they can disperse nothing from their empty store-house. They can only trade with the

trash of the world, not with the commerce of substantial knowledge. The end of both is according to their works—"Unto every one that hath (actively improves) shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not (uses not) shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Mt 5:29)

**John Gill** - does not disperse knowledge, for he has no solid substantial knowledge in him: or, "the heart of the foolish is not right"; it is full of folly and wickedness: or "the heart of the foolish does not disperse that which is right"; true and right things, and the knowledge of them; but, on the contrary, as in Proverbs 15:2, "pours out foolishness".

**Coffman** reminds us that "the concept of the 'foolish' in Proverbs (and the whole Bible) is not mere intellectual dullness, but wickedness. The rich 'fool' of Luke 12:20 might very well have been a graduate of the state university; and the foolish virgins (Matthew 25:2ff) might have included the valedictorian of the local high school!"

**Matthew Henry** - The heart of the foolish does not so; it has nothing to disperse that is good, or, if it had, has neither skill nor will to do good with it and therefore is little worth.

**Illustrations from John Phillips** - In the old days when a person went to see the doctor, his first order usually was "Put out your tongue." The condition of the patient's tongue revealed the condition of his health. When Dr. Livesey visited the pirates in the compound on Treasure Island, he examined several of the wounded buccaneers. One of them said, "Dick don't feel well, sir." The doctor replied, "Well, step up here, Dick, and let me see your tongue. No, I should be surprised if he did! the man's tongue is fit to frighten the French. Another fever." The pirate's tongue betrayed him.

One day Harold St. John was standing in the private chapel of Keble College, Oxford, admiring Holman Hunt's masterpiece **The Light of the Word**. A party of tourists approached and stood chattering before the famous painting. The guide announced in a loud voice, "The original of this picture was sold for fifteen thousand dollars." Mr. St. John stepped forward and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, may I add that the true Original of this picture was sold for thirty pieces of silver." A hush fell on the tourists and they left in silence. **The words of the mouth express the condition of the heart**

#### **Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight**

- **sacrifice:** Pr 21:27 28:9 Isa 1:10-15 61:8 66:3 Jer 6:20 7:21-23 Am 5:21,22 John 4:24
- the prayer: Pr 15:29 1Ch 29:17 Ps 17:1 Song 2:14)
- See sermon by Charles Simeon - [Proverbs 15:8 The Upright Alone Acceptable to God](#)
- Sermon by John Piper - [Proverbs 15:8 The Pleasure of God in the Prayers of the Upright](#)
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **THE HYPOCRISY OF RITUAL WITHOUT REALITY!**

The first line is almost identical to Pr 21:27 - **The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination**, How much more when he brings it with evil intent!

Sacrifice without righteousness is worthless! No wonder God finds wickedness an abomination, for it ruins something that is otherwise meant to be God-pleasing! The wicked are not interested in a personal relationship with God, but what they can "get" out of Him! If they were genuinely interested in relationship, they would recognize their need first to repent of their sin. Some may try to appease His wrath with their external sacrifices while eschewing (avoiding) internal transformation. Public displays of "fabricated spirituality" never gain God's favor! Religious activity without a right (righteous) heart is meaningless, and even worse is an **abomination**, in the same "category" (all the following passages use *toebah* = abomination) as perversions which repulse God and fall under His judgment (Lev 18:22-30; Lev 20:13). Idolatry (Deut 7:25), human sacrifice (Deut 12:31), eating ritually unclean animals (Deut 14:3-8), sacrificing defective animals (Deut 17:1), engaging in occult activities (Deut 18:9-14), conducting one's business dishonestly (Deut 25:13-16), practicing ritual prostitution (1Ki 14:23-24)! Compare Pr 6:16 (abominations to Jehovah).

In Pr 28:9 we learn that it is not only the hypocritical, ritualistic worship of the wicked which is an abomination, but even their prayers! This is a frightening thought!

Even "clean" offerings without a "clean" life are an abomination to God. As Samuel asked Saul ""Has the LORD as much delight in **burnt offerings and sacrifices** As in **obeying** the voice of the LORD? Behold, to **obey** is better than **sacrifice**, [And] to heed than the fat of rams." (1Sa 15:22) "For Thou dost not delight in **sacrifice**, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. The **sacrifices** of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps 51:16-17 **note**)



As **Murphy** put it "It is the sacrificer, not the sacrifice, that is the issue."

**Adam Clarke** - No religious acts will do in place of holiness to the Lord.

**John Gill** - Even those sacrifices which were of divine appointment under the former dispensation, when offered by wicked men, **without faith in Christ**, without any sense of sin, repentance for it, and reformation from it; when these were used as a cloak for sin, under which they sheltered and satisfied themselves, and went on in sin; when they brought them "with a wicked mind", as in Proverbs 21:27; when either what they brought were not according to the law, the lame and the blind; or were not their own, but robbery for burnt sacrifice; or supposing that these would atone for their sins of themselves; when either of these, or all this, was the case, it was an abomination to the Lord

**Charles Bridges** - The sacrifice of the wicked—though it be part of God's own service, yet 'will be found in his register in the catalogue of sins to be accounted for.' (Comp. Isa. 66:3, Hag. 2:12–14.) Instead of an acceptable offering, it is an insulting provocation. (Isa. 1:11–15; 61:8, Jer. 6:20, Ezek 14:4; Amos 5:22, Mal. 1:7, 8) It is not only vain (Mt 15:7–9), but abominable—yea abomination itself. (Pr 21:27) That is wanting, "without which it is impossible to please God;" the lack of which stamped the sacrifice of Cain as an abomination. (Ge 4:3–5, with Heb 11:4, 6) It is a 'work, that doth not flow from a lively faith, and therefore hath in it the nature of sin.' (Article 13 - The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources) Not that prayer itself is a sin. 'It is'—as Archbishop Usher expounds—'a good duty, but spoiled in the carriage (the manner of carrying it out).' And far indeed would we be from discouraging the wicked from prayer. (Acts 8:22) We would only press the awaking conviction, that it must be done in God's order and way; else never can it find His acceptance. But not only the sacrifice—but the way of the wicked; not only his religion, but his common course—natural as well as moral—is abomination. All is the course of a rebel against God. All his doings are the corrupt stream from a corrupt fountain. Awful indeed is the thought of every step of life as being hateful to God!

**Matthew Henry** - God has sacrifices brought him even by wicked men, to stop the mouth of conscience and to keep up their reputation in the world, as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice; but their sacrifices, though ever so costly, are not accepted of God, because not offered in sincerity nor from a good principle; they dissemble (pretend that to be which is not, they make a false appearance) with God, and in their conversations show the falsehood of their devotions, and for that reason they are an abomination to Him, because they are made a cloak for sin, Proverbs 7:14. See Isaiah 1:11-note.

**John Trapp** on sacrifices of the wicked - Their very incense stinks from the hand that offers it. [Isaiah 1:13-note] Good words may be uttered, but we cannot hear them, because uttered with a stinking breath: and good meat may be presented, but we cannot eat of it because it is cooked or brought to the table by a nasty sloven (one negligent of cleanliness). Works may be materially good, but will never prove so formally - when they are not right = (1). When they proceed not from a right principle, "a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned"; [1Ti 1:5] (2). When they tend not to a right end, the glory of God in our own or other men's salvation. The glory of God must consume all other ends, as the sun puts out the light of the fire.

**Lawson** - **Wicked men may abound in the external acts of religion, as if they intended to compensate the defects of the inward man, by a double measure of bodily exercise.** By this means they flatter (**Ed**: And deceive) themselves into dangerous and presumptuous hopes of the favor of God, and sometimes gain a name among the godly, who are neither qualified nor authorized to search the secrets of the heart. But God, Who cannot be deceived, sees the insincerity of their hearts, and loathes their most splendid and costly services, as so many presumptuous attempts to bribe the great Judge into a connivance (literally the act of winking) at their wickedness.

No man would choose to put himself to a great deal of trouble to no purpose. But hypocrites not only lose the benefit of their services, but provoke God's indignation by them. The wicked and their sacrifices are detestable to Him; He counts them a trouble, and will not long bear with them. How miserable are unrenewed (unregenerate - Titus 3:5-note) sinners! Their righteousnesses are abominable and provoking iniquities; what (an urgent) need they have to disclaim (disown, disavow) their own goodness, and seek to win Christ (by grace through faith) and be found in Him, clothed with His righteousness, and purified by His Spirit!

But let not God's people be afraid of this text, although they are often obliged to confess that they are carnal, sold under the sway of sin. They walk in the light, and have fellowship with God; and the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses them from all sin (1Jn 1:7-note). **Their prayers are unworthy of divine acceptance, but through the Beloved they are well pleasing to Him** (cp Hebrews 10:19-22-note). Whilst the costly services of the wicked are detested by Him, He delights in the meanest (humblest) services of the **upright**. This was a truth to be believed, whilst the Old Testament ordinances were yet in force; how much more are we encouraged to believe this truth, who have so clear revelations of that great High Priest Who is passed into the heavens (Heb 4:14-16-note), and appears in the presence of God, making intercession for us (Heb 7:25-note), and recommending our weak and imperfect services to His Father! **Prayer is God's delight, and should it not be ours also, who stand in so much need of the benefit of it?** When God requires from us the severest instances of self-denial, it is our duty and interest to please God rather than ourselves; but when He delights in prayer, and takes pleasure to have His richest favors asked by needy creatures, shall we not

come often to His throne of grace? He that commands us to pray, and delights in the voice of prayer, and has appointed His Son to be our Advocate (1Jn 2:1-note), will not turn a deaf ear to the petitions of His suppliants.

**Wardlaw** - When an ungodly man prays, it is not the act of prayer that constitutes the sin, it is the want of a praying heart. The sin is in him, not in his prayer.—Wardlaw.

The formal devotion of a faithless man is not worth the crust of bread which he asks.—T. Adams.

**Lange** - "Sacrifice and prayer" are not here contrasted as the higher and the lower, but "sacrifice" is a gift to God, "prayer" is desiring from Him (Comp. Isa ; Isa 1:15, etc.) Yet this is by no means an essential difference; for both sacrifice and prayer, which indeed fall likewise under the category of offering in the broadest sense (Psa 119:108; Heb 13:15) come under consideration here only as general tokens of reverence for God; and the value of both is clearly defined by this test, whether the state of heart is or is not well pleasing to God.—Lange's Commentary.

**Sacrifice** (02077) (**zabah** from **zabah** - to slaughter for sacrifice) refers to an offering killed and presented by the worshiper to God as an act of devotion (to fill a special vow - Nu 15:3), thanksgiving (Lev 22:29, Ps 107:22, 116:17) or to meet the need for forgiveness (expiation, propitiation). The first specific mention of an animal sacrifice in Ge 4:4 (although it does not use the word zebah). The first use of zebah in Genesis describe sacrifices by Jacob (Israel) (Ge 31:54 - associated with the covenant between Jacob and Laban, Ge 46:1).

Other places in Proverbs where sacrifice or feasting and/or prayer are discussed are Pr 15:29; 17:1; 21:3, 27; 28:9.

**Wicked** (07563) (**rasha'**) is an adjective meaning unrighteous, unjust, an evil person, wrong wicked, guilty (legally not innocent of a violation of the law - Ex 23:1, Ps 109:7), in the wrong, criminal, transgressor. **Rasha'** often describes unbelievers, who hate God and are habitually hostile toward Him. The wicked/ungodly conduct their lives as if God does not exist and with no regard for Him. **Rasha'** describes someone as evil with a focus on their being guilty or in the wrong (2Sa 4:11). **Rasha'** is the opposite of **righteous** (**saddiq**).

Compare this abomination to Pr 6:16-19 - "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him..."

Not only is their sacrifice an abomination but even their very thoughts ("evil plans") (Pr 15:26).

**Sid Buzzell** summarizes God's **abominations** in Proverbs - In Proverbs the LORD is said to detest many kinds of sinful attitudes and actions: crooked (perverse, 'iqqēš, means crooked or distorted; see comments on Pr 2:15) living (Pr 3:32; 11:20), lying (Pr 12:22), hypocrisy (Pr 15:8), wicked conduct (Pr 15:9), wicked thoughts (Pr 15:26), pride (Pr 16:5), injustice (Pr 17:15), and dishonesty in business (Pr 20:10, 23). Also see Pr 6:16–19. On the other hand the Lord takes delight in those who are morally whole (blameless; cf. Pr 11:3) and are truthful (Pr 12:22)....God hates sacrifices offered by wicked people (cf. 1Sa 15:22; Isa. 1:11; Jer. 7:22; Amos 5:22) because those offerings are given hypocritically. Because "the way" (conduct) of the wicked is detestable, so are their sacrifices....Offering sacrifices, an external act, is no substitute for a life of righteousness, which obviously God loves.

Illustrations of abomination (Bullinger): Cain (Genesis 4:5. Hebrews 11:4); Saul (1 Samuel 15:22, 1 Samuel 15:23); Jews (Isaiah 1:11-15; Isaiah 66:3).

**Abomination** (08441) (**toebah**) refers to an abominable custom or thing. Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent. Sometimes **toebah** is used as a synonym for idol, a repulsive thing, a worship object, with a focus that it is an item to be rejected (Dt 32:16; 2Ch 34:33; Isa 44:19, Jer 16:18; Ezek 5:9; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 16:36). **Toebah** is even used for a specific pagan deity, as in 2Ki 23:13 where Milcom is called "the abomination of the Ammonites." And even prayer is an abomination when offered by one who refuses to obey God's Word (Pr 28:9).

**Baker** notes that **toebah** "is primarily understood in the context of the Law. It identifies unclean food (Dt. 14:3); the activity of the idolater (Isa. 41:24); the practice of child sacrifice (Dt. 12:31); intermarriage by the Israelites (Mal. 2:11); the religious activities of the wicked (Pr 21:27); and homosexual behavior (Lev. 18:22). In a broader sense, the word is used to identify anything offensive (Pr 8:7)." (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT)

**Toebah** (abomination, hates) in Proverbs - Pr 3:32; 6:16; 8:7; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 13:19; Pr 15:8-9, 26; Pr 16:5, 12; Pr 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; Pr 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27

**LORD** (see **Jehovah**)

**GOD DELIGHTS IN THE  
PRAYER OF THE UPRIGHT**

**POSB** - Whereas the Lord *despises* the **sacrifice** of the **wicked**, He *delights* in the **prayer** of the **upright**—those who walk faithfully and righteously in obedience to His Holy Word. Notice the contrast in actions in these two statements: the wicked sacrifice and the upright pray. “**Sacrifice** is an outward ritual and easily performed by the wicked, but **prayer** is a private and inward act and not usually fabricated by unbelievers.” The wicked person who sacrifices seeks something from God; the righteous person who prays usually seeks God Himself. What a lesson for every one of us!

**Adam Clarke** on God's **delight** in the **prayer** of the **upright** - What a motive to be upright; and what a motive to the upright to pray! But who is the upright?

**Charles Bridges** gives a poignant exhortation - "Let the reader ponder this awful question. What am I—what is my service—when upon my knees before God? an abomination, or a delight? Man judges by acts; God by principles."...The prayer of the **upright** from its first feeblest utterance, is not only acceptable to the Lord, but His **delight**. The golden censer above, (Heb. 10:19–22) and the gracious intercession within, (Ro 8:26, 27) combine with fragrant odor before our God. Never could we faint in prayer, did we realize more habitually this pure ground of acceptance. Not less pleasing to him is the course of the upright. He has given him a measure of righteousness, and an effort for more. And though he fulfils it not, he follows after it, cheered with the smile of his father's gracious love. (Pr 21:21, Isa. 64:5, Phil. 3:12-14)

**NET Note** - God hates the way of the wicked, that is, their lifestyle and things they do. God loves those who pursue righteousness, the Piel verb signifying a persistent pursuit. W. G. Plaut says, "He who loves God will be moved to an active, persistent, and even dangerous search for justice"

**Matthew Henry** - Praying graces are God's own gift, and the work of His own Spirit in the upright, with whom He is well pleased. He not only answers their prayers, but delights in their addresses to Him, and in doing them good.

**John Trapp** on the **prayer** of the **upright** - His music, his honey drops, [Song 4:11] his sweetest perfume ("as incense"), [Ps 141:2] his "fruit of the lips," [Hosea 14:2] with which, when we cover his altar, he is abundantly well-pleased. For as all God's senses, nay, His very soul is offended with the bad man's sacrifice [Isa 1:13-15-note] - His sharp nose easily discerns, and is disgusted by the stinking breath of the wicked's rotten lungs, though his words be ever so scented and perfumed with (external) shows of holiness. But the prayer that proceeds from an **upright** heart, though but faint and feeble, comes before God, "even into His ears," [Ps 18:6] and so strangely "charms" Him, [Isa 26:16, "whisper" like a snake charmer might whisper] (b) that He breaks forth into these words, "Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands." {Isaiah 45:11} **Oh that we understood the latitude of this royal charter! then would we pray always with all prayers and supplications in the Spirit; then would we watch thereunto with all perseverance, and not faint or shrink back.** [Ephesians 6:18 Luke 18:1].

**Prayer** ([08605](#))(**tepillah** from **palal** = to intervene, to interpose, to pray) describes the act of speaking to God, of making requests of Him. Request, petition. Often in the form of a plea "Hear my prayer" (Ps 4:1 - cp Ps 6:9, 39:12, 54:2, 55:1, 61:1, Da 9:17 - all of these uses are translated in Lxx with **proseuche** the general word for prayer and is used only of prayer to God). The root verb palal conveys the idea of to cause another to intervene or arbitrate in one's case. And indeed this is exactly what we are often doing in prayer asking Him to intervene?

Five Psalms are specifically referred to as a "**prayer**" in their superscription (Ps 17:1, 86:1, 90:1, 102:1, 142:1) and all are translated in the Lxx with **proseuche**. The idea that the Psalms are called "prayers" has led to the practice of "praying the psalms" as a devotional exercise. In Hab 3:1 **tepillah** is used as an introduction to the rest of the chapter, indicating that what followed was his prayer. **Tepillah** is occasionally paired with other words such as "cry" or "supplication" (1Ki 8:28, Ps 6:9, Da 9:3). **Tepillah** is paired with shawah meaning a cry (as for help) (Ps 39:12, Jer 7:16) In Ps 54:2 "the words of my mouth" are synonymous with "my prayer." In Ps 141:2 prayer is paired with "lifting of my hands."

The first use of **tepillah** is in David's prayer of response to God's covenant with him (2Sa 7:27). At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prays to God (1Ki 8:28-29, 38, and in 1Chr 6:19-20) and asks God to hear their prayer when His people go to battle or when they sin and return to Him (1Ki 8:45, 49) Jehovah told Solomon He had heard his prayer (1Ki 9:3). In 2Ki 20:5 He heard Hezekiah's prayer for healing. Wicked Manasseh was given a chance to repent, which he did in his prayer to God (2Chr 33:18-19). Nehemiah is well known as a man of prayer (Neh 1:6, 11) as was Job (Job 16:17). The most unusual location for a prayer was Jonah in the belly of a fish (Jonah 2:7). Daniel's prayer for God to end Judah's exile in Babylon was answered by the arrival of Gabriel the archangel who brought God's answer (Da 9:3, 17, 21). King Hezekiah was instructed to pray for the remnant that still survived (2Ki. 19:4); and in Jeremiah, the word is used to denote what not to do, i.e., do not pray with any plea or petition (Jer. 7:16).

**Renn** - Several contexts specifically mention prayer that is accepted by God (cf. Ps 6: 9; 66:20; 102:17; Pr 15:29; Isa. 38: 5). Conversely, Jer. 7:16; 11:4; Lam. 3: 8, 44 record that prayer is on occasion rejected or denied by God. In a similar vein, Yahweh's anger at the prayers of his wayward people, resulting in his refusal to listen to them, is indicated in Ps 80:4; Isa. 1:15 (cf. also Ps 109:7). Intercessory prayer is recorded in Isa. 37:4; Dan. 9:3. The temple is referred to as the "house of prayer" in Isa. 56:7.

(Expository Dictionary)

As an aside it should be noted that there are no less than twelve Hebrew words that are rendered **pray** (or **prayer**) in English. The first Hebrew word indicating the general idea of prayer is the verb **palal** ([06419](#)), with the derivative noun **tepillah**. The Septuagint usually translates **palal** with the Greek **proseuchomai**, the most common word for prayer in the NT.

In Pr 15:8 the Hebrew **tepillah** is translated with the noun **euche** which means prayer (James 5:15) or vow (especially in the Septuagint uses), a solemn promise to God (Acts 18:18).

**Tepillah** - 72x in 67v - 2Sa 7:27; 1Ki 8:28-29, 38, 45, 49, 54; 9:3; 2Ki 19:4; 20:5; 2Chr 6:19-20, 29, 35, 39-40; 7:12, 15; 30:27; 33:18-19; Neh 1:6, 11; 11:17; Job 16:17; Ps 4:1; 6:9; 17:1; 35:13; 39:12; 42:8; 54:2; 55:1; 61:1; 65:2; 66:19-20; 69:13; 72:20; 80:4; 84:8; 86:6; 88:2, 13; 102:1, 17; 109:4, 7; 141:2, 5; 143:1; Pr 15:8, 29; 28:9; Isa 1:15; 37:4; 38:5; 56:7; Jer 7:16; 11:14; Lam 3:8, 44; Da 9:3, 17, 21; Jonah 2:7; Hab 3:1

**Upright** ([03477](#)) (**yashar** from the verb **yashar** = to be smooth, straight or right) is an adjective that means straight; reliable, level, pleasing; upright; righteous. **Yashar** only rarely is used literally of that which is straight (Ezek 1:7). **Yashar** can refer to something physical like a path, but even in those uses is often a metaphorical description of one's conduct or behavior (Ps 107:7). Most uses refer to that which is right in an ethical or an emotional sense, as agreeable or pleasing.

It is fitting that God is the standard of **yashar** (what is "straight") (Ps 92:15, called the "Upright One" - Isa 26:7). God's Word is described as **upright** (right) (Ps 19:7) as are His judgments (Ps 119:137) and His way (Ps 107:7). "God made men **upright** (Ge 1:27), but they have sought out many devices." (Eccl 7:29)

When God tore the kingdom from Solomon for his failure to obey (God had given him a promise conditioned on whether he would "do what is **right** [**yashar**]" in God's sight - 1Ki 11:38), he reminded him that he was not like David "who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was **right** (**yashar**) in My sight." (1Ki 14:8). Again we read "David did what was **right** (**yashar**) in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite." (1Ki 15:5). We see the phrase "did what was **right** (**yashar**) in the sight of the LORD" in the description of a number of the Kings of Judah (Asa - 1Ki 15:11, 2Chr 14:2, Asa's son Jehoshaphat - 1Ki 22:43, 2Chr 20:32, Jehoash [Joash] = 2Ki 12:2, 2Chr 24:2, Amaziah = 2Ki 14:3, 2Chr 25:2, Azariah = 2Ki 15:3, Jotham = 2Ki 15:34, 2Chr 27:2, Hezekiah = 2Ki 18:3, 2Chr 29:2, 2Chr 31:20, Josiah = 2Ki 22:2, 2Chr 34:2, Uzziah = 2Chr 26:4) Ahaz "did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD." (2Ki 16:2, 2Chr 28:1)

**Webster** on **upright** - Showing a strict regard for what is morally right. Honest; just; adhering to rectitude in all social intercourse; not deviating from correct moral principles; as an upright man. Job 1:1 ("was blameless, **upright**, fearing God, and turning away from evil.", Job 1:8, 2:3 = God's assessment of Job = "upright" or **yashar**!). Conformable to moral rectitude. Demonstrating a strict adherence to moral principles.

**Yashar** is frequently used to describe our moral/ethical **heart** as "**upright in heart**" (Ps 7:10, 11:2, 32:11, 36:10, 64:10, 94:15, 97:11, 111:1, 125:4) (See all uses in Psalms and Proverbs below). Indeed, the **upright** "will behold His face" (Ps 11:7), will experience gladness (Ps 97:11), will be gathered together in the assembly (Ps 111:1), will be blessed (Ps 112:2), will be given light in times of darkness (Ps 112:4), will dwell in God's presence (Ps 140:13, cp Pr 2:21), have access to God's sound wisdom (Pr 2:7), will experience intimacy with the Most High God (Pr 3:32), will be guided by their integrity (Pr 11:3), will be delivered by their righteousness (Pr 11:6), will be delivered by their words (Pr 12:6), will see their tents flourish (Pr 14:11). "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil." (Pr 16:17)

In the first use in Ex 15:26 God instructs His Chosen People just delivered from bondage to do "what is **right** (**yashar**) in His sight." (cp similar charge in Dt 6:18) In Pr 12:15 "The way of a fool is **right** in his own eyes." (cp **yashar** = **right** in Pr 14:12, 16:25, 21:2) Repeatedly in Deuteronomy we see "what is right" linked with in the sight of Jehovah (Dt 6:18, 12:25, 28, 13:18, 21:9) In fact Israel was warned of the antithesis of "every man doing whatever is **right** (**yashar**) in his own eyes." (Dt 12:8) Unfortunately, they did not heed (or pass down this warning) because several generations later we find in the 250 year period of the Book of Judges every man doing "what as **right** in his own eyes." (Jdg 17:6, 21:25), the pathogenesis of course being the fact that there was no king (Jehovah was to have been their King) in Israel! **Yashar** describes God as ""The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and **upright** (**yashar**; Lxx = *hosios*) is He." (cp Hos 14:9)

**Brown-Driver-Briggs'** summarizes **yashar** - straight, upright, correct, right; straight, level; right, pleasing, correct; straightforward, just, upright, fitting, proper; uprightness, righteous, upright; that which is upright (subst)

In Pr 15:8 **yashar** is translated in the Lxx with the verb **kateuthuno** which means to keep straight (in the **present tense** = to continually, as one's general lifestyle, the general direction of one's life). It is used in Paul's prayer to direct the heart to the love of God (2Thes 3:5). In the Lxx of 1Chr 29:18 **kateuthuno** is used in David's prayer for God's people in which he asks Him to "**direct** (**kateuthuno**) their heart to Thee." (A good, godly prayer for all of us to pray!)

**Yashar NAS Usage:** conscientious\*(1), fittest(1), Jashar(2), just(1), proposal of peace(1), **right**(35), safe(1), straight(5), **upright**(51), Upright One(1), uprightly(1), uprightness(1), what(2), what is right(7), what was right(6), which was right(1), who are upright(1), who is upright(1).

**Yashar** - 119v -

Ex 15:26; Num 23:10; Deut 6:18; 12:8, 25, 28; 13:18; 21:9; 32:4; Josh 9:25; 10:13; Jdg 17:6; 21:25; 1Sam 12:23; 29:6; 2 Sam 1:18; 1Ki 11:33, 38; 14:8; 1Ki 15:5, 11; 22:43; 2Ki 10:3, 15, 30; 12:2; 14:3; 15:3, 34; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2; 2Chr 14:2; 20:32; 24:2; 2Chr 25:2; 26:4; 27:2; 28:1; 29:2, 34; 31:20; 34:2; Ezra 8:21; Neh 9:13; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; 4:7; 8:6; 17:8; 23:7; 33:23, 27; Ps 7:10; 11:2, 7; 19:8; 25:8; 32:11; 33:1, 4; 36:10; 37:14, 37; 49:14; Ps 64:10; 92:15; 94:15; 97:11; 107:7, 42; Ps 111:1, 8; Ps 112:2, 4; Ps 119:137; 125:4; 140:13; Prov 2:7, 21; 3:32; 8:9; 11:3, 6, 11; Pr 12:6, 15; Pr 14:9, 11-12; 15:8, 19; Pr 16:13, 17, 25; Pr 20:11; 21:2, 8, 18, 29; Pr 28:10; 29:10, 27; Eccl 7:29; Isa 26:7; Jer 26:14; Jer 31:9; Jer 34:15; Jer 40:4-5; Ezek 1:7, 23; Dan 11:17; Hos 14:9; Mic 2:7; Mic 3:9; Micah 7:2,4

Here are all the uses of yashar in Psalms and Proverbs (which together have almost 1/2 of all OT uses)...

Ps 7:10 My shield is with God, Who saves the **upright** (Lxx = **euthus** = upright conduct = depicted as a straight path. In Acts 8:21 Peter addressed Simon whose heart was NOT right before God!) in heart. ([Spurgeon's note](#))

Ps 11:2 For, behold, the wicked bend the bow, They make ready their arrow upon the string, To shoot in darkness at the **upright** (Lxx = **euthus**) in heart. ([Spurgeon's note](#))

Ps 11:7 For the LORD is righteous; He loves righteousness; The **upright** will behold His face.

Ps 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are **right**, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ([See Spurgeon's note](#))

Ps 25:8 Good and **upright** is the LORD; Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.

Ps 32:11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones, And shout for joy, all you who are **upright** in heart. ([Spurgeon's note](#))

Ps 33:1 Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the **upright**. ([Spurgeon's note](#))

Ps 33:4 For the word of the LORD is **upright**; And all His work is [done] in faithfulness.

Ps 36:10 O continue Thy lovingkindness to those who know Thee, And Thy righteousness to the **upright** in heart.

Ps 37:14 The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow, To cast down the afflicted and the needy, To slay those who are **upright** in conduct.

Ps 37:37 Mark the blameless man, and behold the **upright**; For the man of peace will have a posterity.

Ps 49:14 As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the **upright** shall rule over them in the morning; And their form shall be for Sheol to consume, So that they have no habitation.

Ps 64:10 The righteous man will be glad in the LORD, and will take refuge in Him; And all the **upright** in heart will glory.

Ps 92:15 To declare that the LORD is **upright**; [He is] my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Ps 94:15 For judgment will again be righteous; And all the **upright** in heart will follow it.

Ps 97:11 Light is sown [like seed] for the righteous, And gladness for the **upright** in heart.

Ps 107:7 He led them also by a **straight** way, To go to an inhabited city.

Ps 107:42 The **upright** see it, and are glad; But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.

Ps 111:1 Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all [my] heart, In the company of the **upright** and in the assembly.

Ps 111:8 They (His precepts - Ps 111:7) are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and **uprightness**.

Ps 112:2 His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the **upright** will be blessed.



Ps 112:4 Light arises in the darkness for the **upright**; [He is] gracious and compassionate and righteous. ([Spurgeon's note](#))

Ps 119:137 Tsadhe. Righteous art Thou, O LORD, And **upright** are Thy judgments.

Ps 125:4 Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, And to those who are **upright** in their hearts. ([Spurgeon's note](#))

Ps 140:13 Surely the righteous will give thanks to Thy name; The **upright** will dwell in Thy presence.

Prov 2:7 He stores up sound wisdom for the **upright**; [He is] a shield to those who walk in integrity,

Prov 2:21 For the **upright** will live in the land, And the blameless will remain in it;

Prov 3:32 For the crooked [man] is an abomination to the LORD; But He is intimate with the **upright**.

Prov 8:9 "They are all straightforward to him who understands, And **right** to those who find knowledge.

Prov 11:3 The integrity of the **upright** will guide them, But the falseness of the treacherous will destroy them.

Prov 11:6 The righteousness of the **upright** will deliver them, But the treacherous will be caught by [their own] greed.

Prov 11:11 By the blessing of the **upright** a city is exalted, But by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.

Prov 12:6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, But the mouth of the **upright** will deliver them.

Prov 12:15 The way of a fool is **right** in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Prov 14:9 Fools mock at sin, But among the **upright** there is good will.

Prov 14:11 The house of the wicked will be destroyed, But the tent of the **upright** will flourish.

Prov 14:12 There is a way [which seems] **right** to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Prov 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the **upright** is His delight.

Prov 15:19 The way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the **upright** is a highway.

Prov 16:13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And he who speaks **right** is loved.

Prov 16:17 The highway of the **upright** is to depart from evil; He who watches his way preserves his life.

Prov 16:25 There is a way [which seems] **right** to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Prov 20:11 It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself If his conduct is pure and **right**.

Prov 21:2 Every man's way is **right** in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.

Prov 21:8 The way of a guilty man is crooked, But as for the pure, his conduct is **upright**.

Prov 21:18 The wicked is a ransom for the righteous, And the treacherous is in the place of the **upright**.

Prov 21:29 A wicked man shows a bold face, But as for the **upright**, he makes his way sure.

Prov 28:10 He who leads the **upright** astray in an evil way Will himself fall into his own pit, But the blameless will inherit good.

Prov 29:10 Men of bloodshed hate the blameless, But the **upright** are concerned for his life.

Prov 29:27 An unjust man is abominable to the righteous, And he who is **upright** in the way is abominable to the wicked.

**Delight** (acceptable) ([07522](#))(**ratson/rason** from **ratsah**) = to be pleased with; satisfy a debt; be acceptable; accept favorably) is a masculine noun meaning pleasure, delight, desire, will, favor, acceptance. This term is ascribed both to human agents and to God. Ratson describes a strong desire which implies a choice (Ge 49:6; 2Ch 15:15). Here in Lev 1:3 **ratson** refers to a state or condition of approval and implies pleasure in the event (Ex 28:38)

**J C Ryle** - The bank-note without a signature at the bottom, is nothing but a worthless piece of paper. The stroke of a pen confers on it all its value. The prayer of a poor child of Adam is a feeble thing in itself, but once endorsed by the hand of the Lord Jesus, it avaleth much. There was an officer in the city of Rome who was appointed to have his doors always open, in order to receive any Roman citizen who applied to him for help. Just so the ear of the Lord Jesus is ever open to the cry of all who want mercy and

grace. It is His office to help them. Their prayer is His delight. Reader, think of this. Is not this encouragement?

**John Phillips** - "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Think of all the things that bring delight to God's heart and imagine our prayers being included! He is pleased when millions of galaxies rush to do His bidding. The songs of the sinless seraphim rejoice His heart. His plans for all the countless ages yet to come delight Him. His Son delights Him. His Spirit delights Him. When we enter the courts of bliss we will be amazed at the reveling. But hush. Here come His upright ones who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and whose names have been written down in glory. There is an Abraham praying for Sodom, a Moses interceding for Israel, a Daniel on his knees reminding God of a prophecy needing to be fulfilled. There is Paul with his prayer list. But above all there is the Lord Jesus—our great high priest, our advocate with the Father—praying for His own. Those prayers, above and beyond all else in the universe, delight the heart of the Most High. When was the last time you brought delight to the heart of God?

**Continue Upright - Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook** - THIS is as good as a promise, for it declares a present fact which will be the same throughout all ages. God takes great pleasure in the prayers of upright men; He even calls them His delight. Our first concern is to be upright. Neither bending this way nor that, continue upright: not crooked with policy, nor prostrate by yielding to evil, be you upright in strict integrity and straightforwardness. If we begin to shuffle and shift, we shall be left to shift for ourselves. If we try crooked ways, we shall find that we cannot pray; and if we pretend to do so, we shall find our prayers shut out of heaven. Are we acting in a straight line and thus following out the Lord's revealed will? Then let us pray much and pray in faith. If our prayer is God's delight, let us not stint Him in that which gives Him pleasure. He does not consider the grammar of it, nor the metaphysics of it, nor the rhetoric of it; in all these, men might despise it. He, as a Father, takes pleasure in the lisplings of His own babes, the stammerings of His new-born sons and daughters. Should we not delight in prayer since the Lord delights in it? Let us make errands to the throne. The Lord finds us enough reasons for prayer, and we ought to thank Him that it is so.

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**F B Meyer Our Daily Homily** - Proverbs 15:8 The prayer of the upright is his delight. - We too seldom consider the pleasure that the prayer of his people gives to God. Often we go to Him with no other thought than to find relief from the pressure of anxiety or sin. We hardly realize that He is looking for our coming because He loves us. Thus nothing delights Him more than the time we consecrate for heartfelt fellowship with Him. Think, O child of God, when next the hour of prayer comes round, that God is waiting for you. Would you cause Him disappointment by curtailing it, and by passing cursorily through a form, when He looks for the fellowship of the soul? Remember how Jesus said, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." The prayer which gives God delight is one which is characterized thus:— (1) It must be an identification with the prayer of the Lord Jesus. In Him alone can the Father take delight, and in us only as far as we are in the Beloved, and He in us. (2) We must come in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our lives rid of all known inconsistency and impurity. (3) We must give time for God to speak to us. Rev. Andrew Murray says, "Bow quietly before Him in humble faith and adoration. God is. God is near. God is love, longing to make Himself known." (4) Lie very low before God. Sink down before Him in the lowest dust of self-abasement, reckoning yourself to be nothing. (5) Present yourself to God that He may fulfil through you his own loving purposes. In the Book of Revelation, we are bidden to behold the Angel of the Covenant mingling much incense with the prayers of all the saints. That incense is the merit of Jesus, which makes our prayers delightful (Revelation 8:3–5).

**C Ridley Pearson Devotional** (Counsels of the Wise King)

March 18th "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is His delight."—Pr 15:8 (Pr 21:27; 28:9).

**Interpretation.**—Sacrifice is more than prayer, for it includes prayer along with a gift to God. But the prayer alone of the upright is infinitely more pleasing to God than the sacrifice of the wicked, because the heart goes along with it. Thus, a word from a poor man who walked uprightly would be more acceptable to Jehovah than holocausts of the rich. Specially displeasing to a pure and holy God must be an offering brought not only without true prayer, the soul of all sacrifice, but "with a wicked mind" (21:27), as though to purchase God's connivance with evil, to make Him "the minister of sin." Or, if prayer be offered while sins of wilful ignorance are persisted in, that prayer is "an abomination to the Lord" (28:9), and will vitiate any sacrifice. The verse following our text goes to the root of the matter, for if the personal character of a man be displeasing to the Almighty, how can aught which he offers be acceptable?

**Illustrations.**—The sacrifices of Cain, of Saul, of Balaam, were all an abomination, as "not being mixed with faith," or being mixed with disobedience. In the cases of Absalom, Jezebel, and too many of the Pharisees in our Lord's time, there was an actual prostitution of a religious rite to a pretext and cloak for sin. But of Eliezer, Elijah, Simeon, Anna, Cornelius, and a host of other worthies, the prayer, proceeding from an upright heart, was proved by its success to have been God's delight.

**Application.**—Since God has always been a Spirit, it can be nothing new that He requires to be "worshipped in spirit and in truth." Though more fully revealed, and more distinctly insisted upon under the Gospel, this primary lesson in religion was taught from the

beginning, and learnt by every well-instructed Jew. And ought not I, as a Christian, still more to know and to act upon it? If so, I shall not delude myself with the vain idea that attendance upon ordinances (however sedulous) or performance of ceremonies (however correct) will serve in place of personal holiness. Nay, I shall know that all outward show of religion is simply offensive to God, and increases my guilt, unless there be a sincere effort running parallel with it to make the life consonant therewith. Shall I, then, give up prayer, forsake Church, neglect Holy Communion? By no means, for this would be disobedience, and also an abomination. I am not forbidden to pray, but commanded to pray aright. And so with all other religious duties. Man judges by acts; God by principles. Corrupt principles will spoil any acts, however good in themselves. Dissembled holiness is double iniquity. God stops His ears against their prayers who stop their ears against His law.

### Proverbs 15:9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves one who pursues righteousness

- **The way:** Pr 4:19, Pr 21:4,8 Ps 1:6 146:8,9 Mt 7:13 Jer 44:4 Hab 1:13
- **Loves:** Pr 21:21 Isa 26:7 51:1,7 Hos 6:3 1Ti 6:11 2Ti 2:22
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CONTRASTING THE WICKED & RIGHTEOUS

**Kitchen** - This antithetical proverb complements the preceding verse, clarifying what was intended there. The primary link is the word translated in both verses as 'an abomination' (Prov. 6:16–19; 11:20). What was the 'sacrifice' of the wicked (Pr 15:8) is here described as their 'way.' It is, ultimately, not even just the specifics of their lives that repulse God, but it is the entire direction they are headed.

We see NT parallels in Paul's exhortations to Timothy...

1Timothy 6:11 But **flee** from these things, you man of God; and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance [and] gentleness.

2Timothy 2:22 Now **flee** from youthful lusts, and **pursue** righteousness, faith, love [and] peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

**Comment:** All 4 commands (flee from, pursue) are **present imperative**, which calls for this to be our lifestyle, our life's general direction (not perfection), which begs the question of how is this even possible? The only way we can obey these commands is by daily surrender to the Holy Spirit, being filled with (controlled by) Him, and walking by His power (Eph 5:18-note, Gal 5:16-note, Php 2:13-note)

Prov 21:21 He who **pursues righteousness** and loyalty Finds life, righteousness and honor.

**The way of the wicked** - Earlier the reader is warned "do not enter the **path** of the wicked, And do not proceed in the **way** of evil men." (Pr 4:14) "The **way** of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble." (Pr 4:19) "the way of the wicked leads them astray (Lxx = **planao**)." (Pr 12:26)

**Bridges** - It is not only the sacrifice but the way of the wicked that God detests (Pr 15:8). It is not only his religion but his everyday life that is an abomination. His whole life is lived in rebellion against God. Everything he does flows from a polluted spring. It is a terrible thought that the wicked man's every step is detestable in God's sight.

**An abomination** - The Lxx translates **toebah** with **bdelugma** which means extremely detested. The root verb **bdeo** means to stink! Thus the way of the wicked "*stinks*" to God! See also comments in Pr 15:8 on same word **abomination (toebah)**. In somewhat of a reversal we see that "An unjust man is abominable to the righteous, And he who is upright in the way is abominable to the wicked."

**Toebah** is a **key word** in Proverbs = Proverbs 3:32; 6:16; 8:7; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:8-9, 26; 16:5, 12; 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27

**But** - This **term of contrast** introduces yet another striking contrast which is so frequent in the Proverbs. Always take a moment to ponder (meditate on) what is being contrasted, why, what effects, etc.

**POSB** - The Lord delights in obedience. This is why He loves those who truly repent of their sins and seek to please Him. They do not seek favors from God but fellowship with God. They pursue righteousness rather than sin because they love God and treasure their relationship with Him. This means that their sacrificial offerings are true worship offered from hearts that genuinely love the Lord-the total opposite of the offerings given by the wicked. The righteous offer up their prayers because they want to be in God's

presence.

**Pursue (radaph)** is frequent in Proverbs - "He who **pursues** righteousness and loyalty finds life, righteousness and honor" (Pr 21:21, cp Isa 51:1) for God **loves** those who **pursue righteousness** (Pr 15:9), but he "who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty" (Pr 28:19), for "he who **pursues** worthless things lacks sense" (Pr 12:11) and even worse he who **pursues** evil will bring about his own death" (Pr 11:19) emphasizing the maxim that "adversity **pursues**" him (Pr 13:21). Given these truths it is not surprising that "The wicked flee when no one is **pursuing**, but the righteous are bold as a lion." (Pr 28:1)

## NOT PERFECTION BUT DIRECTION!

**Kitchen** - It is not the **perfection** of every detail upon which God's pleasure hangs, but a consistent, steady, intense, purposeful, set **direction** toward His righteousness. The verb form of 'pursues' signifies the intensity of the search.

**Longman** - the contrast in the verse is between the lifestyles of the wicked and the righteous.

**Pursues (07291)(radaph)** means to pursue, chase, persecute. The first use describes Abram's pursuit of Lot's captors (Ge 14:14-15). In Ex 14 God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would chase after the Israelites (Ex 14:4, 8, 9, 23, Josh 24:6). God's promise if Israel obeys is that they will "chase your enemies." (Lev 26:7-8, cp similar promise in Josh 23:10), but if they disobeyed they would even "flee when no one is pursuing" them (Lev 26:17, cp three uses in Lev 26:36-37). Radaph describes Saul pursuing David to kill him (1Sa 23:25, 28, 24:14, 26:18, thus David prayed Ps 7:1). In fact many of the uses of **radaph** in Psalms speak of pursuit by an enemy. Radaph refers to hunting, chasing after animals (1 Sam. 26:20). Figuratively, radaph describes chasing rewards (Isa 1:23) or strong drink (Isa. 5:11). To pursue one's enemies into to darkness means to utterly wipe them out (Nah. 1:8).

**TWOT** - In a more theological context, God is said to **pursue** the wicked. KJV reads "persecute" (Jer 29:18). In other contexts it is the faithful who pursue their enemies (Ps 18:38)....In the intensive and reflexive stems, **radaph** means being "hounded" or "persecuted" (Ps 71:11-13).

**Radaph** is often translated in the Lxx with the verb **dioko**, which means to pursue or chase after and even to persecute.

**Brown-Driver-Briggs'** Definition - **radaph** - to be behind, follow after, pursue, persecute, run after (a) (1) (Qal) (a) to pursue, put to flight, chase, dog, attend closely upon (b) to persecute, harass (fig), (c) to follow after, aim to secure (fig), (d) to run after (a bribe) (fig). (2) (Niphal) (a) to be pursued (b) one pursued (participle)

**Pursue** in English - To follow; to go or proceed after or in a like direction. To follow in order to overtake, capture, kill, or defeat. It means to go after or on the track of something or someone and suggests a continuing effort to overtake, reach, or attain. To follow with a view to overtake; to follow with haste; to chase; as, to pursue a hare; to pursue an enemy.

**NAS Usage:** chase(6), chased(5), chases(1), follow(3), follow\*(1), follows(1), hunts(1), passed(1), persecute(6), persecuted(5), persecutors(4), press(1), **pursue**(36), **pursued**(37), pursuer(1), pursuers(9), pursues(9), pursuing(13), puts to flight(1), took up the pursuit(1), went in pursuit(1).

**Radaph** - 135v -

Gen 14:14-15; 31:23; 35:5; 44:4; Ex 14:4, 8f, 23; 15:9; Lev 26:7f, 17, 36f; Deut 1:44; 11:4; 16:20; 19:6; 28:22, 45; 30:7; 32:30; Josh 2:5, 7, 16, 22; 7:5; 8:16f, 20, 24; 10:10, 19; 11:8; 20:5; 23:10; 24:6; Jdg 1:6; 3:28; 4:16, 22; 7:23, 25; 8:4f, 12; 9:40; 20:43; 1 Sam 7:11; 17:52; 23:25, 28; 24:14; 25:29; 26:18, 20; 30:8, 10; 2 Sam 2:19, 24, 28; 17:1; 18:16; 20:6f, 10, 13; 22:38; 24:13; 1 Kgs 20:20; 2 Kgs 5:21; 9:27; 25:5; 2 Chr 13:19; 14:13; Neh 9:11; Job 13:25; 19:22, 28; 30:15; Ps 7:1, 5; 18:37; 23:6; 31:15; 34:14; 35:3, 6; 38:20; 69:26; 71:11; 83:15; 109:16; 119:84, 86, 150, 157, 161; 142:6; 143:3; Prov 11:19; 12:11; 13:21; 15:9; 19:7; 21:21; 28:1, 19; Eccl 3:15; Isa 1:23; 5:11; 17:13; 30:16; 41:3; 51:1; Jer 15:15; 17:18; 20:11; 29:18; 39:5; 52:8; Lam 1:3, 6; 3:43, 66; 4:19; 5:5; Ezek 35:6; Hos 2:7; 6:3; 8:3; 12:1; Amos 1:11; Nah 1:8

Most of the uses of **radaph** (30) are in the Psalms...

Ps 7:1 A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite. O Lord my God, in Thee I have taken refuge; Save me from all those who **pursue** me, and deliver me,

Ps 7:5 Let the enemy **pursue** my soul and overtake [it;] And let him trample my life down to the ground, And lay my glory in the dust. Selah.

Ps 18:37 I **pursued** my enemies and overtook them, And I did not turn back until they were consumed.

Ps 23:6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will **follow** (Lxx = **katadioko** = follow after, follow hard upon,

pursue closely) me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

**Ray Stedman** calls goodness and mercy God's two "sheep dogs" which continually pursue us and keep us on the path of righteousness for His Name's sake (Ps 23:3)

**William White** - One of the most blessed aspects of God's providence is his rescuing his people from pursuit. In the well-known phrase from Psalm 23, God's blessing itself is said to "follow" (KJV and RSV, v. 6), which is not strong enough for the sense of the root. It should be more active. "Only goodness and mercy shall pursue me" is the preferred reading.

**Spurgeon** - This is a fact as indisputable as it is encouraging, and therefore a heavenly verily, or "surely" is set as a seal upon it. This sentence may be read, "only goodness and mercy," for there shall be unmingled mercy in our history. These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer. Goodness and mercy follow him always—"all the days of his life"—the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins. "**And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.**" "A the slave does not remain (abide) in the house forever, but the son does remain forever." (Jn 8:35) While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be His house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber, I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper storey of the house of the Lord for ever. May God grant us grace to dwell in the serene atmosphere of this most blessed Psalm!

Ps 31:15 My times are in Thy hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who **persecute** me.

Ps 34:14 **Depart** from evil, and **do** good; **Seek** peace, and **pursue** it. (Red = commands = Let's be honest. Our natural man does not gravitate in these ethical directions. We need to seek continual filling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to truly obey these commands.)

**Spurgeon - Depart from evil.** Go away from it. Not merely take your hands off, but yourself off. Live not near the pest house. Avoid the lion's lair, leave the viper's nest. Set a distance between yourself and temptation. And do good. Be practical, active, energetic, persevering in good. Positive virtue promotes negative virtue; he who does good is sure to avoid evil. **Seek peace.** Not merely prefer it, but with zeal and care endeavour to promote it. Peace with God, with thine own heart, with thy fellow man, search after this as the merchantman after a precious pearl. Nothing can more effectually promote our own happiness than peace; strife awakens passions which eat into the heart with corroding power. Anger is murder to one's own self, as well as to its objects. **And pursue it. Hunt after it, chase it with eager desire. It may soon be lost, indeed, nothing is harder to retain, but do your best, and if enmity should arise let it be no fault of yours. Follow after peace when it shuns you; be resolved not to be of a contentious spirit. The peace which you thus promote will be returned into your own bosom, and be a perennial spring of comfort to you.**

Ps 35:3 Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who **pursue** me; Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."

Ps 35:6 Let their way be dark and slippery, With the angel of the LORD **pursuing** them.

Ps 38:20 And those who repay evil for good, They oppose me, because I **follow** what is good.

Ps 69:26 For they have persecuted him whom Thou Thyself hast smitten, And they tell of the pain of those whom Thou hast wounded.

Ps 71:11 Saying, "God has forsaken him; **Pursue** and seize him, for there is no one to deliver."

Ps 83:15 So **pursue** them with Thy tempest, And terrify them with Thy storm.

Ps 109:16 Because he did not remember to show lovingkindness, But **persecuted** the afflicted and needy man, And the despondent in heart, to put [them] to death.

Ps 119:84 How many are the days of Thy servant? When wilt Thou execute judgment on those who **persecute** me?

Ps 119:86 All Thy commandments are faithful; They have **persecuted** me with a lie; help me!

Ps 119:150 Those who **follow** after wickedness draw near; They are far from Thy law.



Ps 119:157 Many are my **persecutors** and my adversaries, [Yet] I do not turn aside from Thy testimonies.

Ps 119:161 Shin. Princes **persecute** me without cause, But my heart stands in awe of Thy words.

Ps 142:6 "Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my **persecutors**, For they are too strong for me.

Ps 143:3 For the enemy has **persecuted** my soul; He has crushed my life to the ground; He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead.

**Pursues righteousness** - This is a great description for it implies that this will be (should be) our life long activity - to pursue, to chase after, to run after, to seek that which is right (in our thoughts, words, deeds). In effect this describes the process of sanctification, which is a life long process, and in this life (contrary to those who teach the false doctrine of entire sanctification) will never be achieved perfectly. Praise God though that every believer in Messiah stands clothed (forever, immutably) in Christ's perfect, complete righteousness, the only righteousness that is acceptable by the Father. (cp 1Cor 1:30, 2Cor 5:21, Eph 1:5KJV)

Ps 37:23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD; and He delights in his way.

The writer of Hebrews exhorts (more accurately "commands") his (predominantly Jewish) readers (in light of the tendency for some to drift back [cp Heb 2:1-note] into the Levitical practices rather than experiencing the true liberty which is found in Christ - cp Jn 8:36, James 1:25-note) to "**Pursue (present imperative** = a command to make this our "lifestyle," - it is not a call to perfection, but IT IS a call for the "direction" of our life - are we living "Heavenward" or "Hellward?" Don't be deceived, beloved!) peace with all men, and the sanctification (holiness) without which no one (oudeis = absolute negation!) will see (come into the presence of His glory - cp Jude 1:24, 2Th 1:6-9) the Lord." (Heb 12:14-note) The writer is NOT saying we can merit salvation IF we keep on pursuing holiness! Don't "invert" the passage! The clear implication of this passage (when compared with other Scriptures) is that the one who is truly saved, who has a new heart, who has a new "direction" (righteousness rather than wickedness) and who has a new power (the indwelling Holy Spirit Who is true to His name ["Holy"] because He enables every Christ follower to actively pursue holiness). Let's be honest. Our fallen flesh has absolutely no desire for holiness (unless it is an external, ritualistic type of holiness, which is really not true holiness acceptable to the Father). Any desire to pursue holiness is first "energized" by the One Who is Holy (the Holy Spirit), but we still must make a volitional (willful) choice to obey that desire He stirs up in our heart. We can choose not to obey. So what the writer of Hebrews is saying in essence is "Choose to obey that desire for holiness that the Holy Spirit places in our hearts and minds, and pursue holiness, even that accomplishment being enabled by the energizing power of the Spirit! (See this juxtaposition of the call to work out our salvation which God works within us giving us the desire and the power - Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13NLT-note) . **These truths beg the question we all need to seriously ponder: "Am I really pursuing holiness (not perfection, but direction!)" "Do my life choices give evidence that I am a Jesus follower and a possessor of His empowering Holy Spirit?" These are questions which we dare not take lightly, for ultimately our eternal destiny lies in how we answer these questions! We might be able to fool others around us, but we cannot fool God (cp Pr 15:3)!**

**George Lawson** - Though God hates all sin, even in his own people, yet so rich is his grace, and so prevalent is the intercession of Christ, that he loves his people even in this world, where their righteousness is imperfect, and their course of life stained with many sins. At the best, they are but followers of righteousness. Paul himself could not say that he had attained, or was already perfect; but their hungerings and thirstings after righteousness are sure evidences of the love of God to them, and presages of that perfection which they shall attain in due time. Like as a father pitieth his son, and takes pleasure to see his feeble efforts to please and serve him; so the Lord delights in every breathing of desire, and every aim to obey his will which he sees in his people. Their righteousness towards men, and faithful discharge of the duty of their stations, is accepted in his sight, as well as their praises addressed to himself. ([Exposition of the Book of Proverbs](#))

**Proverbs 15:10 Grievous punishment is for him who forsakes the way. He who hates reproof will die**

- **Grievous:** Pr 12:1 13:1 23:35 1Ki 18:17 21:20 22:8 John 3:20 7:7
- **And he:** Pr 1:30 5:12 10:17 Isa 1:5,6 Eze 24:13,14
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GRIEVOUS PUNISHMENT FOR THE APOSTATE & THE OBSTINATE**

**International Children's Bible** - The person who quits doing what is right will really be punished. The one who hates to be corrected will die.

While **grievous punishment** (discipline or chastisement) might at first reading seem to apply to a believer (at least as one who has been severely chastised, it certainly felt grievous), the key seems to be the description that his is one who **forsakes the way**. All believers sin and all received divine discipline, but this passage in parallel with the latter part of this passage seems to indicate more than simply a time of backsliding, instead indicating a leaving or forsaking. (But some such as Charles Bridges [see below] apply this passage to those who are children of God.)

**Bridges** writes "But is not **grievous punishment (severe discipline)** also shunned by the child of God? No. He knows his need of it; he kisses the rod, bows his will, and reaps a harvest of blessing. But he who leaves the path is only humbled by force, not in spirit. There is no surer step to ruin than to hate correction. Child of God, do you not still need correction so you can be more obedient? The Lord teaches you, when you have a thorn in your flesh, to pray for his grace to be in your heart (2 Corinthians 12:7). Seek your Father's favor more than your own ease. Desire sanctifying rather than the removal of His rod. Do not mock Him with an empty show of repentance. Lord, let me know the smart of Your rod rather than the eclipse of Your love. Show me Your love, and then do with me as You wish." ([Charles Bridges on Proverbs 15](#))

**Punishment** ([04148](#))(**musar** from **yasar** = to discipline, chasten, admonish) refers to discipline, chastening, correction. God's chastening is always for purposes of instruction, and should not be ignored or resented. (Job 5:17 cp Job 42:2). Solomon instructs us "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof." (Pr 3:11) One of major purposes of wisdom literature is to teach wisdom and **instruction (musar)** (Pr 1:2) Isaiah describes the divine chastisement poured out on the Suffering Messiah (Isa 53:5). **Musar** is translated in the Septuagint with the noun **paideia** which is used of rearing and guiding a child to maturity (Heb 12:11-note) and refers to God's fatherly discipline (Heb 12:5-note). Most commentators however feel that the this proverb is not describing believers who occasionally forsake the way, but apostates who permanently leave the way.

The **KJV Bible Commentary** puts it this way - "A grievous punishment awaits those who forsake the way of wisdom. The Lord will first bring correction that is designed to bring them back into the way (Lev 26:14 ff.). If a man hates this reproof from the Lord and does not move to the place of repentance, the Lord will kill him."

**Grievous** (causing or characterized by severe pain, suffering, or sorrow!) is the Hebrew word **ra'** which means **bad** - the reproofing rod of God will be **bad** for all who forsake **'the way'**. Divine discipline for believers results in temporal chastisement or discipline. On the other hand those who forsake **"the Way, the Truth and the Life,"** the Person of Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6), the result will be eternally grievous, for they will incur eternal punishment! In Psalm 1:6 (**note**) we see a clear description of **TWO WAYS** of every person created which results in two eternal destinies "For the LORD knows **the way** of the righteous, but (what a dramatic **contrast**) **the way** of the wicked will perish."

**Forsakes** (leaves) ([05800](#))(**'azab**) basically means to depart from something. As one commentary says, this would seem to be tantamount to apostasy, of departing from God's way of righteousness. True believers may have moments (even seasons) of backsliding, but they will always endure the end, because they are enabled to endure by the supernatural power of God.

**Michael Fox** on the way - This is **the way** (though the definite article is not used)—the safe and natural path through the broken and booby-trapped landscape of life; see Vol. I, 129. It is defined as the right way by its antithesis with hating reproof, for loving reproof is wisdom (Prov 12:1), and it leads to life (4:13; 10:17). (Anchor Yale Bible Commentary)

**The way** - Not "the way of evil" (Pr 2:12, 4:14, 19, 12:26, 13:15), "the way of death" (Pr 14:12, 15:10, 16:25), but "the way of good men" (Pr 2:20), "the way of wisdom" (Pr 4:11), "the way of life" (Pr 6:23), "the way of righteousness" (Pr 8:20, 12:26, 16:31), "the way of understanding" (Pr 9:6), "the way of the LORD" (Pr 10:29). In the previous passage we read "**The way** of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD." (Pr 15:9)

## PARALLEL SYNONYM'S

<b>Forsakes</b>	<b>Hates</b>
<b>Punishment</b>	<b>Reproof</b>
<b>Grievous</b>	<b>Die</b>

**NET Note** says "The two lines are parallel synonymously, so the **"severe discipline"** (grievous punishment) of the first colon is parallel to **"will die"** of the second. The expression מוֹסֵר רָע (musar ra', "severe discipline") indicates a discipline that is catastrophic or harmful to life. If this line and the previous line are synonymous, then the one who abandons **the way** also refuses any correction, and so there is severe punishment. To abandon (**forsakes**) the way means to leave the life of righteousness which is the repeated subject of the book of Proverbs.

**Gaebelein** agrees that "Discipline must be used for those who go astray, but in this discipline they may die prematurely....The relationship of the two lines is probably synonymous: the "stern discipline" (mûsâr rā) of the first line is parallel to the death (yāmû)

in the second. The point of the verse is that it is one thing to sin and find forgiveness but another altogether to refuse correction and receive such stern discipline. See also Romans 8:13." (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible** - The wicked will face significant discipline off and on throughout their lives. They will, at least at times, be afflicted by the discipline of guilt, questions about eternity, an inability to deal with problems, a sense of purposelessness, wondering if life is worth it all, a lack of permanent satisfaction and fulfillment, disease and/or accident, severe crises, doubt and uncertainty, lacking assurance of God's presence and eternal life. The greater tragedy, though, is that they will not respond to the discipline nor change their ways. Their stubborn disobedience to God's Word will lead to their death, both here on earth and for all eternity.

**John A Kitchen** - The word translated 'stern' (grievous) basically describes that which is evil or bad. It can describe something as morally wicked (Prov. 15:3) or as calamitous and unfortunate (Prov. 15:15). Which meaning does it carry here? Probably the latter notion is in mind.<sup>28</sup> The discipline itself is bitter, difficult, stern, severe and heavy. Such discipline awaits the one who 'forsakes the way.' The 'way' is the path of wisdom and righteousness so often set forth in Proverbs, particularly in chapters 1–9 (Prov. 2:13, 19, 20, etc.), but also in the collections (Pr 10:17; 12:28). This severest form of discipline is held for those who are confirmed in their rebellion, for him who 'hates reproof' (Pr 10:17; 12:1; 15:5, 12). An illustration would be Ahab's attitude toward the prophesying of Micaiah (1Ki 22:8–28). Confirmed in his direction, his path can only lead to death (Pr 1:31, 32; 5:11, 12, 23; 1Ki 22:34–38). The New Testament assures us that the severest form of church discipline involves delivering 'such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus' (1Cor. 5:5; cf. 1Cor. 11:28–30; 1Ti 1:20; James 5:19–20; 1 John 5:16). ([Proverbs- A Mentor Commentary- recommended resource](#))

**Butler** comments on **hate reproof** - Evil has a built-in rejection of reproof to immune the evildoer from stopping his evil. But it is a fatal immunity.

**Criswell** states that the phrase **hates reproof** "indicates lack of genuine repentance on the part of the wrongdoer. The sinner is unmoved and even annoyed by correction or discipline because these bring his iniquity before him. The child of God, on the other hand, rejoices in God's loving discipline, which is the evidence of his sonship (Heb. 12:5-8-note), and profits by the rod of reproof, which makes his way happy and not grievous (Heb. 12:11-note).

**Matthew Henry** - He that hates reproof shall perish in his sins, since he would not be parted from them.

**John Phillips** - If there is anything a headstrong sinner dislikes, it is to be told the truth about himself and where his path is leading. He usually ends up hating the person who tries to correct him.

**Hates** (08130)(sane) means to detest, abhor, loathe, be hostile, have a feeling of open hostility and intense dislike (Ge 37:4), to be unwilling, the opposite of to love (ahab, 0157). To be an enemy with open hostility and strife toward another (Pr 29:24)

**Reproof** (08433)(tokeha from **yakah** = to argue, convince, convict, judge, reprove) is a noun which describes a rebuke, a correction, a chastening (Ps 73:14) a reproof (Ps 39:11) or an argument (Job 13:6, 23:4). The main idea of tokeha is correcting a wrong. The **Lxx** translates **tokeha** in most of the OT passages with **elegchos** which strictly speaking refers to trying or testing for the purpose of proving. In the negative sense it is the act of charging a person with wrongdoing and thus is an expression of strong disapproval (reproof, censure) as in 2Ti 3:16-note.

**Will die** - The second line defines the **punishment** threatened in the first. This is not just physical death, but even worse eternal death and separation from the presence of God. Woe to the man who becomes irrevocably, irreversibly hardened to divine reproof which is the way of life (Pr 6:23).

**George Lawson** writes that "When a traveler loses the right way, he is glad of one that can set him right. When a man is on the edge of a concealed pit, he will thank the person that pulls him back with violence, and tells him of his danger. But many men are such enemies to their own souls, that they cannot endure necessary reproofs and corrections, and would rather be suffered to go to the place of torment at their ease, than terrified with apprehensions of their danger, whilst there is time to make a retreat. Let such persons consider, that however **grievous** correction is, yet hell is much more **grievous**; and that however they may get free of the former, there is no possibility of getting out of the latter. Who pities Ahab for his fall at Ramoth-Gilead? (1Ki 22:1-40) He was forewarned of his danger by Micaiah (1Ki 22:8, 18), but he hated the holy prophet for telling him the truth. Equally unpitied shall they be who perish for refusing reproof, and all the words of instruction which they heard in the day of grace, shall be like flaming thunderbolts in their consciences through endless ages.

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Proverbs 15 - Today in the Word - In "The Road Not Taken," poet Robert Frost reflected on the significance of a choice. Walking in the woods one day, he came to a fork in the path. He could not see what lay ahead in either direction. Which way should he go? In

the end, he chose

“the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

Two contrasting paths is a common picture in the wisdom literature of Scripture. Just as Proverbs gives us a portrait of the godly person who takes the first path, it also gives us a picture of the sinner who takes the second path. What might that second picture look like, based on today's chapter? A fool has a poor relationship with his parents (Pr 15:5, 20). He spurns discipline and correction (Pr 15:10, 12, 31–32). The things he loves are stupid or evil or both (Pr 15:14, 21). The words he says are harsh (Pr 15:1), deceitful (Pr 15:4), ignorant (Pr 15:7), quarrelsome (Pr 15:18), and impetuous (Pr 15: 28)—and since “the mouth of the fool gushes” (Pr 15:2), there are a lot of them! Comparison proverbs make even better sense in light of the two paths (see Pr 15:16–17). The general form of this type of proverb is, “Better is A with X than B with Y.” A is usually an apparently negative quality, activity, or circumstance, with B as an apparently positive opposite. X is usually a genuinely positive quality, activity, or circumstance, with Y as an opposite, resulting in a reversed perception of A and B. For example, in Pr 15:16, A is “a little” (materially) and B is “great wealth.” B seems preferable. But add in X as “fear of the Lord” and Y as “turmoil” and the perception flips. A right relationship with God is far more valuable than financial wealth! **Apply the Word** - Here is another good overall study question for Proverbs: “What does this tell me about God?” He sees and knows all (Pr 15:11). He loves righteousness and hates wickedness (Pr 15:8–9). He supports the poor, opposes the proud (Pr 15:25), loves the pure-minded (Pr 15:26), and hears the prayers of the righteous (Pr 15:8, 29).

### Proverbs 15:11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD. How much more the hearts of men!

- **Sheol:** Pr 27:20 Job 26:6 Ps 139:8 Rev 1:18
- **hearts:** 2Ch 6:30 Ps 7:9 44:21 Jer 17:10 John 2:24,25 21:17 Heb 4:13 Rev 2:23
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**International Children's Bible** - The Lord knows what is happening where the dead people are. So he can surely know what living people are thinking.

**Sheol and Abaddon lie open before Jehovah** - The idea is that the omniscient God is fully aware of these two places. How interesting that they are paralleled with men's hearts! Is there a hint of a reminder that "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jer 17:9)

**How much more** - Introduces an argument from the lesser to the greater. As the NET Bible reasons "If all this is open before the LORD, how much more so human hearts.

**More more** and **much less** arguments in Proverbs = Pr 11:31, 15:11, 17:7, 19:7, 19:10, 21:27

**HCSB note** - **Sheol** is the realm of both the righteous and the unrighteous dead. It is generally observed that one cannot see God from **Sheol** (Ps 6:5) and can never hope to get out (Job 7:9; Ps 89:48; cp. Lk 16:26), but God can see into **Sheol** and He can bring His elect out (Ps 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:13; Hos 13:14). If God can see into the obscure depths of the grave, how much more (see note at 11:31) can He see the recesses of human hearts. ([Holman Christian Standard Bible Study Bible](#))

The **NET Note** adds that "**Hearts** here is a **metonymy** of subject, meaning the motives and thoughts (cf. NCV "the thoughts of the living")."

**Before** (05048) (**neged** from the verb **nagad** = to be conspicuous, to make known, to declare something) is a preposition that means before (in presence of - in Ex 34:10 God says "**Before** all your people I will perform miracles."), in front of (Ex 19:2 = "Israel camped **in front of** [Septuagint or Lxx = katenanti = prep. meaning to place opposite, figuratively in sight of or in the judgment of] the mountain" Mt Sinai), opposite (in front of but with space between as when Israel were at the Jordan River and "crossed **opposite** Jericho", cp Ge 21:16) or corresponding to. **Swanson** says **neged** pertains "to a spatial position anterior to another object, implying a public or open position, and so often being in the presence of another." The root word n-g-d means to place something conspicuously before another.

**Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definition** of **neged** - what is conspicuous, what is in front of adv, (2) in front of, straight forward, before, in sight of, (3) in front of oneself, straightforward (4) before your face, in your view or purpose with prep, (5) what is in front of, corresponding to, (6) in front of, before, (7) in the sight or presence of, (8) parallel to, (9) over, for, (10) in front, opposite.

The first use is Ge 2:18, 20, both verses describing the creation of Eve, a "helpersuitable (**neged** - corresponding to)" Adam. In Joshua 5:13 "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man (pre-

incarnate appearance of Messiah) was standing **opposite** (neged; Lxx = enantios = before, in the presence of) him with His sword drawn in His hand, and Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" In Joshua 8:35 (after Israel entered the promised land) "There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read **before** all the assembly of Israel (What a great principle we see here - before they possessed God's promised land, they listened to the Promise Keeper's word, for instruction and encouragement of their faith) with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them." Pr 4:25 instructs us to "Let your eyes look directly ahead, And let your gaze be fixed straight **in front of** you." In Ps 51:3 David says "I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever **before** me." (Praise God for His forgiveness as far as the East is from the West! Ps 103:12). God says to faithless Israel "Remove the evil of your deeds from My **sight**. (Lxx = apenanti = in a position that faces against another, opposite)" In another Psalm David used **neged** to give us the secret of successful (not perfect) sanctification declaring "I will set no (uses Gk adverb signifying absolute negation) worthless (belial - transliterated in 2Cor 6:15 to describe Satan!) thing **before** (Lxx = pro = before) my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten (**dabaq** = stick like glue, cleave as used in Ge 2:24 which in Lxx = **proskollao**) its grip on me." (Ps 101:3) In Isaiah 24:23 we have a prophetic description of the Millennium which declares that "**Then** (Always take note of this important **expression of time** and ask "**When is then?** In this case for accurate **interpretation**, you will be forced to **keep the context king** and read Isa 24:21-22) the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for (**term of explanation**) the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and [His] glory will be **before** (Heb = neged; Lxx = enopion = positioned in front of) His elders." In a beautiful passage Jehovah declares "Behold, I have inscribed you (some see this as the city Zion, but ultimately it is the redeemed Jewish remnant and it also applies to all the redeemed) on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually **before** Me." (Isaiah 49:16-see discussion of **Inscribed on His Hands**)

**TWOT** - The unique thrust of this preposition (**neged**) illumines many passages (e.g. 1Sa 15:30; cf. 2Sa 12:12; Josh 8:11). Our word occurs in covenantal contexts. God's law was to be read before (i.e. so all could hear) Israel (Dt 31:17; cf. Josh 8:35; Ezra 8:3). Man's public covenants were enunciated (1Kgs 8:22) and fulfilled openly in that the entire community could witness the act. So David (Ps 22:25), and later the Messiah, promised the payment of vows. The reference here is probably to the šēlāmîm (the peace offering, the perfected Passover, the Lamb of God himself. Public vowing embraces open declaration of God's word (Ps 119:46), and praise (Ps 138:1), and hoping in his name (Ps 52:9). God's word and attesting miracles were performed openly and prominently before Israel. There was no excuse for unbelief (Ex 34:10; cf. Ps 78:12). The same holds true for his acts of providence (Ps 31:19; cf. Ro 2:4). The word also occurs in legal (rîb, q.v.) contexts. Samuel calls the people before God as a witness to his steadfastness (1Sa 12:3; cf. 1Ki 21:13). God the omniscient judge clearly attests man's sin (Hos 7:2; Ps 109:15), his desire (Ps 38:9; cf. Ro 8:27ff) and all his ways (Ps 39:5; 119:168; Pr 15:11). His Messiah shall always sit before him vindicated and rewarded (Ps 89:36; cf. Isa 24:23; 61:11).

**NAS Usage:** against(3), aloof\*(3), away(1), **before**(60), broad(1), demoralized\*(1), directly(1), distance\*(3), **front**(15), **opposite**(16), opposite\*(5), other side(1), **presence**(13), resist\*(1), risked\*(1), sight(2), sight\*(2), straight ahead(3), straight before(1), suitable(2), under(1).

**Neged** - 129v -

Gen 2:18, 20; 21:16; 31:32, 37; 33:12; 47:15; Ex 19:2; 34:10; Num 2:2; 25:4; Deut 31:11; 32:52; Josh 3:16; 5:13; 6:5, 20; 8:11, 33, 35; Judg 9:17; 20:34; Ruth 4:4; 1 Sam 12:3; 15:30; 16:6; 26:20; 2 Sam 12:12; 18:13; 22:13, 23,25; 1 Kgs 8:22; 20:27; 21:10, 13; 2 Kgs 1:13; 2:7, 15; 3:22; 4:25; 1 Chr 5:11; 8:32; 9:38; 2 Chr 6:12f; 7:6; 8:14; Neh 3:10, 16, 19, 23, 25ff; 4:5; 7:3; 8:3; 12:9, 24, 37; 13:21; Job 4:16; 10:17; 26:6; Ps 5:5; 10:5; 16:8; 18:12, 22; 22:25; 23:5; 36:1; 38:9, 11, 17; 39:1, 5; 44:15; 50:8; 51:3; 52:9; 54:3; 69:19; 78:12; 86:14; 88:1; 89:36; 90:8; 101:3, 7; 109:15; 116:14, 18; 119:46, 168; 138:1; Prov 4:25; 14:7; 15:11; 21:30; Eccl 4:12; 6:8; Isa 1:7, 16; 5:21; 24:23; 40:17; 47:14; 49:16; 59:12; 61:11; Jer 31:39; Ezek 40:13, 23; 41:16; 42:1, 3; Dan 8:15; 10:16; Hos 7:2; Joel 1:16; Amos 4:3; Obad 1:11; Hab 1:3.

Here are some uses of **neged**...

Ps 5:5 The boastful shall not stand **before** Thine eyes; Thou dost hate all who do iniquity.

Ps 10:5 His ways prosper at all times; Thy judgments are on high, out of his **sight**; As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them.

Ps 16:8 I have set the LORD continually **before** me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Ps 18:12 From the brightness **before** Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire.

Ps 18:22 For all His ordinances were **before** me (Lxx = enopion = in sight of, a position in front of)(**What a great picture for saints of all ages to emulate! Not television programs, not sporting events, etc, but God's precious Word!**), And I did not put away His statutes from me.



Ps 22:25 From Thee [comes] my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows **before** those who fear Him.

Ps 23:5 Thou dost prepare a table **before** me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

Ps 36:1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD. Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God **before** his eyes.

Ps 38:9 Lord, all my desire is **before** Thee; And my sighing is not hidden from Thee.

Ps 38:11 My loved ones and my friends stand **aloof** from my plague; And my kinsmen stand afar off.

Ps 38:17 For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually **before** me.

Ps 39:1 For the choir director, for Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. I Said, "I will guard my ways, That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle, While the wicked are in my **presence**."

Ps 39:5 "Behold, Thou hast made my days [as] handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Thy **sight**, Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.

Ps 44:15 All day long my dishonor is **before** me, And my humiliation has overwhelmed me,

Ps 50:8 "I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, And your burnt offerings are continually **before** Me.

Ps 51:3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever **before** me.

Ps 52:9 I will give Thee thanks forever, because Thou hast done [it], And I will wait on Thy name, for [it is] good, in the **presence** of Thy godly ones.

Ps 54:3 For strangers have risen against me, And violent men have sought my life; They have not set God **before** them. Selah.

Ps 69:19 Thou dost know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor; All my adversaries are **before** Thee.

Ps 78:12 He wrought wonders **before** their fathers, In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

Ps 86:14 O God, arrogant men have risen up against me, And a band of violent men have sought my life, And they have not set Thee **before** them.

Ps 88:1 A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. For the choir director; according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite. O Lord, the God of my salvation, I have cried out by day and in the night **before** Thee.

Ps 89:36 "His descendants shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun **before** Me.

Ps 90:8 Thou hast placed our iniquities **before** Thee, Our secret [sins] in the light of Thy presence.

Ps 101:3 I will set no worthless thing **before** my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me.

Ps 101:7 He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position **before** me.

Ps 109:15 Let them be **before** the LORD continually, That He may cut off their memory from the earth;

Ps 116:14 I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh [may it be] in the **presence** of all His people.

Ps 116:18 I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh [may it be] in the **presence** of all His people,

Ps 119:46 I will also speak of Thy testimonies **before** kings, And shall not be ashamed.

Ps 119:168 I keep Thy precepts and Thy testimonies, For all my ways are **before** Thee.

Ps 138:1 A Psalm of David. I Will give Thee thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to Thee **before** the gods.

**Sheol** ([07585](#))(**she'ol**) is the underworld or the place to which people descend at death. The grave, death, the depths, the nether world, the underworld. Sheol was viewed as the place where departed spirits went after death. **Sheol** was envisioned as a dark region within the earth, the entrance to which was the grave with its steep slopes (cf. Ps 88:4-6). In Job 14:13-22, Job expressed the common view of life beyond death, namely, that in **Sheol** there is no contact with the living, only separation, but in Sheol there is a conscious awareness of the dreary existence. In Jonah 2:3 Jonah pictures himself in the belly of **Sheol**, its very center - in other words he is as good as dead. In Ps 22:6 **Sheol**, the underworld, the place of the dead, is personified as David's enemy. **Abaddon** is

used as a name for Sheol in Ps 88:11. In Ps 143:3 "dark places" is a synonym for **Sheol**, pictured as a dark place located deep in the ground. In the ancient Israelite view he joined his deceased ancestors in **Sheol**. In Isaiah 7:11, the phrase "Make it as deep as **Sheol** or make it high upwards" words suggest that Ahaz can feel free to go beyond the bounds of ordinary human experience. The phrase "path of life" stands in contrast to death/Sheol in Pr 2:18-19; 5:5-6; 15:24. Sheol, the place of death, is sometimes depicted as a raging sea (see Ps 18:4, 15-16). **Sheol** is the land of the dead localized in Hebrew thought in the earth's core or the grave. "Sheol" in the Bible can be used four different ways: the grave, the realm of the departed [wicked] spirits or Hell, death in general, or a place of extreme danger (one that will lead to the grave if God does not intervene). (Note: Many of these comments on **Sheol** are summarized from over 100 comments on "**Sheol**" in the very helpful resource, [NET Notes](#)).

In Hebrew thought, **Sheol** is the proper name of the subterranean world which was regarded as the land of the dead. In ancient Canaanite thought Death was a powerful god whose appetite was never satisfied. In the OT Sheol/Death, though not deified, is personified as greedy and as having a voracious appetite. See Pr 30:15-16; Isa 5:14. According to the OT, those who descend into the realm of death/Sheol are cut off from God's mighty deeds and from the worshiping covenant community that experiences divine intervention (Ps 30:9; 88:10-12; Isa 38:18). The Hebrew term שַׁחַת (shakhat, "pit" = not same Hebrew word used in Pr 1:12) is often used as a title for Sheol (see Ps 16:10, 49:9 - decay = pit; Ps 55:24; 103:4 = pit of destruction, where our physical body decays).

**Abaddon** (011)(**abaddon** from **abad** = to die or pass away) is a feminine noun which means destruction. **Abaddon** is transliterated in both Hebrew and in Greek, in Rev 9:11 ([see note](#)) used as a name for the king over the abyss (some suppose this is Satan), whose name in Greek is [Apollyon](#). (derived from **apoleia** = to destroy = describes utter and hopeless loss of all that gives worth to existence.)

**Abaddon** - 6v -

Job 26:6 "Naked is Sheol before Him, And Abaddon has no covering.

Job 28:22 "Abaddon and Death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it.'

Job 31:12 "For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon, And would uproot all my increase.

Psalms 88:11 Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon?

Proverbs 15:11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, How much more the hearts of men!

Proverbs 27:20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.

**Garland** on **Abaddon** = a transliteration of the related Hebrew term. The Hebrew term אַבְדּוֹן [āḇdōn] is derived from אבד [abad] meaning "to perish, become lost, be ruined." It is translated by "destruction" and associated with שְׁאוֹל [sheol] in Job 26:6 and Pr. 15:11, where it denotes a place which is seen by the omnipresence and omniscience of God. Abaddon is personified along with death (מָוֶת [māwet] ) as having heard of the fame of elusive wisdom (Job 28:22). It is said to be the destination of a consuming fire (Job 31:12) and is associated with the grave (קֶבֶר [qeber] ), but differentiated from it (Ps. 88:11). It is said that hell (שְׁאוֹל [sheol] ) and Abaddon ("destruction") are never full (Pr. 27:20). In all of these uses, it denotes a location which is associated with Sheol and the grave, but differs from them. "The rabbins have made Abaddon the nethermost of the two regions into which they divide the lower world."

**See Dictionary Articles:**

- [Sheol in Baker's Evangelical Dictionary](#)
- [Sheol in Holman's Dictionary](#)
- [NET Bible articles](#)
- [What is the Difference Between Sheol, Hades, Hell, etc?](#)
- [Where did OT Believers go when they died?](#)

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - May 12th "Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"—15:11.

**Interpretation.**—"Sheol and Abaddon," the place of departed spirits, and the lowest hell the abode of "the angels that sinned" (2 Pet. 2:4), "are before the Lord," under His eye and control. He knows and regulates the condition of every departed spirit. The secrets of the prison-house of despair are all open to Him. The deepest machinations of the Prince of hell (called Abaddon, Rev. 9:11) and of all the demons are penetrated by His omniscience. How much more, then, may we believe (the argument is adapted to our limited powers of reason) that the hearts of living men, into which we ourselves have some penetration, must be subject to His cognizance and power! How can man, so inferior in subtlety and sagacity, expect to hide counsels or prosper in conspiracies against Him?

**Illustrations.**—Foreknown to the Omniscient One from the beginning was Pharaoh's persistent rebellion and ultimate fate, though,

with a view to His own glory (Exod. 3:19; Rom. 9:17), He allowed that monarch to maintain his ground through ten successive plagues. His control of the hearts of men and of nations is equal also to His knowledge, and is compared by Himself to that of the potter over the clay (Jer. 18:6). Jesus, when upon earth, proved Himself God by answering men's thoughts (Luke 7:39, 40; Matt. 9:4), convicting men of secret sin (John 8:7–9), and predicting their future (John 21:18, etc.).

**Application.**—No one denies God's omniscience in words, but how much atheism unspoken is acted! Of men who profess to believe the Bible, and who abjure it, too many are alike in this respect. The disciple of nature may imagine himself encompassed by the Deity in His works, but it is not a personal God taking cognizance of his thoughts and doings whom he acknowledges. Like the idolater, he wants a blind God, and this he finds in nature as the other in blocks of wood and stone. But mine be the God revealed in the Word I believe to be His, and from His all-searching eye, as from His all-pervading presence, I know there is no escape—in hell no more than in heaven (Ps. 139). What, however, should be the effect of this belief upon my life? How can I prove it to be real? Surely it will make me afraid even to think before Him what I should be afraid to do before men. It will abide with me in His sanctuary, in my place of business, in my private chamber, and constrain me to aim at holiness. And then it will enable me to appeal to Him, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," and to found upon the omniscience of my Saviour a hope for eternity. Search me, O God, and know my heart, not to condemn but to heal. ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

### Proverbs 15:12 A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, he will not go to the wise

- Pr 15:10 9:7,8 Amos 5:10 John 3:18-21, 7:7 2Ti 4:3) (2Ch 18:7 Job 21:14
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Paul says that in "the last days difficult (perilous) times will come" (2Ti 3:1-**note**) and we will have churches filled with **scoffers**, those who have a contempt of and no desire for hearing of the plain teaching of pure Scripture, "for (**term of explanation**) the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but [wanting] to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth (cp Pr 15:12 = "**will not go to the wise**!)", and will turn aside to myths." (2Ti 4:3-4-**note**)

**Have you ever shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with someone who scoffed at you?** Let's face it, the Gospel is the "ultimate reproof" of a person, for it is the way of eternal life if received, but it guarantees eternal death (separation from God) for those who refuse to receive it's reproof, "for (**term of explanation** = What's Paul explaining? See end of Ro 3:22) all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23-**note**) and "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23-**note**).

The **scoffer** regards reproof as unworthy of consideration! One who scoffs expresses an open dislike and disrespect, even an overt derision mixed with indignation. In short a **scoffer** expresses an indignant contempt! The **NLT** paraphrase gives us a good sense of the intent of this proverb - "**Mockers hate to be corrected, so they stay away from the wise.**" Many of us have had the experience of sharing the Gospel with a **scoffer**, and find that after that they tend to avoid us whenever we encounter them in the future! Does this "hurt?" Of course it does, but as Paul said we are doing our "share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions." (Col 1:24-**note**) And notice that in Col 1:24 Paul (supernaturally) rejoices in his sufferings (he was imprisoned for the Gospel when he penned the letter to the Colossians) for the sake of the Colossians. Suffering for Jesus may yield (temporal) pain in this life, but hallelujah it brings (eternal) gain in the next life! (cp Mt 5:12-**note**) = "**Rejoice**, and be **glad** [jump for joy], for your reward in heaven is great".

**Charles Bridges** - The mocker has been flattering himself for so long that he cannot bear to be brought down to his correct level. So he thinks that a friend who tells him the truth is his enemy. He not only resents correction—he hates it.

**Wiersbe** - Scorners show how ignorant they are by the way they respond to advice and reproof (Pr 9:7-8, Pr 13:1, Pr 15:12)...When you try to teach a scorners, you're just casting pearls before swine. The scorners know everything (**Ed**: At least that's what he thinks)!

**Scoffer** (scorner, mocker) ([03887](#))(**lis/luwts**) is a verb which means to manifest contempt by derision, to treat with insolent ridicule or mockery. The essence of the sense is to express utter contempt.

To help understand God's "definition" of a **scoffer** see the uses of this Hebrew verb (**lis/luwts**) in Proverbs (not all give a good description of a scoffer, but several do. Note that even God Himself scoffs at the scoffer [Pr 3:34], so clearly some scoffing is godly! This truth is like godly anger [Eph 4:26-27-**note**], which even for believers is a very "fine line," while God can scoff or hate with perfect righteousness!) - Pr 1:22; 3:34; 9:7-8, 12; 13:1; 14:6, 9; 15:12; 19:25, 28-29; 20:1; 21:11, 24; 22:10; 24:9.

**Does not love.** What is the antithesis of **love**? Of course it is hate. Would it not be fair to say that a **scoffer** hates a reprover.

**Wise** - This word occurs some 62x in Proverbs in the NAS. If you would like to see how God defines wise, take a moment and go through the following passages, asking (after praying for the Spirit's illumination) what characterizes a wise person? You might even make a list in your notebook. You could use this list to "assess" whether (or to what degree) you are wise. You could then pray these passages, especially asking God to make you wise in those areas you fall short. Surely He will answer you according to 1Jn 5:14-15, as you ask in faith (even as small as a mustard seed), trusting He will answer in His perfect timing and his good, and acceptable and perfect will.

Proverbs 1:3, 5-6; 3:7, 35; 6:6; 8:33; 9:8-9, 12; 10:1, 8, 14, 19; 11:30; 12:15, 18; 13:1, 14, 20; 14:1, 3, 16, 24; 15:2, 7, 12, 20, 24, 31; 16:14, 21, 23; 17:28; 18:15; 19:20; 20:1, 18, 26; 21:11, 20, 22; 22:17; 23:15, 19, 24; 24:5-6, 23; 25:12; 26:5, 12; 27:11; 28:11; 29:8-9, 11; 30:24.

## Proverbs 15:13 A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken

- **Joyful:** Pr 15:15, 17:22 2Co 1:12
- Pr 12:25 18:14 Ne 2:2 John 14:1 2Co 2:7 7:10
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### JOYFUL HEART VS SAD HEART

Pr 15:13-15 may be linked for all use the Hebrew word for **heart**. In Pr 15:14 (where **mind** is actually **heart** in Hebrew) a key to gaining and maintaining a **joyful heart** is to seek knowledge.

**POSB** on **heart** in (Pr 15:13-15) - The heart affects people's choices, but it is also affected by their choices. Remember from the discussion in the previous point, God sees into people's hearts. He knows their deepest thoughts, feelings, and intentions (Pr 15:11). In these next three proverbs, Scripture describes what God sees when He looks into the heart of a wise, then a foolish, individual. (And so in Pr 15:13 he writes) People can usually get a glimpse into other people's hearts by looking at their faces. Their countenance or expression reveals their hearts. The faces of the righteous should and usually do radiate the joy of the Lord. In addition, their wonderful relationship with Him changes their attitude and outlook toward life. God's presence in their lives becomes their joy and strength and stirs them to live righteously (Ne.8:10).

Inner feelings or disposition affect and even determine outward or exterior expression, whether it be an expression of joy or of sadness. Ultimately human beings are controlled from the inside out, not the converse. The face is the mirror of the soul!

In Pr 15:13 we see that joy lifts a person and shows on the face. On the other hand sadness and grief smite (so to speak) a person, beating them down with sorrow.

**Macdonald** - A **merry heart** is reflected in a smiling face, but a broken **heart** has deeper effects. It causes despondency and despair.

The thoughts of our heart are revealed in our countenance, our talk and our walk. See God's comment to Cain - "Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your **countenance** fallen? "If you do well, will not [*your countenance*] be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." (Ge 4:6-7) And of course we all know the result - the first murder!

Given that the fact that for a believer the fruit of the Spirit is joy (Gal 5:22), a joy filled face is evidence of a believer who is filled with (controlled by) and walking by the enabling power of the Spirit.

**John Kitchen** says that this "proverb, as a whole, would then teach us that it is not so much what happens to you, but your attitude toward what happens to you that determines your view of yourself and your life. Attitude is everything!"

**Derek Kidner** - The **heart** stands for the thoughts and attitude; and these, not the circumstances, are decisive. Knox: 'Gay heart, gay looks; sad thoughts crush the spirit.' Cf. Pr 15:15; 17:22; 18:14.

**Bridges** - A man's countenance is the index of his spirit. In experiencing joy "the heart sits smiling in the face and looks cheerfully out of the windows of the eyes" (Trapp). This cheerfulness, however, is very different from the noisy mirth of the ungodly. The word cheerful was often used by the old writers. It was Foxe's favorite description of the holy joy of the martyrs. Sad, indeed, is the contrasting heartache that crushes the spirit. Too often a mischievous gloom worms itself into the hearts of God's children. The

melancholy victim drags on through a weary, heavy-laden existence. His hands slacken, and his energies for God's work are paralyzed. He sinks into apathy and laziness as if he has no life left in him. Every effort should be made to sweep away this dark, hovering cloud. Let sense and feeling be kept within their bounds. Listen to the Savior's encouraging voice. "I wonder many times," says Rutherford, "that ever a child of God should have a sad heart, considering what his Lord is preparing for him." The gleam of the present sunshine is the earnest (down payment so to speak) of what it will be when, as he again beautifully observes, "we shall be on the sunny side of the Brae ( a hillside especially along a river)." Meanwhile, the first step in religion is not only beginning to be serious but to be happy. To maintain our Christian balance, even godly sorrow must be disciplined, so that it does not beat down the heart that it was only meant to humble. (Crossway Version)

**Allen Ross** - The emotional condition of a person has an obvious effect on body and soul. This verse uses an antithesis. **Joy is inspiring and is expressed by a cheerful face, but "heartache" is depressing, i.e., "crushes the spirit."** The words used here stress the pain and the depression with a note of despair. Toy, 308, observes that the implication is also that a broken spirit is expressed by a sad face and that a cheerful face shows a courageous spirit (see also Pr 17:22; 18:14; Isa 66:2). See Genesis 40:6 for a good illustration. (EBC, revised)

**William Arnot** - THE emotions that thrill in the heart mark themselves in legible lines on the countenance. This is a feature in the constitution of man, and a useful feature it is. The wisdom of our Maker may be seen in the degree of its development. If there had been more of it or less, the processes of human life could not have gone on so well. If the hopes and fears that alternate in the soul were as completely hidden from the view of an observer as the action of the vital organs within the body, the intercourse between man and man would be far less kindly than it now is. How blank would the aspect of the world be if no image of a man's thought could ever be seen glancing in his countenance! Our walk through life would be like a solitary march through a gallery of statues,—as cold as marble, and not nearly so beautiful. On the other hand, if all the meaning of the soul could be read in the countenance, the inconvenience would be so great as to bring the machinery of life almost to a stand still. Society could not go on if either all the mind's thoughts or none were legible on the countenance. That medium which actually exists in the present constitution of humanity is obviously the best. You have some power of concealing your emotions, and your neighbor has some power of observing them. He who made us has done all things well. (Excerpt from a 5 page article entitled "[Mirth a Medicine](#)" in his commentary "[Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth](#)" - Proverbs 15)

**George Lawson** - There is so close a connection between the soul and body, that when the latter is pained, the former feels its pains; and when the mind is oppressed with grief, the body cannot enjoy its health and vigour. On the other side, a healthy body is of great advantage to the operations of the mind, and the joy of the heart spreads itself over the countenance. It makes the eyes brisk and sparkling, and gives a pleasant grace to the aspect in the eyes of every beholder. If one could paint as well as Jezebel, he could not make his face so lovely as it is rendered by the cheerfulness of the spirit. Every thing that tends to promote a well-regulated joy in the mind is valuable, for it serves both soul and body at once. Meekness and contentment with our lot, peace and love, afford a continual feast to the mind, and make us agreeable to others. These virtues are not to be acquired, in their true excellency, but from God, for they are fruits of his Spirit, and are the property of the believer in Christ\*. Christians should remember, that to rejoice is their duty, their privilege, and an ornament to their profession. The world has been too much tempted by Christians themselves, to think that there is little pleasure in religion. Why should we not constantly verify that saying of the wise preacher, "A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine." ([Exposition of the Book of Proverbs - go to top and select page 314](#))

**Heart (03820)(leb)** refers to what I term the "control center" of our being. Think of an Air Traffic Controller and how dysfunctional, even destructive it is when the controllers fail to function as they should. Just as a healthy human heart is at the center of the body and absolutely essential for physical life and health, so too a healthy spiritual heart (intellect, emotion, will) is at the center of one's inner being (soul) and is vital for a healthy soul, serving as the "fountain" of all moral attitudes and actions. Our spiritual heart thus controls out actions and our actions determine our habits, which in turn determine our character.

**Richard Watson** - The Hebrews regarded the **heart** as the source of wit, understanding, love, courage, grief, and pleasure....The heart is said to be dilated by joy, contracted by sadness, broken by sorrow, to grow fat, and be hardened by prosperity. The heart melts under discouragement, forsakes one under terror, is desolate in affliction, and fluctuating in doubt. To speak to any one's heart is to comfort him, to say pleasing and affecting things to him. The heart expresses also the middle part of any thing: "Tyre is in the heart of the seas," Ezekiel 27:4; in the midst of the seas. "We will not fear though the mountains be carried into the heart (middle) of the sea," Psalms 46:2 .The heart of man is naturally depraved and inclined to evil, Jeremiah 17:9 . A divine power is requisite for its renovation, John 3:1-11 . When thus renewed, the effects will be seen in the temper, conversation, and conduct at large. Hardness of heart is that state in which a sinner is inclined to, and actually goes on in, rebellion against God.

#### See Also Related Resources:

- New Testament word study on Heart = kardia
- [Heart - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia - Good Summary](#)



- [Heart - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Heart - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Heart \(includes OT allusions\) - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Heart \(primarily discusses "kardia"\) - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)

**Joyful** (08056)(**sameach**) is an adjective which denotes being glad, happy or joyful with one's entire being (filled with joy, exceedingly glad) as indicated by association with heart (cognate verb **samach** uses in Ex 4:14; Ps 19:8; Ps 104:15; Ps 105:3), with one's soul (Ps 86:4) and with one's countenance and the lighting up of eyes (Pr 15:30). Joy comes from the blessing of Jehovah (Dt 16:15), joy of having children (Ps 113:9), description of God's people (glad) when "Jehovah has done great things." (Ps 126:3) The wicked are deceived and perverted that they are joyful at evil (Pr 2:14 = those who walk in paths of darkness "**delight** [Lxx = **euphraino**] in doing evil."; 17:5 = " He who **rejoices** [epichairo] at calamity will not go unpunished"). Similarly David says that those who "**rejoice** (Lxx = epichairo = rejoice over or against - with malignant intent) at my distress." (Ps 35:26). **Sameach** is used in rejoicing with a sense of bragging about their conquest of Lo-Debar (no pasture, i.e., they rejoice over "nothing!") (Amos 6:13)

The first use of **sameach** describes the joy associated with the Feast of Booths and Jehovah's blessing "Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you shall be altogether **joyful** (Lxx = **euphraino** from eu = well, good + phren = mind, intellect, disposition - means to make someone glad, cheer them up)." (Dt 16:15) In the anointing of Solomon as king there was "**rejoicing** (**sameach**, Lxx = **euphraino**) with great joy (Heb = **simchah** from verb **samach**) (1Ki 1:40, cp 1Ki 1:45)

Swanson adds that sameach means "delight, i.e., pertaining to a feeling or attitude of joy, happiness or contentment, with a possible focus of making an outward expression of that joy. "

**Sameach** NAS Usage: glad(2), joyful(5), joyfully(1), merry-hearted\*(1), pleased(1), rejoice(3), rejoiced(2), rejoices(1), rejoicing(4), who delight(1).

**Sameach** - 21v - Deut 16:15; 1Kgs 1:40, 45; 4:20; 8:66; 2Kgs 11:14; 2Chr 7:10; 23:13; Esther 5:9, 14; Job 3:22; Ps 35:26; 113:9; 126:3; Pr 2:14; 15:13; 17:5, 22; 29:6; Eccl 2:10; Isa 24:7; Amos 6:13

**Makes a cheerful face** (healthy, uplifted expression) - This is more literally "makes the face good." **Cheerful** is the Hebrews word **yatab** which primarily means to be good or to make good and so in this verse means to make the face good.

"The antithesis is the pained heart that crushes the spirit." (NET Note)

**Sad** (06904)(**assebet**) means suffering, grief, pain, hurt, injury, sorrow, wound. Used 5x - Job 9:28; Ps 16:4; 147:3; Pr 10:10; 15:13. The Lxx translates the Hebrew with **lupe** which describes pain of mind or spirit (sorrow, grief, sadness, anxiety - Jn 16:6) or physical pain, suffering or distress.

Assebet - 5v translated pains(1), sad(1), sorrows(1), trouble(1), wounds(1).

Job 9:28 I am afraid of all my **pains**, I know that You will not acquit me.

Psalm 16:4 The **sorrows** (Lxx = **astheneia** - state of incapacity, weakness) of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

Psalm 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their **wounds**. (Lxx = **suntrimma**) - that which is broken and shattered, calamity, affliction, destruction, ruin)

**Spurgeon** - This the Holy Spirit mentions as a part of the glory of God, and a reason for our declaring his praise: the Lord is not only a Builder, but a Healer; he restores broken hearts as well as broken walls. The kings of the earth think to be great through their loftiness; but Jehovah becomes really so by his condescension. Behold, the Most High has to do with the sick and the sorry, with the wretched and the wounded! He walks the hospitals as the good Physician! His deep sympathy with mourners is a special mark of his goodness. Few will associate with the despondent, but Jehovah chooses their company, and abides with them till he has healed them by his comforts. He deigns to handle and heal broken hearts: he himself lays on the ointment of grace, and the soft bandages of love, and thus binds up the bleeding wounds of those convinced of sin. This is compassion like a God. Well may those praise him to whom he has acted o gracious a part. The Lord is always healing and binding: this is no new work to him, he has done it of old; and it is not a thing of the past of which he is now weary, for he is still healing and still binding, as the original hath it. **Come, broken hearts, come to the Physician who never fails to heal: uncover your wounds to him who so tenderly binds them up!**

Proverbs 10:10 He who winks the eye causes trouble (Lxx = **lupe**), And a babbling fool will be ruined.

Proverbs 15:13 A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, But when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken (Lxx = **lupe**).

**Broken** (05218) (**naka**) is an adjective which means afflicted, smitten, broken, crushed, beaten and describes the **spirit** (ruah) as oppressed or broken by a grieved heart. **Naka** is used only 3 times in Scripture,

Pr 15:13 A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, But when the heart is sad, the spirit is **broken**. (Lxx = skuthropazo = to be of sad countenance, sullen, gloomy)

Pr 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, But a **broken** spirit dries up the bones.

Pr 18:14 The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, But a **broken** (Lxx = oligopsuchos = discouraged, faint-hearted, despondent) spirit who can bear?

**POSB** - People can usually get a glimpse into other people's hearts by looking at their faces. Their countenance or expression reveals their hearts. The faces of the righteous should and usually do radiate the joy of the Lord. In addition, their wonderful relationship with Him changes their attitude and outlook toward life. God's presence in their lives becomes their joy and strength and stirs them to live righteously (Ne 8:10). The faces of the foolish, however, reflect hearts that are broken, which, in turn, crushes their spirits. The absence of the Lord in their hearts means that their lives are empty of His power. They do not have the capacity to rejoice nor to be victorious through the severe crisis of life such as a broken relationship, the loss of a child or loved one, bankruptcy, terminal illness, or death (Jas 1:2). Sadly, their hearts are wounded by their foolish decisions and actions; they suffer the painful consequences of a life void of God's wisdom and presence.

**John Butler** - There are some in every crowd whose heart is always in the gloom mode. It shows on their faces and in their speech, and it is contagious and injurious to others. But the person who has a merry heart (and all believers ought to be merry for they have the greatest blessing of all in soul salvation) is happy even amidst affliction. This was Paul's experience in the Philippian jail, and it resulted in a miracle of the earthquake and in the conversion of the jailer and his family. (Analytical Bible Expositor)

**David Hubbard** combines the related truth in several Proverbs (Pr 15:13, 15, 17:22, 18:14) - The ability to take what life sends and stay on the bright side was a trait the teachers treasured. They were utterly realistic about the amount of pain that life inflicted on the average person. But they also knew what a difference the right attitude could make. In Pr 17:22 they played on the contrast between a "merry ["joyful"] heart" (Pr 15:13, 15) and a "broken ["beaten," "shattered"] spirit." One brought health like a good "medicine"; the other dehydrated the very "bones" of the sufferer. The medicinal effects of cheerfulness were explored by Norman Cousins in his famous experiment with comedy films and the therapeutic impact of laughter during his painful recovery from an inflammation of the nervous system. So dramatic were his findings that he has served on the faculty of the UCLA School of Medicine sharing his experiences with the neophyte physicians. His personal research anticipated the discovery of endorphins and other hormonal secretions which are the body's own pain blockers, released by the act of laughter and other expressions of hopeful positive outlook. Only the merry heart or spirit (Pr 18:14) can counteract the hardship ("sorrow" in Pr 15:13) and "sickness" (Pr 18:14) that weigh us down and keep us from the complete emotional and spiritual collapse that "broken spirit" suggests. "Depression" is probably our modern equivalent. As the teachers knew, it was easier to prevent than to cure. Who can lift up ("bear") a broken spirit once it sags to the bottom of hopelessness (Pr 18:14), inner disaster ("evil," Pr 15:15), and psychosomatic affliction? How important that we remind ourselves regularly of the resources available in our faith to stoke the fires of joy in hearts that burn low! And how helpful it is to have available in our day both the medical technology and clinical skills to mend the broken spirits! None of these, however, is a substitute for the healing of the soul's diseases that only the forgiving, sustaining grace of God can perform. (**The Preacher's Commentary**)

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - May 13th "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."—15:13 (Pr 15:15; 12:25; 17:22).

**Interpretation.**—"Merry" is the old English word for "cheerful." Though not always, yet as a rule (14:13), the countenance is an index to the heart to some extent. Peace and joy within have that wholesome effect upon the bodily health which brightens up the face. Whereas a running sore at the heart impairs the health and energies and breaks down the spirit.

**Illustrations.**—Hannah, "a woman of a sorrowful spirit," which her countenance betrayed, was breaking down under her heart's grief before the word came which restored her to health and gladness (1 Sam. 1:7, 15, 18). The wife of Phinehas seems to have succumbed to grief (1 Sam. 4:20, etc.). Our blessed Saviour would appear to have become prematurely old as "the Man of sorrows" (John 8:57), and to have died of a broken heart (Ps. 22:14; 69:20; Matt. 27:50; John 19:34). But after His resurrection, His countenance inspired joy (John 20:20), and was as the sun (Rev. 1:16). St. Stephen, animated by His Spirit, displayed "a face" radiant with happiness, "as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

**Application.**—This proverb is not a mere truism, but practical lessons are wrapped up in it. Who has a cheerful heart but the man who has a good conscience through the “blood of sprinkling” (Heb. 10:22), and who exercises himself to keep that conscience “void of offence toward God and men” (Acts 24:16)? If this be my happy case, it ought to be manifested in a cheerful mien. I ought to be “an epistle” of joy (not like Ezekiel’s scroll), “known and read of all men,” and recommending the religion I profess. Earthly trials will at times depress the spirit (and some men are constitutionally more subject than others to such depression), but they should never “break” his spirit who as a true Christian can reflect on what the Lord has done for him, and look forward to what the Lord is preparing for him. There are those who “weep as though they wept not,” smiling through their tears, and others who “eat in darkness,” and whose hands hang down. This is the state of those (and no wonder) who are a prey to “the sorrow of the world, that worketh death,” to an evil conscience, to envy or discontent. And the only remedy is in absolution and a new heart through the Blood and Spirit of Christ. If I am as yet unpardoned, unrenewed, no solid happiness or safety can be mine, only a fitful merriment interchanged with ever-deepening gloom. But if a Christian indeed, then “the joy of the Lord” should be “my strength.” And this joy will enable me to do good like a medicine to hearts that stoop, and it may be to save some from giving way to despondency or despair. ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

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Living Every Day (Proverbs 15:13-33) - When Tamer Lee Owens celebrated her 104th birthday, she credited "laughter, the Lord, and the little things" for keeping her going. She still finds enjoyment each day in talking with people, taking a walk, and reading the Bible as she has done since childhood. "I don't know how long He'll let me stay here," she said. "I just thank the Lord for what He's given me already."

Most of us won't live 104 years, but we can learn from Tamer Lee how to enjoy each day that we are given.

Laughter—"A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Prov 15:13). True happiness begins deep inside and emerges on our faces.

The Lord—"The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility" (v.33). When God is central in our hearts, He can teach us His way through every experience of life.

The Little Things—"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred" (v.17). Maintaining loving relationships and enjoying the basic things of life are more important than wealth and success.

Not all of us will live a long time, but we can all live well each day—with laughter, the Lord, and the little things in life. —David C. McCasland (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The world is filled with so much good—  
Little things that bring us pleasure—  
But Christ can fill our lives with joy  
Beyond all earthly treasure.  
—Sper

### Happiness is not a destination but a day-by-day journey

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**A Merry Heart** (Proverbs 15:13-30) - Are only a few fortunate people born with a bright outlook on life, or is optimism an attitude we can learn? Susan C. Vaughan, author of Half Full, Half Empty, says that seeing life's possibilities instead of its pitfalls is the result of an internal process anyone can follow. One of her conclusions is that "there is a powerful link between facial expression and emotion." She believes that people who begin to act happier actually feel happier. There is merit in thinking and acting positively, but the Bible declares that true spiritual joy begins deep inside us, then spreads to our faces. A wise man wrote, "A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance . . . . He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast" (Proverbs 15:13,15). When we're happy on the inside, our faces can't help but show it on the outside. How do we develop a merry heart? We can begin by thanking the Lord for being with us and working for our good in every situation (Romans 8:28). It's not a matter of pretending but of practicing an outlook on life that reflects our faith in Christ. "Rejoice in the Lord always," Paul wrote from prison. "Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). That kind of optimism begins with a merry heart and spreads quickly to the face. —David C. McCasland

The smile on the face that reveals true joy  
Always comes from deep within;  
It springs from a heart that is full of thanks—  
That's where our joy must begin.

—Fitzhugh

**If you have the joy of Christ in your heart,  
it will show on your face.**

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**LAUGHTER** - "Like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool."-- Ecclesiastes 7:6

Your dog may be a great companion. You may hunt together, play together, eat together, even sleep on the same bed together. Yet, although you and your dog may share life, you will never share a laugh. As far as we know, humans are the only creatures of God who enjoy humor. Laughter is a distinctive of human beings.

Laughter also can tell something about you. Show me what amuses you, and I can make a good guess about the sort of person you are. If you laugh at filthy stories, you give yourself away. If you scoff at virtue, you have embraced vice. If you laugh at another's failure or misfortune, you have a cruel streak inside of you. If you can laugh at your own stupidities and mistakes, you handle life with some skill.

I believe Christians have a greater capacity to enjoy healthy laughter than others. After all, we live with the promise of eternal life and with knowledge that God can use even our setbacks to move us forward.

Proverbs 15:13 tells us that "a merry heart makes a cheerful countenance." But the Bible also says that the laughter of fools who are living only for this life is like the "crackling of thorns" that are burned in a fire (Eccl. 7:6).

Ask yourself, "What makes me laugh?" -- Haddon W. Robinson

To know the Savior brings great joy,  
The kind that nothing can destroy;  
And though a smile should light your face,  
Coarse humor surely has no place.  
- Dennis J. Deut Haan

**What we laugh at reveals our character.**

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**Mom's Dream Home** (Proverbs 15:13-20) - What is a mother's idea of a dream home? A one-story, ranch-style house on a half-acre lot with a fenced-in yard for the children? Three bedrooms, two large bathrooms, a big family room, a modern kitchen, and a two-car garage? Or maybe her dream home would have a beautiful garden and a view overlooking a quiet lake. As good as these features may be, most mothers know it takes more to make a house a home. The most important characteristics of a home are the spiritual qualities and the love between father, mother, and children. In Proverbs 15, Solomon said that it is better to live in poverty while fearing the Lord than to possess great treasure and have trouble because of it (v.16). It is better to eat a dinner of herbs where there is love than to sit around a veal or steak dinner in the presence of strife (v.17). And a dream home is a place where children obey their father and honor their mother (v.20). A loving, spiritual atmosphere is the feature most desired in a home, and that can be found in a simple one-room house or in a spacious mansion. Yes, I think we would all agree that love for our family and the fear of the Lord can turn any house into a dream home. It's a place where Mom--and the rest of the family--will find true joy. —Mart De Haan

Give me a house to call my own,  
Family and friends to make it a home,  
Love and kindness that never depart,  
Enough to fill a thankful heart.  
--Anon.

**A house is built by human hands,  
a home by human hearts**

**Proverbs 15:14 The mind (Literally = heart) of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly.**

■ **Mind:** Pr 1:5 9:9 1Ki 3:6-12 Ps 119:97,100 Ac 17:11 2Pe 3:18

- **the mouth:** Pr 12:23 Isa 30:10 44:20 Hos 12:1
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CONTRASTING PREOCCUPATIONS OF THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH

The **hearts** of the wise and foolish not only have different attitudes but also different appetites. "The wise grow wiser, but the foolish more dense!" **This begs a question "What are you pursuing? The wisdom of fools or the wisdom of God?"**

Compare this passage with Pr 15:7 - "The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not so." So just as **lips** and **heart** were in opposition in that maxim, here we find **mind** (heart) and **mouth** in opposition.

**John Kitchens** notes that "The wise are said to already possess such insight, but they, nevertheless, yearn, seek after and pursue more of that which they already possess (Prov. 14:33; 18:15; 19:25; 21:11). The fool, however, contentedly reclines in his folly and ruminates upon the silliness and naïveté he has fed his heart and mind upon already. To have tasted of God's wisdom is to desire it all the more. To have numbed one's mind on folly is to ruin its taste for anything higher and better (Pr. 15:2, 21). **Beware what you satisfy your heart on!**" ([Proverbs- A Mentor Commentary- recommended resource](#))

Peter's closing command would be an appropriate exhortation - "**Grow** (**present imperative** = make this your lifestyle - only possible as we rely on the enabling power of the Spirit!) in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him [be] the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2Pet 3:18-note)

**Mind** (**heart**) ([03820](#))(**leb**) refers to what I term the "control center" of our being (see discussion on **heart** in Pr 15:13).

**Life Application Study Bible Note** - What we feed our minds is just as important as what we feed our bodies. The kinds of books we read, the people we talk with, the music we listen to, and the films we watch are all part of our mental diet. Be discerning because what you feed your mind influences your total health and well-being. Thus, a strong desire to discover knowledge is a mark of wisdom.

**Intelligent** ([0995](#))(**bin/biyn**) means to understand or perceive. **Bin/biyn** conveys the same idea as our word **discernment** = the ability to look at two things and see what God sees! It entails the idea of making a distinction as in 1Ki 3:9 where Solomon ask God for the ability "to **discern (bin/biyn)** between good and evil". Many of the OT uses of bin/biyn are translated "understanding," an understanding which is the result of comparative "study" or "mental separation". The Lxx translates **bin/biyn** in this verse with the adjective **orthos** which pertains to being in a straight line (rather than crooked) and figuratively conveys the idea of persevering in a correct course of life toward a goal (for a believer this reminds me of Paul's pressing "on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" in Php 3:14) It is interesting to note that of the 29 uses of **orthos** in Scripture (2 in the NT and 27 OT) most are in the Proverbs (Jdg 15:5; 1Kgs 20:11; Pr 4:11, 25, 26, 27; 8:6, 9; 11:6; 12:6, 15; 14:12; 15:14; 16:13, 25; 21:8; 23:16; 31:5; Jer 31:9; Ezek 1:7; Mic 2:3, 7; 3:9; Acts 14:10; Heb 12:13)

**Seeks** ([01245](#))(**baqas**) describes a person's earnest seeking of something with the intent to find and/or acquire that which is sought. **Baqas** points to a quest characterized by passionate intention. In this passage the **Lxx** uses **zeteo** (giving attention and priority to some task and deliberately pursuing it) which is in the **present tense** indicating that this is a life long seeking for knowledge.

**Knowledge** ([01847](#))(**daat** derived from **yada** = to know, speaking in many contexts of an intimate knowledge) expresses knowledge gained in various ways by the senses (and is the opposite of folly). It describes "experiential active knowing." In other words this knowledge is not just a bookish collection of information but is experiential knowledge of the Living God. Knowledge of His written Word cannot be separated from personal knowledge of God. To know God is to live in harmony with His will, and to live in harmony with His will we must know His word. In this passage the Lxx translates **daat** with the noun **aisthesis** which describes the ability to make moral distinctions and then decide on the most appropriate behavior.

**Allen Ross** notes that "throughout the book (of Proverbs) knowledge is linked with righteousness, and ignorance goes with sinfulness."

**Fools** ([03684](#))(**kesil**) is a stupid fellow, a morally insensitive dullard, whether it be in spiritual, intellectual, or moral matters. These are stupid people who are totally confident in own wisdom, thinking they have it all figured out without God's assistance. **Swanson** adds that **kesil** refers to (1) foolishness, stupidity, insolence, i.e., the state of being in complete lack of understanding, implying rebellion (Pr 10:1); (2) fool, insolent person, i.e., one completely lacking understanding, implying to be a rebel against standard or person (Pr 10:18).

**Vine** - The **kesil** is "insolent" in religion and "stupid or dull" in wise living (living out a religion he professes)...They have knowledge of God but do not properly evaluate or understand what they know...(In Proverbs the fool) rejects the claims and teachings of



wisdom. However, in the Bible wisdom is the practical outworking of one's religion. Therefore, even in these contexts there is a clear connotation of insolence in religion.

**Feeds on** (Hebrew verb **raah** literally denotes the grazing of cattle) - Figuratively **raah** signifies the acquisition of **folly** (in contrast to seeking of knowledge). The word "feed" indicates that the fool has an "appetite" for **folly**! Kitchens quips that the "verb **feeds**' describes the arbitrary munching of domesticated animals."

**Wiersbe** - Because they "feed on foolishness" (Pr. 15:14), fools have no moral strength.

As **Crawford Toy** says "**mouth feeds** is a rhetorical variation of mind seeks. —Instead of feeds on, the verb of the second clause may be rendered *is occupied with, strives after* (lit. associates with), or, *delights in*, but *feeds* better suits the noun mouth. The word rendered fools denotes the highest degree of stolidity, insusceptibility and unreceptiveness; the mental furniture and nourishment of such an one is foolishness or folly in thought and deed, and this is the product of ignorance. Here, as in Pr 14:33 al. and throughout Proverbs 1–9, **virtue is allied with knowledge, vice with ignorance**. The verbs (**seeks** and **feeds**) express eager interest and devotion." ([Crawford Toy - Critical and Exegetical Commentary - Proverbs 15](#))

**Folly** (0200)(**iwweleth**) is a noun signifying foolishness which **Swanson** says is "a state of being devoid of wisdom and understanding, with a focus on the evil behaviors which occur in this state." The **Lxx** translates **iwweleth** in this verse with **kakos** which basically denotes a lack of something, and describes something not as it ought to be. **Kakos** is the opposite of that which is **kalos** (sound or good). In the moral sphere **Kakos** describes those whose lives are characterized by godlessness, their moral attitudes, plans and conduct being godless, base, wicked (Mk 7:21).

**Michael Fox** - This folly is called iwweleth, the most pernicious sort. Thickheaded dolts (kesilim) are not necessarily ewilim at the outset, but their smugness and indifference make them susceptible to the insidious attractions of iwweleth. The background image is sheep-like fools "grazing" on folly.

**Wiersbe** - The English words "fool" and "folly" come from the Latin **follis**, which means "**bellows**." It also described a person's puffed-up cheeks. *Follis* indicates that a fool is a windbag, somebody full of air but lacking in substance. Fools may look like giants, but when the wind is taken out of them, they shrink dramatically and reveal what they really are—pygmies....The problem with fools isn't low IQ or deficient education. Their big problem is their heart: They won't acknowledge the Lord and submit to Him. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Ro 3:18)....A fool's own father can't instruct him (Pr 15:5), and if you try to debate with him, it will only lead to trouble (Pr 29:9). Why? Because fools actually enjoy their folly and think they're really living! "Folly is a joy to him who is destitute of discernment" (Pr 15:21 NKJV; see Pr 1:22; 12:15; 18:2). Warn them about sin and they laugh at you (Pr 14:9). (Be Skillful)

**TWOT** - The **folly (iwweleth)** of fools is deceit (Pr 14:8). One is regarded a fool because of his folly (iwweleth), since folly seems a special product of fools (kēsīlīm). **But the aspect of moral insolence is prominent**. A quick-tempered man acts foolishly and is likely to do things he might later regret (Pr 14:17). Likewise one who is quick-tempered makes his folly prominent to attract the attention of others (Pr 14:29). A foolish man perverts his own way. His kind of way is his own fault, not God's (Pr 19:3). Discipline is important to children because foolishness is part of a child's nature. A remedy for correction is the rod of discipline in order to drive the foolishness from him (Pr 22:15). One must keep in mind that this discipline is important to curb moral insolence that might lead in turn to rebellion against God. Proverbs emphasizes the necessity for discipline (Pr 13:24; 23:13–14; 29:15). But it is to be tempered with compassion and concern (Pr 1:8–9). The folly of a quick-tempered person is contrasted with the great understanding (tēbûnâ, q. v.) of one slow to anger (Pr 14:29). Similarly, the senseless find joy in folly, while by contrast the one who walks straight is a man of understanding.

**Iwweleth NAS Usage:** folly(17), foolish(1), foolishly(1), foolishness(6).

**Iwweleth** - 24v - Ps 38:5; 69:5; Pr 5:23; 12:23; 13:16; 14:1, 8, 17-18, 24, 29; 15:2, 14, 21; 16:22; 17:12; 18:13; 19:3; 22:15; 24:9; 26:4-5, 11; 27:22

**Charles Bridges** - But while the discerning heart is never satisfied with its knowledge, the fool is completely satisfied with folly. His brutish taste feeds on folly as his meat and drink. Young people, be on your guard against this folly. Avoid trifling amusements, frivolous reading, profane merriment. In religion, beware of choosing empty speculations and arguments on indifferent matters rather than the rich pasture of the children of God. Let us all ponder the responsibility to go on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1; 5:14).

**POSB** - The hearts of the wise and foolish not only have different attitudes but also different appetites. Notice the second half of this proverb, as it is more descriptive and sheds light on the first: fools feed on trash, that which is utterly foolish. Feed (ra'ah) is the word used of a grazing flock. The Hebrew word for foolishness refers to a person who totally rejects God's law, who lives in rebellion to it. Fools are nourished by their appetite for sin and disobedience to God. They have no appetite for wisdom nor for the things of the Lord. In fact, there is no fear of God before their eyes-no reason to fear Him at all. Therefore, their foolishness sustains them. Sin

satisfies their appetites, and strengthens them to commit additional sins. The understanding heart is totally different: it has an appetite for knowledge. When we truly fear the Lord and receive Christ as Savior, we receive a new nature. We have new desires and appetites. Just as babies have a natural appetite for their mothers' milk, we-as true believers-have an appetite for God's Word (1Peter 2:2, Heb 5:14).

**George Lawson** - Here the most intelligent men know but in part, and they are the wisest men that are most sensible of the imperfection of their wisdom, "I know nothing," said the wisest of the Greeks, "but that I know nothing;" and the wisest of Christians compares his present attainments to those of a child. Desires of wisdom, discovered in the ardent pursuit of it (**Ed:** In God's wise Word!), are the best evidences we can give of our wisdom. There are many that use the ordinary means of knowledge, and yet have no true wisdom (cp James 3:13-17); but their fault lies more in the heart than in the head. They are formal and careless in their endeavors to obtain knowledge, because they have not a cordial love to the truth (cp Job 23:12, Ps 119:97, etc). They read and hear, but they do not **meditate** (Ps 1:2) and pray. If knowledge would drop into their minds as the dew upon the earth, they would be very glad of it; but they will not incline their ear unto wisdom, nor apply their heart to understanding (Pr 2:2, 5:1) The truly wise have a higher esteem of knowledge than of gold and rubies (Ps 19:10), and their hearts are deeply engaged in the search of it. They use the means of knowledge, but will not be satisfied with the use of them without obtaining the end, and therefore they depend upon Christ as the great Teacher, and earnestly plead for the illuminations of his Spirit (His Spirit - Jn 16:13), to brighten their understandings with discoveries of the truth, and to furnish them with that practical wisdom, without which they cannot be happy (**Ed:** Spiritually blessed). Such seekers of wisdom shall not be disappointed; they shall know God to their joy in this world, and in heaven they shall know even as they are known. **But the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness**, for they have no relish for wisdom; they can drink in vain and frothy discourse from morning till night, as if it were sweet wine; and when good men meditate by day and night on the law of God, the vain imagination of fools supplies them with thoughts suited to their corrupt minds, in which they delight as much as in their necessary food. God has provided marrow and fatness for the entertainment of our minds, but these foolish creatures rather choose to feed on wind and chaff. Their mouth pours out foolishness, and they cannot do better, because they neither have, nor desire to have, any thing better within their hearts, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Mt 12:34KJV). ([Exposition of the Book of Proverbs - go to top and select page 314](#))

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - May 17th "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness."—Pr 15:14 (Pr 15:21; 18:15).

**Interpretation.**—"The man of understanding," in other words, the enlightened man, is here again contrasted with "the fool" of every class and degree—the godless one. The heart of the first having already received divine truth, is bent upon acquiring more and more of that best knowledge. While the other, with no "heart" for anything, gratifies a brutish appetite by feeding his mind upon what is purely "of the earth earthy." The proverb, in a sense secondary to the religious one, may be understood of a difference of tastes, that for what is high-toned and improving, and that for what is frivolous and low.

**Illustrations.**—David, as we gather plainly from his Psalms, was always intent on adding to his stores of sacred knowledge. Solomon in his prayer sought wisdom from above, and by diligent application became conversant with all sorts of useful learning. The Queen of Sheba showed an understanding heart in her eagerness to gain information which she might turn to account for the benefit of her subjects. Nicodemus, and Mary of Bethany, and the Bereans, and the Ethiopian, were all wise enough to be teachable, and so obtained the precious knowledge they sought. Whereas, the Athenians, with their ears only open to gossip, lost their opportunity of being made "wise unto salvation."

**Application.**—How widely different are the tastes of men, even men of equal standing and education! A grand generic contrast at once makes itself seen between those renewed by grace, and those who (though regenerated in baptism) still "mind earthly things." Sin is the element of the one, just as holiness is of the other class, and each breathes most freely in its own element, and feeds upon that which is adapted to its own nature. So you will find, here, a hungering and thirsting after all good, pure, useful, elevating knowledge, divine and human. While there, the appetite is keen after knowledge only at the best "earthy," and much of it not even useful in any way, but frivolous, sensational, debasing. Men betray their tastes by the books they read, the company they keep, the conversation they enjoy. To God and themselves their thoughts are known, and the bent of the thoughts is the index of the character. Let me try myself, then, by this criterion, with a view to my prospects in the future. For heaven will satisfy those only who have acquired a taste for heavenly things. It will not be changed to suit me; therefore I must be made meet for it. Those two divisions will outlive the world—the men of understanding and the fools. With which will my lot be bound up? **According as my heart now seeks knowledge or my mouth feeds on foolishness, so must my final portion be.** ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

- **All:** Ge 37:35 47:9 Ps 90:7-9
- **but:** Pr 16:22 17:22 Ac 16:25 Ro 5:2,3,11 12:12 2Co 1:5,12 6:10 1Pe 1:6-8 4:13
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CONTRAST IN THE HEART'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION

**HCSB** - All the days of the oppressed are miserable, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.

**NLT** - For the despondent, every day brings trouble; for the happy heart, life is a continual feast.

**All the days** - The antithesis of **continual**.

**Bad** (wretched) - The antithesis of **cheerful heart**.

**Afflicted** (Hebrew = ani) - Contrasts with **feast**.

**Bruce Waltke** notes that "The proverb does not contrast the **afflicted**, who are innocent and exploited, with a **cheerful heart**. Rather, the **afflicted** in health and/or wealth may have the **cheerful heart** that enables them to endure and to overcome their circumstances (cf. 2Cor. 4:8; 6:9–10; Heb. 10:34). "If Pr 15:13 shows our prevailing attitude colors our whole personality, this saying makes it color our whole experience." (See Kidner below) **All the days** (kol-yemê) breaks down the entire life of the innocent **afflicted** (ānî; see Pr 3:34) into its day-by-day experience of being physically **wretched** (rāîm; see "evil" in Pr 1:15). (NICOT)

**Kitchen** - This completes the trilogy of the heart that began in Pr 15:13. And, as in verse 13, this proverb underscores that it is not so much one's circumstances as one's attitude that determines the quality of life enjoyed. Again, attitude is everything! The first group, 'the afflicted,' are literally the 'poor.' They may or may not be 'poor' materially. Their lack may also be in the generous benefits of life in other realms as well. Whatever the lot that makes them 'afflicted,' their verdict on their experience is that it is 'bad.' The word is the one most often translated 'evil.' It is his disposition, not his predicament, that prevents him from finding joy amid his hardship (Ruth 1:20–21). How different the experience of the one with 'a cheerful heart.' The attitude controls the experience, rather than vice versa (Prov. 14:30; 17:22; Hab. 3:17–18). Whatever his lot, he has 'a continual feast.' Feasts were momentary times of celebration. This man, however, because of his temperament, basks in the perpetual joy of celebrating life and its wonders.

**Life Application Study Bible Note** - Our attitudes color our whole personality. We cannot always choose what happens to us, but we can choose our attitude toward each situation. The secret to a happy heart is filling our mind with thoughts that are true, pure, and lovely, with thoughts that dwell on the good things in life (Philippians 4:8). This was Paul's secret as he faced imprisonment, and it can be ours as we face the struggles of daily living. Look at your attitudes and then examine what you allow to enter your mind and what you choose to dwell on. You may need to make some changes.

**KJV Bible Commentary** - This verse is connected with the thirteenth verse (Pr 15:13). The man who is depressed sees in each day only those dismal events that serve to increase his already extensive fear. The man whose life is possessed by a merry heart sees such evidences of God's faithfulness that his days are bright and his soul has a continual feast. The source of such festivity is the settled conviction that every affliction and blessing has its source in God's love.

**Derek Kidner** entitles this proverb "**Morale**" - If Pr 15:13 shows that our prevailing attitude colours our whole personality, this saying makes it also colour our whole experience. Cf. Genesis 47:9 with 2Ti 4:6–8-note; or Ru 1:20, 21-note with Hab 3:17, 18-note.

**Barnes** sees the **affliction** as signifying "less that of outward circumstances than of a troubled and downcast spirit. Life to the cheerful is as one perpetual banquet, whether he be poor or rich. That which disturbs the feast is anxiety, the taking (anxious) thought" of Matthew 6:34."

**Ryrie** - One's temperament has a considerable effect on one's circumstances.

**William MacDonald** offers this interpretation of Pr 15:15 - This seems to contrast the pessimist and the optimist. The first is always down-in-the-mouth. He is gloomy, fearful, and negative. The optimist always seems to be on top. He enjoys life to the full.

**Matthew Henry** - See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temperament of some men and other men. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil (bad) days, like those days that often characterize old age, and days in which they say they have no pleasure. They eat in darkness (Eccl 5:17) and never eat with pleasure (Job 21:25). How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for,

succored and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, merry as we are at present.

**Afflicted** (06041)(**ani**) means poor. This refers to those who are suffering, in a state of poverty, oppression, misery from various causes: from being poor, needy (Ex. 22:25); unfortunate, in want (Dt. 24:15; 2Sa 22:28; Job 24:4). They may be poor materially or may suffer lack in other areas, but whatever their lot that makes them "**afflicted**" leads to their assessment that it is **bad**.

**Allen Ross** - Emotions, joy and sorrow. Life can be delightful or difficult, depending on one's circumstances and disposition. The contrast is between the "oppressed" (**ānī**) and the "cheerful heart" (**tōb-lēb**). The parallelism of the second line suggests that the **ānī** are those who are inwardly oppressed. Obviously the proverb recommends the cheerful frame of mind, for the image of the feast signifies enjoyment of life's offerings. This is far better than the evil (**rāîm**; "wretched," NIV) days (see Ru 1:20–21; Hab 3:17–18).

**John Gill** - Some are afflicted all their days, from their youth up; so that not only the days of old age are evil (bad) days, in which they have no pleasure, but even the days of their youth; all their days, as Jacob says, "few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Ge 47:9) because they had been filled up with affliction and trouble of one sort or another. Or (**Ed**: another interpretation in light of the Hebrew word **ani** which can mean "poor" is that) "all the days of the poor"; either in purse, who want many of the good things of life. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Lawson** writes that "To him that is **afflicted**, pity should be shown from his friend, for none but those that have experience can tell what a gloom affliction spreads over one's mind, and what unceasing sorrows it produces, when it is not soothed by the consolations of friendship, or alleviated by the vigor of the mind.

**Charles Bridges** discusses a **cheerful heart** even in circumstances that might not be expected to give a **cheerful heart** - The child of God in affliction is not so miserable as he seems to be. (2Cor 6:10) The darkest of the bad days can never make "the consolations (Hebrew = consolation, comfort) of God small with" the child of God. (Job 15:11) He can sing in the prison as well as in a palace. (Acts 16:25) He can "take joyfully the spoiling of his goods." (Heb. 10:34) He can praise his God, when he hath stripped him naked. (Job 1:21) He can rejoice in him, as his portion in earthly destitution. (Hab. 3:17, 18) 'Who is it'—said the heavenly Martyn in a moment of weakness—"that makes my comforts to be a source of enjoyment? Cannot the same hand make cold, and hunger, and nakedness, and peril, to be a train of ministering angels conducting me to glory?' What real evil then can affliction bring? Or rather, what does it bring but many feast-days? A few days' feasting would soon weary the epicure. But here the merry heart hath a continual feast.—And 'all his trouble is but the rattling hail upon the tiles of his house,' (Leighton on 1Pe 1:2; 3:17) not disturbing his enjoyment. Fed with this heavenly portion, shall I not thank my God, that He has rooted me up from present satisfactions? "Let me not eat of this world's dainties. Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (Ps 141:4, 4:6, 7)

**HCSB** - The parallelism in this verse suggests that even if a person is oppressed and miserable, if he has a **cheerful heart** he can experience a virtual continual feast.

**Cheerful** (02896)(**tob**) is "an adjective meaning good, well-pleasing, fruitful. **Tob** is frequently encountered in the OT and is roughly equivalent to the English word **good** in terms of its function and scope of meaning. Thus in the **Septuagint** translation of Pr 15:15 we read in English that "the **good** are always **quiet**." The verb for **quiet** is **hesuchazo** which is in the **present tense** and means these individuals habitually live with an inward calm, experiencing freedom from being disturbed (even in "disturbing" circumstances!

**Gingrich** writes "Life is what we make of it." If we as Christians disbelieve Ro 8:28 and refuse to obey 1Thes 5:18, all of our days are gloomy and sad but if we believe and obey these Scriptures, all of our days are bright and full of gladness. We have a continual feast." While I would generally agree with what Gingrich writes, it seems that he (as well as a number of the other commentators) fail to make mention of the Christian's source of power to live continually with a cheerful heart. For example, 1Thes 5:18 is a command in the present imperative (calling for continual attitude of gratitude), and frankly this is simply not naturally possible, but is only supernaturally possible as we learn to jettison self-reliance (even our best efforts to maintain a "cheerful disposition") and yield to the filling of the Spirit and His supernatural power. And when we do yield, we begin to see the fruit of joy and patience, fruit that is manifest independent of the external circumstances.

**Whedon** on **cheerful heart** — טוב לב, (**tobh-lebh**), a good heart...It is probable that our expression of good heart, nearly hits the sense. He that keeps up *good heart* does not give way to despondency and discouragement; but is full of hope and faith, and has a continual feast. A good conscience is, doubtless, a very important element in this cheeriness of heart that furnishes the perpetual banquet.

**Matthew Poole** on **cheerful heart** - Hebrew means of a **good heart**, i.e. composed, and quiet, and contented.

**NET Note** on **continual feast** - The image of a continual feast signifies the enjoyment of what life offers

**John Gill** describes a **cheerful heart** - a heart that has "the kingdom of God" in it, which lies "not eating and drinking, but

righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Ro 14:17), which has the love of God shed abroad in it by the Spirit (Ro 5:5), where Christ dwells by faith (Eph 3:17); and that lives by faith on Him (2Cor 5:7), and on the provisions of His grace (2Pe 1:3); all this is a constant continual feast to a gracious soul, made joyful hereby.

**Disciple's Study Bible** - Those who keep a sense of festival within their lives find the days more pleasant. People who dwell on their problems never know joy.

**John MacArthur** on **continual feast** - The joyous, inward condition of the wise man's heart (Pr 14:21) is described as a perpetual feast. Real happiness is always determined by the state of the heart (cf. Hab 3:17, 18; 1Ti 4:6-8).

**David Hubbard** has some interesting comments on Pr 15:16 (and related verses) - **The ability to take what life sends and stay on the bright side was a trait the teachers treasured.** They were utterly realistic about the amount of pain that life inflicted on the average person. But they also knew what a difference the right attitude could make. In Pr 17:22 they played on the contrast between a **"merry ["joyful"] heart"** (Pr 15:13, 15) and a **"broken ["beaten," "shattered"] spirit."** One (merry heart) brought health like a good "medicine"; the other dehydrated the very "bones" of the sufferer. The medicinal effects of cheerfulness were explored by Norman Cousins in his famous experiment with comedy films and the therapeutic impact of laughter during his painful recovery from an inflammation of the nervous system. So dramatic were his findings that he has served on the faculty of the UCLA School of Medicine sharing his experiences with the neophyte physicians. His personal research anticipated the discovery of endorphins and other hormonal secretions which are the body's own pain blockers, released by the act of laughter and other expressions of hopeful positive outlook. Only the merry heart or spirit (Pr 18:14) can counteract the hardship ("sorrow" in Pr 15:13) and "sickness" (Pr 18:14) that weigh us down and keep us from the complete emotional and spiritual collapse that "broken spirit" suggests. "Depression" is probably our modern equivalent. **As the teachers knew, it was easier to prevent than to cure. Who can lift up ("bear") a broken spirit once it sags to the bottom of hopelessness (Pr 18:14), inner disaster ("evil," Pr 15:15), and psychosomatic affliction? How important that we remind ourselves regularly of the resources available in our faith to stoke the fires of joy in hearts that burn low!** And how helpful it is to have available in our day both the medical technology and clinical skills to mend the broken spirits! None of these, however, is a substitute for the healing of the soul's diseases that only the forgiving, sustaining grace of God can perform. Openness to counsel is a vital sign of self-control. Self-control and self-sufficiency are two separate matters. The wise extol the former and decry the latter. (The Preacher's Commentary) (Bolding added)

### Proverbs 15:16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and turmoil with it

- **little:** Pr 16:8 28:6 Ps 37:16 1Ti 6:6
- **great:** Pr 10:22 Ec 2:10,11,18-23 5:10-12
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WEALTH - SPIRITUAL BETTER THAN MATERIAL

**See: [Proverbs 15:16 A Treasure Without Trouble](#)** - Here is a snippet - "There is trouble in getting it.... There is trouble after it is gotten....There is great trouble attendant on its loss."

Note the strong contrast (demarcated by **colored font**) in this **"better-than"** proverb. See other **"better-than"** proverbs = Pr 12:9; 15:16, 17; 16:8, 16, 19, 32; 17:1; 19:1, 22; 21:9, 19; 22:1; 25:7, 24; 27:5, 10; 28:6).

Better is a **little** with the **fear of the LORD** than **great treasure** and **turmoil** with it. (Or as Moffatt translates it "wealth with worry")

The main point of this proverb is closely linked with Pr 15:17. The **NET Note** adds that "One of the frequent characteristics of wisdom literature is the **"better"** (better-than) saying; it is a comparison of different but similar things to determine which is to be preferred. These two verses (Pr 15:16-17) focus on **spiritual things** being better than troubled **material things.**" I would add that not only are the spiritual things better in this life, they are the only things that "transfer" over to the eternal life (e.g., read 1Ti 4:8-note, cp Mt 6:19-21-note). Jesus commands us not to seek what the lost world seeks after but to **'Seek (zeteo** in the **present imperative** = a command to make this our lifestyle! This is to be our general "direction" not "perfection." It is only possible as we daily yield to the Spirit of Jesus Who indwells us and Who alone gives us supernatural power to enable us to continually seek the eternal things above and not those temporal things which are on the earth - Col 3:2-note) first (This begs the question - What is your "priority" when you awake each morning? Let your love for Jesus motivate you to seek Him [in His Word] passionately as the Lover of your soul - in short, be motivated by love, not legalism!) His kingdom and His righteousness; and **all these things** (everything necessary for life and godliness - 2Pe 1:3-note) shall be added to you." (Mt 6:33-note)



**Allen Ross** - These two verses (Pr 15:16-17) stress that spiritual things are far better than material wealth. In Pr 15:16 the fear of the Lord brings more satisfaction than wealth with discontentment.

**POSB** - Jesus clearly taught that people's lives are not measured by their possessions (Lk 12:15). Life is not about money; it is about relationships. Loving God and loving others are the two most important aspects of life on earth. Solomon offers two proverbs about the value of relationships: first, a relationship with the Lord, and, second, a relationship with the most important people in life-family.

**Better** (02896)(**tob** from the verb **tob** = to do good in the broadest sense ranging from practical, economic, or material good) is an adjective which means pleasant, agreeable, good. The Lxx translates **tob** with **kreitton/kreisson** (e.g., used in Pr 21:9). In English "**better**" means more attractive, advantageous, more favorable, or more commendable, having good qualities in a greater degree than another.

**John Trapp** - This is one special consideration that keeps up the good heart in continual comfort. Contented godliness is great riches; Misera est magni custodia census. Great treasures bring great troubles. It is not the great cage that makes the bird sing. It is not the great estate that brings always the inward joy—the cordial contentment. The little lark with a wing sees farther than the ox with a bigger eye, but without a wing. Birds usually do not sing when they are on the ground, but when got into the air, or on tops of trees. If saints be sad, it is because they are too busy here below....Riches, though well gotten, are but as manna; those that gathered less had no want, and those that gathered more, it was but a trouble and annoyance to them.

**Jamieson** - Where the "fear of the Lord" is, there is quiet; where it is not, there is "trouble." Riches, so far from averting, bring trouble in acquiring, defending administering, and losing them. So that the "little" is to be preferred that is accompanied with the "fear of the Lord," both for passing this life in quiet, free from envy, snares, and cares, and also for obtaining eternal life.

**Matthew Poole** - Piety with little is better than wealth with trouble. Ps 39:6; Matthew 6:33.

**E W Bullinger** gives these **illustrations** - . Illustrations: the shepherds (Luke 2:20. Compare Matthew 2:3); Paul in prison (Philippians 1:4, Philippians 1:11, Philippians 1:13, Philippians 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:6). Contrast Ahab in palace (1 Kings 21:4). Jehovah is a substitute for every good thing, but nothing is a substitute for Him.

Notice that thankfully Solomon does not stop with "**better is little.**" **Little** is not necessarily **better!** But it is if it is mixed with the qualifier of a heart attitude of "fear of Jehovah." Who are those who **fear the LORD?** If we examine a parallel passage in Ps 37:16 (see below), we see that they are the **righteous**. And who are the **righteous** in the Old Testament? In a word, they are genuine believers. Were they righteous because they sacrificed, etc? Ge 15:6 says that **Abraham** Paul writes that Abraham had the Gospel preached to him (Gal 3:8, Ge 12:3) and Moses records that Abraham "believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." (Ge 15:6, see NT uses of this passage in Ro 4:3-6-note, James 2:23-note). Compare the description of Abraham in Heb 11:8-note which teaches that genuine belief is coupled with heart obedience, obedience motivated not by legalism but by love of God! Abraham's obedience did NOT save him, but did demonstrate His faith was saving faith. **Habakkuk** writes that "the righteous will live by his faith." (Hab 2:4-note, which Paul quoted in part in Ro 1:16-17-note)

**David** agrees writing "**Better** (same word as Pr 15:16 - Heb = **tob**; Lxx = **kreitton/kreisson**) is the **little** of the righteous than the abundance of many wicked." (Ps 37:16)

**Spurgeon comment:** This is a fine proverb. The **little** of one **good** man is contrasted with the **riches** of many **wicked**, and so the expression is rendered the more forcible. There is more happiness in the godly dinner of herbs than in the stalled ox of profane rioters. In the original there is an allusion to the noise of a multitude, as if to hint at the turmoil and hurly burly of riotous wealth, and to contrast it with the quiet of the humbler portion of the godly. We would sooner hunger with John than feast with Herod; better feed on scant fare with the prophets in Obadiah's cave than riot with the priests of Baal. A man's happiness consists not in the heaps of gold which he has in store. True contentment finds *multum in parvo* (much in little), while for a wicked heart the whole world is too little.

## **THE KEY TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

**Fear of the LORD** - This phrase occurs in 25v, most often in the **Proverbs** - 2Chr 19:7, 9; Job 28:28; Ps 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Prov 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; Isa 11:2-3; 33:6; Acts 9:31; 2Cor 5:11. A great study would be to read all the uses of this phrase and simply write down what is associated with fear of the LORD -- you will be amazed at how much you learn! And you have just "tapped in" to the key phrase of the entire book of Proverbs!

**Charles Bridges** on the **fear of the LORD** - "It is that affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and

carefully to his Father's law. His wrath is so bitter, and His love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please Him, and—because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations—a holy watchfulness and fear, 'that he might not sin against Him.'

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that "If we truly **fear the LORD**," we acknowledge from our hearts that He's the Creator, we're the creatures; He's the Father, we're His children; He's the Master, we're the servants. It means to respect God for Who He is, to listen carefully to what He says, and to obey His Word, knowing that our disobedience displeases Him, breaks our fellowship with Him, and invites His chastening. **It's not the servile fear of the slave before the master but the reverential and respectful fear of the child before the parent.** Children fear not only because their parents can hurt them, but also because they can hurt their parents. Proverbs 13:13 admonishes us to fear God's commandments, which suggests that the way we treat our Bible is the way we treat God. (Bolding mine)

**Adam Clarke** - where the fear of God is, there are moderation and contentment of spirit.

**Lawson** - **It is the blessing of God that makes any thing pleasant and satisfying.** It is sufficient alone to make the beggar rich, and without it the man is poor who calls whole counties his own. And his blessing is upon his own people, and upon their basket and store, whilst the wicked and all they have are under his curse. It is God that gives both food and gladness, and without gladness, what good can our food do to us? and this gladness is ordinarily given to him that is good in his sight; but to the sinner he giveth travel, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. **If a Christian has but little**, it is pleasant to him; because he considers it as the gift of his heavenly Father, and tastes in it the love of his Saviour, through whose grace every thing is pure and sanctified to him. The wicked have their food from the providence of God which rules over all, the righteous have their bread by covenant and promise. If they have little in possession, they know that they shall have every thing necessary and good for them, from the possessor of heaven and earth; and when they are pinched with straits, it is not for want of good will in their heavenly Father, but because his goodness to them is directed by wisdom. If they have scarcely any food at all, they have promises on which they can feed, with a pleasure never tasted by the men of the world when their corn and wine do most abound.

**Wiersbe** on **great treasure** - "When you fear the Lord, you keep your priorities straight....One of the subtle dangers of wealth is a false sense of security. "He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage" (Pr 11:28). After all, riches won't save the sinner on the day of judgment (Pr 11:4); they can't buy peace (Pr 15:16-17) or a good name (Pr 22:1). Riches have a tendency to fly away when we least expect it (Pr 23:4-5; Pr 27:23-24)."

**Great treasure** often brings great **turmoil**. One is reminded of Solomon the very one who penned this proverb. He seems to have fallen "prey" to his own proverb! He was wiser than any man of his day but he also had greater treasure and in the end his life was filled with unimaginable turmoil, trouble and tumult, ultimately resulting in the Kingdom of Israel being divided (Read 1Kings 11:1-12). Proverbs does not deprecate **great treasure** per se, for Pr 10:22 says "It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it." Indeed, when Jehovah gives a man great treasure, that treasure is truly "great!" **Temper Longman** notes that the Book of Proverbs "often suggests that wealth is the reward of the wise, it also makes it clear that sometimes one must choose between fear of Yahweh and wealth." **Beloved, is there some "fork in the road" you are facing in your life even as you read this note? Perhaps one fork guarantees great material wealth, but at the potential expense of sacrificing great spiritual wealth. Let me encourage you to pray this proverb to the Lord of the harvest, asking Him to make it very clear whether you are to seek great treasure or be soul satisfied with "little." It could make all the difference in the world (and in the world to come!)**

**Turmoil** (04103)(**mehumah** from **hum** = to disturb greatly) is a feminine noun which means tumult, disturbance, confusion, disquietude, vexation, trouble, wild, confused disorder, extreme discord. **Swanson** says **mehumah** describes "confusion, i.e., a state of discomfiture (uncomfortableness) and consternation because one is not understanding a situation, and so implying turmoil and panic." There is "anxiety attending the pursuit and preservation of wealth." **Kitchen** adds that **mehumah** "is a word often associated with holy war and describes the confused and frantic state of the enemies of God when faced with His holy presence and power (Dt 7:23; 28:20; 1Sa 5:9, 11; 14:20; 2Chr 15:5; Isa 22:5; Amos 3:9).The English word **turmoil** describes disturbance; tumult; harassing labor; trouble; molestation by tumult. It is a state or condition of extreme confusion, agitation, or commotion. **Is that not what great riches often bring, especially if not accompanied by godliness!**

The **NET Note** adds this thought on **mehumah** - **Turmoil** refers to anxiety; the **fear of the LORD** alleviates anxiety, for it brings with it **contentment** and **confidence**. Not all wealth has **turmoil** with it. But the proverb is focusing on the comparison of two things – fear of the LORD with little and wealth with turmoil. Between these two, the former is definitely better. (**Amen!**)

**Allen Ross** - "**Turmoil**" (**mehumah**) is anxiety; the reverential **fear of the Lord** alleviates such anxiety, for it causes contentment and tranquility, the opposite of "**turmoil**." Not all wealth has this disadvantage, but when it does, it is undesirable.

**Pulpit Commentary** - The trouble intended is the care and labor and anxiety attending the pursuit and preservation of wealth. "Much coin, much care" (comp. Ecclesiastes 6:4).

**POSB** - Notice that the contrast is between the **fear of the Lord** and **trouble**. In all but two of its Old Testament uses, the word translated as **trouble** refers to some destruction or turmoil sent by the Lord in judgment. Though the ungodly rich may not suffer the worldly problems the godly poor endure, they doubtless have immeasurable trouble awaiting them in eternity. Their riches can buy them no favor with God. Their wealth will be of no value to them in hell (Lu.16:22-25).

**William MacDonald** - A poor believer is better off than a wealthy worrywart. Wealth has trouble attached. The life of faith is the carefree life.

#### **Related Resources:**

- See Numerous Quotes Related to Contentment
- Christian Contentment
- More discussion of Christian Contentment
- [Contentment - Monergism](#)
- [Jeremiah Burroughs - The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment](#) - Recommended

**Lawson** - **Trouble is the inseparable companion of great treasures, when they are not sanctified by prayer, and sweetened by the fear of the Lord.** They are like water to a man in a dropsy, which doth not quench, but inflame his thirst. Anxiety and care, an ill conscience, and the uncertainty of present things, embitter the portion of the men of the world. Nothing can be really pleasant that wants the blessing of God. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches, not of one, but of many wicked§.

The love that religion promotes, tends greatly to sweeten their outward enjoyments.

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - May 14th "Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith."—15:16 (ver. 6; 16:16).

**Interpretation.**—The contrast seems to be not between wealth and poverty, to the advantage of the latter, but between wealth without the fear of the Lord (attended with turmoil), and contracted means accompanied with that peace and blessing which true religion brings. A "little" under those circumstances is certainly better than great "revenues."

**Illustrations.**—Perhaps no man ever possessed greater treasures than Solomon himself, yet his experience proved them to be but "vanity and vexation of spirit" after he had forsaken God (Eccles. 2:11). And no man was ever poorer than Job when deprived of all by a mysterious providence, yet how much, in reality, was his condition even then better than that of the apostate king, able as he still was to maintain his faith in God! Contrast Elisha, content with a "prophet's reward," "poor but making many rich," with his ungodly servant, grasping great treasure, and acquiring trouble therewith. But observe, too, how Abraham and Joseph of Arimathea, both wealthy men, were "rich" also "toward God." Also, how Judas Iscariot, a poor man (to whom thirty shekels was an object) was infinitely more poor in that he emptied his heart of Christ.

**Application.**—That religion is the sweetener as well as the sanctifier of life, is a truth hard to be received. Yet this the inspired Word teaches everywhere. The heart, in its alienation from God, craves happiness without Him, and thinks to find it in money and what money procures. Now, "the love of money is the root of all evil," but money itself is not. Let us admit its value, but insist that a religious use of it will immensely augment that value; so much so that "a little" under that condition is far better than a "treasure" without it. The possessor of wealth will allow that it involves great trouble and anxiety in its preservation, its investment, its expenditure. And doubtless there is a reward for the trouble if the money be husbanded and made use of religiously, so as to increase the happiness of its owner, by enabling him to do good. But if this be not so, then the burden of management is greater than the return of satisfaction, and it may become a source of intolerable disquietude, as e.g. when litigation or family feuds arise out of it. Let me strive, then, to make good use of what God gives me. If much, and trouble therewith, yet a conscientious use of it will tend to sweeten life, and may even improve instead of darkening my prospects for eternity. If little, yet, religiously handled, it will bring less trouble and fewer temptations with it. Whether much or little, the great truth to be accepted is that only through the fear of the Lord can money become a real blessing. ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

#### **Proverbs 15:17 Better is a dish of vegetables where love is than a fattened ox served with hatred**

- Pr 17:1, 21:19 Ps 133:1-3 Php 2:1 1Jn 4:16
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Note the strong contrasts demarcated by the **colored font** in these two related proverbs.

Better is a **dish of vegetables** where **love** is than a **fattened ox** served with **hatred**. (Proverbs 15:17)

Better is a **dry morsel** and **quietness** with it than a house full of **feasting** with **strife**. (Proverbs 17:1)

Spiritual things outweigh material things, in this life and the life to come (see note on Pr 15:16). **Longman** adds that "A good relationship with people rather than things is preferred (**Ed**: over good food)."

**William MacDonald** - A plate of vegetables in an atmosphere of **love is ... better than** a filet mignon roast where there is strife. Moffatt says, "Better is a dish of vegetables, than the best beef served with hatred." A fatted calf is one that has been raised in a stall and given the best feed; its meat is tender and delicious. Joseph R. Sizoo says: In a nearby city I visited one of the most luxurious estates I've ever seen in America. Within the house were Italian fireplaces, Belgian tapestries, Oriental rugs, and rare paintings. I said to a friend, "How happy the people must have been who lived here!" "But they weren't," he replied. "Although they were millionaires, the husband and wife never spoke to each other. This place was a hotbed of hatred! They had no love for God or for one another" (Our Daily Bread).

**KJV Bible Commentary** - The one who is rejoicing in the Lord can well understand the dear old saint who gave thanks for a bit of bread, an onion, a glass of water, and then joyfully thanked God for "all this and Jesus!"

**POSB** - It is better to eat simply and meagerly at a table spread with love than to indulge in the luxuries of the rich in a house filled with hatred. All the world's delicacies and luxuries cannot make a house a home or turn a bitter relationship into a tender, loving one.

**Allen Ross** says this proverb "affirms that happy, loving relationships are more desirable than a great meal where there is hatred. Again the teaching concerns the negative side of wealth; all too often wealth replaces love in a family. The ideal is to have a loving family, friends, and great food; short of that, a humble meal with love is preferable."

A preacher said, "It's better to have a hamburger at McDonalds with someone who loves you than to be entertained at the Waldorf by someone who hates you."

**Whedon** - A **fattened ox** was, by the Hebrews, as by other ancient peoples, reckoned among the noblest of entertainments. It is mentioned among the provisions for the table of Solomon and of Nehemiah. In the New Testament, the marriage supper which the king made for his son consisted, in great part, of oxen and fatlings, (Mt 21:4;) and the fatted calf was brought forth to entertain the returning prodigal. Luke 15:23. (**Ed**: There to celebrate the love of the father for the son!)

**Charles Bridges** comments on Proverbs 15:16-17 - Here are the sources of the cheerful heart—the fear of the LORD and the love of man. And here also is the constant feast that so satisfies that the saint's little is better than everything the world has. "Riches and poverty are more in the heart than in the hand. He is wealthy who is contented. He is poor who wants more" (Bishop Hall). The universe will not fill a worldly person, while a little will suffice for a heavenly heart. Few, alas, put this divine testimony into practice. Parents, do you seek the lasting happiness of your children? Then lead them to expect little from the world and everything from God.

**Lawson** - Love is a pleasing affection of the soul, and diffuses cheerfulness all around it. It gives a relish to the scantiest and coarsest meal. Water is sweeter than wine, and dry bread more pleasant than fat things full of marrow, when this delightful affection gives a relish to them. Ruth and Naomi were happy when they lived on the gleanings of the fields of Boaz, and in the fulness of their satisfaction poured their blessings on the head of him that allowed them the scanty pittance. But selfishness, and hatred, and variance, makes every pleasant dish insipid or bitter.

The conversation of friends is far pleasanter than any dish at the table. Where hatred is, there is silence or sullenness, or at least hollow mirth, and tasteless ceremony; but where love and the fear of God is, the table conversation is delightful and useful. We find even an heathen poet reflecting with rapture on the pleasures of such entertainment\*. How blessed were the disciples of our Lord, when they sat at meat with him! Barley loaves and fishes were probably ordinary fare with them, but they were entertained with divine discourse.

Such pleasure as they enjoyed in their Master's company we cannot now expect; but his religion is admirably fitted to promote our present happiness, for love is his great commandment. He enforces love between husbands and wives, as well as among friends, by motives which no Christian can withstand.

If love is necessary to sweeten our ordinary meals, we must never come to the Lord's table without exercising supreme love to Christ, and fervent love to our fellow Christians. We must consider ourselves as one body and one bread, when we are all partaking of one bread. Love is a pleasant passion, but let us beware of anger, which makes a man a torment to himself, and a plague to his neighbours.

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - May 15th "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."—Pr 15:17.

**Interpretation.**—Vegetables represent the simplest diet (Dan. 1:12), while meat, specially of fatted oxen, was the holiday fare of Eastern peoples. Thus our Lord, in two of His parables, alludes to “oxen and fatlings” and “the fatted calf” in connection with social festivity. The word rendered “dinner” signifies a portion or ration (Jer. 52:34). Thus the contrast is between a very humble meal shared by one or more, and a dinner-party at which many guests, and those of the well-to-do class, are entertained. Let friendliness and harmony prevail at the one, and ill feeling intrude at the other,—who can doubt which of the two would be the more agreeable?

**Illustrations.**—Elijah and the widow of Zarephath shared a very humble meal, but the charity of the prophet and the gratitude of the poor woman gave it a flavour and a relish which were utterly wanting to those much grander entertainments at which murderous thoughts obtained, presided over by Absalom and Herod. On the other hand, we see how bad passions may obtrude themselves into the simplest (and most sacred) meal, in the case of Judas, with traitor’s hand on the table, at our Lord’s Last Supper; and false brethren like “spots,” or “sunken rocks,” at the Christian agapæ, or love-feasts, later on (Jude 1:12).

**Application.**—In this proverb, love to our neighbour is represented as sweetening the social meal. The plainest fare may be far more enjoyable than the most luxurious banquet. The difference between man and man lies in the heart far more than in anything external. There are comrades in labour, there are cottage households, to whom, united by true mutual regard, the social meal, as plain and cheap as possible, affords real pleasure, specially if “it be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.” There are owners of mansions, on the other hand, with every luxury at command, whose daily common repast is a daily trial through contrariety of tempers, and whose formal parties give little or no real satisfaction through the absence of geniality and friendliness. Love will sweeten the meanest food. Hatred, or the absence of love, will embitter the richest feast. Not riches, then, nor yet poverty is the secret of social happiness—but love. There are rich people who live harmoniously, and doubly enjoy their abundance. There are poor people who quarrel over their herbs. There is hospitality which gives genuine pleasure because so hearty; and a frigid reception of guests, lacking the spirit of hospitality, which repels;—and this, in either case, quite independent of externals. “To walk in love as Christ also hath loved us,” this is the one secret of social joy, and this we learn of Jesus by having Him as our Guest. ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

#### Proverbs 15:18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute.

- Pr 10:12 26:21 28:25 29:22 2Sa 19:43 20:1 Jas 3:14-16
- **he:** Pr 15:1 25:15 Ge 13:8,9 Jdg 8:1-3 1Sa 25:24-44 Ec 10:4 Mt 5:9 Ac 6:1-5 Jas 1:19,20
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### POWER OF PATIENCE ON STRIFE

See Tim Keller's sermon - [The Healing of Anger](#)

Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.

**POSB** introduces the proverbs in Pr 15:18-30 entitling this section "**Their conduct and its consequences.**" - People's circumstances are, for the most part, determined by their own conduct or by the conduct of parents or guardians who are responsible for them. While godly behavior produces success in God's eyes, ungodly behavior produces failure. This principle applies both to life and to relationships. True, the ungodly may be very successful according to worldly standards, but God knows their hearts. The godly receive the Lord's blessing and protection, but the ungodly have to plow through life on their own-without God's help-and suffer through the painful consequences of their sin. Notice the conduct of the righteous as contrasted with that of the wicked throughout this set of proverbs.

**Hot-tempered man** - Hebrew literally reads "a man of wrath" or a "man of rage!" He is an angry person and clearly contrasts with the man who is **slow to anger**.

**Hot-tempered** ([02534](#))(**chemah** from **yacham** = to be hot, Delitzsch says it is related to an Arabic word hamiy = to glow) is a noun which can refer to physical heat, but more often is used figuratively to convey the picture of inner, emotional "heat" which rises and is fanned to varying degrees. And thus **chemah** can mean hot displeasure, indignation, anger, wrath, and even poison (figuratively speaking). This type of anger is anger at its fever pitch so to speak. Chemah is used 9x in Proverbs - Pr 6:34; 15:1, 18; 16:14; 19:19; 21:14; 22:24; 27:4; 29:22

The **Septuagint** translates the Hebrew **chemah** in Pr 15:18 with the adjective **thumodes** which speaks of one who is furious, passionate. **Thumodes** is used frequently in Lxx of the Proverbs (Pr 11:25; 15:18; 22:24; 29:22; 31:4). **Thumodes** is derived from



**thumos** which describes passion (as if breathing hard) and thus speaks of an agitated or "heated" anger that rushes up (impulsively toward someone). **Thumos** is a tumultuous welling up of one's whole spirit, a mighty emotion which seizes and moves the whole inner man. Woe! Avoid these folks (Pr 22:24)!

**MacArthur** - "Hotheads" are contrasted with "peacemakers" (Pr 14:16-17, 29; 15:1; 19:19, Pr 22:24, 28:25; 29:11, 22).

**Charles Bridges** - This Proverb requires no explanation. But observe the principles of hatred and love, contrasted in active exercise. Some persons make it their occupation to sit by the fire, to feed and fan the flame, lest it be extinguished—An useful and friendly employment, were it a fire to warm. But when it is an injurious, consuming, and destructive element, it would seem difficult to discover the motive of these incendiaries, did we not read, that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, wickedness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness." (Mark 7:21, 22)

**Longman** - This verse speaks of the emotional intelligence of the wise. Fools respond to an attack by attacking back, only making things much worse. On the other hand, the wise are coolheaded and patient, thus in the end subduing accusations that may be directed toward them.

**Lawson** - It will be our wisdom, if possible, to avoid the company of a passionate (hot tempered) man, for it is **almost impossible** to live in peace with him. He is **almost perpetually giving offence**, and yet he **cannot bear the least shadow of offence to be given to himself**. You cannot act or speak so cautiously, but he will find or make some occasion for a quarrel, for tow is not more inflammable than a mind in which passion rules over reason. But if you cannot avoid his company, be sure to keep a strict guard over your spirit, and by this means strife may be prevented or appeased. It is one of the amiable glories of God, that he is slow to anger; and considering how much we are indebted to his patience, we are strongly obliged to copy after him, as dear children. A passionate disposition makes a man the firebrand (one that creates unrest or strife) of society; but meekness makes him a blessing to his neighbors. He that appeaseth strife, does us as much service, as he that quenches the fire that is burning down a house. **We must learn of Christ, who was meek (gentle) and lowly (humble) of heart (Mt 11:28-30-note)**; so shall we find rest to ourselves, and pacify contentions, and enjoy a double blessing from the great Author of blessings. "Blessed are the meek,—blessed are the peace-makers."

**John Gill** - A man of a wrathful disposition, of a furious spirit, of an angry temper; that is under the power and dominion of such a passion, and indulges it, and takes all opportunities to gratify it; he stirs up strife and contention where there was none, or where it was laid; as a man stirs up coals of fire and raises a flame; see Proverbs 26:21. He stirs up strife in families, sets one relation against another, and the house in an uproar; he stirs up contentions in neighbourhoods, and sets one friend and neighbour against another, whence proceed quarrels and lawsuits: he stirs up strife in churches, breaks brotherly love, and causes animosities and divisions; he stirs up strife in kingdoms and states, whence come wars and fightings, confusion, and every evil work;

**Stirs up strife** - The picture is they stir it up where none exist and they do it by turning up the "temperature" in situations that are already "simmering." What a contrast with the righteous man who is slow to anger for he turns down the temperature, defusing the situation, so to speak. They diffuse potential problems and avoid conflict.

**Matthew Henry** - Passion the great make-bate. Thence come wars and fightings. Anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame: A wrathful man, with his peevish passionate reflections, stirs up strife, and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though ever so trifling. When men carry their resentments too far, one quarrel still produces another.

**Stirs (01624)(garah)** is a verb that means to meddle, stir up strife, engage in strife, provoke. Often used in connection with warfare. When used reflexively **garah** means to stir up oneself against something or someone (Dt 2:5, 19), , a king (2Ki 14:10; 2Chr 25:19); a people or nation to provoke war (Dt. 2:9, 24; Da 11:10, 25).

In English **provoke** means to arouse; to excite; as, to provoke anger or wrath by offensive words or by injury; to provoke war.

**Swanson** - 1. (piel) initiate strife, foment, provoke, stir up, i.e., create a hostile situation by one's actions or words (Pr 15:18; 28:25; 29:22); (hitp) provoke, make causation, initiate an action (Dt 2:5, 9, 19, 24; 2Ki 14:10; 2Ch 25:19; Jer 50:24; Da 11:10,25), note: often in reference to military battle 2. (hitp) resist, formally, provoke, i.e., be in opposition by not conforming to a pressure or power (Pr 28:4)

**Garah** - Usage: contend(1), engaged in conflict(1), mobilize(2), provoke(5), stirs(3), strive(1), wage war(1).

Deuteronomy 2:5 do not **provoke** them, for I will not give you any of their land, even as little as a footstep because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.

9 "Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor **provoke** them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.

19 'When you come opposite the sons of Ammon, do not harass them nor **provoke** them, for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot as a possession.'

24 'Arise, set out, and pass through the valley of Arnon. Look! I have given Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land into your hand; begin to take possession and **contend** with him in battle.

2 Kings 14:10 "You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has become proud. Enjoy your glory and stay at home; for why should you **provoke** trouble so that you, even you, would fall, and Judah with you?"

2 Chronicles 25:19 "You said, 'Behold, you have defeated Edom.' And your heart has become proud in boasting. Now stay at home; for why should you **provoke** trouble so that you, even you, would fall and Judah with you?"

Proverbs 15:18 A hot-tempered man **stirs** up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute.

Proverbs 28:4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, But those who keep the law **strive** with them.

Proverbs 28:25 An arrogant man **stirs** up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.

Proverbs 29:22 An angry man **stirs** up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.

Jeremiah 50:24 "I set a snare for you and you were also caught, O Babylon, While you yourself were not aware; You have been found and also seized Because you **have engaged in conflict** with the LORD."

Daniel 11:10 "His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again **wage war** up to his very fortress.

25 "He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will **mobilize** an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.

**Strife** (04066)(**madon**) is a masculine noun referring to strife, dissension. It refers to a quarrel or dispute that cannot be stopped once it starts (Pr. 17:14); or to arguments and contentions that create barriers between persons (Pr 18:19). Study the uses in Proverbs to get a good "feel" for this word. Here in Pr 15:18, the Lxx translates **madon** with the Greek noun **mache** which literally was used for physical combat or a contest fought with weapons. Figuratively **mache** was used to describe "battles" fought with words (disputes, quarrels).

**Strife** in English means bitter sometimes violent conflict or dissension, contention in anger or enmity; contest; struggle for victory; quarrel or war, a state or condition marked by a lack of agreement or harmony, strife emphasizes a struggle for superiority rather than the incongruity or incompatibility of the persons or things involved.

**Contention** in English applies to strife or competition that shows itself in quarreling, disputing, or controversy; Strife in words or debate; quarrel; angry contest; controversy; a violent effort to obtain something, or to resist a person, claim or injury; contest; quarrel.

**NAS Usage:** contention(4), contentions(3), contentious(5), object of contention(1), strife(7).

**Madon** - 20x in 20v - Ps 80:6; Pr 6:14; 15:18; 16:28; 17:14; 18:18-19; 19:13; 21:9, 19; 22:10; 23:29; 25:24; 26:20-21; 27:15; 28:25; 29:22; Jer 15:10; Hab 1:3

**Slow** (0750)(**arek**) is "an adjective meaning long, drawn out, or slow. This word primarily describes feelings pertaining to a person: either being slow of temper or patient. In wisdom literature, the person who is patient and does not anger quickly is extolled as a person of understanding (Prov. 14:29; Eccl. 7:8). When used to describe God, the Hebrew word means slow to anger and is immediately contrasted with God's great love, faithfulness, and power, demonstrating His true nature and His long-suffering (Ex. 34:6). Also, this Hebrew word is used of an eagle's **long** pinions or feathers (Ezek. 17:3)." (Baker)

**Phrase "slow to anger" = Arek aph** (see latter below) = patient, slow to anger, long-suffering before getting angry (Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18; Ne 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Pr 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; Jer 15:15; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Na 1:3)

**Slow to anger** - In Hebrew this is more literally "**long nose**"! The picture seems to be that when we become angry the **nose** often flares out and we take a deep inspiration, thus in Hebrew the word "**nose**" (**aph**) is used over 200x for anger. The Lxx translates the Hebrew phrase with the Greek adjective **makrothumos** (See related word **makrothumia** from makros = long, distant, far off, large + thumos = temper, passion, emotion) literally describes one who is long-tempered (as opposed to "short tempered"), who exhibits a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion. It describes a state of emotional calm or quietness in the face

of provocation, misfortune or unfavorable circumstances. Such a person is self-controlled (I would add "**Spirit controlled**," Eph 5:18-**note** and Gal 5:23-**note** = an aspect of the Spirit's fruit is self control) in the face of provocation and thus is patient, forbearing, tolerant, even-tempered.

**Arek NAS** Usage: long(1), patience(2), slow(10), who is slow(2).

**Arek** - 15v - Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Pr 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; Eccl 7:8; Jer 15:15; Ezek 17:3; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3

**Anger** (nose, nostril, wrath) ([0693](#))(**aph** - see discussion above)

**Calms** ([08252](#))(**shaqat**) is a verb which means to cause quietness, to pacify, to allay, to be still, to be quiet, to be undisturbed. Basically the meaning of shaqat is a state of tranquility, as when the land has absence of war (2Chr 20:30). The first use in Joshua is used figuratively to describe that "the land **had rest** (Lxx = **katapauo** = to cause something to cease, to cause to be at rest - Heb 4:4, 8, 10) from war." (Josh 11:23, cp similar uses in Josh 14:15, Jdg 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28) In Ruth 3:18-**note** Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz "will not **rest** (Lxx = **hesuchazo** = to be at rest)" until he resolves the matter of who is to be the kinsman redeemer. In Isaiah 30:15 we read "For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In **quietness** and trust is your strength." Sadly the last part of that verse says "But you were not willing!" In Isa 32:17 what brings true security and tranquility reading that that "the work of righteousness will be peace, And the service of righteousness, **quietness** (Lxx = **anapausis** = cessation from wearisome activity for the sake of rest) and confidence forever." Thus it is righteousness which brings true tranquility. The tossing sea "cannot be quiet (still, at rest, calm)." (Isa 57:20) **Shaqat** describes people (Israel) "at rest, that live securely" (Ezek 38:11) which speaks of a sense of safety and security.

**Shaqat** is translated in Pr 15:18 in the Lxx with the verb **hesuchazo** which means to relax from normal activity and so to be at rest. A Spirit controlled person who manifest slowness to anger causes others to be at rest, to be free from being disturbed.

"This type of person goes out of his way to keep things calm and minimize contention; his opposite thrives on disagreement and dispute." (NET Note) "Blessed are the peacemakers." (Matthew 5:9-**note**).

**Shaqat NAS** Usage: been quiet(1), been undisturbed(1), calm(1), calmed(1), calms(1), careless(1), grant him relief(1), had rest(3), keep quiet(1), keeps quiet(1), pacified(1), peace(1), quiet(12), quietly(1), quietness(2), rest(2), still(3), undisturbed(7).

**Shaqat** - 41x in 41v - Josh 11:23; 14:15; Jdg 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; 18:7, 27; Ru 3:18; 2Kgs 11:20; 1Chr 4:40; 2Chr 14:1, 5-6; 20:30; 23:21; Job 3:13, 26; 34:29; 37:17; Ps 76:8; 83:1; 94:13; Pr 15:18; Isa 7:4; 14:7; 18:4; 30:15; 32:17; 57:20; Isa 62:1; Jer 30:10; 46:27; 47:6-7; 48:11; 49:23; Ezek 16:42, 49; 38:11; Zech 1:11

**Matthew Henry** - Meekness the great peace-maker: He that is slow to anger not only prevents strife, that it be not kindled, but appeases it if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, unites those again that have fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.

**John Trapp** - Is as busy to stint strife, as the other to stir it; brings his buckets to quench this unnatural fire between others, and puts up injuries done to himself, as Jonathan did when his father flung a javelin at him - he rose from table and walked into the field. David also, though provoked, yet he "as a deaf man heard not, and was as one dumb, in whose mouth there was no reproof." Such peaceable and peacemaking men are blessed of God and highly esteemed of men, when wranglers are to be shunned as perilous persons. "Make no friendship with an angry man," saith Solomon. [Proverbs 22:24] And they are not much to be regarded that with every little offensive breath, or disgraceful word, are blown up into rage, that will not be laid down without revenge or reparation to cure their credits.

**Dispute** (contention, quarrel, strife, discord) ([07379](#))(**rib**) means strife or dispute and is derived from the verb (**rib** - [07378](#)) is a legal word and means to contend (although the proverb should not be restricted solely to a courtroom setting). The **NET Note** says **rib** "used for "quarrel; strife" strongly implies that the setting is the courtroom or other legal setting (the gates of the city). The hot-headed person is eager to turn every disagreement into a legal case.

**Rib** is translated in **NAS** as - adversary(1), case(11), cause(9), complaint(2), contend(1), contention(1), contentions(3), controversy(1), dispute(11), disputes(1), indictment(1), lawsuit(1), plea(1), plead his case(1), quarrel(2), strife(13), suit(2).

**McKane** seeing here a reference to litigiousness writes: "There is the kind of person who thrives on acrimony and who seeks a pretext to transform every difference or disagreement into a bitter legal contest, and there is his opposite who will do everything in his power to minimize contention and to obviate the acerbities of litigation" (see also Pr 14:29; 15:1).

**John Gill** - a man of a quiet and peaceable disposition, possessed of the true grace of charity; who is not easily provoked, longsuffering, bears and endures all things; he allays the heat of anger; he quenches the coals of contention; he calms the storm

and makes it quiet, as the word signifies; he "mitigates strifes raised," as the Vulgate Latin version renders it; he composes differences, reconciles the parties at variance, and makes all hush and still; and so prevents the ill consequences of contention and strife.

**Charles Bridges** - What then is the Christian's experience? Instead of stirring up—to appease strife; to bring water—not fuel—to the fire; by "a soft answer to turn away wrath;" (Pr 15:1) by a yielding spirit to melt, subdue, and bring peace. (Gen. 13:7–9, Eccl. 10:4.) Let me remember that I owe my very salvation to this attribute—slow to anger. (Ps. 103:8, 2Pet. 3:15) And shall I not endeavor to imbue my profession with this lovely adorning, and to "be a follower of God, as his dear child, walking in love?" (Eph. 5:1, 2) Will not this temper of the gospel secure my earthly enjoyment of godliness? (Matt. 5:5) Will it not also seal my title as a child of God? (Mt 5:9)

**POSB** - Abraham displayed a spirit of righteousness when a conflict arose over his and Lot's herds (Ge 13). He was much older, far wealthier, and had the right to choose the better land for himself. Yet, in one of the most selfless acts imaginable, Abraham conceded the better land to his nephew in order to bring a peaceful solution to the problem (Read Ge 13:8-9)

**J Vernon McGee** - A man who is crude and rough in his dealings will stir up strife. However, it is also true that preaching the Word of God will stir up strife. Remember that the Lord Jesus was the most controversial person who has ever been on this earth. Wherever the truth is preached, strife will be the result, because there are folk who don't want to hear it. Remember that we said the Word of God works like a Geiger counter. If you run it over a congregation, you can learn who is a genuine Christian and who is not. A young preacher having trouble in his congregation came to me about it. I told him about my experience when I was a boy. When I would go to the barn at night to feed the horse or the cow, I would light a lantern and carry it with me. When I would open the barn door and step in, two things would happen: The rats would scurry and run for cover, and the birds which were roosting on the rafters would begin to sing. Light had those two very different effects. And when the Word of God is preached you will see the rats run for cover and the birds begin to sing. We do need to keep in mind that we are not to exaggerate the offense of the cross—just preach it.

#### Proverbs 15:19 The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway

- **Lazy** - Pr 22:5,13 26:13 Nu 14:1-3,7-9
- **upright**: Pr 3:6 8:9 Ps 5:8 25:8,9,12 27:11 Isa 30:21 35:8
- **Highway** - Isa 57:14
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

[The Hedge of Thorns and the Plain Way -- Proverbs 15:19 -- C. H. Spurgeon](#) You might want to read his sermon which he introduces with this remark "*I shall try to show you that our text, while it has its temporal bearings which we will not conceal, has, beyond these, its **higher and spiritual teachings** with which we will conclude.*"

### THE LAZY VERSUS THE UPRIGHT WAY

**Kidner** notes that "The  **sluggard** is contrasted, a little unexpectedly, with the upright or straightforward—a reminder (a) that there is an element of dishonesty in laziness (trying to sidestep the facts and one's share of the load); (b) that the straight course is ultimately the easiest. (Cf. Pr 4:25, 26)." In a word this proverb says that laziness is unethical!

**The way** - Frequent metaphor in Proverbs, usually describing **the way** one lives their life. Pr 1:15; 2:8, 12, 20; 4:11, 14, 19; 6:23; 7:8, 27; 8:2, 20; 9:6; 10:29; 12:15, 26, 28; 13:15; 14:12; 15:9-10, 19; 16:25, 31; 21:8, 16; 22:5-6; 23:19; 29:27; 30:19-20

The **lazy** man is the antithesis of the **righteous** man. Solomon could have said "diligent" but instead he says "righteous." Clearly the plain intent in context is that the **lazy** man is not a **righteous** man! Think about this contrast -- is a lazy man likely to give you an honest days labor for the wages you pay? Surely the lazy man fails to fulfill one of God's decrees for man after he sinned - "By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread" (Ge 3:19). The lazy man surely still desires to eat the bread, but not suffer the work to gain it! If you toil for it, he will gladly accept your bread, which Spurgeon says even "verges upon coveting and stealing." As Paul wrote to the saints at Thessalonica "even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread." (2Th 3:11-12)

As **Spurgeon** says "The  **sluggard** is not righteous, for he does not render to God according to the strength lent to him, nor to man according to the work assigned him. A slothful man is a soldier who would let others fight the battle of life while he lies asleep under the baggage wagon—until rations are served! He is a farmer who only farms his own strength and would eat the grapes while others

trim the vines. He would, if possible, be carried on his bed into the Kingdom of Heaven—he is much too great a lover of ease to go on pilgrimage over rough and weary ways. If the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence from others, it will never suffer violence from him! He is too idle to be importunate, too slothful to be earnest. He cannot be a righteous man, for slothfulness leads to the neglect of duty in many ways and, very soon, leads to lying about those neglects of duty—and no liar can have a portion in Heaven. . Idleness is selfishness and this is not consistent with the love of our neighbor, nor with any high degree of virtue. Every good thing withers in the drought of idleness. In fact, all kinds of vices are comprehended in the one vice of sloth and, if you tell me that a man is a sluggard, I have his whole character before me in the blackest of letters! His fallow fields are well adapted for evil seed and, no doubt, Satan will raise a fine crop of weeds in every corner of his life! What this world would have been if we had all been gentlemen, with nothing to do, I cannot tell. The millions that have to work are largely kept out of mischief by their toil and although crimes are abundant enough in our great city as it is, what would they have been if there had not been daily tasks to keep men from excessive indulgence in drink and other forms of evil? " ([Sermon](#))

**Lawson on the way of the lazy** (slothful) - It is but little that a slothful man can be prevailed on to do; but that little gives him great trouble and fatigue. A diligent man finds himself easy and cheerful in the exercise of his profession; but the slothful man cannot be content, but when he is permitted to doze or sleep. When he is on the way of his duty he cannot proceed far, for he sees a hedge of thorns before him, and no opening to give him passage. Whatever business he is employed about, he finds unconquerable difficulties, and inextricable perplexities in it, so that he either leaves it undone, or slubbers it over, and does nothing to purpose. Such a man is fit neither for heaven nor earth. His dispositions do not at all suit the present state of mankind, to whom God has appointed labour and sweat; nor do they suit the law of Christ, which requires men to rejoice and work righteousness\*.

**Longman** - Diligence normally determines progress in life. This proverb says that the slothful person seems to find obstacles along the way—his way is like a hedge of thorns

**Lazy** ([06102](#))(**asel** from verb **asal** = to hesitate, delay, not to act, to lay back) is an adjective which means sluggish, lazy, acting the sluggard, descriptive of one who has no discipline or motivation and is slow to take any action. Swanson says the word suggests "a lack of discipline or initiative, as a moral failure (Pr 24:30)." The soul of one who is **asel** wants nothing, and gets nothing (Pr 13:4). The man described as **asel** takes no initiative (Pr 19:24); doesn't do tasks when they are supposed to do them (Pr 20:4), refuses to work (Pr 21:25), rolls over in his bed (instead of making progress to get up) (Pr 26:14).

**Webster on lazy** - Disinclined to action or exertion; not energetic or vigorous; naturally or habitually slothful; sluggish; indolent; averse to labor; heavy in motion. **Webster on sluggard** - A person habitually lazy, idle and inactive; a drone. **Webster on sluggish** - averse to activity or exertion; Habitually idle and lazy; slothful; dull; inactive; as a sluggish man.

**Asel NAS** Usage: lazy(1), lazy one(1), sluggard(12).

**Asel** - 14v - Prov 6:6, 9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-15

Prov 6:6 Go to the ant, O **sluggard**, Observe her ways and be wise,

Prov 6:9 How long will you lie down, O **sluggard**? When will you arise from your sleep?

Prov 10:26 Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the **lazy** one to those who send him.

Prov 13:4 The soul of the **sluggard** craves and [gets] nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.

Prov 15:19 The way of the **sluggard** is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the upright is a highway.

Prov 19:24 The **sluggard** buries his hand in the dish, [And] will not even bring it back to his mouth.

Prov 20:4 The **sluggard** does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

Prov 21:25 The desire of the **sluggard** puts him to death, For his hands refuse to work;

Prov 22:13 The **sluggard** says, "There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!"

Prov 24:30 I passed by the field of the **sluggard**, And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense;

Prov 26:13 The **sluggard** says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!"

Prov 26:14 [As] the door turns on its hinges, So [does] the **sluggard** on his bed.

Prov 26:15 The **sluggard** buries his hand in the dish; He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.

**As** - See discussion of **terms of comparison** and the value of observing and interrogating **similes**.

**As a hedge of thorns** - One picture would be that because of his lack of diligence and drive, his way has become obstructed like a path that is overgrown by thorny briars, making it difficult to pass by. Progress in life is deterred, strewn with difficulties (as is walking



a path blocked by a **hedge of thorns**). Now he is in real trouble, and can only sit and complain, possibly using the "hedge" as an excuse for his inaction (even though he brought on the problem!).

**Spurgeon** comments on **hedge of thorns** - The idler's way is not a desirable way. Unthinking persons suppose that the sluggard lives a happy life and travels an easy road. It is not so. Many believe in "the sweet doing of nothing," but it is a sheer fiction. Surface appearances are not the truth—though it may seem that idleness is rest, it is not so. Though sloth promises ease, it cheats its votaries. Of all unrest there is none more wearisome than that of having nothing whatever to do. The severest toil is far more endurable than utter sloth. I have heard of retired business men going back to the counter from absolute weariness of idleness. It is far more desirable to be righteous than it is to be at ease. Labor of a holy sort has ten thousand times more joy in it than purposeless leisure! The way of the sluggard is also difficult. The idle man walks a hard road in his own apprehension—he has to break through thorns. Every molehill is a mountain to him; every straw is a stumbling block. There is a lion in the way—he will be slain in the streets. You look out and can only see the smallest possible dog, but he is sure that it is a roaring lion and he must stay at home and go to bed! He cannot plow by reason of the cold. The clods are frozen, he is sure. They are hard as iron and will break the plow! If you look out of doors, you will see the neighbors' teams going, but he has another excuse if you beat him out of the one he has given you! The difficulties that he sees are created in his own mind by his natural sluggishness—he has such a creative faculty that he has always 20 arguments against exerting himself once! The first thing such persons do in the morning, when they open their window, is to look out and see a difficulty. Whenever they are sent about a task, or on an errand, they straightway begin to consider the great labor that will be involved in it, the imminent risk that will surely come of it—and the great advantages of leaving it undone! To the slothful man, his way, when he gets so far as having a way at all, always appears to be as hard to pursue as a hedge of thorns and, mark you, if he continues slothful, it will actually become a hedge of thorns. Difficulties imagined are apt to arrive! Duty neglected today will have to be done some time or other and the arrears of neglected service are grim debts. The slothful is like the spendthrift who does not reckon what he spends, but contents himself with crying, "Put it down." The score increases and again he cries, "Put it down." He resolves to do better and then gives a bill, or renews a former bill and dreams that the debt is paid! But the debt remains, accumulates and follows the the man's track. Old debts pursue a man. Like wolves which hunt the fleeing traveler across the snowy plains of Russia, neglects and obligations follow a man with swift and sure pursuit and there is no way of escape. It is the past which makes the present and the future so difficult. The sluggard's way appears to lie not only over a thorny brake, but over a compacted mass of thorns of set purpose planted for a hedge. Dear Friends, do not put off till tomorrow that which can be done today! Keep the road clear of arrears. Do the day's work in the day. I am persuaded that in your ordinary business work some of you Christian people need to be warned against shiftless delay. Believe me, there is a piety in keeping your work well in hand, in having the house right, the business in order, the daily task well done. True religion seeks to honor God in all the transactions of life and this cannot be done by idling, by postponement and by allowing work to run behind. No sluggard can be a saint; no sluggard can glorify God. Life grows hard and unenviable to men who try to make it easy. A man who neglects his duty, whether he is a carpenter, a bricklayer, a clerk, a minister, or an archbishop, will find his way increasingly difficulty until it becomes almost impassable. ([Sermon](#))

**Adam Clarke** - Because he is slothful, he imagines ten thousand difficulties in the way which cannot be surmounted; but they are all the creatures of his own imagination, and that imagination is formed by his sloth.

**John Gill** says that "by his slothfulness, has implicated and entangled himself in such difficulties, that he cannot extricate himself; his way is not passable, at least not very easily; it is as it were hedged up with thorns; see Hosea 2:6; or in his own apprehensions; who raises such difficulties about doing business, which to him seem insurmountable; at least which discourage him from attempting it, it being like breaking through thorns and briers; hence he will not plough because of the cold, nor go abroad because there is a lion in the streets, Proverbs 20:4; or the way of his duty, especially of virtue and religion, is as troublesome and disagreeable to him as breaking through a thorn hedge, or treading upon briers and thorns; to attend the duties of public worship, prayer, and hearing the word, is very irksome to him; to be present at family worship, at prayer, and hearing the Scriptures or religious discourses read, is like sitting upon thorns unto him. This, as Aben Ezra observes, is to be understood of a wicked man, as the opposition in the next clause shows."

**Matthew Henry** - Those that have no heart to their work pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all (as if God were a hard Master, reaping where he had not sown), at least that their way is strewed with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger; and therefore they go about it with as much reluctance as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge.

**John Trapp** - The way of a slothful man is perplexed, so that he gains no ground, achieves no deliverance; he goes as if he were shackled when he is to go upon any good course, so many perils he casts and so many excuses he makes—this he wants, and that he wants, when in truth it is a heart only that he wants, being woefully hampered and enthralled in the invisible chains of the kingdom of darkness, and driven about by the devil at his pleasure.... Never any came to hell, saith one, but had some pretence for their coming hither.

**Delitzsch** notes that a 'hedge of thorns' could be used as fencing—making the way impassible and directing travelers along another route (Hosea 2:6).

#### **R A Torrey on idleness and sloth -**

1. Forbidden. Ro 12:11; Heb 6:12.
2. Produce apathy. Pr 12:27; 26:15.
3. Akin to extravagance. Pr 18:9.
4. Accompanied by conceit. Pr 26:16.
5. Lead to
  - a. Poverty. Pr 10:4; 20:13.
  - b. Want. Pr 20:4; 24:34.
  - c. Hunger. Pr 19:15; 20:13.
  - d. Bondage. Pr 12:24.
  - e. Disappointment. Pr 13:4; 21:25.
  - f. Ruin. Pr 24:30, 31; Ec 10:18.
  - g. Tattling and meddling. 1 Ti 5:13.
6. Effects of, afford instruction to others. Pr 24:30–32.
7. Remonstrance against. Pr 6:6, 9.
8. False excuses for. Pr 20:4; 22:13.
9. Illustrated. Pr 26:14; Mt 25:18, 26.
10. Exemplified
  - a. Watchmen. Isa 56:10.
  - b. Athenians. Ac 17:21.
  - c. Thessalonians. 2 Th 3:11

**But - term of contrast** = Ponder what Solomon is contrasting.

**The path** - a less frequently used phrase - Pr 4:14, 18, 26; 5:6; 10:17; 15:19, 24

In the next chapter Solomon says "The **highway** of the **upright** is to depart from evil." (Pr 16:17)

**Upright** (right) (adjective) ([03477](#))(**yashar** from the verb **yashar** = to be smooth, straight or right) is an adjective that means straight; reliable, level, pleasing; upright; righteous. Yashar only rarely is used literally of that which is straight (Ezek 1:7). Yashar can refer to something physical like a path, but even in those uses is often a metaphorical description of one's conduct or behavior (Ps 107:7). Most uses refer to that which is right in an ethical or an emotional sense, as agreeable or pleasing.

Notice how the Hebrew word **upright** derived from yashar which means to be smooth or straight fits nicely with the picture of a easily passable road in his life. This the man who obeys Prov 3:6 - In all your **ways** acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (smooth) He is the man who has obeyed the wisdom of Proverbs 4:26 = Watch the **path** of your feet, and all your **ways** will be established."

**Highway** ([05549](#))(**salal**) is actually a verb which means to build up, cast up, to lift up, to heap up (piling up a collection of something to a higher elevation as in building a ramp or a path) ( Job 19:12; 30:12; Isa 57:14; 62:10; Jer 50:26). In the qal passive **salal** mans to be built up and thus to be a highway as in Pr 15:19 (Jer 18:15). Figuratively, **salal** means to extol or praise someone, the words elevating (so to speak) the status of the one about whom the words are spoken ("Lift up a song for Him who rides through the deserts" = Ps 68:4). Of Pharaoh who exalted himself against God's people (Ex 9:17). In Pr 4:8 **salal** is translated "Prize," "Exalt" or "Esteem" which is a command (pilpel imperative) which is used figuratively meaning to esteem her (wisdom) highly. In Isa 57:14 we God Himself says "And it will be said, "**Build up, build up** (both imperatives or commands), prepare the way, Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people." In Isa 62:10 we read "**Build up, build up** (Lxx = **hodopoieo** = to make a road, to level, to make passable, smooth or open) the highway," where highway is another Hebrew word (mesillah derived from salal).

The Lxx translates salal in Pr 15:19 with tribo conveying the idea of to be worn smooth (speaking of one's path). The verb is in the perfect tense which speaks of past completed action with continuing, ongoing effect or result! Interesting! Another advantage of pursuing righteousness (2Ti 2:22)!

**Salal** NAS Usage: build(6), exalt(1), highway(1), highway\*(1), lift(1), pile(1), prize(1).

**Salal**- 12 uses in 10v - Ex 9:17; Job 19:12; 30:12; Ps 68:4; Prov 4:8; 15:19; Isa 57:14; 62:10; Jer 18:15; 50:26

A **highway** conveys the picture of building or throwing up, dirt to make a level and easily passable roadway.

Isa 40:3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a **highway** for our God.

**Gill** says **highway** "signifies a causeway, a highway, and a plain one, in which a truly righteous and good man finds no difficulty; yea, it is so plain, that men, though fools in other respects, shall not err therein, Isaiah 35:8; nor is it grievous and troublesome, but, on the contrary, very delightful, as the ways of Christ and wisdom are; his commandments are not grievous, his yoke is easy, and his paths pleasant; and the righteous man walks at liberty and with pleasure in them; and without offence or stumbling, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it."

**Charles Bridges** - Another picture of the slothful man drawn to life! He plants his own hedge, and then complains of its hindrance. Every effort to break through his difficulty, like a fresh thorn-bush in his way, tears his flesh. He is brought to a stand. Indecision, delay, reluctance, sluggishness, paralyze his exertions. (Comp. Lev. 26:7, 8, with Judges 1:3, 4) He not only exaggerates his real, (Nu 13:27-33) but pictures to his mind imaginary (Pr 26:13), difficulties; so that, after a feeble struggle of conscience, with much to do, but no heart to do any thing, he gives himself up to idleness or pleasure. (Pr 26:14-15)

**This sloth is a ruinous evil in temporals.** Young men! remember, that one or two hills of difficulty, vigorously climbed in youth, will make the way plain for future and successful progress. But to put half the soul to the work; to drag to it as an unavoidable task; to avoid present difficulties in order to find a smoother path, will make a hedge of thorns, harassing to the end of the journey.

**Much more ruinous is this evil in the Christian life.** The sluggard in religion is miserable—never at ease. He knows his need of a change. He makes an effort to pray. But all withers for want of purpose of heart. His way is a hedge of thorns. Exertion is absolutely impossible. He sees no hope of overcoming, and lies down in despair. (Pr 12:27.) Child of God! Beware of yielding to a sluggish spirit. Soon will nothing remain but the dead form of religion; the bare walls of the house, instead of the temple filled with the glory; the heartless externals of godliness, while the spirit that breathed life into them is gone.

**After all—the difficulties are more in the mind than in the path.** For while the slothful sits down by the side of his hedge in despondency; the righteous, in the habit of diligence, finds his way made plain. (Nu 13:30, 14:2-9) An honest desire and effort make the way easy. Faith brings him to the strong for strength. Hope, love, and joy are conquering principles. "The mountains are threshed" (Isa. 41:10-14) by the energy of faith. Religion, with all its crosses, is found to be a practicable thing. (Phil. 4:13) The victory over sloth opens a happy and prosperous way to heaven.

**Lawson on the way of the upright** - The wise man mentions righteousness in this place rather than diligence, because the latter is included in the former, and is not sufficient without it, to make a man's way plain. The man that joins to industry the practice of justice towards men and piety towards God, may find difficulties in his way; but he is not diverted by them from his duty, nor discouraged from making progress. In worldly affairs, hard labor, with the blessing of God, conquers every thing. In the course of the spiritual life, difficulties and discouragements vanish away before faith, and mountains are threshed down to vallies, by that power on which faith relies.

**Longman - The way of the upright** is like a well-made road, a "**highway**" (selulâ); they have no reason to detour or swerve. For parallelism of the slothful and upright, see Proverbs 28:19 (cf. Pr 6:10; 10:26).

**POSB** - The upright or righteous are industrious. Their counterparts in this verse are the lazy or slothful, pointing to the fact that laziness is not merely a trait or weakness; it is a sin. The way it is expressed in this proverb is understandable to every generation: the road or path near the slothful person's house is overgrown with thorns. Hedge indicates that the briars have grown to the point that the road is impassable because the property owner was too lazy to cut them down. In contrast, the path near the upright individual's house is not only passable but also improved. Made plain or highway (salal) indicates that the diligent property owner built up or smoothed over the road to make it easier to travel upon. There is a symbolic as well as a practical truth in this proverb. The sluggard never goes anywhere in life because of all the obstacles his or her laziness has created. However, the hard worker travels far down the road to success. It is a highway built by his or her own personal efforts.

**Proverbs 15:20 A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.**

- **wise:** Pr 10:1 23:15,16 29:3 1Ki 1:48 2:9 5:7 Php 2:22
- **despises:** Pr 23:22 30:17 Ex 20:12 Lev 19:3
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WISDOM VERSUS FOLLY

**Similar** to Pr 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother. The first line is identical to Pr 15:20, while the second line emphasizes that the result of a foolish son is to bring grief to his mother. Pr 15:20 focuses on the attitude of the foolish son (contempt) which produces this grief.

**Kitchen** comments "Not only is the son a pain to his parents, but He couldn't care less what effect he has upon them."

**McGee** - The father brags about his boy when he is making good. If the boy is failing, you won't hear a word out of his dad.

**Wise** sons (and daughters) live to please their parents. Conversely when a child lives foolishly, they not only grieve their parents (= "a foolish son is a grief to his mother") but show contempt for them and their authority! How tragic!

**Wise** (02450)(**chakam**) is an adjective which is related to wisdom (see word study on **chokmah**). To describe one as wise is to say they are characterized understanding of people and of situations and manifest discernment and judgment in dealing with them.

**Chakam** describes one's manner of thinking and attitude concerning life's experiences.

**Chakam** - 46 of the 133 uses are in Proverbs - Pr 1:5-6; 3:7, 35; 9:8-9; 10:1, 8, 14; 11:29-30; Pr 12:15, 18; 13:1, 14, 20; 14:1, 3, 16, 24; 15:2, 7, 12, 20, 31; Pr 16:14, Pr 16:21, 23; 17:28; 18:15; 20:26; 21:20, 22; 22:17; 23:24; 24:5, 23; 25:12; Pr 26:5, 12, 16; 28:11; 29:8-9, 11; 30:24. **Study the following to get a good sense of how Proverbs defines "wise"...**

Prov 1:5 A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,

Prov 1:6 To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles.

Prov 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

Prov 3:35 The wise will inherit honor, But fools display dishonor.

Prov 9:8 Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

Prov 9:9 Give [instruction] to a wise man, and he will be still wiser, Teach a righteous man, and he will increase [his] learning.

Prov 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

Prov 10:8 The wise of heart will receive commands, But a babbling fool will be thrown down.

Prov 10:14 Wise men store up knowledge, But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.

Prov 11:29 He who troubles his own house will inherit wind, And the foolish will be servant to the wisehearted.

Prov 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls.

Prov 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Prov 12:18 There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Prov 13:1 A wise son [accepts his] father's discipline, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Prov 13:14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn aside from the snares of death.

Prov 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Prov 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish tears it down with her own hands.

Prov 14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for [his] back, But the lips of the wise will preserve them.

Prov 14:16 A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, But a fool is arrogant and careless.

Prov 14:24 The crown of the wise is their riches, [But] the folly of fools is foolishness.

Prov 15:2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.

Prov 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge, But the hearts of fools are not so.

Prov 15:12 A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, He will not go to the wise.

Prov 15:20 A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish man despises his mother.

Prov 15:31 He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof Will dwell among the wise.

Prov 16:14 The wrath of a king is [as] messengers of death, But a wise man will appease it.

Prov 16:21 The wise in heart will be called discerning, And sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

Prov 16:23 The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds persuasiveness to his lips.

Prov 17:28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is [counted] prudent.

Prov 18:15 The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

Prov 20:26 A wise king winnows the wicked, And drives the [threshing] wheel over them.

Prov 21:20 There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, But a foolish man swallows it up.

Prov 21:22 A wise man scales the city of the mighty, And brings down the stronghold in which they trust.

Prov 22:17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, And apply your mind to my knowledge;

Prov 23:24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise son will be glad in him.

Prov 24:5 A wise man is strong, And a man of knowledge increases power.

Prov 24:23 These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good.

Prov 25:12 [Like] an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprover to a listening ear.

Prov 26:5 Answer a fool as his folly [deserves], Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Prov 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Prov 26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.

Prov 28:11 The rich man is wise in his own eyes, But the poor who has understanding sees through him.

Prov 29:8 Scorners set a city aflame, But wise men turn away anger.

Prov 29:9 When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.

Prov 29:11 A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.

Prov 30:24 Four things are small on the earth, But they are exceedingly wise:

**Bridges** - Do not the brightest joys (Pr 10:1; 23:15, 24, 25, 1 Kings 1:48), and the bitterest tears in this world of tears (Pr 17:25, 2Sa 17:23; 18:1–4), flow from parents' hearts? Whatever be the delight to see a son prospering in life, the Christian father finds no rest, until a wise son maketh him glad. And here we need not any development of talent or superior attainment, but the true wisdom; humble and docile, marked (as the contrast suggests) by filial reverence, specially by the cleaving choice of that fear of the Lord which "is the beginning of wisdom." (Pr 15:33, 1:7) Such a son does indeed rejoice his father, as he watches with equal pleasure and thankfulness the daily growth and healthiness of his choice vine.

**Lawson** - Nothing can make a dutiful child happier, than to contribute to the happiness of his parents; and this filial disposition must not be confined to childhood, but dwell in us whilst either father or mother dwell upon the earth. If our parents should require us to do some great and hard thing for them, nature and gratitude would enforce our compliance; but all that they require is, that we should be wise and happy, for their felicity is bound up in our welfare. Surely he is an unnatural fool that will not gratify them in such kind desires. **Epaminondas**, one of the best of the Greeks (**Ed**: Montaigne judged him one of the three "worthiest and most excellent men" that had ever lived,) having gained a glorious victory over the enemies of his country, said to them that complimented him on it, that his chief pleasure in it was the pleasure that the news would give to his father and mother.

**Matthew Henry** - To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents, who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them. And it adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come.

**Glad** ([08056](#)) (**sameach**) is an adjective which denotes being glad, happy or joyful with one's entire being (filled with joy, exceedingly



glad) as indicated by association with heart (cognate verb *samach* uses in Ex 4:14; Ps 19:8; Ps 104:15; Ps 105:3), with one's soul (Ps 86:4) and with one's countenance and the lighting up of eyes (Pr 15:30). Joy comes from the blessing of Jehovah (Dt 16:15), joy of having children (Ps 113:9), description of God's people (glad) when "Jehovah has done great things." (Ps 126:3) Swanson adds that *sameach* means "delight, i.e., pertaining to a feeling or attitude of joy, happiness or contentment, with a possible focus of making an outward expression of that joy. "

**Foolish** (literally the Hebrew reads "a fool of a man") (03684)(**kesil/kecil**) is a stupid fellow, a morally insensitive dullard, whether it be in spiritual, intellectual, or moral matters. These are stupid people who are totally confident in own wisdom, thinking they have it all figured out without God's assistance. Swanson adds that *kesil* refers to (1) foolishness, stupidity, insolence, i.e., the state of being in complete lack of understanding, implying rebellion (Pr 10:1); (2) fool, insolent person, i.e., one completely lacking understanding, implying to be a rebel against standard or person (Pr 10:18).

**Bridges** - But what if folly, instead of gladdening, despise, a mother? (Pr . 19:26; 23:22) She—whose tender love, (Isa. 66:13) and yearning faithfulness (Isa 49:15, is a faint picture of the heart of God—She is despised by "the son of her womb!" (Ex. 20:12) The law of God commands honor (Ex 20:12) and reverence (Lev. 19:3, 30); and the transgression of the law will not be forgotten. (Pr 20:20; 30:17, Ezra 22:2, 7) But is not this neglect a chastening rebuke for capricious indulgence? What grace and wisdom is needed, so that parents may be a valuable blessing to their children for their highest interests!

**Kitchens** remarks that "To become a parent is to place your emotional well-being in jeopardy (Prov. 17:21, 25). A child holds in his hands the power to inflict untold pain or joy upon his parents (Prov. 29:3). The whole person is wrapped up in loving a child. The callousness of this fool's attitude toward his parents will be fleshed out through his actions. He may curse (Prov. 20:20; 30:11), mock (Prov. 30:17), rob (Prov. 28:24) and even assault and drive away his parents (Prov. 19:26). Such a fool will be judged (Prov. 20:20) in the severest of fashions (Prov. 30:17)."

**Despises** (0959)(**bazah**) is from a root meaning to accord little worth to something) means to disdain or to hold in contempt. *Bazah* is used in a number of places to mean "despise" in the sense of treating someone or something as totally insignificant or worthless. *Bazah* means to raise the head loftily and disdainfully, to look down one's nose at something (so to speak)! The idea is that one undervalues something or someone which implies contempt for that thing or person (as **despising** God's Name in Malachi 1:6-**note!** Do we not do this in a sense *every time* we **willfully sin** against Him? I fear so! Thankful that "His **compassions** never fail and are new every morning!" Lam 3:22-23)

The Lxx translates **bazah** in Pr 15:20 with the verb **mukterizo** (from **mukter** = nose) which means to "turn up one's nose at" and so to treat with contempt!

**Bazah** is used two other times in Proverbs - Pr 14:2 "he who is devious in his ways **despises** (Lxx = **atimazo** = dishonors, deprives of the respect deserved)" God! Also used in Pr 19:16 "he who is **careless** (despises his ways; Lxx = **kataphroneo** = to look down on with contempt) of conduct will die."

**Kidner** links the grief of the mother in Pr 10:1 with the description in Pr 15:20 of "the callousness of one who is fool enough...to inflict it"

**Matthew Henry** - To the shame of wicked children, that by their wickedness they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill requital for their kindness: A foolish son despises his mother, that had most sorrow with him and perhaps had too much indulged him, which makes his sin in despising her the more sinful and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

**Lawson** - Nature and Scripture condemn the folly of those that despise either father or mother. If our dependence is chiefly on our father, yet we have experienced more tenderness from our mother, and have cost her greater sorrows\*. Religion, if it had free course, would turn this earth into a kind of paradise, by making all men a blessing to one another. The duties we owe to human society, and to our respective relations, are enforced in the Bible by motives, which nothing but folly and impiety can resist.

### Proverbs 15:21 Folly is joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight

- **joy**: Pr 10:23 14:9; 26:18,19
- **lacks sense**: Heb. void of heart, Pr 11:12
- **man**: Pr 14:16 Job 28:28 Ps 111:10 Eph 5:15 Jas 3:13
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Instead of wisdom being their **joy**, **folly** is their **joy**. They enjoy their folly because they are convinced they're really living (cp Pr

12:15, Pr 18:2)! They are like those of whom God says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa 5:20) How could they make such a moral mistake? The answer is that they lack **sense**, more literally that they are destitute of heart, lacking a clear sense of right and wrong!

As **MacDonald** quips "A stupid man enjoys his stupidity. He has never known anything better."

**Kitchen** adds that "The words '**lacks sense**' are, more literally, 'lacks heart.' The phrase has been met before (Pr 6:32; 10:13; 12:11) and is another way of identifying a fool. He is so completely devoid of understanding, it is like someone has cut his heart (the seat of thinking, feeling and choosing) out. He seems to have lost all ability to think correctly, choose the right path and process his jumbled emotions. Little wonder, then, that such a one finds 'joy' (cf. Pr 15:13, 23, 30) in folly. His thinking is skewed, which leads to poor choices and, in turn, ends up in a confused sense of pleasure."

**Lawson** comments on "**folly is joy**" - It is a sign of prodigious folly for a man to take pleasure in sin, which gives mortal wounds to the soul, provokes the displeasure of the Almighty, and could not be expiated, but in the groans and blood of a Redeemer; and yet all wicked men take pleasure in it. It is with the utmost propriety that the wise man gives the name of fool to the sinner, and allows the character of wisdom to none but the godly. We have in this verse a mark whereby we may know with certainty whether we are wise men or fools; and this mark is explained at great length by Paul, and illustrated by his own example\*.

**Charles Bridges** challenges us - Let this Book of instruction probe our profession. What think we of folly? Not only does the ungodly practice it. But it is joy to him. He sins without temptation or motive. He cannot sleep without it. (Pr . 4:16, 17) It is "the sweet morsel under his tongue." (Pr 15:14, 9:17, Job 20:12.) He "obeys it in the lusts thereof." (Ro 6:12) He "works it with greediness." (Eph. 4:19) He hates the gospel, because it proposes to "save him from it." (Matt. 1:21, Acts 3:26; with John 3:19) But hear the humbling confessions of a child of God—"I am carnal, sold under sin. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Verily would he sink under his hated burden, but for the confidence "I thank God—There is no condemnation." (Ro 7:14, 24, 25; 8:1) **What greater proof can there be of being destitute of wisdom, than this appetite of sin?** That which hath turned this fair and blooming world into a sepulcher—nay—that which hath kindled "everlasting burnings"—is his joy. And thus he goes on, intent upon the trifles of the day; and trifling with eternal concerns; preferring shadowy vanities to everlasting glory. Will he not open his eyes to the discovery; that "they that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy?" (Jonah 2:8) The Lord save him—ere it be too late—from reaping the bitter fruits of his foolish choice!

**Matthew Henry** - It is the character of a wicked man that he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily, and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he has swallowed it: Folly is joy to him; the folly of others is so, and his own much more. He sins, not only without regret, but with delight, not only repents not of it, but makes his boast of it. This is a certain sign of one that is graceless.

**Folly** (0200)(**iwweleth**) is a noun signifying foolishness which Swanson says is "a state of being devoid of wisdom and understanding, with a focus on the evil behaviors which occur in this state." Moral insolence is a prominent aspect of foolishness.

The **Lxx** translates **iwweleth** in Pr 15:21 with **anoetos** which means literally "not having a mind!" (without understanding, unintelligent, foolish, dull-witted).

**Lacks sense** (literally "lacking or destitute of heart"). The **NET Note** explains Solomon's use of heart (**leb**) - "The Hebrew term "**heart**" represents the mind, the place where proper decisions are made (cf. NIV "judgment"). The one who has not developed this ability to make proper choices finds great delight in folly."

In Pr 12:11 we learn that "he who pursues worthless [things] lacks sense." (Compare description of Ephraim in Hos 7:11)

**Lacks** (02638)(**chaser**) means needy, lacking, in want of and is used 13/17x in Proverbs - 1Sa 21:15; 2Sa 3:29; 1Kgs 11:22; Pr 6:32; 7:7; 9:4, 16; 10:13, 21; 11:12; 12:9, 11; 15:21; 17:18; 24:30; 28:16; Eccl 6:2

**Lawson** on a **man of understanding** - Wise men are not wise in every instance of their conduct, for weakness and temptation too often betray them into sin, yet they hate sin, and account their indwelling corruption a body of death; but sin is not only practiced by the wicked, but it is loved by them. Folly is their joy, and therefore they sin even without a temptation. It is their meat and drink to sin, and they roll iniquity as if it were a sweet morsel under their tongue. They often feel stings of conscience from the word of God; but they hate not those sins that are condemned by it, but the word that condemns them. They dislike salvation itself, because it is a deliverance from sin. But the wise man's employment is to cleanse his way, and make it straight. He hates sin that dwells in him, and loathes himself for his impurities. He takes pleasure in holiness, and loves the law of God, because it testifies against his iniquities. He joins earnestly with the Psalmist in that prayer, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" and instead of being satisfied with such a degree of holiness as may amount to the lowest evidence of true grace, he will not count himself completely happy, till his grace is completed in the glory of the heavenly state.

**Understanding** is often used as a synonym for wisdom.

**Walks straight** speaks of one's path or way, a frequent metaphor in Proverbs, and in this passage depicts a righteous path or way as this person journeys through life.

**Kitchen** - the 'man of understanding' chooses his course carefully, weighing each choice by what is right before God and man.

**Charles Bridges** asks - But how know we the **man of understanding**? He gives his heart and mind to the word of God. He has joy in wisdom (Pr 21:15),—as the sinner in folly. Even his painful discoveries of indwelling corruption, ground him deeper in solid religion, than those who know only the surface. He is taught of God, and his upright walk is a bright "shining path." (Pr 4:18.) Give me, O my God, understanding, that my joy may be in thy wisdom—not in my own folly.

**John Gill** on the **man of understanding** - he who has his understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God; who has an understanding given him by the Son of God; who has a spiritual and experimental understanding of the Gospel, and the truths of it: he walks according to the rule of the divine word; he walks as he has Christ for an example, and by faith on Him; and after the Spirit, and not after the flesh

**Matthew Henry** - It is the character of a wise and good man that he makes conscience of his duty. A fool lives at large, walks at all adventures, by no rule, acts with no sincerity or steadiness; but a man of understanding, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the Spirit (and those that have not a good understanding have no understanding), walks uprightly, lives a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies in every thing to conform himself to the will of God; and this is a constant pleasure and joy to him. But what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him at any time, is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it. By these characters we may try ourselves.

**John Trapp** - A man of understanding walketh uprightly, and he doth it with delight, as the opposition implies. Christ's "burden" is no more "grievous" to him than the wing is to the bird. His sincerity supplies him with serenity; the joy of the Lord, as an oil of gladness, makes him lithe and nimble in ways of holiness.

**Understanding** (08394)(**tebunah** from **bin** = to discern) is a noun describing the ability to discern a right course of action (Dt 32:28, Ps 136:5, 145:5, Pr 3:19). In other contexts, **tebunah** refers to skill or the ability to perform a craft (Ex 31:3). **Tebunah** is the object of knowledge (Pr 2:3; 3:13; 5:1; 14:29; 18:2; 19:8 Ps 49:4; 147:5 Is 40:28 1Ki 5:9; 7:14) **Vine** summarizes **tebunah** - it represents the act (Job 26:12), faculty (Ex. 31:3), object (Pr 2:3), and personification of wisdom (Pr. 8:1).

**Lxx** translates **tebunah** in Pr 15:21 with **phronimos** which is an adjective "that pertains to understanding associated with insight and wisdom =, sensible, thoughtful, prudent, wise." (BDAG)

By describing the man of understanding's path as **straight**, clearly implies the fool's path is crooked.

**Straight** (03474)(**yashar**) means literally straight or figuratively describes an upright or moral life. The Lxx translates **yashar** with **kateuthuno**, which means to keep straight (in the present tense = as one's lifestyle or general direction of their life. The idea is that of conducting one straight to a place, and not by a round-about course. How is this possible for NT believers? Ultimately by depending on the Spirit and walking by the Spirit. (Gal 5:16).

A similar picture is called for in Pr 4:25 " Let your eyes look directly ahead, And let your gaze **be fixed** (**yashar**) straight in front of you."

**Yashar** is used in the famous verse that prophesied of John the Baptist - Isa 40:3 "A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth (**yashar**; Lxx = euthus = metaphorically, of moral and spiritual preparation for Jesus' appearing as Messiah) in the desert a highway for our God."

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**[A Man Of Warmth And Wisdom - Our Daily Bread](#)** - When Dr. Vernon Grounds, former president and chancellor of Denver Seminary, went to be with the Lord at age 96, tributes and remembrances poured in from former students, colleagues, and friends. Almost everyone recalled a time when Dr. Grounds had personally encouraged them through his teaching, his counsel, or simply his warm smile. He believed in the value of training pastors, teachers, and counselors who had a vital relationship with Christ and a willingness to serve others.

A vivid portrait of Vernon Grounds is seen in a selection of verses from Proverbs 15: "A man of understanding walks uprightly" (Pr 15:21). "A word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (Pr 15:23). "The words of the pure are pleasant" (Pr 15:26). "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer" (Pr 15:28). "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (Pr 15:33).

Dr. Grounds' counsel grew out of his character, and his wisdom came from God. The warmth of his life was fired by his purity of

heart. The result is a model for us from the Word of God and the example of a man who humbly followed his Savior.

Vernon Grounds ran well and finished his race. May his example of wise and compassionate living challenge us as we continue to run.

By David C. McCasland |

Life's truest heroes never carve their name  
On marbled columns built for their acclaim;  
They build instead a legacy that springs  
From faithful service to the King of kings. —Gustafson

A good leader is one who knows the way, shows the way, and goes the way.

## Proverbs 15:22 Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed

- Pr 11:14 20:18 Eccl 8:6
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Sermon by Tim Keller** - [Your Plans- God's Plans - Redeemer Sermons](#) = The only way to understand God's plans for us is to see Christ truly and trust him fully. God's plans for us are not abandoned to fate; our choices matter, and once we have committed entirely to His will, we can receive His guidance humbly and boldly.

### THE PROFIT OF WISE COUNSEL

The importance of wise counsel is a repeated theme in Proverbs...

Prov 11:14 Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.

**Comment:** The Hebrew word for **guidance** gives us a word picture for **Kidner** says that it is "a fair equivalent to the Heb. word arising from the tackle of a ship, and hence the handling and steering of it."

Prov 20:18 Prepare plans by consultation, and make war by wise guidance.

Prov 24:6 For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

Remember that this is a proverb, so that many wise counselors usually yields success of one's plans, it is not a "promise" and success is not absolutely 100% guaranteed! However, in general wise advice has prevented many a disaster. We can probably all think of situations in our life where we received the advice and benefited and other times when we spurned wise counsel and paid a dear price! Ouch!

**Bruce Waltke** says that in "adulthood counselors replace parents," but I disagree somewhat, as I (age 69) have been able to give my youngest son (age 38, and born again only about a year ago, 2014) considerable counsel on an entrepreneurial venture and now that he is born again, he has listened and it has saved him considerable grief in several situations. The wise counsel of wise dads (not that I always am!) is always worth receiving.

Wisdom is knowing we don't have all the answers! The wise man in fact regularly seeks advice of other wise men. And not surprisingly, their plans are often successful. We need to remember that all advice is not necessarily good advice as Solomon's son Rehoboam discovered when he listened to the counsel of the foolish young men rather than the wise (older) men who had served Solomon (see 1Ki 12:1-33)

**Without** (0369)(**'ayin**) is a Hebrew particle marking negation (no, without, etc).

**Waltke** - The plans of the arrogant, headstrong, and obstinate person, based on his exaggerated opinion of himself, court failure because without correction they tend to be self-serving and defy reality.

**John Phillips** - It is foolhardy to act without knowing all the facts. It is sensible to get a second opinion. It is sensible to consider that opinion even when it differs materially from our own. It is sensible to evaluate other points of view and to weigh all the evidence. Then, even if we do make a wrong decision, we will make an honest mistake.

**Consultation** (05475)(**sod**) primarily means confidential conversation, speech or talk. Compare the Arabic word sa'wada which means to speak secretly. **Sod** emphasizes confidentiality in contrast to more general advice or counsel. The point is that one seeks advice from intimate friends who are trustworthy, especially ones who can keep a secret (Pr 11:13, 20:19, 25:9).

**Plans** (04284)(**mahasabah**) is a feminine noun which means thoughts, purposes, intentions. **TWOT** says that "The basic idea of the word is the employment of the mind in thinking activity. Reference is not so much to "understanding" (cf. **bin/biyn**), but to the creating of new ideas." The Lxx translates mahasabah with the noun logismos which **BDAG** says is "the product of a cognitive process (cognitive = based on or capable of being reduced to empirical factual knowledge) - calculation, reasoning, reflection, thought." See comments on Proverbs 15:26.

**Matthew Henry** - Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice. Men's purposes are disappointed, their measures broken, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass; circumstances defeat them which, with a little consultation, might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly and of one's own head. Plus vident oculi quam oculus - Many eyes see more than one. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

**Frustrated** (06565)(**parar**) means to bring to nothing, to foil, to thwart or to frustrate. It can also mean "to break" and in this sense is often used in conjunction with a covenant (Ge 17:14), but also with commands (Nu 15:31), laws (Ps 119:26), brotherhood (Zech 11:14). It is used of frustrating counsel in 2Sa 15:34, 17:14, Isa 14:27, Ezra 4:5) or to thwart plans as in this proverb (cp Job 5:15) Plans without consultation from trusted advisers are generally destined for disaster! In general one's plans become ineffectual or are frustrated with insufficient counsel.

John Gill - If a man determines and resolves upon a matter, and at once hastily and precipitately goes about it, without mature deliberation, without consulting with himself, and taking the advice of others in forming a scheme to bring about his designs, it generally comes to nothing; see Luke 14:28.

**Many** (abundance, plentiful) (07230)(**rob**) is a masculine noun that speaks of counselors as numerous.

**Kitchen** has a wise word - The word **many** implies that multiplied counselors is a safeguard. As one surveys trusted individuals, he may see a pattern of advice develop. Ultimately, it is not human counsel one wants, though, but the counsel of the Lord, for it alone will stand (Prov. 19:21). Yet, it may be through such friends that blind spots are laid bare, miscalculations are uncovered and unforeseen obstacles are brought into view...Begin now to watch for people who display God's wisdom. Cultivate friendships with them. Seek their input when you face important decisions.

**Lane** - Even those of us who have Christ for our wisdom are not infallible. We don't know everything, we lack experience, we see things from our own perspective. Consulting others will provide us with a course correction. Question - Do you think the present craze for 'counselling' as an expertise, even a profession, is altogether good? Do you think it would be better shared out among us and practised by all? See Proverbs 27:17, Hebrews 10:24f, 12:15.

**Kidner** - Although one can take **too many opinions** (cf. King Zedekiah, Jer. 38:1-28), it is fatally easy to shut out disquieting voices.

**Counselors** (03289)(**yaas**) is a verb meaning to advise or to counsel. It most often describes the giving of good advice, but sometimes describes the opposite (bad) effect (2Chr 22:3). In Pr 15:22 clearly the intent is "good advice." The Lxx translates **yaas** with the noun **boule** which describes an inward thought process leading toward a decision. **Yaas** is also used in P 13:10 learn that "wisdom is with those who receive counsel." All uses of **yaas** in Proverbs - Pr 11:14; 12:20; 13:10; 15:22; 24:6

**Clifford - Plans** [plural] fail for want of counsel [singular] but a plan [singular] succeeds because of advisors [plural]. [Proverbs- A Commentary - Richard J. Clifford](#)

**Succeed** (06965)(**qum**) basically means to arise, stand up or come about. The will turn out well, obtaining the object desired, arrive at a prosperous termination. Uses of **qum** in Proverbs - Pr 6:9; 15:22; 19:21; 24:16, 22; 28:12, 28; 30:4; 31:15, 28;

The only plans **guaranteed** to succeed are those of Jehovah! = "Many are the plans in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD, it will stand." (Pr 19:21)

**MacDonald** - It is safer to get a broad range of information and advice. Men who have had experience can warn against dangers to be avoided, can suggest the best methods, etc.

**Matthew Henry** - If men will not take time and pains to deliberate, they are not likely to bring any thing to pass.



**Life Application Study Bible Note** - People with tunnel vision—those who are locked into one way of thinking—are likely to miss the right road because they have closed their minds to any new options. We need the help of those who can enlarge our vision and broaden our perspective. Seek out the advice of those who know you and have a wealth of experience. Build a network of advisers. Then be open to new ideas, and be willing to weigh their suggestions carefully. Your plans will be stronger and more likely to succeed.

**John Trapp** - The Romans, by sitting in council, conquer their enemies. But what a strange man was Xerxes, and it prospered with him accordingly, who, in his expedition against Greece, called his princes together, but gave them no freedom of speech nor liberty of counsel! Lest, said he to them, I should seem to follow mine own counsel, I have assembled you: and now, do you remember, that it becomes you rather to obey than to advise. (a) Such another was that James that reigned in Scotland in our Edward IV's time. He was too much wedded, saith the historian, (b) to his own opinion, and would not endure any man's advice, how good soever, that he fancied not. He would seldom ask counsel, but never follow any.

**Lawson** - Wisdom is profitable to direct, and all our affairs must be conducted by it, and nothing done rashly and precipitately; for what is done too hastily, is generally repented of at leisure. As we should endeavour to make our knowledge and wisdom useful to other men, so we should take the benefit of other men's wisdom, for we were designed by our common Creator to give and to receive, and by a commerce of wisdom to enrich one another. The **proud and selfish man**, that thinks himself above advice, meets with disappointment and shame. But by a **multitude of counselors**, (that is, of wise counselors, for none else deserve the name), purposes are established and their success is generally ensured. This is so important a truth, that Solomon takes care we should not forget it, and therefore repeats it in this place, out of a former passage of this book (Pr 11:14). Solomon often speaks of the destruction of the proud, and the exaltation of the humble. This is chiefly owing to God's hatred of pride and love of humility; but the natural tendencies of virtue and vice serve Providence in this, as in other cases. The **proud man** takes the course that leads to disgrace and ruin, whilst he trusts so much to his own wisdom, that he consults with neither God nor man. The **humble man** acknowledges God in all his ways (cp Pr 3:6), and employs the wisdom of other men with his own, and his way is prosperous, because it is wise.

**Warren Wiersbe** - "Plans are established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war" (Pr 20:18, NKJV). If experienced generals seek counsel as they wage war, shouldn't we seek counsel for the battles of life? It's dangerous to rely on our own wisdom and experience and to ignore the wisdom and experience of other believers who have successfully walked with the Lord. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise" (Pr 12:15 NKJV). **The first source of wise counsel is Christian parents.** "Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old" (Pr 23:22 NKJV; see Pr 6:20–23). "A wise son heeds his father's instruction" (Pr 13:1 NKJV). Not everybody has the privilege of being raised in a godly home, but even then, the Lord often provides "substitute parents" who can share the wisdom of the Lord. **Christian friends can also listen, counsel, and pray.** "Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel" (Pr 27:9 NKJV). The Living Bible paraphrases the verse, "Friendly suggestions are as pleasant as perfume," but sometimes a friend's counsel may not be perfume! It may be acid! Even then, we have nothing to lose; for "as iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Pr 27:17 NKJV). The sparks may fly, but God will give us the light that we need. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Pr 27:6). **How we accept and apply rebuke is a test of how devoted we are to truth and wisdom and how sincere we are in wanting to know God's will.** "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise" (Pr 15:31 NIV). "He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding" (Pr 15:32, NKJV). Friends who flatter us and avoid telling us the truth are only doing us harm. "He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue" (Pr 28:23 NIV; see Pr 29:5). **Not every friend is a good counselor, so we must choose wisely.** "The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out" (Pr 20:5 NIV). We don't know our own hearts (Jer. 17:9), and only God's Word can honestly reveal "the thoughts and intents [motives] of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). It takes a counselor with loving patience and a discerning spirit to help us see what lies deep within our hearts. **While it's usually true that "a multitude of counselors" assures a wise decision** (Pr 11:14; 15:22; 24:6; see Ex 23:2), **at the same time, we must avoid running from friend to friend asking for advice.** This may indicate that we're trying to find somebody who will tell us what we want to hear! "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Pr 18:24 NIV). It isn't enough to have friends; we must have a friend who will "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Often in my conference ministry, people will approach me with personal problems and ask for advice. I try to avoid giving counsel for several reasons: I don't know the people; I'm not going to be there long enough to continue a counseling relationship; a quick chat after a meeting isn't counseling; and I don't want to take the place of a faithful local pastor. "Have you discussed this matter with your pastor?" I ask, and I carefully listen to the reply. No matter what the words are, the reply often indicates, "I talked to him, but it didn't do any good" (meaning possibly, "I didn't get my way") or, "I've talked to him and a dozen other ministers and guest speakers!" Then I know that anything I say will probably do little good. **In seeking counsel, we must be sincere, because a loving and wise friend can often see dangers and detours that are hidden from us.** It's best to be accountable to another believer and submit to the authority of the spiritual leaders in our church. During more than forty years of

ministry, I've witnessed the painful downfalls of several "Lone Ranger" Christians who thought they didn't need anybody's counsel. "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment" (Pr 18:1 NKJV). Christians are God's sheep, and we need to flock together. As members of Christ's spiritual body (1Cor 12:1-31), we belong to each other and we need each other. ([Be Skillful- God's Guidebook to Wise Living](#) - bolding mine)

**Charles Bridges** - Consider how weak and ignorant we are. **Were our judgment perfect, the first impressions would be infallibly right. But feeble and shaken as it is by the fall, every dictate needs pondering. How much evil has been done by acting upon impulse in a few hasty moments, or by a few warm words or lines without consideration!** (Pr 19:2.) Our wisdom lies in self-distrust (**Ed:** Amen!!! cp Jer 17:9), at least leaning to the suspicion that we may be wrong. Yet, guard also, on the other side, against that indecision of judgment, which is carried about by every person's opinion. Upon the whole, Christian prudence suggests the expediency—especially in important matters—of experienced counsel. By the neglect of this advantage, many good purposes have been disappointed. (Rehoboam, 1Ki 12:13–19; Ahab, 22:18–39; even David, 2 Sam. 24:1–4, 15.) God has ordained the commerce of wisdom for mutual benefit, and by the multitude of counselors many valuable purposes have been established. (Pr 11:14; 20:18; 24:6, Acts 15:6, 31) But as the wisest of these are fallible, and often in error, is it not our only safe path, in the use of human means, to look up to the great "Counselor" (Isa. 9:6) of his Church for guidance, and in reverential thankfulness, to take "his testimonies as the men of our counsel?" (Ps. 119:24.) Blessed be God for this special privilege of counsel always at hand! In humility and confidence, we shall not materially err (Pr 3:5, 6.).

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**MANY ADVISORS** by Marvin Williams - The fifteenth-century theologian Thomas à Kempis said, "Who is so wise as to have perfect knowledge of all things? Therefore, trust not too much to your own opinion, but be ready also to hear the opinions of others. Though your own opinion be good, yet if for the love of God you forego it and follow that of another, you shall the more profit thereby." Thomas recognized the importance of seeking the opinions of trusted advisors when making plans for life.

In order to determine God's course for life, the wise person should open up to several avenues of counsel, through which God will bring His guiding wisdom. When a person seeks the wise counsel of others, he shows his realization that he might be overlooking some important factors in his decisions.

Solomon, the wisest man in Israel, wrote about how important it is to have counsel from others: "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov. 15:22).

The Lord is the Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6), and He desires to protect us through wise advisors. Seek them out and thank God for them. Let them help you discover a clearer picture of His plan for your life.

If you seek wise counsel, you multiply your chances for sound decisions.

INSIGHT: Proverbs 15:22 instructs us on the importance of seeking wise counsel. Many of the people in Scripture sought out counsel from wise and trusted advisors. Moses asked advice from his father-in-law Jethro about how to lead and judge Israel (Ex. 18:13-24). Ahithophel was so wise that it was said that his advice "was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God" (2Sa 16:23). But the greatest counsel we can seek is from God Himself. James tells us that if we lack wisdom, we can ask of God and He will give it to us because He "gives to all liberally and without reproach" (James 1:5). ([Many Advisors - Our Daily Bread](#))

### Proverbs 15:23 A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word

- **joy:** Pr 12:14 16:13 24:26 25:11,12 Eph 4:29
- **apt** - Eccl 3:1 Isa 50:4
- **how:** 1Sa 25:32,33
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SPEAKING THE RIGHT WORD AT THE RIGHT TIME

This proverb speaks of "wise speech" (cp Pr 15:1).

**Waltke** - The proverb brings to a climactic conclusion the subunit on śāmēa ("joy"). Parents have joy when their children receive their good counsel (Pr 15:20), and wise adults have joy in accepting ethical counsel (Pr 15:22–23) and in giving it (Pr 15:23).

**Matthew Henry** - **We speak wisely when we speak seasonably: The answer of the mouth will be our credit and joy when it is pertinent and to the purpose, and is spoken in due season, when it is needed and will be regarded, and, as we say, hits the**

**joint.** Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done, for want of being well-timed. Nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready off-hand, just when there is occasion for it, and it comes in well. 2. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort and to the advantage of others: A man has joy by the answer of his mouth; he may take a pleasure, but may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably and well that the hearers admire him and say, "How good is it, and how much good does it do!"

Abigail gave David an **apt answer** that was **timely** - "Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed, and from avenging myself by my own hand." (1Sa 25:32-33)

**J Vernon McGee** - It is not only what you say but when you say it. Sometimes the right word at just the right time will do the job. Many of us could testify that the right word said to us at the right time in our lives changed the whole course of our lives. That has certainly happened to me.

**Apt answer** (Literally "the answer of his mouth") - The **NET Note** writes that "The term "**mouth**" is a **metonymy** of cause for what he says. But because the parallelism is loosely synonymous, the answer given here must be equal to the good word spoken in season. So it is an answer that is proper or fitting."

**MacDonald** - Compare Isaiah 50:4, "a word in season to him who is weary." Jesus knows how to speak that word.

**John Gill** - When his advice is asked, and he gives good and wholesome counsel, and that being taken succeeds; it is a pleasure to a man that he is capable of assisting his friend, and doing him service, or a common good, whether it be in things natural, civil, or religious; when his speech is with salt, seasoned with grace, and he knows how he ought to answer every man; when that which is good proceeds from him, and is to the use of edifying, and ministers grace to the hearers, and is acceptable to them; when with readiness he gives an answer to every man that asks him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear, Colossians 4:6, Ephesians 4:29;

**Answer** (response, purpose) (04617) (**maaneh** from **anah** = to give a response, to answer) is a masculine noun which describes a response or answer. Maaneh refers to a true and right response to a circumstance.

**Waltke** on "**how**" - Exclamatory **how** (mah) underscores the joy of hitting the nail on the head.

**Delightful** (02896) (**tob**) means good, pleasant, agreeable. The delight is both to the speaker and the hearer! **Waltke** says that **tob** in this verse "signifies that the word is so well composed that it is beneficial for the life and prosperity of both the speaker and his audience and so desirable to all."

**Timely** (06256) (**eth**) means time. In context it is a word spoken at the right time or the opportune time. What is said is "spot on" as the British say. The **Lxx** translates it with **kairos** which speaks of a window of time, an opportunity, that which one needs to recognize and seize (lest the opportunity be missed), in this case by speaking the right word (at the right time!) How sad when we say the right thing at the wrong time (ever done that?! "Do not say something when it is not the right moment for it" (Delitzsch). Trust the Spirit to guide your timing and your words (Eph 5:19 = "speaking to one another" -- What is this a manifestation of? A person filled with, controlled by the Spirit - Eph 5:18-note).

"**Timely** words (whether of love, encouragement, rebuke, or peacemaking) are beneficial." (Buzzell)

**Dave Bland** - The word order of verse 23b in the Hebrew text highlights the pleasure received from speaking a word at the right time: "a word in its time—how good!" Wisdom expresses its fundamental character in saying and doing the right thing at the right time (cf. Pr 16:24; 18:13; 25:11, 15; 24:26). (College Press)

Pr 24:26 He kisses the lips Who gives a right answer.

**Wiersbe** - Our words can encourage those who are burdened...When we're **walking in the Spirit** daily (Gal 5:16) and being taught by the Lord, we'll know how "to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (Isa. 50:4, cp Col 4:6-note). "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" (Pr 16:24 NIV). God also gives us "spiritual radar" so that we can assess a situation and make the right reply. "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable (**Ed comment**: right words at the right time!) " (Pr 10:32). "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is" (Pr 15:23 NKJV; see Isa. 50:4-6). "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil" (Pr 15:28, NKJV). There is beauty and value in the "word fitly spoken" (Pr 25:11-12). People who speak wisely, saying the right thing at the right time in the right way, are people who store God's truth in their hearts. "Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding" (Pr 10:13 NKJV), and that understanding comes from the Word of God. "Wise people store up knowledge" (Pr 10:14 NKJV); they are "filled richly" with the Word of God (Col. 3:16-note). "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips" (Pr 16:23 NKJV). If we devote our hearts to serious study of the Word, even while we're sharing the truth with others, God will teach us more

of His truth. I have had this happen while ministering the Word, and it's a wonderful experience of God's goodness. One of my high school teachers used to say, "Empty barrels make the most noise," and she was right. Too often in church board meetings and business meetings, those who talk the most have the least to say. People who don't prepare their hearts for such meetings are making themselves available to become the devil's tools for hindering God's work. If we're **filled with the Word** (Col 3:16-note) and **led by the Spirit**, (Gal 5:18-note, Gal 5:25,-note Eph 5:18-note) we'll be a part of the answer and not a part of the problem. Have you heard the fable of the king and the menu? A king once asked his cook to prepare for him the best dish in the world, and he was served a dish of tongue. The king then asked for the worst dish in the world, and again was served tongue. "Why do you serve me the same food as both the best and the worst?" the perplexed monarch asked. "Because, your majesty," the cook replied, "the tongue is the best of things when used wisely and lovingly, but it is the worst of things when used carelessly and unkindly." "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Pr 18:21 NKJV). "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life" (Pr 10:11 NIV). Choose life!...The Royal British Navy has a regulation which reads, "No officer shall speak discouragingly to another officer in the discharge of his duties." We need to practice that regulation in our homes and churches! Each of us needs to be a Barnabas, a "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36-37; **Editorial: How was this ministry possible?** See the clue in Acts 11:22-24? **What fills you?**). Near the close of his ministry, a famous British preacher of the Victorian Age said, "If I had my ministry to do over, I would preach more to broken hearts." Jesus came, "to heal the brokenhearted" (Luke 4:18), and we can continue that ministry today with words of encouragement and hope. ([Be Skillful- God's Guidebook to Wise Living](#) - recommended resource. Bolding mine)

**John Phillips** - Winston Churchill was very clever at saying the right thing. Someone asked him a question in the House of Commons about German plans to invade Britain. Churchill, with the royal navy in mind, responded, "I do not say they cannot come. I only say they cannot come by sea." After the Battle of Britain, which destroyed so many enemy planes that Germany could not come by air either, Churchill eulogized the pilots: "Never before in the field of human conflict have so many owed so much to so few."

Shortly after Dunkirk when Britain's future looked grim, the BBC aired a lecture by Quentin Reynolds, an American newsman. He spoke words "in due season" and made an instant hit. In his lecture he pretended to be speaking directly to the German dictator. Reynolds addressed Hitler by his real name: Mr. Shickelgruber. The British people were delighted. There was something so incongruous and comic about that name.

Some other words "spoken in due season" were connected with a cartoon that portrayed an irate passenger standing at an airline ticket counter. Apparently a flight had been canceled and a long line of people were waiting for the next available agent. One pompous businessman was particularly annoyed by the inconvenience because he was used to the streamlined services of his secretary. "Young man," he demanded when he finally arrived within speaking distance of an agent, "do you know who I am?" The harassed agent turned to a colleague. "Fred," he said, "do you think you can help this passenger? He's in serious trouble. He doesn't know who he is!"

This proverb also reminds me of a story about Dan Crawford, a missionary home on furlough from Africa. At a church gathering he had sat patiently on the platform while he awaited his time to speak. The program seemed interminable. There were songs, announcements, special numbers, and responsive readings. Finally the chairman introduced the distinguished speaker. "And now," he said, concluding a flowery introduction, "Mr. Crawford will give us his address." The crusty missionary came to the pulpit, looked over the audience, cast a jaundiced eye at the clock, and said, "My address is Number 35 Bellevue Gardens, London E.C.1." Then he sat down. One suspects he took sardonic satisfaction in teaching the program committee a lesson in common sense and proportion. There is nothing like a word fitly spoken.

**John Gill** - a word spoken in due season, how good is it? whether by way of advice and counsel to such who stand in need of it, or of exhortation and instruction to those that want it, or of comfort to those that are distressed; such is a word of promise spoken and applied by the Spirit of God to the hearts of his people in a time of need; and such is the Gospel of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation, as spoken by Christ and his ministers to weary and wounded souls; it cannot be well and fully expressed how sweet, how good, how suitable, as well as seasonable, it is: see Proverbs 25:11.

**POSB** - This proverb continues the theme of the previous one. Mature believers-those who truly walk with the Lord, know His Word, and are filled with His Spirit-are able to help others with godly counsel. They are a tremendous resource to the body of Christ....When the right answer for the right time is delivered through a righteous person, everyone rejoices. Both the givers of the counsel and the recipients are blessed.

**NET Note** - Hebrew (literally reads) "joy to the man" or "the man has joy." Hebrew (literally reads) "in the answer of his mouth" (so ASV); NASB "in an apt answer." The term "mouth" is a metonymy of cause for what he says. But because the parallelism is loosely synonymous, the answer given here must be equal to the good word spoken in season. So it is an answer that is proper or fitting. Hebrew (for timely is literally) "in its season." To say the right thing at the right time is useful; to say the right thing at the wrong time is counterproductive.

**Kitchen** - The second line points to the timing of the answer. The word 'timely' relates the whole matter to an opportunity or to a particular season. 'Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances' (Pr. 25:11). 'Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification *according to the need of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear' (Eph. 4:29-note, emphasis added). A wrong answer given when a correct answer is sought is misleading. A right answer given at the wrong time may be well-intentioned and technically correct, but damaging. The right answer at the right time is priceless!

**David Hubbard** - The rightness of our advice depends partly on its timeliness. Sensing when people are ready and seizing the moment is a hallmark of wisdom. "Due season" means the right time. We have to guess at it before; we know for sure afterward, if we feel glad ("has joy"; "how good!") about what we have said and how the other person received it. We had just finished a long conversation in my office. As my friend, who had driven several hours for the meeting, placed his hand on the doorknob, I asked him how his wife was doing. His answer was candid: "I am not sure how she feels about my switch of priority from business to more direct Christian service, and I don't know how much of my new life to share with her." My answer was direct and simple: "All of it." He paused a moment, squeezed my hand, and said, "Those last words were worth the whole trip!" Both my answer and timing seemed right. Would that such were always the case! There is great joy in experiencing the truth of the proverb, even though, thanks to our bungling ways, the occasions may be far rarer than we would like.

**Charles Bridges** - A word for our Divine Master to our fellow-sinners he will condescend to bless. The remembrance—"Who made man's mouth?" (Ex. 4:11)—puts away pride. But have we not joy by the answer of our mouth? (Pr 12:14; 13:2) The pain that every right-minded Christian feels in giving "open rebuke," is abundantly compensated by the joy of the happy issue. (Pr . 27:5, 2Sa 12:1–13) Even an unsuccessful effort brings the joy in "the testimony of our conscience." It must however be a word spoken in due season. (Pr 25:11.) "How forcible are right words;" (Job 6:27) well-timed, though from feeble lips! (Pr 24:26) 'There are some happy seasons, when the most rugged natures are accessible.' Yet many a good word is lost by being given out of season. Would we bring true conviction? Then pass by the moment of irritation, and wait for the return of calmness and reason. (1Sa 25:37) Give reproof privately, (Mt 18:15) not exasperating, except when the occasion calls for it, by public exposure. Never commence with an attack—an enemy's position, that naturally provokes resistance. Study a pointed application. A word spoken for every one, like a coat made for every one, has no individual fitness. When "the wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment," (Eccl 8:5. Comp. Pr 3:1, 7) the word is doubly effective. Manoah's wife upheld her husband's faith. (Judg. 13:23) Abigail restrained David's murderous intent. (1Sa 25:32, 33) Naaman's servants brought their Master to sober reason. (2Ki 5:13, 14.) Paul withheld the jailor's hand from self-destruction, and opened salvation to his soul. (Acts 16:28–31) Sweet indeed also is the Minister's joy from the answer of his mouth, when his gifted tongue "speaks a word in season to him that is weary." (Isa. 50:4) And will it not be an element of his consummating joy "at that day," when he shall welcome those, instrumentally saved by the answer of his mouth, as his "glory and joy?" (Amen! 1Th 2:19, 20)

**Lawson** - It is not a good objection against endeavoring to do good by our words, that we are often unsuccessful in our endeavors to serve our fellow-creatures in this way; for although, by the perverseness of men, our kindness may be rendered unprofitable to them, yet a man hath joy by the answer of his mouth. It will be a pleasure to us to reflect, that we have discharged our duty, and used our tongues for the ends for which they were made. It can give us no true satisfaction, that we have gained the applause or good-will of men by sinful silence, or by flattering men's humors and prejudices; but if we have lost the favor of men by faithfulness to their best interests, the testimony of an approving conscience will abundantly counterbalance our damage. The joy that arises to a man from the answer of his tongue, will not be confined to this world; but at the day of judgment, those that have been converted by our words from the error of their ways, and edified in righteousness, will be a crown of rejoicing to us; and Christ himself will take a gracious notice of every word that has been spoken in his cause. Our Judge assures us, that by our words we shall be justified or condemned; and when the works of charity are mentioned with honor, the words which proceeded from that noble principle shall not be forgotten. To make words really good, it is necessary that they be spoken in due season; for as the showers of rain in their proper season fertilize the ground, but at a wrong time drown the hopes of the year, so words have good or bad effects, as the time of speaking them is well or ill chosen. Abigail would not tell Nabal of his danger till he was sober; and Job's friends wounded his spirit in a cruel manner, by speaking things excellent in themselves, and very suitable to Job, if he had been the man they believed him to be. It is one of the properties of a wise man, that his heart knoweth both time and judgment. **A single word spoken in due season**, is inexpressibly good. It may revive the desponding soul, preserve from death or save a soul, for death and life are in the power of the tongue (Job 4:2, 3. 1Sa 25:33. Acts 16:31. Compare 1Ti 4:16).

**Today in the Word** - The book of James gives several memorable pictures of the tongue (James 3:3–12). These include a bit in the mouth of a horse, the rudder of a ship, a spark that starts a forest fire, a spring of water, and a fruit tree. From these images, we learn that though the tongue is small its power is great, that our speech has a high destructive potential and is difficult to control, and that our words indicate the spiritual state of our hearts. The book of Proverbs has much to say about the tongue and our use of language. This is a specific example of the godly wisdom considered yesterday—the kind of wisdom that knows the right time for doing the right thing. Knowing what to say and how to say it in any given situation is a universal challenge, one that James describes



as virtually impossible. But if we could tame our tongues with God's help, how much better our lives would be! Joy here is in part a feeling of happiness or pleasure (Pr 24:26). But it is more than just a feeling. Joy is seen here as a moral quality and a great benefit to the individual and the community. God Himself is often pictured as speaking an apt or timely word to His people.

## Proverbs 15:24 The path of life leads upward for the wise that he may keep away from Sheol below

- **path:** Pr 6:23, Ps 16:11, Ps 139:24 Jer 21:8 Mt 7:14 John 14:6
- **upward:** Php 3:20, Col 3:1,2
- **that:** Pr 2:18, Pr 5:5, Pr 7:27, Pr 9:8, Pr 23:14
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### PATH OF LIFE VERSUS PATH OF DEATH

Once again God's Word reminds us that there are only 2 roads and 2 destinies for every soul of mankind and they are not one for the rich and famous and another for the poor and unknown! Psalm 1:6-**note** says "the LORD knows the way of the **righteous**, but the way of the **wicked** will perish."

**Path of life** (this exact phrase 4x in NAS - Ps 16:11, Pr 5:6, Pr 10:17, Pr 15:24) Our life is often described in Scripture as a walk on a path (or a way) (Pr 10:17, Pr 12:15, 26, 28, Pr 15:19). In Pr 15:19 we see the path of the upright is characterized as a highway. In a sense, the entire book of Proverbs presents the truth that there are only two paths, one leading to life and the other leading to destruction.

The Hebrew word for **path** (0734, orach) is used frequently in Proverbs (19/57v) - Pr 1:19; 2:8, 13, 15, 19-20; 3:6; 4:14, 18; 5:6; 8:20; 9:15; 10:17; 12:28; 15:10, 19, 24; 17:23; 22:25.

**Upward** (04605)(**maal** from verb **alah** = to go up, ascend, climb) means above, high, upward, over. In context (contrast with Sheol below), this is seen by many commentators (including myself) as indicative of heaven.

**Bruce Waltke** says "This synthetic proverb escalates the rewards of righteousness from present joy to everlasting life in relationship with the LORD....Leads [lit. "is"] upward (lema'elâ) as an antithesis to downward in connection with the grave implies eternal life above and beyond the grave."

Some commentaries take the stand that this proverb speaks to longer physical life (they see "upward" as a metaphor for "success") for those who are wise (cp Pr 3:2, Pr 10:27, Pr 14:27). While this is certainly a true statement, the contrasting context of Sheol would favor that the life alluded to is eternal life, not just temporal life. The truly wise man when all has been said and done, is the man who chooses eternal life in Christ Jesus, Who Himself is the very embodiment of genuine wisdom (Cp Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' description of the Wise versus the Foolish - Mt 7:24-27-**note**)..

The **NET Note** on **upward** writes "There is disagreement over the meaning of the term translated '**upward**.'" The verse is usually taken to mean that "**upward**" is a reference to physical life and well-being (cf. NCV), and "**going down to Sheol**" is a reference to physical death, that is, the grave, because the concept of immortality is said not to appear in the book of Proverbs. The proverb then would mean that the wise live long and healthy lives. But W. McKane argues (correctly) that "**upwards**" in contrast to **Sheol**, does not fit the ways of describing the worldly pattern of conduct and that it is only intelligible if taken as a reference to immortality (Proverbs [OTL], 480). The translations "**upwards**" and "**downwards**" are not found in the LXX. This has led some commentators to speculate that these terms were not found in the original, but were added later, after the idea of immortality became prominent. However, this is mere speculation.

**Kitchen** has a similar observation as **NET Note** - Certainly, the proverb points to the oft-repeated fact that walking in God's ways brings health and longer life (Pr. 3:2, 16; 4:10; 9:11), while walking in the way of sin will cut one's days short (Pr 2:18; Pr 5:4-14).

**But, does it also point to a hope of immortality?** Many commentators rush to deny any such doctrine in Proverbs. Some cite the fact that the words here translated as 'upward' and 'Sheol' are missing in the LXX. This, they say, is a significant signal that these words were probably added at a latter time by those who had come to believe in the hope of life after death. The LXX, however, has been seen to offer free, and often radical, departures from the Hebrew text, as we have it. (**Ed:** And as noted below it does render Sheol with the NT synonym Hades!)

To say Proverbs does not allude to **immortality** is to disregard passages like Proverbs 14:32 which says "The wicked is thrust down

by his wrongdoing, but **the righteous has a refuge when he dies**" Similarly Pr 12:28 says "In the way of righteousness is **life**, And in [its] pathway there is **no death**." Pr 10:16 says "The wages of the righteous is **life**, the income of the wicked, **punishment**."

I like **Hubbard's** comment that "It would not be far fetched to hear an inkling of a doctrine of afterlife—heaven and hell—in the contrast between upward and below, though the full implications of those realities were yet to be revealed. Wisdom is again valued as a lifesaver."

**John Phillips** - As we travel through life we are going in one direction or the other. (**Ed**: Up or Down!) Darwin would have us believe that our feet are set surely on the upward way, that man is progressing by slow but sure degrees from protoplasm to paradise. The Bible contradicts that theory; so does human history with its endless wars, woes, privations, passions, and persecutions. Darwin would tell us that all this suffering is due to the law of the jungle—the survival of the fittest—and mankind will come out all right in the end. This teaching is cold comfort at best and an outright lie in fact....civilization is going downhill. The Bible says concerning the last days that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:13). And so they are. Man claims to be wise but he is a fool. He says he can see but he is totally blind. He boasts of his power but he demonstrates his weakness. He is sure he has life but he is spiritually dead. Man needs a Savior, One who can set him on the upward way to life and save him from the Hell beneath. Jesus came to meet that need—"to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

I'm pressing on the **upward way**,  
New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day—  
Still praying as I'm onward bound,  
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Lord, lift me up and let me stand  
By faith on heaven's tableland;  
A higher plane than I have found—  
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground  
--Johnson Oatman

**Wise** (prudent) (07919)(**sakal/sākhā**) primarily means to act with insight, to be prudent, to give insight, to teach, to prosper, to consider, to ponder, to understand, to act prudently, to act with devotion. The primary sense of **sakal/sākhā** is to be prudent, which means "marked by wisdom or judiciousness, shrewd in the management of practical affairs, marked by circumspection." **Sakal** refers to "the ability to grasp the meanings or implications of a situation or message, the ability to understand practical matters and interpersonal relations and make beneficial decisions." (**Michael Fox**) One who manifests prudence is more likely to have success. It is not surprising that sakal is frequently used in Proverbs - Pr 1:3; 10:5, 19; 14:35; 15:24; 16:20, 23; 17:2, 8; 19:14; 21:11-12, 16 (13/61v).

**Walke** adds that "the prudent person gives attention to a threatening situation, has insight into its solution, acts decisively, and thereby effects success and life and prevents failure and death." (Page 94)

**A prudent** person is describe by Webster's 1828 Dictionary as "Cautions; circumspect; practically wise; careful of the consequences of enterprises, measures or actions; cautious not to act when the end is of doubtful utility, or probably impracticable."

**That** - This word is a **term of purpose or result** (cp so that, in order that, that, as a result). What is the result or purpose of the walking on the path of life?

**Lawson** - All men are travelers either to heaven above, or hell beneath. The writers of Scripture knew nothing of the middle place, which perverters of Christianity have found out since their days, by the assistance of the ancient heathens. There is but one way of life, and Christ tells us that he is that way, and no man cometh unto the Father but by him. Those only are in the way of life, that have received him by faith, and walk in him by a holy and heavenly conversation, to which true faith in Christ always leads him that possesses it. This way is above, and they are great deceivers of themselves, who imagine that Christ will save those from hell that will not accept of his salvation from sin, which leads to hell. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord; and the faith which does not make a man heavenly in his affections and conversation, will never conduct a man to the regions of blessedness. The Son of God came from heaven to earth to purchase our salvation, and he is gone to heaven to plead for it, and the hearts of all that have the living hopes of heaven will follow him thither. Our everlasting abode must be either in heaven or hell. Salvation from hell is the half of heaven. The threatenings of hell are a fence about the way to heaven, and whilst we are travelling in it, they are of great use to make us serious and earnest in pursuing our course; for how is it possible that we can flee with too much speed from everlasting burnings, when our flight is directed, not, like that of the manslayer, to a place of banishment, but to the world of happiness and pleasure? Let us try ourselves by this mark of true wisdom. Do we mind earthly or heavenly things? If earthly things be the chief object of our regard, our way is below, and our names are written in the earth, because we forsake the fountain of living waters. If our affections be set on things above, then, when Christ our life shall appear, he will receive us into the celestial mansions, that

where he is we may be also. David and Paul explain this character of the wise man, from their own example, compared with that of worldly men (Pd 17:13, 14, 15. Phil. 3:18, 19, 20).

**Charles Bridges** - he way of life—the way in which alone life is found—the way to God—the way to glory—is but one. That way is Christ. (Jn 14:6) If therefore I come to him—renouncing all other hope, casting all my hope on Him, and every step of my way “looking unto Him” (Heb 12:2) —am not I in this way? And if I follow Him in “the obedience of faith,” am not I advancing in that way? (Jn 8:12) This way is above—of heavenly origin. Fools rise not high enough to discern it, much less to devise and walk in it. Their highest elevation is groveling. God does not allow them even the name of life. (1Ti 5:6) Cleaving to the dust of earth, they sink into the hell beneath. But this is the way of the wise—born from above—taught from above—therefore walking above, while they are living upon earth—A most transcendent life! “partaker of the Divine nature!” (2Pet. 1:4) the life of God himself (Eph. 4:18)—in humble sublimity, ascending above things under the sun—above the sun itself—The further we walk in this way above, the further we depart from hell beneath. Heaven and Hell are here before us—Soon will our state be fixed for eternity. What am I? Where am I? Those “who mind earthly things, their end is” the hell beneath. Those who walk in the way above—“their conversation is in heaven;” their hope is fixed on the Lord’s coming from thence; their everlasting joy will be this complete transformation into his own image. (Phil 3:19–21. Comp. Ps 17:14, 15) Children of God! walk like yourselves; with “your hearts lifted up in the ways of the Lord;” (2Chr 17:6. Comp. Isa. 33:16; 40:31; 58:14) with a holy loftiness above the debasing pleasures of earth; “looking at the things that are unseen;” (2Cor. 4:18) “having respect unto the recompense of the reward;” (Heb. 11:24–26) walking in the way above where your hope is (2Cor 5:1-5, Col 1:27, Heb. 6:19)—where your treasure (Mt 6:20)—where your home (2Cor 5:6-8, Heb. 11:16, Heb 13:14)—above all—where your ascended Saviour is; (Col. 3:1) and where one golden ray of his favor, one reflected beam of his glory—will outshine all the glare of a shadowy world. Grant, we beseech thee, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell.’

**Keep away** (05493)(**sur**) primarily means to turn aside, turn away and is translated in the Lxx with the verb **ekklino** which means to avoid, to keep away from or to steer clear (in context of Sheol)

**Sheol** (07585)(**she'ol**) is the underworld or the place to which people descend at death. The grave, death, the depths, the nether world, the underworld. Sheol was viewed as the place where departed spirits went after death. Sheol was envisioned as a dark region within the earth, the entrance to which was the grave with its steep slopes (cf. Ps 88:4-6). In Job 14:13-22, Job expressed the common view of life beyond death, namely, that in Sheol there is no contact with the living, only separation, but in Sheol there is a conscious awareness of the dreary existence. In Jonah 2:3 Jonah pictures himself in the belly of Sheol, its very center - in other words he is as good as dead. In Ps 22:6 Sheol, the underworld, the place of the dead, is personified as David’s enemy. In the Lxx of Pr 15:24 Sheol is translated with the noun **hades** (from **a** = negative + **eido** = to see) which literally means "not seen" or "unseen," the place of the dead, the underworld. Hades (Sheol) after the Cross is the place of the spiritually dead, serving much like a "holding tank" if you will, from which the tragic souls will be brought out before the Great White Throne for judgment and when their names are not found written in the **Book of Life** and they will be sent to their final abode, forever separated from the presence of God. At this time Sheol itself will also be thrown into **Gehenna**, which is the Second Death (see Rev 20:11-15-[see notes](#)). Does this truth not motivate us to share the Gospel with everyone we can while today is still called "today" and the unregenerate can still choose eternal life in Christ! (See [Second Death in chart of Births, Deaths and Resurrections](#))

**Below** (04295)(**mattah**) is an adverb which means beneath, down, under.

**See Dictionary Articles:**

- [Sheol in Baker's Evangelical Dictionary](#)
- [Sheol in Holman's Dictionary](#)
- [NET Bible articles](#)
- [What is the Difference Between Sheol, Hades, Hell, etc?](#)
- [Where did OT Believers go when they died?](#)

**Proverbs 15:25 The LORD will tear down the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow**

- **tear down:** Pr 12:7, 14:11 Job 40:11-13 Ps 52:1,5, 138:6 Isa 2:12 Da 5:20 1Pe 5:5
- **but:** Dt 10:17,18 Ps 68:5,6 146:9 Jas 1:27
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**JEHOVAH DESTROYS THE ARROGANT  
AND PROTECTS THE POOR**

Note the contrast is between the **proud** and the **widow**, their **house** and her **boundary** (CSB = territory, NLT = property) and the action of Yahweh to either **tear down** or **establish**.

**Tear down** (05255)(**nasah**) is a verb meaning to tear down, tear out (be torn - Dt 28:68 = of Israel when she breaks Mosaic covenant) , uproot, cause to be displaced (Ps 52:5, Pr 2:22), to demolish or dismantle, tearing down a house as an divine act of deserved destruction (Pr 15:25 - Lxx = kataspaio = to pull down, tear down, destroy = as the altars of Manasseh in 2Ki 23:12 = "broke down").

**Nasah** NAS = tear away(1), tear down(1), torn(1), uprooted(1).

**Nasah** - 4v - Dt 28:63; Ps 52:5 (See context Ps 52:1-4 - "God will break you down forever; He will snatch you up, and tear you away from [your] tent, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah"); Pr 2:22 ("the treacherous will be uprooted from" the land); Pr 15:25

**NET Note** - The implication may be that the "**proud**" make their gain from the needy, and so God will set the balance right. The LORD administers justice in his time. The LORD champions the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the needy. These people were often the prey of the proud, who would take and devour their houses and lands (e.g., 1Kgs 21:1-29; Pr 16:19; Isa 5:8-10).

**Bruce Waltke** comments that "**House** (bêt; see Pr 15:6) is a **synecdoche** for a person's indispensable means of sustaining life (cf. Esther 7:10; Esther 9:5-10; Ps 109:9-15; Jer 22:13-30). When it is torn away from the earth, its owner is eliminated forever.

**Proud** (01343)(**geeh** from root verb **gaah** = to rise up, to be lifted up) is an adjective that means proud, haughty, which **Swanson** says pertains "to an undue arrogance as a moral failure." **TWOT** says "The adjective is descriptive of the presumptuous man." **Kidner** remarks that "The same word for **proud** in Pr 16:19 suggests that these are the highhanded, and the widow is their natural prey. The story of **Naboth** (1Ki 21:1-29) illuminates the saying; but it is relevant to all kinds of exploitation."

**Geeh** in Pr 16:19 - It is better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

The **Lxx** translates geeh in Pr 15:25 with the noun **hubristes** which "an insolent man, `one who, uplifted with pride, either heaps insulting language upon others or does them some shameful act of wrong." (Thayer) **Friberg** adds that hubristes describes "one who takes a superior attitude and mistreats others out of his own revolt against God's revelation of truth."

**Hubbard** on the meaning of **geeh** - It suggests elevating ourselves, looking down on others, seeking to lord it over them. In the long run, it is Tower-of-Babel behavior that says, "Let us be like 'a tower whose top is the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves' " (Gen. 11:4). God's response to arrogant ambition is ever the same: He thwarted the plan and confused the planners. What started with high hopes ended in deep chaos.

**Webster** on **insolent** - Proud and haughty, with contempt of others; overbearing; domineering in power; as an insolent master. insultingly contemptuous in speech or conduct, showing scorn for inferiors, even contemptuous haughtiness!

**Geeh** NAS Usage - pride(1), proud(5), who is proud(3).

**Geeh** - 9v - Job 40:11-12; Ps 94:2; Ps 140:5; Prov 15:25; Pr 16:19; Isa 2:12; 16:6; Jer 48:29

**Related Resource:** [Pride - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

**Waltke** adds that **proud** "functions as a metonymy for violent oppressors who exalt themselves against God and stomp on his image bearers (cf. Ps. 94:2; 140:5). Pr. 16:19 warns against sharing in their plunder.

The **proud** accumulate houses and the implication by the contrast with widow's boundary is that they do it at the expense of the poor (widow). It won't work though, for God will destroy the house of the **proud**. This warning is echoed in Proverbs 14:11 "The **house of the wicked** will be **destroyed**, but the tent of the upright will flourish." Proverbs 12:7 "The **wicked are overthrown** and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand."

**Hubbard** - The contrast here is deliberate and powerful. "**Proud**" persons will find their whole estate ("house" here means dwellers, buildings, and holdings) wiped out because of their lofty claims of worth, achievement, and invulnerability. When "**the LORD**" marches to "destroy," they who thought so highly of themselves will have nothing left. **Their presumptuousness means no protection**. The Lord has become their enemy (cp James 4:6). On the other hand, the Lord has become the Guardian of **the widow**" (used only here in Proverbs), the symbol of the defenseless, powerless persons in Israel's society (Dt. 10:18; Ps. 68:6). Her **territory** ("**boundary**"; see Pr 22:28; 23:10) will be kept inviolate by the righteous Judge of all the earth, while neither God nor man will intervene when judgment strikes the proud.

**Establish** (05324)(**nasab**) is a verb meaning to station, to appoint, to erect, to take one's stand. The basic sense **oñasab** (Niphal

stem) is illustrated in God's order to Moses to "**station** yourself to meet him (Pharaoh) on the bank of the Nile." (Ex 7:15) The Lxx translates **nasab** in Pr 15:25 with the verb **sterizo** which literally means to set something up (in this case the widow's **boundary**) so that it remains immovable, firmly fixed (because it is set up by Jehovah Himself)!

**Waltke** - Cheaters move the **boundary** stones an unnoticeable half inch at a time until, unless corrected, they own considerably more land. After her boundaries stones have been moved, the LORD will restore them (cf. Isa. 5:8)."

**Boundary** (01366)(**gebul**) means border, boundary, territory. The Lxx translates **gebul** with the noun **horion** which means a boundary or limit, and thus that which marks the division between two areas. **Gebul** is used two other times in Proverbs = "Do not move the ancient **boundary**." (Pr 22:28, 23:10 = latter is to protect the orphan).

**Lawson** - We have already heard how detestable **pride** is to the Lord, and how it provokes his vengeance. Here we are told that God destroys the dwellings and families of the **proud**, as well as their persons. **Proud** men value themselves upon their magnificent palaces, their great riches, and their prosperous families, and provoke the Lord to destroy those things which are turned by them into idols (**Ed**: Woe! Idols!), and used as the pillars of that creature confidence which he abhors. Nebuchadnezzar prided himself in the splendor of his palace, and the magnificence of his royal city (**Ed**: Read Da 4:28-33-**note**, especially his boast in Da 4:29 = '*Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?*') The read Nebuchadnezzar's testimony in Da 4:37-**note** that God "*is able to humble those who walk in pride*"). But he was driven from it to dwell among the beasts; and some ages after his death, his family, which he had exalted by his ravages, was rooted out of the world, and great Babylon, which he had built for the honor of his majesty, became a monument of the triumphs of God's power over the haughtiness of worms. **Haman** boasted of his riches and the number of his children; but Haman and his ten children were soon hanged, and his riches given to his hated enemy. **Let us never be vain** (Proud of petty things or of trifling attainments) **of any thing, unless we wish to have it destroyed**. God abhors pride even in them whom He dearly loves, and shows His resentment of it by humbling providences, that remove man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. David was proud of the vast numbers of his subjects, but God soon showed him that great hosts save not a king, and that three days may greatly lessen the numbers of a people. Hezekiah's heart was lifted up, but he was soon obliged to humble himself, being assured that the treasures which he had so ostentatiously shown to the Babylonian ambassadors would be carried with his posterity to their own land. **God is terrible to the proud, but he is gracious to the helpless and desolate**. Proud men often attempt to aggrandize their houses, by removing the landmark of the widow and fatherless; but the Lord establishes the border of the widow. Let dying husbands leave their fatherless children and widows in the hand of God (Jer. 47:1), and let widows trust in him. If they are desolate and weak, and liable to oppression, that should not be a discouragement, but a strong motive to them to commit themselves unto the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. (Ps. 10:14. 1Ti 5:5) There is often more meant than expressed in the words of God. **Widows** in this place are to be understood of those that are in desolate circumstances, and exposed to injuries of any kind. Their distressed situations make them proper objects of compassion, and infinite compassions are with God. He hath erected a throne of mercy, and the Redeemer sits upon it, and is exalted, that he may have mercy upon the poor and destitute. (Ps 72:4, 12, 13.) From the acts of terror and of grace here represented to us, we may take occasion to join in the song of the mother of our Lord: "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree (Luke 1:51, 52, 53)."

**Charles Bridges** - The administration of the Divine Government is to humble the proud, and to exalt the humble. (Luke 1:51, 52) The contrast seems to mark the proud oppressor—an usurper of God's rights. He deals with him therefore as a traitor, and destroys not only his person, but his house (Esther 7:10-**note**; Esther 9:10-**note**, Jer. 22:13–30). And who can but acknowledge the retributive vengeance of the Judge of the earth! (Ps. 10:14, 18, 12:5, 58:11) **But the widow, whom many care not for, many are ready to trample on—what a Friend and Protector has she!** (Pr 23:10, 11)—"Let thy widows trust in me." (Jer. 49:11. Comp. 1Ti 5:5.) God condescends to link himself with them in a special relation, concentrating all his care and tenderness on their bereaved condition. (Ps 68:5; 146:9, Dt. 10:17, 18) Did not he provide for sorrowing Naomi, a staff in her faithful daughter; and ultimately establish her border in Israel? (Ruth 1:7–18-**note**; Ruth 4:14–17-**note**) Did he not supply the pressing need of the Minister's widow (2Ki 4:1–7) (a cheering warrant of faith in similar affliction), and take up the Shunamite's oppression, and again establish her border? (2Ki 8:1–6) And shall we forget, how he teaches the returning penitent to plead the gracious manifestation—"In thee the fatherless findeth mercy?" (Hos. 14:2, 3)

**POSB** - The possession of land was very important in Israel; therefore, the law was very specific about moving landmarks or boundary markers to take another person's land (Dt19:14; 27:17). But, sometimes, proud people—people who oppressed and felt they were better than others—would move property markers to their advantage. Defenseless people such as widows and orphans were often victims of these crimes (Pr 23:10). The message of this proverb is simply this: the Lord will come to the aid of the widow whose land is stolen. He is on the side of those who are helpless and humble. Arrogant, God-defying people may illegally build themselves great houses from the profits of their plunder, but the Lord will destroy them. The Lord will avenge the powerless.

**Kitchen** - In ancient Israel, the ownership of land was a person's link to family, the nation and the divine covenant promises. To lose the family allotment of land was a tragedy beyond comprehension and, often, spelled material and social ruin. For this reason, the



law (Deut. 19:14; 27:17) denounced in the strongest terms anyone who would deceitfully move a boundary stone. The Prophets (Hosea 5:10) and Wisdom Literature (Job 24:2; Prov. 22:28; 23:10) joined in this universal condemnation of such underhanded theft. The most vulnerable to this kind of trickery was the 'widow,' for women had little judicial recourse, and the widow had no one else to naturally come to her defense. For this reason, God vowed to put all His divine power behind defending her (Ps. 68:5; 146:9) and those like her (Prov. 23:10–11).

**Waltke on widow** - Of the widow (almānâ) refers "to a woman who has been divested of her male protector (husband, sons, often also brothers). [As a person without a protector, money, or influence, the widow is often mentioned together with the orphan (yâtôm, Job 22:9; 24:3; 31:16–17; Ps. 94:6; Isa. 10:2; Mal. 3:5), sojourner (gēr, Ps. 94:6; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5), hireling (šakîr, Mal. 3:5), poor (dal, Job 31:16; Isa. 20:2; ānî, Job 24:4, 9; Isa. 10:2; Zech. 7:10); needy (ebyôn, Job 24:4; 31:19), and Levites (Deut. 14:29)] Her essential need was protection from exploitation. Although a widow could receive her deceased husband's property, she might not have the strength to work it. Normally, both in Israel and in Mesopotamia, she was assimilated into the family of her husband, but under certain circumstances she went back to the house of her father (Gen. 38:11; Lev. 22:18; Ruth 1:8–14).

**Longman** - The arrogant are those who place themselves first, above God and other humans, so God will see to their downfall. On the other hand, the widow is the epitome of social vulnerability in ancient Near Eastern culture. In a predominantly patriarchal society, a widow had no one to represent her in society or in court, so she was often the victim of malicious people. If anyone can be certain of a dismal future, it is the widow. God will step in to protect and support such people.

**Widow** - Widows from their poverty and unprotectedness, are regarded in OT as under the special guardianship of God (Ps 68:6; Ps 146:9, Pr 15:25, Deut 10:18, Jer 49:11); and consequently due regard for their wants was looked upon as a mark of true religion, ensuring a blessing on those who showed it (Job 29:13; Job 31:16, Isa 1:17, Jer 7:6-7; Jer 22:3-4); while neglect of, cruelty or injustice towards them were considered marks of wickedness meriting punishment from God (Job 22:9-10; Job 24:20-21, Ps 94:6, Isa 1:23; Isa 10:2, Zech 7:10; Zech 7:14, Mal 3:5). The Book of Deuteronomy is especially rich in such counsels, insisting that widows be granted full justice (Dt 24:17; Dt 27:19), that they be received as guests at sacrificial meals (Dt 14:29, Dt 16:11; Dt 16:14, Dt 26:12f.), and that they be suffered to glean unmolested in field, olive yard, and vineyard (Dt 24:19 f.). ([Widow - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#))

#### Related Resources on Widow:

- [Widow - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Widow - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Widow - Fausset's Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Poor, Orphan, Widow - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)

#### Proverbs 15:26 Evil plans are an abomination to the LORD, but pleasant words are pure

- **plans:** Pr 6:16-19 24:9 Jer 4:14 Mt 15:19
- **but:** Pr 15:23 Ps 19:14 37:30,31 45:1 Mt 12:34-37
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Compare Pr 15:8-9 The sacrifice of the wicked is an **abomination** to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight. The way of the wicked is an **abomination** to the LORD, But He loves him who pursues righteousness.

Note the contrasts - evil plans versus pleasant words, abomination versus pure.

**Kidner** comments that "the contrasted language of the second line emphasizes the fact that such plans are hateful to God even before they issue in words or deeds."

**Hubbard** adds that "**Pure** and **abomination** are the first contrast. The language sounds like descriptions of acceptable ("pure," "clean") and unacceptable (abominable, totally rejected) sacrifices or offerings. "**To the LORD**" casts its light on the second half of the proverb as well as the first: "pure to the LORD" is the intent of that line. "Wicked" and "pleasantness" are the second main contrast. "Wicked" or "**evil**" suggests a will to harm, to defraud, to degrade another person. "**Pleasantness**" is tantamount to kindness, the will to help, to encourage, to convey regard. The proverb draws us up short with its declaration that our thoughts and speech have the same significance to God as do our most devout religious acts. We draw careful lines between the sacred and the secular realms of our existence, and God grabs a proverb like this and uses it as a cosmic eraser to rub out those lines and mark all of life as divine territory."

For **evil plans** see Haman (Esther 8:3, 5, 9:25), "plotting of the shrewd" (Job 5:12, cp Isa 59:7) which God frustrates (as in Ps

32:10).

**Evil** (07451)(**raah**) is an adjective that describes evil of varying degrees (depending on the context). The essence of the meaning is bad in a moral and ethical sense, that which is not morally pure or good according to a proper standard. The **Lxx** translates **raah** with **adikos** which is an adjective that in general speaks of that which violates divine law and thus is unrighteous, unjust, crooked.

As noted below the idea of **plans** is thoughts, the thinking behind the plans. **Kitchen** says God's "revulsion goes much deeper—all the way back to their basic way of thinking. It is not a method or a manner that is fundamentally their problem. It is that their entire way of reasoning is not in line with God's way of thinking." Compare the same two Hebrew words (**evil** and **plans**) in Ge 6:5 which led to God destroying the world by water! I would call that an abomination.

**John Trapp** - Let him not think to think at liberty. Thought is not free, as some fools would have it. To such God saith, "Hearken, O earth; behold I bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts." [Jeremiah 6:19]

**Plans** (thoughts) (04264)(**mahasabah** from **chashab** = to think, account) is a feminine noun which means thoughts, purposes and intentions of one's mind. **TWOT** says that "The basic idea of the word is the employment of the mind in thinking activity. Reference is not so much to "understanding" (cf. **bin/biyn**), but to the creating of new ideas." **Mahasabah** is "thought or the inventions that spring from such thoughts." The first use in Ge 6:5 God saw "every intent of the **thoughts** of his heart was only evil continually." **Mahasabah** is used repeatedly in Esther (Esther 8:3, 8:5, 9:25) to describe Haman's evil plot (scheme) to have all the Jews in Persia exterminated.

As noted above the root verb is **chashab** (to think, to devise, to reckon, to regard, to invent, to consider, to be accounted, to consider) and is used with **mahasabah** in a number of the passages - Ex 31:4, Ex 35:32, Ex 35:35, 2Sa 14:14, 2Chr 2:14, Esther 8:3, Esther 9:25, Jer 11:19, Jer 18:11, Jer 18:18, Jer 29:11, Jer 49:20, Jer 49:30, Jer 50:45, Ezek 38:10, Dan 11:24, Dan 11:25

The **Septuagint (Lxx)** frequently translates **mahasabah** with the Greek noun **logismos** which means a reckoning, a production of a cognitive process (a calculation, reflection, thought). **Logismos** can refer to the capability of reasoning. **Logismos** is used in Ps 33:10, 11, Pr 6:18, Pr 12:5, Pr 15:22, 26, Pr 19:21, Isa 66:18, Jer 11:19, Jer 18:11, 18, Jer 29:11, 49:20, 30; Jer 50:45; Jer 51:29; Ezek 38:10; Da 11:24-25; Mic 4:12;

In Ex 31:4 "make **artistic designs (mahasabah)**" is literally "to think plans." In context they were filled with the Spirit of God (Ex 31:3) and enabled to *design* or *plan* works that were artistic or skillful. The artist would think thoughts or devise the plans (in this context apparently guided by the Holy Spirit), and then would then execute the thoughts or plans in silver, stone, etc.

In 1Chr 28:9 (cp 1Chr 29:18) we see that "the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the **thoughts**" because He "knows the **thoughts** of man" (Ps 94:11)

Ps 33:11 refers to the **thoughts** of God's heart and Ps 40:5 to God's **thoughts** toward us. In Ps 92:5 we see that God's **thoughts** are very deep!

In one of the most famous uses of **mahasabah** God says to Judah "For I know the **plans** that I have for you,' declares the LORD, '**plans** for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'" (Jeremiah 29:11)

**Swanson** summarizes the meanings of **mahasabah** - **1. thought, musing**, i.e., the content of reasoning and thinking (Ge 6:5; Isa 55:8, 9); **2. plan, plot**, i.e., a scheme as a rational thought (Esther 8:3); **3. create a design**, i.e., think and plan to create something (Ex 31:4); **4. purpose**, i.e., a plan implying a certain desire (Ps 33:10)

The **Lxx** translates **mahasabah** with the noun **logismos** which **BDAG** says is "the product of a cognitive process (cognitive = based on or capable of being reduced to empirical factual knowledge) - calculation, reasoning, reflection, thought."

**Webster** on **plans** = A scheme devised; a project; the form of something to be done existing in the mind, with the several parts adjusted in idea, expressed in words or committed to writing. A **plan** is a method devised for making or doing something or achieving an end. and always implies mental formulation and sometimes graphic representation.

**Webster** on **thought** = a thought is the result of reflecting, reasoning, or meditating rather than of imagining. It refers to what exists in the mind as a representation (as of something comprehended) or as a formulation (as of a plan). Properly, that which the mind thinks. **Thought** is either the act or operation of the mind, when attending to a particular subject or thing, or it is the idea (plan) consequent on that operation.

**Mahasabah** NAS Usage: design(1), designs(3), devised(1), intentions\*(1), invented(1), inventive(1), plan(2), **plans**(14), plot(1), plots(1), plotting(1), purposes(3), scheme(2), schemes(4), **thoughts**(19), ways(1).

**Mahasabah** - 56x in 52v -

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the **thoughts** (Lxx = **dianoemai** = verb = to have in mind, to think over, to consider, to intend; see related noun **dianoia**) of his heart was only evil continually.

Exodus 31:4 to make (chashab = to think) **artistic designs** for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,

Exodus 35:32 to make **designs** for working in gold and in silver and in bronze,

33 and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every **inventive** work.

35 "He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple and in scarlet material, and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers (**chashab** - to think) of **designs**.

2 Samuel 14:14 "For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans (chashab - to think) **ways** so that the banished one will not be cast out from him.

1 Chronicles 28:9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the **thoughts**. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

1 Chronicles 29:18 "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, preserve this forever in the **intentions** (Lxx = **dianoia**) of the heart of Your people, and direct their heart to You;

2 Chronicles 2:14 the son of a Danite woman and a Tyrian father, who knows how to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone and wood, and in purple, violet, linen and crimson fabrics, and who knows how to make all kinds of engravings and to execute (**chashab** - to think) any **design** which may be assigned to him, to work with your skilled men and with those of my lord David your father.

2 Chronicles 26:15 In Jerusalem he made engines of war **invented** by skillful men to be on the towers and on the corners for the purpose of shooting arrows and great stones. Hence his fame spread afar, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong.

Esther 8:3 Then Esther spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, wept and implored him to avert the evil scheme of Haman the Agagite and his **plot** which he had devised (Heb = chashab) against the Jews.

5 Then she said, "If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter seems proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters **devised** by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces.

Esther 9:25 But when it came to the king's attention, he commanded by letter that his wicked **scheme** which he had devised against the Jews, should return on his own head and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

Job 5:12 "He frustrates the plotting of the shrewd, So that their hands cannot attain success.

Job 21:27 "Behold, I know your thoughts, And the plans by which you would wrong me.

Psalms 33:10 The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the **plans** of the peoples.

**Spurgeon** - While his own will is done, he takes care to anticipate the wilfulness of his enemies. Before they come to action he vanquishes them in the council chamber; and when, well armed with craft, they march to the assault, he frustrates their knaveries, and makes their promising plots to end in nothing. Not only the folly of the heathen, but their wisdom too, shall yield to the power of the cross of Jesus: what a comfort is this to those who have to labour where sophistry, and philosophy, falsely so called, are set in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus. He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. Their persecutions, slanders, falsehoods, are like puff balls flung against a granite wall—they produce no result at all; for the Lord overrules the evil, and brings good out of it. The cause of God is never in danger: infernal craft is outwitted by infinite wisdom, and Satanic malice held in check by boundless power.

Psalms 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The **plans** of His heart from generation to generation.

**Spurgeon** - Men come and go, sons follow their sires to the grave, but the undisturbed mind of God moves on in unbroken serenity, producing ordained results with unerring certainty. No man can expect His will or **plan** to

be carried out from age to age; the wisdom of one period is the folly of another, but the Lord's wisdom is always wise, and his designs run on from century to century. His power to fulfill his purposes is by no means diminished by the lapse of years. He who was absolute over Pharaoh in Egypt is not one whit the less today the King of kings and Lord of lords; still do his chariot wheels roll onward in imperial grandeur, none being for a moment able to resist his eternal will.

Psalm 40:5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your **thoughts** toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count.

**Spurgeon** - The divine **thoughts** march with the divine acts, for it is not according to the God's wisdom to act without deliberation and counsel. All the divine thoughts are good and gracious towards his elect. God's thoughts of love are very many, very wonderful, very practical! Muse on them, dear reader; no sweeter subject ever occupied your mind. God's thoughts of you are many, let not yours be few in return.

Psalm 56:5 All day long they distort my words; All their **thoughts** are against me for evil.

Psalm 92:5 How great are Your works, O LORD! Your **thoughts** are very deep.

**Spurgeon** - He is lost in wonder. He utters an exclamation of amazement. How vast! How stupendous are the doings of Jehovah! Great for number, extent, and glory and design are all the creations of the Infinite One. And thy thoughts are very deep. The Lord's plans are as marvellous as his acts; his designs are as profound as his doings are vast. Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it unsearchable. Some men think but cannot work, and others are mere drudges working without thought; in the Eternal the conception and the execution go together. Providence is inexhaustible, and the divine decrees which originate it are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planned it are infinite. Man is superficial, God is inscrutable; man is shallow, God is deep. Dive as we may we shall never fathom the mysterious plan, or exhaust the boundless wisdom of the all comprehending mind of the Lord. We stand by the fathomless sea of divine wisdom, and exclaim with holy awe, "O the depth!"

Psalm 94:11 The LORD knows the **thoughts** of man, That they are a mere breath.

**Spurgeon** - Whether men admit or deny that God knows, one thing is here declared, namely, that The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. Not their words alone are heard, and their works seen, but he reads the secret motions of their minds, for men themselves are not hard to be discerned of him, before his glance they themselves are but vanity. It is in the Lord's esteem no great matter to know the thoughts of such transparent pieces of vanity as mankind are, he sums them up in a moment as poor vain things. This is the sense of the original, but that given in the authorised version is also true—the thoughts, the best part, the most spiritual portion of man's nature, even these are vanity itself, and nothing better. Poor man! And yet such a creature as this boasts, plays at monarch, tyrannises over his fellow worms, and defies his God! Madness is mingled with human vanity, like smoke with the fog, to make it fouler but not more substantial than it would have been alone. How foolish are those who think that God does not know their actions, when the truth is that their vain thoughts are all perceived by him! How absurd to make nothing of God when in fact we ourselves are as nothing in his sight.

Prov 6:18 A heart that devises wicked **plans**, Feet that run rapidly to evil,

Prov 12:5 The **thoughts** of the righteous are just, [But] the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

Prov 15:22 Without consultation, **plans** are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.

Prov 15:26 Evil **plans** are an abomination to the LORD, But pleasant words are pure.

Prov 16:3 Commit your works to the LORD, And your **plans** will be established.

Prov 19:21 Many are the **plans** in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD, it will stand.

Prov 20:18 Prepare **plans** by consultation, And make war by wise guidance.

Prov 21:5 The **plans** of the diligent [lead] surely to advantage, But everyone who is hasty [comes] surely to poverty.

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his **thoughts**; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

8 "For My **thoughts** are not your **thoughts**, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My **thoughts** than your **thoughts**.

Isaiah 59:7 Their feet run to evil, And they hasten to shed innocent blood; Their **thoughts** are **thoughts** of iniquity, Devastation and destruction are in their highways.

Isaiah 65:2 "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own **thoughts**,

Isaiah 66:18 "For I know their works and their **thoughts**; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory.

Jeremiah 4:14 Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, That you may be saved. How long will your wicked **thoughts** Lodge within you?

Jeremiah 6:19 "Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people, The fruit of their **plans**, Because they have not listened to My words, And as for My law, they have rejected it also.

Jeremiah 11:19 But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; And I did not know that they had devised **plots** against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, And let us cut him off from the land of the living, That his name be remembered no more."

Jeremiah 18:11 "So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a **plan** against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds."

12 "But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own **plans**, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'

18 Then they said, "Come and let us devise **plans** against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the divine word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with our tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words."

Jeremiah 29:11 'For I know the **plans** that I have for you,' declares the LORD, **plans** for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 49:20 Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has planned against Edom, and His **purposes** which He has purposed (chashab = thought out) against the inhabitants of Teman: surely they will drag them off, even the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their pasture desolate because of them.

30 "Run away, flee! Dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Hazor," declares the LORD; "For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has formed a plan against you And devised a **scheme** against you.

Jeremiah 50:45 Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has planned against Babylon, and His **purposes** which He has purposed (chashab) against the land of the Chaldeans: surely they will drag them off, even the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their pasture desolate because of them.

Jeremiah 51:29 So the land quakes and writhes, For the **purposes** of the LORD against Babylon stand, To make the land of Babylon A desolation without inhabitants.

Lamentations 3:60 You have seen all their vengeance, All their **schemes** against me.

61 You have heard their reproach, O LORD, All their **schemes** against me.

Ezekiel 38:10 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It will come about on that day, that **thoughts** will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan,

Daniel 11:24 "In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise (chashab) his **schemes** against strongholds, but only for a time.

25 "He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for **schemes** will be devised (chashab) against him.

Micah 4:12 "But they do not know the **thoughts** of the LORD, And they do not understand His purpose; For He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.



**Plans** and **thoughts** frequently focus upon evil intents. The relationship between evil thoughts and deeds is close, as illustrated by the juxtapositioning of the two among the things that Yahweh hates, "a heart that devises wicked **plans**, feet that make haste to run to evil" (Pr 6:18). **Plans** (in context) refers to scheming and evil plotting.

**Thoralf Gilbrant** - Like the earlier proverbial pair in this chapter (Pr 15:8f), this verse warns that since the plans of the wicked are impure, they are rejected; if their plans are rejected, how much more their lives. The contrast with pure words that are pleasing (cf. Pr 15:1, 23, 28) shows that the plans of the wicked inevitably yield words and deeds that do not please the Lord (cf. Pr 23:7a).

Waltke - Repulsed by them, the LORD withdraws his beneficent presence, abandoning the wicked to a certain and eternal death (cf. Pr 1:20-33; Pr 6:16-19; cf. Ps. 1:6).

**Abomination** (first word in the original Hebrew) (detestable, loathsome) (08441)(**toebah**) refers to an abominable custom or thing. Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent. The Lxx renders toebah with **bdelugma** (derived from **bdelusso** = emit foul odor, turn away from something or someone on account of the "stench". A loathing or disgust, abhor in turn derived from **bdeo** = to stink) which describes something foul, that which is extremely hated, disgusted, detested or abhorred.

**Toebah** is frequent in the Proverbs (this makes a simple study of what is abhorrent to God) - Prov 3:32; 6:16; 8:7; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:8-9, 26; 16:5, 12; 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27;

To whom are the words **pleasant**? Compared with the first half of the proverb they are ultimately pleasant to God, which of course would make them pleasant to His creatures.

**Pleasant** (05278)(**noam** from **naem** - be pleasing, pleasant, delightful, dear) is a masculine noun that describes delightfulness, pleasantness (describing the ways of wisdom in Pr 3:17), beauty ("the beauty of Jehovah" = Ps 27:4) and in Ps 90:17 is a prayer for "the **favor** of the Lord our God [to] be upon us."

**Thoralf Gilbrant** - In Zech 11:7, 10 **noam** is used figuratively of a shepherd's staff - "Zechariah the prophet took two shepherd's staves, one called "Beauty" and the other called "Bands (Favor)," and used them according to the word of the Lord to demonstrate how the Lord would refine and purify his people. Beauty was broken to show how God had cut off his people from the Covenant because of their sins, and Bands was cut into two pieces to show how Israel and Judah, brothers of the same nation, were cut apart (Zech. 11:7-14). ([The Complete Biblical Library Old and New Testament](#))

**Noam NAS** Usage: beauty(1), favor(3), pleasant(3).

**Noam** - 7v - Ps 27:4; 90:17; Pr 3:17; 15:26; 16:24; Zech 11:7, 10

Pr 3:17 Her (Pr 3:13 wisdom's) ways are **pleasant** ways, And all her paths are peace.

Pr 16:24 **Pleasant** words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

The words are pleasant because they are pure, which doubtless speaks of ethical purity.

**Pure** (02889)(**tahor**) means pure, clean, purified, genuine, unalloyed (God's Word in Ps 12:6). "It is applied concretely to substances that are genuine or unadulterated as well as describing an unstained condition of a spiritual or ceremonial nature....Clean most frequently describes the purity maintained by avoiding contact with other human beings, abstaining from eating animals, and using things that are declared ceremonially clean. Conversely, cleansing results if ritual procedures symbolizing the removal of contamination are observed." (Vine) The Lxx translates **tahor** here with the adjective **hagnos** which means pure, without moral defect, being without intent to do wrong in a matter

**POSB** - All thoughts consist of words uttered in the mind. All spoken words are first conceived in the mind, especially those involving purpose or intention (Lu.6:45). Pure words-the expression of pure thoughts-are pleasing to the Lord. They are diametrically opposed to impure thoughts or intentions that are an abomination to Him.

**Matthew Henry** - The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts from which they proceed, so that, 1. The thoughts and words of the wicked, which are, like themselves, wicked, which aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, are an abomination to the Lord; he is displeased at them and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it. 2. The thoughts and words of the pure, being pure like themselves, clean, honest, and sincere, are pleasant words and pleasant thoughts, well-pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity. It may be understood both of their devotions to God (the words of their mouth and the meditations of their heart, in prayer and praise, are acceptable to God, Psalm 19:14; Psalm 69:13) and

of their discourses with men, tending to edification. Both are pleasant when they come from a pure, a purified, heart.

**Bridges** - How lightly do the mass of men think of the responsibility of their thoughts! as if they were their own, and they might indulge them without restraint or evil. But they are the seminal principles of sin (Pr 24:9, Ge 6:5. Even an Heathen accurately described them). And as the cause virtually includes its effects; so do they contain, like the seed in its little body, all the after fruit. They are also the index of character. Watch their infinite variety—not so much those that are under the control of circumstances, or thrown up by the occasion, as the voluntary flow, following the habitual train of our associations. “For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” (Pr 23:7) Let the Christian yield himself up to the clear radiance of “the word, as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;” (Heb. 4:13-**note. kritikos** —a critic, censuring the errata with the most minute accuracy.) and what a mass of vanity does only one day—one hour—bring to account! What then is the result with the wicked! “Evil thoughts” are the first bubbling of the corrupt fountain. (Mt 15:19) The tide of evil rolls on unceasingly. Thoughts of iniquity” (Isa. 59:7)—“vain thoughts lodging within”—all are an abomination. Very different is his mind towards his own people. The words of the pure—the expressions of their thoughts (Matt. 12:34. Comp. Ps. 37:30, 31)—are pleasant words. How pleasant—is manifest from his inviting call to their intercourse with him (Pr 15:8, Song 2:14); yet more from the open reward prepared for them before the assembled world—“They that spake often one to another—and thought upon his name—they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day, when I make up my jewels. (Mal. 3:16, 17)”

**Lawson** - Solomon already told us that the way of the wicked is detestable to God; and here he tells us that his thoughts, no less than his words and actions, are abominable to him. Men see not the hearts of one another, and are too ready to imagine that they shall never be called to an account of what passes in their minds; but we must remember that the difference between God and man is infinite. Man looketh only on the outward appearance, and his rewards and punishments can reach no farther than his knowledge of the facts that deserve them. But it is the prerogative of the Father of spirits to search the hearts and to try the reins of the children of men, to render unto them according to their ways. The thoughts of the wicked are full of selfishness, impiety, pride, and impurity, and must be infinitely offensive unto the pure eyes of Jehovah; and whenever wicked men are, by the convincing operation of the Spirit, made to discern the secrets of their own hearts, they become loathsome to themselves.

Wicked men must forsake their thoughts, as well as their outward practices of wickedness; for what is the profit of making clean the outside of the cup and platter, whilst the inner part is full of impurity? God requires us to give him our hearts for his residence. A heart which should be God’s habitation, if full of abominable thoughts, is like the royal chambers of Pharaoh filled with frogs.

If the thoughts of the wicked are abominable to God, their words cannot be pleasant to him, for how can those that are evil speak good things? If the words should be good when the thoughts are vile, they are like potsherds covered over with silver dross. God desireth truth in the outward parts, and abhors those that flatter him with their tongues, or seek the applause of men by making their tongues the instruments of hypocrisy.

But the thoughts of the pure are well pleasing to the Lord, and their words are pleasant in his ears. God is of pure eyes, and delights in those that are made pure by the blood and Spirit of his Son. Their hearts are cleansed from iniquity, and produce those holy thoughts and words which are acceptable in the sight of the Lord their God and Redeemer (Ps 19:14). Their prayers and praises are a sweet odour in his nostrils. Their confessions are music to his ears†. Their common discourse, when it is seasoned with salt, and ministers grace to the hearers, is heard by him with delight. It is a solemn consideration, that God hears every thing that we say, and is pleased or displeased with it. He hearkens and hears what the wicked say, and his judgment of them is, that they speak not aright‡. When those that fear him speak one to another, he hearkens and hears, and a book of remembrance is written before him for them that fear the Lord, and think upon his name||. What have we to do on earth, but to labour that in our thoughts, and words, and ways, we may be accepted of him (2 Cor. 5:9)?

**Pearson** - “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.”—15:26.

Interpretation.—To bring out the antithesis, and meet the requirements of the Hebrew text, some transposition is needful here. Thus: “An abomination to Jehovah are evil devices, but pure (in His sight) are gracious words”—better expresses the original. The contrast is between thoughts of evil towards others, which are equally with injurious words hateful to God, and gracious words expressing gracious thoughts which He accepts as pure, having the genuine ring of true piety.

Illustrations.—There were thoughts in Cain’s heart, finding expression afterwards in words and deeds (Gen. 4:8, 9), which made him as well as his offering (Gen. 4:5) unacceptable to God. The sacrifices of the Jews in Isaiah’s time were an abomination to the Lord by reason of the state of their hearts towards their afflicted brethren (Isa. 1:10–20). Even so, in Christ’s parable, the Pharisee looking askance at the publican is rejected; and the unkind thoughts of Simon about the woman that was a “sinner” proclaim him unforgiven. A special reward is promised to those Jews of Malachi’s time (and not to them only), who “spake often one to another”—gracious words, we may be sure, which God hearkened to and approved.

Application.—It was regarded as a very clever saying, that “words were invented to conceal thoughts.” But the saying is really without point, unless we banish God from His world. For to Him thoughts are words, and by them, no less than by their words,

mankind will be judged. Whether carried out or not, whether uttered or suppressed, they are equally known to the all-wise Searcher of hearts. They are the seminal principles of sin, containing within them the embryo murder or adultery (Matt. 15:19). They are the index of character, for "as (a man) thinketh in his heart so is he" (Prov. 23:7). To be watchful over the thoughts, then, is of the essence of true religion. To be careless about the thoughts is to be careless about the soul. To indulge unkind, sarcastic, revengeful thoughts about a neighbour, though concealed by hypocritical smiles and smooth speeches, is hateful in His sight, who is "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But, on the other hand, how acceptable to Him are those thoughts concerning others which issue in gracious words; alas! how comparatively rare in this sorrowful world! And why? Because the heart is not naturally kind. Be it mine as a Christian, by the grace given me, to multiply such words! (Counsels of the Wise King)

### Proverbs 15:27 He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live

- **He who profits:** Pr 1:19 11:19,29 20:21 Deut 7:26 Jos 6:18 7:11,12,24,25 1Sa 8:3-5 2Ki 5:27 Isa 5:8-10 Jer 17:11 Hab 2:9-11 Zec 5:3,4
- **but:** Pr 28:16 29:4 Ex 18:21 23:8 Deut 16:19 Isa 33:15,16
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BAD HOUSEKEEPING SEAL OF DISAPPROVAL!

A dishonest gainer is troubling his house, Young

A grasping man brings trouble, NEB ...

He who traffics in ill-gotten gain wrecks his own household, Goodspeed.

Note the contrasts - **profits illicitly** (greedy for unjust gain) versus **hates bribes, troubles his own house** versus **will live**.

**Waltke** on one **who profits illicitly** - Whoever is greedy for gain (see 1:19) is represented as a murderous thug in 1:10-19, and here, by its parallel, as a corrupt shyster, most probably an official

**Troubles his own house** - And the "trouble" comes from the hand of Jehovah (cp Pr 15:25)! "A dishonest father, providing for his family by unjust or violent means, will eventually cause his wife and children to suffer." (Buzzell)

Pr 11:29 He who **troubles** his own **house** will inherit wind, and the foolish will be servant to the wise hearted.

Pr 15:6 Much wealth is [in] the **house** of the righteous, But **trouble** is in the income of the wicked.

Some more of Solomon's teaching on the **houses** of the wicked and righteous = Compare what happens to the **house** in Pr 15:25 = "The LORD will tear down the **house** of the proud, But He will establish the boundary of the widow." Pr 3:33 = The curse of the LORD is on the **house** of the wicked, But He blesses the dwelling of the righteous." Pr 12:7 = The wicked are overthrown and are no more, But the **house** of the righteous will stand. Pr 14:11 = The **house** of the wicked will be destroyed, But the tent of the upright will flourish. Pr 24:3 = By wisdom a **house** is built, And by understanding it is established;

All uses of **house (bayith)** in Proverbs - Pr 1:13; 2:18; 3:33; 5:8, 10; 6:31; 7:6, 8, 11, 19-20, 27; 8:2; 9:1, 14; 11:29; 12:7; 14:1, 11; 15:6, 25, 27; 17:1, 13; 19:14; 21:9, 12; 24:3, 27; 25:17, 24; 27:10, 27; 30:26; 31:15, 21, 27

**POSB** - Solomon offers another proverb that demonstrates how people's behavior affects their families. People who make money illegally or dishonestly create problems not only for themselves, but also for their families. Inevitably, they will be caught, and their families will suffer the consequences of their imprisonment or possible execution. They will lose their provider, forfeit all that they have gained, be scorned and despised by others, suffer the painful separation from their families and often the loss of their affection.

**Disciple's Study Bible** - Prosperity is never more valuable than people. Duty to family reputation and needs far outweighs any responsibility to gain material goods.

**Ross** - The "greedy man" is the bosea` basa` the one who wants a big cut, who is in a hurry to get rich, and who is not particular how it happens (McKane, p. 485).

**Profits (01239)(basa)** to cut off (figurative extension of to die or be dead = Job 27:8 or to kill = Job 6:9), to break off, to gain by violence, to finish or fulfill (Isa 10:12; La 2:17; Zec 4:9), to be greedy (have strong desire for unjust gain = Ps 10:3; Pr 1:19; 15:27; Jer 6:13; 8:10; Ezek 22:27; Hab 2:9). In some cases, it is used to express the dispensing of the Lord's judgment (Isa 10:12 = "**completed** all His work on Mt Zion and Jerusalem"; Lam 2:17 = Jehovah had "**accomplished** His word.") **Basa** often denotes the

presence of dishonesty, greed, and injustice. Ezekiel 22:27 portrayed Israel's wicked leaders as "wolves tearing the prey to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain." Amos prophesied that the Lord was pledging to completely obliterate the temple complex, from the tops of the ornate columns to the stones of the foundation. He would cause the thresholds to "break off." Job said of the wicked, "For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off, When God requires his life?" (Job 27:8). In La 2:17, Jeremiah declared, "the Lord has done what He purposed; He has fulfilled His word." Job expressed his desire to die by saying that he wished God would let loose his hand and cut him off (Job 6:9). Hezekiah, being extremely ill also spoke of God cutting him off (as a weaver would material from the loom) to indicate death (Isa. 38:12).

**Basa NAS** Usage: accomplished(1), break(1), break ranks(1), completed(1), cut me off(1), cut off(1), cuts me off(1), finish(1), gains by violence(1), get dishonest(1), gets(1), greedy(2), greedy man(1), injured your for gain(1), profits(1).

**Basa** - 16v - Job 6:9; 27:8; Ps 10:3; Prov 1:19; 15:27; Isa 10:12; 38:12; Jer 6:13; 8:10; Lam 2:17; Ezek 22:12, 27; Joel 2:8; Amos 9:1; Hab 2:9; Zech 4:9

**Illicitly** (unjust gain)(01215)(besa from basa above) means to gain made by violence, unjust gain, profit. It often denotes the presence of dishonesty, greed, and injustice. Besa describes illegal or unjust gain or profit which God's people were to avoid (Ge. 37:26; Ex. 18:21; 1Sa. 8:3; Ps. 119:36; Pr 28:16).

**Swanson** summarizes **besa** - **1. ill-gotten gain**, dishonest gain, valuable things obtained by theft, deception, or other immoral actions (Ex 18:21; Isa 33:15); **2. plunder**, i.e., things gained by robbery after a military victory (Jdg 5:19); **3. severing, a cutting off**, i.e., a figurative extension of cutting thread or material as a figure for dying (Jer 51:13); **4. gain, advantage**, i.e., of benefit (Ge 37:26; Mal 3:14); **5. greed**, i.e., a strong desire for material things in various ways (Isa 57:17)

**Besa NAS** Usage: dishonest gain(4), end(1), gain(7), illicitly(1), plunder(1), profit(4), unjust gain(4), unjust\*(1).

**Besa** - 23v - Ge 37:26; Ex18:21; Jdg 5:19; 1Sa 8:3; Job 22:3; Ps 30:9; 119:36; Pr 1:19; 15:27; Pr 28:16; Isa 33:15; 56:11; 57:17; Jer 6:13; 8:10; 22:17; 51:13; Ezek 22:13, 27; 33:31; Mic 4:13; Hab 2:9; Mal 3:14

**NET Note on profits illicitly** (KJV = greedy of gain) - This refers to a person who is always making the big deal, getting the larger cut, or in a hurry to get rich. The verb, though, makes it clear that the gaining of a profit is by violence and usually unjust, since the root has the idea of "cut off; break off; gain by violence." The line is contrasted with hating bribes, and so the gain in this line may be through bribery.

**Troubles his own house** - Note that **troubles** is first in the Hebrew. And it stands in contrast to **shall live**. The implication is the the dishonest man bring trouble on his own soul, his own life. And as discussed below the Greek verb used to translate **troubles** speaks of utter destruction!

**Reformation Study Bible** - Our folly usually has repercussions on those closest to us (Pr 1:19).

One of the most notorious examples of the truth of this proverb is found in **Achan's** greedy grabbing of goods under the ban (Context = Joshua 7:20-21 - "I have sinned against the LORD" note the "pattern" = **saw...coveted...took...concealed** [concealed his sin but cp Nu 32:23]! Sound familiar?) - "And Joshua said, "Why have you **troubled** (same Hebrew word = **akar**) us? The LORD will **trouble (akar)** you this day." And all Israel stoned them (**his entire family** - see Josh 7:24) with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones." **Thomas a Kempis** described the process of **temptation** which would apply to the troubler Achan. First, he said, there is the bare thought of the sin. Then the imagination paints a picture and hangs it on the screen of the mind. Then that picture exudes a strange sweetness that falls drop by drop into the heart. That subtle sweetness destroys the moral faculty and wins the consent of the whole soul, and the sin is committed.

**Troubles** (05916)(akar) means to stir up, disturb, trouble, to bring ruin or disaster. Jacob told Simeon and Levi that they had **brought trouble** upon him by killing the men of Shechem (Ge 34:30) for he feared the Canaanites would join forces and destroy his household. In 1Chr 2:7, the author alters Achan's name to "Achar," which creates a play on words with the verb trouble so it could be read "The son of Carmi was **Trouble**, the **troubler** of Israel." Lxx translates troubles in Pr 15:27 with the verb **exollumi** which means to destroy utterly. **Exollumi** is also used in Pr 10:31 to translate **karath** "will be cut off" and again in Pr 11:17 "the cruel man does himself harm (Heb = akar = troubles himself; Lxx = exollumi, see related word - **apollumi**)."

**POSB** - The individuals who hate bribes (all dishonest gain) will live, and they will spare their loved ones immense suffering and grief.

## **THE WAY OF LIFE: HATRED OF BRIBES**

**HCSB** on **he who hates bribes** - God hates bribes because they subvert justice (Pr 17:23; cp. Pr 18:5; Dt 16:19; Ps 15:5; Eccl 7:7;

Isa 5:23). Therefore, the person who hates bribes agrees with God, and the one who totally agrees with God—that is, who has the mind of Christ—will live (Ro 7:16; 1Co 2:16; 1Tim 6:3).

Moses was instructed to select as leaders to judge "men who fear God, men of truth, **those who hate dishonest gain** (same word used here in Pr 15:27 = **besa**)." (Ex 18:21)

**Ross** - hating bribes is the safest path to follow. For an example of avoiding this danger, see Genesis 14:22-24, where Abram refused to take anything for himself. See also the story of Elisha's refusal of Naaman's gift and Gehazi's ruinous greed for it (2Kings 5:16, 20, 27).

**H A Ironside** - Those who sit on the judicial bench and those who are called as witnesses have always been exposed to the snare of taking bribes. Greed and covetousness have proven the undoing of many in this position. People who have accepted bribes have brought ruin on themselves and shame on all who were associated with them. The hater of gifts—that is, the one who resolutely refuses to be bought—will live. The soldiers who guarded the tomb of our Lord were silenced by bribes, to their eternal dishonor (Matthew 28:11-15). Samuel challenged Israel to testify to his integrity on this subject (1 Samuel 12:3-4). See Proverbs 29:4

**Hates** (08130)(**sane**) expresses an emotion ranging from intense "hatred" to much weaker "set against." Lxx translates **sane** with the verb **miseo**, (in **present tense** = as his lifestyle, his general practice).

**Bribes** (04979)(**mattannah** from **nathan** = to give) a feminine Hebrew noun which means gift, present (as in Pr 19:6). It could be given as compensation or for support (Ge 25:6; Esther 9:22; Ezek. 46:16, 17), as a gift to the Lord (Ex. 28:38; Lev. 23:38; Nu 18:29; Ps. 68:18, Unacceptable gifts in Ezek 20:26, 31). "Every man shall **give** as he is able." (Dt 16:17) Levitical priesthood was given as a gift from God to Israel (Num 18:6-7) Mattannah is used in this verse as giving with a selfish intent (bribe) (Pr. 15:27; Eccl 7:7).

**Webster's** definition of **bribe** - A price, reward, gift or favor bestowed or promised with a view to pervert the judgment, or corrupt the conduct of a judge, witness or other person. A bribe is a consideration given or promised to a person, to induce him to decide a cause, give testimony, or perform some act contrary to what he knows to be truth, justice or rectitude.

**Waltke** on **gifts** - as when a father gives his son gifts at death (Gen. 25:6; 2 Chr. 21:3; cf. Esth. 9:22; Ezek. 46:16, 17) or when Shechem offers the sons of Jacob "gifts" beyond the bride price in exchange for their sister Dinah (Ge 34:12). In its theological uses, it is God who gives gifts (Nu 18:6, 29; Ps. 68:18). In wisdom literature, however, "**gifts**" is always used to influence the judgment or conduct of another, such as to open the way into the king's presence (Prov. 18:16), to "curry favor with a ruler" (Pr 19:6), or to pacify his wrath (Pr 21:14). In Eccl. 7:7 it aims to corrupt the recipient's judgment and/or conduct.

**Mattannah** NAS Usage: bestowed(1), bribe(1), bribes(1), gift(3), gifts(10), give(1).

**Mattannah** - 17v - Ge 25:6; Ex 28:38; Lev 23:38; Num 18:6-7, 29; Deut 16:17; 2Chr 21:3; Esther 9:22; Ps 68:18; Pr 15:27; Eccl 7:7; Ezek 20:26, 31, 39; 46:16-17

There is a second Hebrew word for **Bribe** - shochad (07810) (Pr 21:14, 17:8, 23) which means bribe or a gift, but always with "strings attached."

- [Bribery - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Bribery - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

**Thoralf Gilbrant** - Bribes are a form of violence, since they pervert justice (Pr 17:23; 29:4). Those who hate bribery (and therefore the violence perpetrated by injustice) are safe; they are innocent of anything that might cause them scandal (Pr 10:9) or trouble.

**John Phillips** - Some years ago I saw a cartoon depicting bribery and corruption in an American court. The judge told the prosecuting attorney and the defense attorney to approach the bench. "I have received a bribe from the defendant for \$15,000," he said, "and I have also received a bribe from the plaintiff for \$15,000. Now you can proceed with the case, both sides knowing that the bench is now quite impartial!"

**Waltke on will live** - Will live is an imprecise antithesis to "**ruins his house**," implying that "**live**" entails the continuation of his house and "ruins his house" entails the loss of his life.

**Will live** (02421)(**chayah**) means to live and is translated in the Lxx with the verb **sozo**, which means to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction (and in the **present tense** signifies this is the continual effect on the one who makes the godly choice to hate bribes. His hatred of bribes is in a sense just a "marker" of the character of his heart which is surrendered to God and His Word and will! Surprisingly, the verb **chayah** is used only 4x in Proverbs = Pr 4:4; Pr 7:2; Pr 9:6; Pr 15:27

**Bridges** - **What an awful stamp has God fixed upon covetousness!** Idolatry (Eph. 5:5, Col. 3:5. Comp. Job 31:24); abomination



(Psalm 10:3), an evil eye, and the cause of poverty (Pr 28:22); “the root of all evil!” (1Ti 6:9, 10) Not only is it a curse to the sinner, but often a trouble to his house. So did Lot (Gen. 13:10, 11; 14:12; 19:14, 30.), Achan, (Jos. 7:1, 15, 24, with Deut. 7:25) Saul (1Sa 15:19–26), Ahab, (1Ki 21:1–14, 1Ki 21:19–22, 2Ki 9:24–26) Gehazi (2Ki 5:20–27), Jehoiakim, (Jer. 22:13, 18–30) and the Jews (Jer 6:12, 13; 8:10), find it. And often in our own day has greediness of gain plunged whole families into misery in ruinous speculations! (Hab. 2:9, 10) For where the enriching blessing of God is not desired or sought, we cannot wonder that it be withheld! Can the man of God do so? Not only would he refuse, but he hates, gifts, not only in the corrupting influence of bribes (Ex. 18:21, 23:8, Deut. 16:19), but in any case, that would bring dishonor upon his God. For this reason Abraham refused the gifts of the king of Sodom, (Gen. 14:22, 23) and Peter the enticement of Simon (Acts 8:18–20). The man who thus walks in integrity, does not he live on high in the special favor of his God? (Ps. 15:5, Isa. 33:15, 16, Jer. 22:15, 16, Ez. 18:5–9) Does not he, who hates this world’s gifts for the affliction of the cross, “receive an hundred-fold recompense in this life, and, in the world to come, everlasting life?” (Heb. 11:24–26, Matt. 19:29, 30) ‘Let their money perish with them’ (was the noble confession of the Marquis of Vico, nephew to Paul V.) ‘that prefer all the world’s wealth before one day’s communion with Jesus Christ and his despised people.’

**Lawson** - The counsel of the wicked shall cast him down, for he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walks upon a snare. Instead of gaining what he expects by his iniquity, he exposes himself to those miseries which he most dreads, and that which he thought would be a shield to defend him, proves a killing sword. The covetous man is an instance of this truth. His heart is set upon gain, and he expects that it will render his life comfortable and happy. But he finds, by bitter experience, the truth of what he would not believe from the mouth of Christ, that a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. He that is greedy of gain shall not live; so the wise man insinuates in the last part of the verse. He either shortens his days by his anxieties about the world, and those sinful methods which he takes to obtain the things on which he has placed his heart, or he embitters his life by his distracting cares. He designs to secure his family against want and contempt, and to raise it to eminence and honor; but he covets an evil covetousness to his house, and consults shame to it, whilst he sins against his own soul. He kindles a fire in his dwelling, which shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.

If men could obtain what they seek by sin, it would be a pitiful compensation for eternal misery; but the same Almighty God that punishes the wicked in hell, reigns by his providence upon earth; his face is ever against the wicked, and if they prosper and flourish for a while, like the grass, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever\*; and they are the wretched instruments of mischief, not only to themselves, but to those whom they most love, and whom they mean to serve by their sins.

Money is a good thing when it is possessed by the wise, but the love of money is the root of every evil, and therefore covetousness is not to be named among the saints. If we love ourselves and our children, if we wish for quietness and peace on earth, if we cannot think without horror of dwelling in everlasting fire, we must take heed and beware of covetousness.

“But he that hates gifts shall live,” and his house shall stand. It is not enough for us to refrain from dishonest gain, but we must shake our hands from holding of bribes. This is the difference between the disposition of good and bad men, with relation to sin. Bad men may for many reasons abstain from the outward commission of it; but good men hate sin, and every thing that leads to it. He that hateth bribes is not a loser by his justice, unless a little money be more valuable than life, and the blessing of God to sweeten it. His family are great gainers, for the just man walketh in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him.

Jeremiah gives us several striking illustrations of this proverb (Jer. 17:11. 22:13–19.).

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - May 16th - “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.”—Pr 15:27.

**Interpretation.**—The avaricious man is a troubler of his own family in many ways. Contrasted with him is the man who hates avarice and all ill-gotten gain—as, for example, the receipt of bribes so common in the East, or usurious transactions, to which the Jews as a nation have always been addicted. The first of these two characters, it is implied, will not be happy or prosperous in the true sense of the word; the second shall live to good purpose, enjoy life, and achieve prosperity.

**Illustrations.**—Lot, yielding, perhaps, to his wife’s influence, brought great trouble and disgrace upon his family by settling down, for the sake of gain, in a vile neighborhood. Laban, by his sordid dealings, saddened the hearts and lost the services of those who might have been a comfort and a help to him in his declining years. Achan, whose greed of forbidden treasure drew down God’s wrath upon the tribes, is reproached by Joshua as having troubled them. Gehazi involved his posterity in evil by giving way to covetousness. But Abraham had strength of principle to reject the gifts of the King of Sodom, and St. Peter those of Simon Magus. And Samuel contrasts most favorably with Eli’s two sons ravening for their fees in flesh (1Sa 12:3, 4; 2:15, 16).

**Application.**—How base a passion is the love of money, even judged of only by what we see! Well has it been called “the root of all evil” (1Ti 6:10), for all manner of evils may, and as a matter of fact do, arise out of it. Domestic troubles are specially glanced at here as among its progeny, and their name is “Legion.” If the passion be to hoard, the man becomes “a miser,” an epithet which proclaims both his own condition and that of his household as miserable. For, in order to save money, he will reduce the comfort and happiness

of all under his power to a minimum, giving full scope to his own exacting, irritable, hard temper. But if to lavish money be his aim in raking it together, then what temptation is there to hazardous speculations, risking all to make more, and indeed, to iniquitous methods of various kinds, which not seldom terminate in disgrace! The anxiety and distress these cause to wife and family cannot be described. Too often present ruin or a harvest of future difficulties are their sad outcome. Be it mine, as an heir of glory, to guard against those two extremes by "using this world as not abusing it." The family is God's handiwork, which He will not suffer to be troubled with impunity. The gain of which this is the price is unjust, and all such gain is loss. ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

### Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things

- **heart:** Pr 15:2 16:23 1Ki 3:23-28 Eccl 5:2,6 1Pe 3:15
- **the mouth:** Pr 10:19 13:16 29:11,20 Ec 10:12-14 Mt 12:34 Tit 1:10,11 Jas 3:6-8 2Pe 2:18
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## REFLECTIVE VERSUS IMPULSIVE SPEECH

**Contrasts** - **Heart** versus **mouth**, **righteous** versus **wicked**, **ponders** versus **pours**, **answer** versus **evil things** (implying that the **answer** of the righteous is good and godly, well thought out before it is uttered, the speech which is **evil**, presumably blurted out without much thought [rash, off the cuff speech]).

Think before you speak! Be wary of listening to those who are too quick to blurt out their opinion! Other proverbs that advocate reflecting on what you are going to say before you say it = Pr 19:2; 20:18, 25; 21:5; 29:20.

**Lawson** - The righteous man has a good treasure in his heart, out of which he bringeth good things; but he does not depend upon this good treasure, so as to speak any thing upon a subject that occurs most readily and easily to him. He wishes to speak nothing that may do hurt to others, or lead them into mistakes, but on every occasion, and especially in affairs of importance, to say what is best and most seasonable. He therefore considers what is fit to be answered to any man with whom he converses, and his words as well as his affairs are ordered with discretion. Without thought the righteous would speak like fools, as David did when he was provoked by the churlish words of Nabal, and in his fury vowed to destroy the house of Nabal, and cut off the innocent with the guilty. In matters of great consequence that require delicate management, it is needful, in answering men, to lift up our souls to God in secret prayer for the direction of our tongues. Nehemiah prayed to the Lord in the presence of the king of Persia, before he answered his question; and it is remarkable with what insinuating eloquence he was taught of God to address the king, in such a manner as to obtain great favour for himself and for Israel.

**Bridges** - Consideration is an important part of the Christian character; nowhere more important than in the discipline of the tongue. Think twice before we speak once. "The wise man's heart is in his right hand," (Eccl 10:2) that he may weigh his words, and study how to answer (Pr 10:31, 32, 13:16; 16:23), and be ready "always to give an answer to him that asketh a reason of the hope that is in him." (1Pe 3:15) Though there may be "good treasure" within, yet we must carefully ponder to draw from it "a word in due season." (Pr 15:23, Mt. 12:34) Often may we reflect upon ourselves, for speaking hastily. (Ps 31:22; 116:11) And indeed, when that comes out which is uppermost, nothing but the dross of evil can be looked for? Many stumblings have been made by speaking from the hasty feeling of the moment, rather than from a well-balanced and considerate judgment. In this haste, Joshua was beguiled by the Gibeonites (Josh 9:14, 15); David indulged a burst of murderous revenge; (1Sa 25:13-21) Peter would fain have dissuaded his master from the work (Matt. 16:22), which he came down from heaven to do, and without which we should have been a world eternally lost. Cultivate a pondering mind. If ever asked to open an important subject, throw it not off hastily; nor give an answer, till it has been obtained from God. For the heart's study to answer, necessarily implies prayer—the only medium of receiving the "wisdom that is profitable to direct." (Ps 2:1-6, Eccl. 10:10.) Nehemiah darted up his prayer for the answer for the moment, and now graciously was it vouchsafed (permitted to be done without danger)! (Neh. 2:1-6) This is more especially a Ministerial responsibility for the many cases of conscience, that require "the tongue of the learned"—a word of wisdom, conviction, or consolation. How can "the priest's lips keep knowledge," (Mal. 2:7) unless the heart, under his Master's teaching, studies to answer?

**NET Note** - The advice of the proverb is to say less but better things. The wise - here called the righteous - are cautious in how they respond to others. They think about it (heart = mind) before speaking.

**Heart (03820) (leb)** describes not the physical organ but what I like to refer to as the "control center" of our being, the center of our emotions, thoughts, actions. The heart of the problem of every man can always be traced to their heart! Here we find the heart of the righteous, which is a good heart. In OT language it is a circumcised heart, a heart that has believed in the Gospel of the Messiah (in

the OT looking forward, but now in the NT looking back to Calvary).

**Heart** is frequently described in Proverbs (study the passages for interesting insights on the heart) -

Pr 2:2, 10; 3:1, 3, 5; 4:4, 23; 5:12; 6:14, 18, 21, 32; 7:3, 7, 10, 25; 8:5; 9:4, 16; 10:8, 13, 20-21; 11:12, 20; 12:8, 11, 20, 23, 25; 13:12; 14:10, 13-14, 30, 33; 15:7, 11, 13-15, 21, 28, 30, 32; 16:1, 5, 9, 21, 23; 17:3, 16, 18, 20, 22; 18:2, 12, 15; 19:3, 8, 21; 20:5, 9; 21:1-2, 4; 22:11, 15, 17; 23:7, 12, 15, 17, 19, 26, 33-34; 24:2, 12, 17, 30, 32; 25:3, 20; 26:23, 25; 27:9, 11, 19, 23; 28:14, 26; 30:19; 31:11;

**The Septuagint** = Proverbs 15:28 The hearts of the righteous meditate faithfulness (Lxx = **pistis**); but the mouth of the ungodly answers evil things.

**Waltke** - The wise person has a ready answer (see Pr 15:23), but he still thinks long and hard about what he says and how to say it (see Pr 15:2)...The proverb assumes that the righteous are considerate and have the self-control to reflect and not to react emotionally, unlike the wicked who only want to vent their malice (cf. Pr 10:31, 32; Pr 15:1-2); they "ponder" how to plunder successfully (Pr 24:2).

**Righteous** (06662)(**saddiq**) is the one who is "right" (thoughts, speech, action) before God and then before men. Righteous does not refer to perfection but more to direction. In other words, the righteous man is living with a Godward focus, motivated by an inner desire to live in a manner worthy of the Lord. He falls at times, but he gets back up and continues on in the general "direction" of heaven, enabled to do so by the transformative power provided by the grace of God. **Saddiq** is frequently found in Proverbs - Pr 2:20; 3:33; 4:18; 9:9; 10:3, 6-7, 11, 16, 20-21, 24-25, 28, 30-33; 11:8-10, 21, 23, 28, 30-31; 12:3, 5, 7, 10, 12-13, 21, 26; 13:5, 9, 21-22, 25; 14:19, 32; 15:6, 28-29; 17:15, 26; 18:5, 10, 17; 20:7; 21:12, 15, 18, 26; 23:24; 24:15-16, 24; 25:26; 28:1, 12, 28; 29:2, 6-7, 16, 27

**Ponders** (01897)(**hagah**) conveys the basic meaning of a low sound and so as used in the OT means to groan, to sigh or to mutter. Figuratively hagah refers to inward utterance, the words a man speaks to himself. And so hagah means to meditate (give serious thought and consideration to selected information implying a definite focusing of one's thoughts on something so as to understand it deeply), to ponder (to carefully weigh in the mind, to appraise), to ruminate (literally to chew repeatedly for an extended period and figuratively to go over in the mind repeatedly and often casually or slowly).

**Hagah** is also translated meditation (cp Ps 63:6), which indicates the righteous considers carefully what he is going to say. In so doing the righteous man's words are more appropriate and timely (cp Pr 15:23).

## THE MOUTH OF THE WICKED

**Lawson** - a wicked man has little sense of the importance of the government of the tongue, and lacks the bridle of the fear of God to manage this unruly member, and therefore he pours forth evil things. But for all his vain and wicked words he must one day account.

**Bridges** - The wicked have no such restraint. He cares not what he says. It is of little consequence to him, whether it be true, or well-timed, or whom it wounds. His poisoned fountain pours out poisonous waters. (Pr 15:2, Pr 13:16, Eccl 10:3, 12-14) Yet fearful is it to think, how every light word brings its account, (Matt. 12:36) and will be found a 'hot coal to make the fire of hell burn more fiercely.' Such a plague often infests the Church. (Titus 1:10, 11, 2Pe 2:18) "From such withdraw thyself." Separation is the keeping of the soul.

The phrase **mouth of the wicked** occurs six times in Proverbs -

Prov 10:6 Blessings are on the head of the righteous, But the **mouth of the wicked** conceals violence.

Prov 10:11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, But the **mouth of the wicked** conceals violence.

Prov 10:32 The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable, But the **mouth of the wicked**, what is perverted.

Prov 11:11 By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, But by the **mouth of the wicked** it is torn down.

Prov 15:28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the **mouth of the wicked** pours out evil things.

Prov 19:28 A rascally witness makes a mockery of justice, And the **mouth of the wicked** spreads iniquity.

**Wicked** (07563)(**rasha'**) is a masculine noun which is one who is hostile to God, guilty of sin (against God or man). The first use is "telling" for Moses uses rasha' in his question to the Lord regarding the imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah - "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the **wicked**?" In that passage in Genesis (and also here in Pr 15:28) the **Lxx** translates

**rasha'** with the adjective **asebes** which in essence describes one who is devoid of all reverence for God.

We all know people who even pride themselves on being frank and outspoken, not weighing their words or the implications of them before blurting them out ("I'm just giving them some good advice!"). "Because a thing is true, it is not necessarily a fit subject to be discussed and passed on from one to another. The righteous will consider carefully the effect of his words before uttering what can never be fully recalled." (POSB)

**Pours** (05042)(**naba**) means to flow, to spring, to bubble up. The picture is not just a "drop" (so to speak) but of an abundant impartation of this evil spirit. The evil give out speech like the bubbling of a brook, completely without restraint. Naba is used in Pr 15:2 "the mouth of fools **sprouts** (spews, blurts out) folly." They need to read David's prayer in Ps 141:3 "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips."

Pr 12:23 "the heart of fools proclaims folly."

**Evil** (07451)(**raah**) is an adjective that describes evil of varying degrees (depending on the context). The essence of the meaning is bad in a moral and ethical sense, that which is not morally pure or good according to a proper standard. The **Lxx** translates **raah** with **kakos** which is an adjective that denotes a lack of something bad, not as it ought to be, opposite kalos (sound, good) and agathos (good).

**Life Application Study Bible** - The godly weigh their answers; the wicked don't think before speaking because they don't care about the effects of their words. It is important to have something to say, but it is equally important to think about it first. Do you carefully plan your words, or do you pour out your thoughts without concern for their impact?

**H A Ironside** - The man who walks in the fear of God will weigh his words carefully, lest by a hasty utterance he dishonor his Lord and hinder where he desires to help. The wicked has no such consideration; he speaks whatever comes to his lips, no matter what harm it may do. People often actually pride themselves on being frank and outspoken, when in reality they are simply exhibiting the calloused state of their consciences. If truly aroused to the value of words, they would weigh them well before speaking them and thus avoid much mischief and sorrow. Because a thing is true, it is not necessarily a fit subject to be discussed and passed on from one to another. The righteous will consider carefully the effect of his words before uttering what can never be fully recalled. Contrast Elisha with the sons of the prophets at Jericho (2 Kings 2:15-18).

## Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous

- **far:** Ps 10:1 34:16 73:27 138:6 Mt 25:46 Eph 2:12,13
- **Hears:** Pr 15:8 Ps 34:15-17 66:18,19 145:18,19 Isa 55:8,9 John 9:31 Ro 8:26,27 Jas 5:16-18 1Pe 3:12
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## INTIMACY WITH JEHOVAH

**Contrasts** - **Far away from** versus **hears the prayer; wicked** versus **righteous**. Far away is used figuratively (since God is omnipresent), the idea being that He is "inaccessible" to the wicked man! He is as it were "deaf" to their pleas! The implication is that Jehovah does not hear the prayer of the wicked. You can speak to someone who is near you but not someone who is far from you (Proverbs antedates our technological age!). When the righteous pray they speak to God as a friend (cp Ps 34:15, 17, 1Pe 3:12). The wicked have no such relationship with God. Only the righteous can approach God in prayer (see who **righteous** are in Pr 15:28). Don't misunderstand -- God is omniscient and He knows the attempts to pray which come from the wicked, but His awareness goes no further . He does not heed (regard with care), act or respond to the "prayers" of the wicked!

As **Kitchen** says "The **quality** of one's **living** affects the **effectiveness** of one's **praying**." That the Lord 'is far from' those who do not know Him is often attested to in Scripture (Ps. 18:41; Ps 66:18-19; Ps 138:6; John 9:31). The worship of the 'wicked' is an abomination to God (Prov. 15:8, 9, 26). Until they repent, they will not be heard by God (Prov. 1:28). Unconfessed sin is clearly an obstacle, even to a true believer (1Pe 3:7).

The psalmist (unnamed) understood this proverb admitting that "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." (Ps 66:18)

As an aside the truth that Jehovah is far from the wicked is what one would expect because the wicked choose to stay away from Him.

**Hubbard** - The contrast between "**the wicked**" and "**the righteous**" is expressed in terms of distance from ("**far**") and nearness to (close enough so that He "**hears**") "**the LORD.**" Physical or geographical distance is not the point, though it serves to sharpen the issue. Intimacy or familiarity are what nearness entails. The **wicked** are so distantly related to God through creation that they have no real claim on His grace or blessing. The **righteous**, in comparison, are loyal sons and daughters of the covenant. They know God in the intimacy of redemption. They belong to Him as His sheep, His subjects, His children. He hears their prayer and takes great delight in doing so.

**Ironside** - The wicked have no right to expect anything from Jehovah; He makes no promise to heed their cry. When the day of their distress comes they find no one on whom to call. When idolatrous Israel turned to God in their troubles, He refused to be entreated of them. He referred them to the gods they had served, in order that they might realize what it meant to have turned their backs on Him. **But He has pledged Himself to hear the prayer of the righteous** and with Him to hear is to answer. The man who delights himself in God when all is bright will find Him a Friend close at hand when darkness enshrouds the soul. Let us not forget that it is written, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). See Joshua at Gibeon (Joshua 10:12-14).

**But** - Strong contrast. Two ways. Two destinies - See Ps 1:6!

**MacDonald** - Believers have instant audience with the Sovereign of the universe in the throne room of heaven by prayer. "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him" (John 9:31).

**Hears** - Same Hebrew word in Pr 15:31-32, translated **listens**. NET Bible adds that "The verb '**hear**'" (שָׁמַע, shama') has more of the sense of "respond to" in this context. If one "listens to the voice of the LORD," for example, it means that he obeys the LORD. If one wishes God to "hear his prayer," it means he wishes God to answer it. God's response to prayer is determined by the righteousness of the one who prays. A prayer of repentance by the wicked is an exception, for by it they would become the righteous."

**David** writes "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them." (Ps 145:18-19) As Spurgeon says "They (righteous) shall have their way for they have his way in their hearts. A holy heart only desires what a holy God can give, and so its desire is filled full out of the fullness of the Lord."

**James** put it this way "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

**Lawson** - The Lord is not far from any man, for in Him we all live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). But **aswicked** men are far from God, through the alienation of their hearts, and the wickedness of their works, so the Lord is far from them, he will have no fellowship with them. The **righteous** cry, and the Lord hears them; but he does not hear the cry of the **wicked**, and beholds them afar off. **Wicked** men think they may safely go on in sin, and if trouble come upon them they will cry to the Lord, and all shall be well. Many have been ruined by such presumptuous expectations, and sad experience has at last convinced them that the Almighty was under no obligation to attend to their voice in adversity, when they would not hear his voice in the day of his forbearance.

The prayers of the **righteous** are graciously heard. God does not always give a present answer to them, but they need not wonder at that, for he did not give a present answer to his own Son crying to him in the days of his flesh. He will hear at the time, and in the manner, that appears best to Himself. And wise heathens could see, that it is proper to leave it to the wisdom of God to determine what is best for us. If we do not obtain a speedy answer to our mind, we must wait on God, for He is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him. (Ps 52:9, Ps 27:14 Ps 40:1 Ps 62:1,5 Ps 123:2 Ps 130:5,6 La 3:25,26) Our Advocate who presents our petitions is always heard, and the worthy name in which we pray is ever prevalent with God.

The blind man whom Christ healed (Jn 9:1-41), made a noble use of the truth contained in the beginning of this verse. He drew from it an irrefragable proof of the divine mission of Christ. But there are too many that draw a very bad conclusion from it. If our prayers cannot be heard, say they, we may give over praying. The prophet Isaiah draws a very apposite instruction from this truth, teaching sinners to leave their sins, and not their prayers†. "When ye make many prayers," says God, "I will not hear; your hands are full of blood." What then must they do? are they for ever excluded from the favour of God? No; the Lord is far from the wicked, and yet brings near his salvation to them. He shows them a fountain of blood in which they must be washed and purged from their blood and filth, and then their prayers will come with acceptance before him (Acts 8:22).

**Charles Bridges** - Such is the Lord's difference between these two classes. He is equally near to them both in his essence. (Pr 15:3, Jer. 23:23, 24, Acts 17:27, 28.) But in his favor he is **far from the wicked**, and rejects their prayer. (Isa. 1:11, Jer. 14:12, Ezek 8:18) He is near to the righteous, and hears them. (Ps. 34:15, 1Pet 3:12) His distance from the wicked is to their hearts' desire. Yet does he sometimes make them groan, (Job 21:14) as they will sink hereafter, under its final and everlasting curse. (Ps. 73:27, Matt. 25:41, 2 Thess. 1:9) But who can estimate the grace that calls these "stouthearted, that are afar off, to hearken, and brings near righteousness and salvation to them?" (Isa. 46:12, 13) Inexpressible must be the guilt of despising such free, abounding, mercy!



(Acts 13:38–46)

But to the **righteous**, he is most graciously near. (Ps. 34:18, 145:18, 19) He hears their breath, when there is no voice (Neh. 2:4, Lam. 3:56); their desire and weeping, when there are no words; (Ps. 38:9, 6:8) their stammering, when there is no gift. (Is. 38:14) Wonderful indeed is it, that he should hear such prayers, polluted as they are in their very breath. Yet does our compassionate High Priest wait for these vile offerings at the door of the oracle; and in his golden censer they appear spotless before the throne. (Rev. 8:3, 4) For his sake we are not only borne with, but accepted. Add to which—our prayers his own Spirit has dictated. (Ro 8:26-27) How then can he turn away from them?

Yet the enemy will suggest the doubt. Does he hear? Well he knows, what a shelter prayer is from his assault; and gladly would he drive us from it. 'Am I righteous?' Be it so, that thou art not. But is not thine advocate so? (1 John 2:1) Then put thy prayers in his hands. Thou canst not doubt his access to God; or that the ear, that may be shut to thee, is open to him. "Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king?" (2 Kings 4:13) Stammer out the prayer to thy Friend—"O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." (Isa. 38:14)

'But I see no answer.' Correct the errors of sense by faith in his word, which declares—whatever appearances may be—He heareth. Judge not by thy feelings or conceptions, but by his own unchangeable word—by the manifestation of his name; (Ps. 65:2) that he will refuse thee nothing that is really good; that thou dost obtain, if not what thou desirest, yet what upon the whole is best and fittest for thee. Have patience with God. Dictate nothing. Commit thy will to him. Say not—"I will that thou give me by and by." (See Mark 6:25) Leave time and all to him. If he does not answer in thy time, he will in his own far better season. (Isa. 30:18)

**Study the character of God. It is not the Judge on his seat; or the King on his throne of state; but the Father in the full flowing of his love. Is not this attraction?** In the sharpest trial—not all the world—not all the power of hell—can bar thine access to Him. No child runs to his Father with such a confidence as thine. Never will He chill the heart, that throws itself upon His love.

Then honor Him in this confidence. Show that you really mean what you say. Bring to Him no general petitions (the signs of an heartless frame) but definite objects. Tell Him what you want, and all that you want. Prize His presence supremely—the pleasures of the closet above all privileges. No creature—not even the company of Apostles—can compensate for the loss of Him. **Wrestle in prayer, but sit still in faith.** He has bound Himself by His own promises. And the fulfilment of them in answer to prayer will quicken confidence and praise.

**Devotional from Ridley Pearson** - May 18th "The Lord is far from the wicked: but He hears the prayer of the righteous"—Pr 15:29.

**Interpretation.**—God, in His essence and power, is far from no one. "In Him we live and move and have our being." Even in hell, He is there (Ps.139:8). But He is said to be "far from the wicked," in respect of diversity of mind and character, in the withdrawal of His sensible presence, and in His unwillingness to show them favor. Hence they have no reason to expect that their prayers will be heard so as to be answered. Whereas, He is nigh unto the righteous in all those ways. His mind and character they (to some extent) reflect. He makes His presence felt within their hearts. His favor is toward them, and His ears are open unto their prayers to answer them in the best time and way.

**Illustrations.**—God's command to pitch the Tabernacle without the camp after the idolatry of the golden calf, was a withdrawal of the visible tokens of His presence and favor from Israel (Ex 33:7). Saul's bitter cry, "God is departed from me," (1Sa 28:15, cp Samson Jdg 16:20) was forced from him when, on account of his wickedness, no answer came to him by prophet, or by Urim, or by dreams. But of good men whose prayers have been heard, the Bible presents instances as well known as numerous.

**Application.**—It is well to be reminded even of so trite a truth as this. For the belief in a personal Deity who takes cognizance of all His creatures, is the only foundation of true religion. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). If I believe not this, I shall not come to God. If I am persuaded, e.g., that He is unconcerned about His creatures, and, having set the wheel of nature in motion, leaves it to roll on without any moral government on His part, what motive have I for striving to please Him? But if I believe that He presides over His own laws, and will reward those who seek Him by hearing their prayers, then my heart responds, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Then, moreover, conscience, enlightened by the Word, teaches that "in righteousness" only can I hope to behold God's face (Ps. 17:15), and so a sufficient motive offers itself for a holy life. This entered upon, experience proves that prayer is heard—heard according to the condition which must always bind a Father: "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). Now, "this is the will of God, even (our) sanctification (holiness)" (1Thess 4:3). **Hence my prayers will be answered only at such time and in such manner as shall subserve that great object. But what more can a child of God desire? And what more could a wise and loving Father grant?** ([Counsels of the wise king or Proverbs of Solomon Applied to Daily Life](#))

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**Our Daily Bread** - Proverbs 15:29 - Sportswriter Waddy Spoolstra and his wife Jean are both octogenarians who demonstrate each day the importance of a life of faith in Jesus Christ. Jean has suffered from congestive heart failure for 3 years. After she had a medical checkup last fall, her doctor announced, "Your heart is good and your lungs are clear. It seems that both are in the process

of healing." When Waddy responded with "Praise the Lord," the physician replied, "That's it. You two have positive attitudes. You believe in answered prayer. As I've said before, prayer is a big part of medical care." It's exciting to hear a doctor acknowledging the connection between prayer and patient care. It's not a new idea, though. Studies have shown that prayer can accelerate the healing process, whether it's the patient or others who do the praying. But we don't really need studies to prove that prayer works. God's Word tells us it does. Have you spent time talking to the Lord about your trials? He knows how to meet your needs--whether through His direct intervention (Ps. 34:17) or through the comfort of His presence (v.18). Trust Him today with your heart. --J D Branon (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Prayer brings us peace and gives us power  
To walk the Christian way;  
Prayer links us with the living God--  
Therefore we need to pray.  
-Anon.

Daily prayers are the best remedy for daily cares.

### Proverbs 15:30 Bright eyes gladden the heart; Good news puts fat on the bones

- Pr 13:9 Ezra 9:8 Eccl 11:7 Rev 21:23, 22:5
- **Good:** Pr 17:22, 25:25 Ps 89:15 Lk 2:10-19
- **bones:** Pr 3:8 Isa 58:11
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**NET** Proverbs 15:30 A bright look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the body.

**ESV** Proverbs 15:30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones.

**KJV** Proverbs 15:30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.

**LXE** (Septuagint) Proverbs 15:30 The eye that sees rightly (or "the eye that sees beautiful things") rejoices the heart; and a good report fattens the bones.

**RSV** Proverbs 15:30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones.

**International Children's Bible** - Good news makes you feel better. Your happiness will show in your eyes.

**Bright eyes** - Literally the Hebrew reads "light of the eyes." The **NET Note** comments that "The expression may indicate the gleam in the eyes of the one who tells the good news, as the parallel clause suggests." **Ryrie** says **bright eyes** speak of "the brightness that shines in the eyes when good news comes." Indeed, does not giving or receiving good news brighten one's eyes?

**Waltke** - The rare metaphor the light (meôr) of the eyes (ênayim), connotes the manifestation of the inward vitality and joy of the one bringing good news, as the parallel clause suggests, and is associated with righteousness (Pr 13:9). His eyes speak louder than his words (see Pr 15:13). A close synonym, ôr ênay, also functions as a metonymy for "life" (Ps. 38:11), and the related expression hâir ênê ("he gives light to the eyes of" (Ezra 9:8; Ps. 13:3; 19:8; Pr 29:13) refers to God giving life and joy to human eyes

**Bright eyes** parallel **good news**, but what does this mean? **Kitchen** says "The first line, by itself, might appear to be a comment about personal joy and its benefits to one's physical health. However, the parallel with 'Good news' makes it clear that the 'Bright eyes' are not in us, but in those we meet. Someone comes to us with 'Good news' and it brings refreshing to us, even physically ('puts fat on the bones'). Likewise, when we encounter a person whose eyes are gleaming over some good news they have encountered or that they have to share, we too find our hearts lifted (Prov. 25:25). The word for 'bright' is the word for a lamp or source of life. It describes light being given off by another's eyes. When you find a person that delighted, contented and satisfied, it is a pleasing thing personally. Joy is contagious! 'A joyful heart makes a cheerful face' (Prov. 15:13a; cf. Pr 16:15). The root of 'gladdens' is also found in Proverbs 15:20, 21, 23. The expression 'fat on the bones' is a figure used to describe physical refreshing, health and reviving (Prov. 3:8; 12:4; 14:30; 16:24; 17:22). A good illustration of the truth of this proverb is found in Jacob's response to the news that his son, Joseph, was still alive (Gen. 45:27-28)."

**Bright** (03974)(**maor** from **or** = to be or become light) is a luminary. The first use in Ge 1:14 is God's command to "Let there be **lights**" referring to the luminaries in the heavens as in Ezek 32:8 and in Ps 74:16 where Asaph says of God "you have prepared the **light** and the sun." In Ex 25:6 it refers to "oil for **lighting**" (cp olives in Ex 27:20, 35:8, 14, 28, 39:27, Lev 24:2, Nu 4:9, 16).

In Ps 90:8 we read that "Thou hast placed our iniquities before Thee, Our secret [sins] in the **light** (Lxx = **photismos** - 2Cor 4:6) of Thy presence." (**Woe!**) Dark things in He Who is light are not dark.

**Spurgeon** - Hence these tears! Sin seen by God must work death; it is only by the covering blood of atonement that life comes to any of us. When God was overthrowing the tribes in the wilderness he had their iniquities before him, and therefore dealt with them in severity. He could not have their iniquities before him and not smite them. Our secret sins in the sight of thy countenance. **There are no secrets before God; he unearths man's hidden things, and exposes them to the light. There can be no more powerful luminary than the face of God,** yet, in that strong light, the Lord set the hidden sins of Israel. **Sunlight can never be compared with the light of Him Who made the sun, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."** (1Jn 1:5) If by His countenance is here meant his love and favor, it is not possible for the heinousness of sin to be more clearly manifested than when it is seen to involve ingratitude to One so infinitely good and kind. Rebellion in the **light** of justice is black, but in the **light** of love it is devilish. **How can we grieve so good a God?** The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt with a **high hand**, fed in the wilderness with a **liberal hand**, and guided with a **tender hand**, and their sins were peculiarly atrocious. We, too, having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and saved by abounding grace, will be verily guilty if we forsake the Lord. What manner of persons ought we to be? How ought we to pray for cleansing from secret faults? It is to us a wellspring of delights to remember that our sins, as believers are now cast behind the Lord's back (Isa 38:17), and shall never be brought to **light** again: therefore we live, because, the guilt being removed, the death penalty is removed also. (**Ed: And all God's children thankfully, joyfully shout "Hallelujah!"**)

**Maor NAS** Usage: bright(1), light(12), lighting(2), lights(3), shining(1).

**Maor** - 16v - Ge 1:14-16; Ex 25:6; 27:20; 35:8, 14, 28; 39:37; Lev 24:2; Nu 4:9, 16; Ps 74:16; 90:8; Prov 15:30; Ezek 32:8.

**Gladden** (08055)(**samach** from **shama** = to hear) is a root which denotes being glad or joyful. The Lxx translates samach with the verb euphraino (in present tense = continual effect) which means to make glad, to cheer up someone, to cause them to be glad or delighted (Used in triumphant cry of the saints in heaven when they "receive" the good news [Rev 18:19] that Babylon is finally and forever fallen Rev 18:20-[see note](#). **Hallelujah!** That is indeed good news the prospect of which should gladden the heart of every saint independent of your current temporal, passing circumstances!).

**MacDonald** - A person's beaming countenance is contagious. It gladdens the heart of everyone he meets.

## **THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF GOOD NEWS ON OUR PSYCHE**

**Waltke on Good news** - Good (tôbâ, Pr 15:23) news (šēmûâ) denotes a verbal report of a recent event that advances life.

**Good** (02896)(**tob**) is an adjective meaning good, well-pleasing, fruitful, morally correct, proper, convenient. The use of **good** in Pr 15:30 is translated in the Lxx with **agathos** (profitable, beneficial).

**News** (08052)(**shemuah** is a passive participle from **shama** = to hear) is feminine noun referring to a report; news; a rumor. Literally, it means what is heard. First use in 1Sa 2:24 is of the **report** of Eli's disobedient sons and then the **news** that the Ark of God had been taken (1Sa 4:19). Shemuah describes the **report** that Mephibosheth (crippled in his feet) received of the death of Saul and Jonathan. (2Sa 4:4). The **report** to David that Absalom had killed Ammon (2Sa 13:30). The Queen of Sheba said Solomon's wisdom and prosperity exceeded "the **report**" she had received (1Ki 10:7, 2Chr 9:6). In Ps 112 shemuah is used in the phrase "evil **tidings**." Solomon writes "Like cold water to a weary soul, So is good news from a distant land." (Pr 25:25) Isaiah asks "Who has believed our **message**? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" (Isa 53:1) **Shemuah** can also refer to a rumor, gossip, hearsay, information which is able to be known, but not verified as true (2Ki 19:7, Isa 37:7, Ezek 7:26, Da 11:44 - this last one referring to rumors the Antichrist will receive in the future.). Here in Pr 15:30 shemuah is translated in the Lxx with **pheme** which means a report, news, saying, information (used in Mt 9:26, Lk 4:14)

**Waltke** adds that "Outside of Pr 15:30; Pr 25:25 and Ps 112:7 **shemuah** is used in the historical and prophetic books mostly of "bad news" about battle reports, but notable exceptions are the message the Queen of Sheba heard about Solomon (1Ki 10:7) and the remnant's report of Suffering Servant (Isa. 53:1). In this context it functions as a metaphor for the teaching that follows in Pr 16:1-15."

**Shemuah NAS** Usage: heard(1), message(3), news(6), report(10), rumor(4), rumors(1), tidings(1), what it means(1).

**Shemuah** - 24v - 1Sa 2:24; 4:19; 2Sa 4:4; 13:30; 1Ki 2:28; 10:7; 2Ki 19:7; 2Chr 9:6; Ps 112:7; Pr 15:30; 25:25; Isa 28:9, 19; 37:7;

53:1; Jer 10:22; 49:14, 23; 51:46; Ezek 7:26; 16:56; 21:7; Da 11:44; Oba 1:1

**Puts fat on the bones** ("invigorates the bones" = NAB) - Speaks not of the literal bones but figuratively of the entire body which is invigorated when one receives good news. We all have experienced this great emotion. Here **bones** is a [metonymy](#) of subject, the **bones** representing the whole body.

**Puts fat on** ([01878](#))(**dasen**) is a verb meaning to be fat, to grow fat, to fatten. Figuratively dasen means to satisfy and in once means to anoint.

**TWOT** notes that "Since fat animals were considered the healthiest and the fat was regarded as the best part of sacrificial animals (cf. Psa 20:3 [H 4]), the metaphorical usage of "prosperous" or "rich" is easily understood. The righteous man is described as a fruitful tree, "full of sap" in his old age (Ps 92:14). In Proverbs, the generous man, the diligent man, and the one who trusts in the Lord are all called "fat" or "prosperous" (Pr 11:25; Pr 13:4; Pr 28:25). Good news "gives health to the bones" (Pr 15:30). Ps 23:5 refers to the head "**anointed** (made fat) with oil" as a description of the blessing of God."

**Swanson** summarizes **dasen** - **1. (piel) anoint, smear, rub on**, i.e., smear an object with a liquid or semi-liquid, as a ceremony of preparation for a feast (Ps 23:5), note: other explanations are given as to what this event refers to; **2. (qal) thrive, formally, grow fat**, i.e., be in a healthy state as an extension of eating well and putting on a weight to give a sleek appearance (Dt 31:20); (piel) give health (Pr 15:30); **3. (hotpaal) be covered, be thick**, i.e., be in a state where an object is so plenteous, it covers another object (Isa 34:6); **4. (piel) remove fat-soaked ashes**, i.e., pick up, bear, and carry an object from one area to another (Ex 27:3; Nu 4:13); **5. (pual) be soaked with fat**, i.e., have a condition in which a dry object is filled with a liquid or semi-liquid substance to the point where it can absorb little more (Isa 34:7); **6. (pual) prosper**, have an abundance, formally, be soaked with fat, i.e., have more than enough, as an extension of having a great amount of fat assumedly from the slaughter of many animals (Pr 11:25; 28:25); **7. (piel) accept, formally, consider fat**, i.e., receive a gift as appropriate, implying a strengthening of a relationship (Ps 20:3); **8. (pual) fully satisfied**, formally, be soaked with fat, i.e., have a feeling or attitude of contentment, in having enough of some kinds of material things, as a figurative extension, possibly of having an abundance of fat to consume and so be satiated (Pr 13:4)

The Lxx translates dasen in Pr 15:30 with the verb piaino which means to make fat, to enrich, to enlarge, to increase.

**Allen Ross** adds that "The idea of "health to the bones" comes from a Hebrew expression that is literally "makes the bones fat," a symbol of health and prosperity (see also Pr 17:22; 25:25; Ge 45:27–28; Isa 52:7–8).

**Dasen NAS** Usage: anointed(1), become greasy(1), become prosperous(1), find your acceptable(1), made fat(1), prosper(1), prosperous(1), puts fat(1), removing its ashes(1), sated(1), take away(1), take away the ashes(1).

**Dasen** - 11v - Ex 27:3; Nu 4:13; Dt 31:20; Ps 20:3; 23:5; Pr 11:25; 13:4; 15:30; 28:25; Isa 34:6-7

**NET Bible Note** - The idea of "making fat" signifies by comparison ([Hypocatastasis](#)) with fat things that the body will be healthy and prosperous (e.g., Pr 17:22; 25:25; Ge 45:27–28; and Isa 52:7–8). **Good news** makes the person feel good in body and soul." (**Ed**: Amen! Are you one who tends to paint the picture of the glass half empty or half full? The latter is much more likely to nourish the hearer's soul. Ask the Lord to enable you by His Spirit to be a bearer of "good news" accentuating the positive aspects of circumstances [but of course not denying the reality of bad news] as much as you can.)

**POSB** - a messenger bringing good news is a welcome sight to the recipient. This positive frame of mind strengthens a person inwardly and outwardly, just as a negative outlook affects a person's attitude and health adversely. Hence, a good report leads to happiness and health, which makes the bones fat. The Hebrews referred to the bones as a symbol of health, happiness, and prosperity (Pr 3:8; 12:4; 14:30; 16:24; 17:22).

**Buzzell** - As in Pr 15:13a, emotional health contributes to physical well-being (health to the bones).

**Matthew Henry** - How delightful to the humbled soul to hear the good report of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ!

**Hubbard** - Even the countenance of the messenger, eyes alight with the glow of the news and the expectations of its reception, "**rejoices the heart**" of the recipient. Body language—shining face, downcast eyes, posture erect or slumping—is used to convey mood in biblical literature just as it is in modern drama or cinema. Any parent can tell the kind of day a schoolchild has had by the way she walks in the door. When the "**good report**" (or news) is actually uttered, the whole person is revived—"makes ... **healthy**" translates the same word that describes the anointing of the head with oil in Psalm 23:5. "**Bones**" is not just a description of the human frame or skeleton but of the entire person, the inner of the self. **The impact of good news is profound and thorough, not superficial or partial.** A comparison captures its effect on the hearer in Pr 25:25.

**Charles Bridges** - The eye is the medium of the most rational enjoyment. Most elevating is the sight of the wonders of the creation! The Psalmist's Hymns of praise finely portray his delight. (Ps. 19:1; 111:2) Glowing was the joy, which burst from the wise man's

heart in the sight of the morning glory—"Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." (Ps 8:1-9; Ps 104:1-35, Ecc. 11:7) Look also at gracious and unexpected providences—How did the light of the aged Patriarch's eyes rejoice his heart, when he embraced his long-lost son! (cp Lk 15:20-24) A sunbeam truly was it in the cloud of despondency! And when the eye fastens upon the one object of attraction, does not one look clothed with light, cast a glory on the soul, and fill it with life and joy? (Gen. 46:29, 30. Comp. Pr 25:25) "They looked unto him and were radiant." (Psalm 34:5) And what will it be, when the whole soul, animated with Divine Power, shall centre in the eye, when the light of the eyes shall present him to unclouded view, whom all heaven adores with everlasting praise!

But let us look at the joy of hearing. See how the Patriarch's heart bounded at the good report of his beloved Joseph. (Gen. 45:27, 28. Comp. Pr 13:12) The absent Minister seems to live again in the good tidings of his thriving people. (1Th 3:5-9.) 'How delightful must it be to the humbled sinner to hear the good report of salvation, and to have his eyes enlightened to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!' The animating delight with which the Shepherds saw the good report realized before their eyes, can scarcely be conceived. (Luke 2:15-17) So joyful is it still to the humbled sinner, that the very "feet of its messengers are beautiful" in his eyes. (Isa 52:7) "How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O LORD, they walk in the light of Thy countenance." (Ps. 89:15)

**Lawson** - Truly the light is sweet, and we ought to give thanks every day to God, who makes the sun to shine, and formed that amazing piece of mechanism, the eye of man, and contrived it so as to fetch in a thousand pleasures, not only from the objects that surround us, but from those glorious luminaries that are millions of leagues distant from the place of our abode. If Bartimeus was transported with gratitude to Christ when he restored to him his sight, why should we be less grateful to our Maker, who gave us this noble organ of sense, and has constantly preserved it, and made it the instrument of so many pleasures and advantages? It is very ungrateful to make our eyes the instrument of rebelling against our Maker, which is every day done by the adulterer and drunkard. On the contrary, when our eyes give joy to our hearts, it is highly proper to improve this pleasure into adoration and praise, by magnifying the work of God which we behold.

**"And a good report maketh the bones fat,"** for the ear as well as the eye ministers delight and advantage to us. Pleasant views are cheering to the spirit, but glad tidings are no less reviving to the heart, and the pleasures received from them is marrow to the bones, and health to the whole man.

No reports have this effect so much as the **glad tidings of salvation to lost sinners**. We must thank God that we receive so many curious discoveries by means of the sense of hearing, but above all, that the gospel of his grace has reached our ears. Gratitude teaches us to turn away our ears from the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge, and from all corrupt and uncharitable conversation, and to attend with earnestness unto the voice of the Lord, addressing us from day to day. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Have any of us lost the sight of our eyes? That is a sore affliction, yet let us be thankful if the use of our ears remains to us, by which we enjoy the agreeable converse of our friends, and the opportunities of serving God, and waiting on him in his sanctuary.

**H A Ironside** feels that "The Gospel of the glory of the blessed God is the **"good report"** of this proverb. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Precious as light when one has been groping in darkness, is this good news to a soul that has been longing for deliverance from a burdened conscience. The good report sent from Heaven to men in their sins concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). It is a Person who is presented to man in the gospel. When He is trusted and His work understood, it does indeed rejoice the heart and make the bones fat. See the jailer of Philippi (Acts 16:29-34).

**Pearson's** devotional on Pr 15:30 - Interpretation.—The Hebrew text requires us to understand by "the light of the eyes" that which is outside oneself—the bright, joyous, kind, sympathizing, approving eyes of another. The sight of such eyes is gladdening to the heart of all but the selfish and morose, and if of one in authority, or who brings a message, how reviving is the effect upon the spirits! Good tidings also have the like beneficial influence upon the health, and when the two combine—the cheering news, with the happy manner of imparting it—a most exhilarating sensation is experienced by the recipient of the "good report." To such a one the words may be applied, "Your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like a herb" (Isa. 66:14).

Illustrations.—David tells us how his bodily health suffered, his "bones waxed old," through suppressed heart-sorrow under a sense of sin. A message of pardon from heaven (perhaps delivered by Nathan) restored composure to his mind and elasticity to his frame (Ps. 32). The countenance of the holy Stephen irradiated by an angelic smile, did it not impress itself upon the memory of Saul the persecutor, among others, and help to bring home to his heart (to its unutterable rejoicing afterwards) the truths he at first blasphemed?

Application.—It is, then, in my power to be a "good physician" among my fellow-creatures, and that at a very little cost. Have I not myself experienced the immense benefit to mind and body of being brought into contact with one whose countenance beamed



kindness? Even to meet such a one is a refreshment in this weary world, and seems to inspire hope. But if while those eyes have sparkled with delight the lips have delivered a message of love, or some good news, or a word of approval and encouragement—oh! has it not been to me as a cordial, putting new life into my faint or jaded heart? Now, why should not I do to others as I have so much enjoyed being done by? It is little enough good I can do. But if I cherish kind thoughts, they will speak through my eyes. And many times as a friend, an employer, yes, even as a stranger, I may impart a thrill of pleasure to some one whose heart is stooping, which may do more for him than any medicine. And if the peace of the Gospel shine forth in my countenance and prompt my speech, it may be my words shall be (like God's Word) "as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." May Christianity be to me "a law of kindness" (31:26)

### Proverbs 15:31 He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise

- **ear** : Pr 15:5, Pr 1:23 9:8,9, 13:20, 19:20, 25:12 Isa 55:3
- **dwell**: John 15:3,4 1Jn 2:19
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NET** Proverbs 15:31 The person who hears the reproof that leads to life is at home among the wise.

**NJB** Proverbs 15:31 The ear attentive to wholesome correction finds itself at home in the company of the wise.

**NLT** Proverbs 15:31 If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise.

The lesson is clear - if you want to be wise, listen to reproof. The opposite attitude is seen in Pr 15:32a. This theme is common in proverbs - Pr 6:23 = "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life." He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, But he who forsakes reproof goes astray' (Pr 10:17). 'He who hates reproof will die' (Pr. 15:10). Those who are wise will listen and become wiser still (Prov. 9:9). Those who refuse to listen further confirm their hardness (Pr. 15:12).

Whatever enters our ears will ultimately influence our mind, heart, and decisions, so we need to be very discerning about what we listen to, in this case our need for life-giving reproof. And remember the basic principle that our ears will listen to what our heart loves!

**Matthew Henry** - It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reprov'd, and therefore chooses to converse with those that, both by their words and example, will show him what is amiss in him: The ear that can take the reproof will love the reprover. Faithful friendly reproofs are here called the reproofs of life, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal (and we must reprove by our lives as well as by our doctrine), but because, where they are well-taken, they are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life

**Ear** (0241)(**ozen**) is a masculine noun which literally means ear, but is often used figuratively depicts the instrument of obedience as in Pr 25:12 " [Like] an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprover to a listening **ear**." The converse (disobedience) is seen in Jer 6:10 where " their ears are closed, And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it." In this present passage NET Note explains that "The term "ear" is a **synecdoche** of part (= ear) for the whole (= person)."

**Ozen** in Proverbs (a good study of what we should do with our ears) - Pr 2:2; 4:20; 5:1, 13; 15:31; 18:15; 20:12; 21:13; 22:17; 23:9, 12; 25:12; 26:17; 28:9;

**Listens** (08085)(**shama**) is a verb which means to listen (the famous **'Shema - Hear, O Israel!'** - Dt 6:4) and as in this proverb **shama** takes on the connotation obedience. So the reproof is not just to be heard, but to be heeded (obeyed). We wise are those who listen to reproof (cp Pr 3:11–12; 9:7–9).

**NET Note** - "**Life**" is an objective genitive: Reproof brings or preserves life.

Reproof is not "fun," but it is good for our spiritual well-being, because it's like a "check up" on our heart condition. The best reproof is God's Word - 2Ti 3:16-**note** which is always profitable.

**John Trapp** - Truth is sharp, but be it bitter, yet it is better - and more savoury to sound senses than the honey drops of a flattering tongue.

**Reproof** (08433)(**tokeha** from **yakah** = to argue, convince, convict, judge, reprove) is a noun which describes a rebuke, a

correction, a chastening (Ps 73:14) a reproof (Ps 39:11) or an argument (Job 13:6, 23:4). The main idea of tokeha is correcting a wrong. **Webster's** definition of **reproof** = criticism for a fault; a charge or blame expressed to one's face; censure for a fault and often implies a kind intent to correct another's fault. Hastings Bible Dictionary says reproof is "the refutation of error, the discovery of sin, the convincing and convicting of the wrongdoer." ([Reproof - Hastings' Dictionary](#))

- See excellent Scriptural overview of [Reproof in Torrey's Topical Textbook](#).

**Tokeha** is a key word in Proverbs with 16 of the 24 OT uses in this book - Pr 1:23, 25, 30; 3:11; 5:12; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5, 10, 31-32; 27:5; 29:1, 15

**Longman** - Only the wise are willing to admit mistakes, change behavior, and improve their lives. In this way, correction enhances life. Wise persons are much less likely to make the same mistake twice. The proverb, in effect, suggests that wisdom is defined by one's willingness to listen to correction.

**Dwell** (03885)(**lun**) is a verb which means to spend the night and which functions as a [synecdoche](#) for to remain, tarry or dwell (cp Isa. 1:21; Jer. 4:14; Zeph. 2:14; Job 17:2; 19:4; 41:22).

**Wise** (02450)(**chakam**) is an adjective describes a manner of thinking and attitude concerning life's experiences. It is the person who is characterized by wisdom, marked by deep understanding, keen discernment, and a capacity for sound judgment. A wise person has great understanding of people and of situations and unusual discernment and judgment in dealing with them.

**Webster** defines **wise** - having knowledge and hence, having the power of discerning and judging correctly, or of discriminating between what is true and what is false; between what is fit and proper, and what is improper; discrete and judicious in the use or application of knowledge; choosing laudable ends, and the best means to accomplish them.

**Allen Ross** observes that Pr 15:31 "shows how the one who listens to reproof that is beneficial to life will be at home with the wise."

**Bridges** - What a contrast to the "scorner," lately described, who "goeth not unto the wise." (Pr 15:12) The *circumcised* ear hears the reproof that tends to life (Pr 6:23), and welcomes it as a probing medicine, needful for the soul's health. (Pr 15:Ver. 5, 12:18. Comp. Ps. 141:5) It is indeed the absolute law of social life, a component part of the love of our neighbor (Lev. 19:17, 18), the bounden obligation to be "our brother's keeper" to the utmost of our power. (This obligation was repudiated by the first transgressor. Gen. 4:9.) And yet for its discharge there should be a special office or relation, or concurrent providential circumstances. So wisely has God fenced its exercise from needless or wilful provocations. No wise man would incur the reproach of a tale-bearer, (Lev. 19:16) by thrusting himself into this ungracious work. But beautiful indeed is the sight of "a wise reprove upon an obedient ear." (Pr 25:12.) The man of God abode with the wise. (1Sa 25:39-42) He took his meek reprove to his wife. He honored the faithful messenger of his Father's rod with his highest confidence. (2Sa 12:7-12, 1Ki 1:32. Comp. Pr 28:23) The Apostle's affectionate testimony to his reprove brother showed, that he had heard the reproof of life. (Gal. 2:11, with 2Pe 3:15) This considerate and humble temper always gets understanding. Nothing teaches like experience, and no experience is more useful, because none so abasing, as rebuke. (Pr 29:15, Rev. 3:19.)

**Lawson** - There are great differences among reprovers. Some reproofs are not the reproofs of life, and these deserve little regard from us. There are not wanting persons that will rebuke others for doing their duty, and curse them because they will not see with the eyes of their unjust reprovers. But in opposition to these gainsayers, and perverters of the right ways of the Lord, we must hold on our way, and never be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord.

But the reproofs of life are valuable. Our Lord teaches us to account them pearls, and Solomon in this expression gives them an equal commendation, and frequently lays it down as a mark of wisdom, to pay a proper regard to just and needful reproofs.

But how shall we know whether we have this character of wisdom? It is not by saying to that friend who reproves us, that we are obliged to him. Good manners will make almost any man to say that. But here is the trial of our submission to rebukes, "The ear that hears them abides among the wise."

If we have a just sense of the value of reproofs, we will count that faithful friend that reproves rather than flatters, a treasure, and frequent his company on that account. We will not passionately leave that Christian society with which we are connected, because the word of God is faithfully applied in it to the correction of vice, and discipline impartially administered, although we ourselves should become the objects of it. The servant that loves a faithful reprove, and truly regards his own soul, will chuse to live in a house where God is feared, and family religion enforced; and every man possessed of this humble disposition, will chuse that company in which he is most likely to be told of his faults.

Those that reprove others, ought to dispense their salutary admonitions with meekness and prudence, that they may not render this ordinance of God disgusting and offensive by their manner of dispensing it, and render themselves accountable for the mischief

done by this means to precious souls.

## Proverbs 15:32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding

- Pr 1:24-33 5:11,12 8:33-36 Ps 50:17 Heb 12:15
- **discipline:** Pr 29:1 Isa 1:5 Jer 5:3 Ezek 24:13,14
- **Listens** [obeys] Pr 5:13 Dt 21:18,20 Mt 7:24-27 Jas 1:22 Rev 3:19
- **Acquires:** Hebrew = possesses a heart, Pr 15:14,21 Pr 17:16 18:15)
- See sermon by Charles Simeon - [Proverbs 15:32 Instruction to be Obeyed](#)
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Contrasts - neglects** versus **listens**; **discipline** versus **reproof**; **despises himself** versus **acquires understanding**.

**Ross** - the person who despises discipline, slights or “despises himself” (mo’es napsho means that he rejects himself as if he were of little value and so fails to grow).

**Matthew Henry** - The folly of those that will not be taught, that refuse instruction, that will not heed it, but turn their backs upon it, or will not hear it, but turn their hearts against it. They refuse correction (margin); they will not take it, no, not from God himself, but kick against the pricks. Those that do so despise their own souls; they show that they have a low and mean opinion of themselves, and are in little care and concern about themselves, considered as rational and immortal, instruction being designed to cultivate reason and prepare for the immortal state. The fundamental error of sinners is undervaluing their own souls; therefore they neglect to provide for them, abuse them, expose them, prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body.

**Hubbard** - To reject wisdom as costing too much or inflicting more pain than we can handle—when it comes in the forms of correction (“instruction”) or rebuke—is to pay a much higher price: the loss of self-respect, described in this proverb as despising one’s own soul. Self-rejection is emotional suicide. We should spare no price to obtain the wisdom that will protect us from that.

**Neglects** (06544)(**para**) means means to be loose or to loosen and here conveys the idea of willful ignoring of instruction (cp Pr 1:25, 8:33, 13:18). There are 6 uses in Proverbs - Pr 1:25, 4:15, 8:33, 13:18, 15:32, 29:18. And so we see that several times in Proverbs, **para** denotes willful rejection of wise instruction which results in suffering such consequences as poverty and shame (Pr. 1:25; 8:33; 13:18; 15:32). Elsewhere, the wise man avoids a dangerous option such as the path of the wicked (Pr. 4:15).

The **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates para with the verb **apothéo/apotheomai** (from **apó** = from + **othéo** = push away, thrust, drive) which literally means to push aside, thrust way (from) or push off. Figuratively as used in Pr 15:32 apothéo means to reject, repudiate, refuse to listen to, to cast away or to put away (from). Used from Homer onward meaning “to repel,” “to reject.”

### Ron Mattoon - How do men refuse instruction?

- They avoid churches with real Bible preaching pastors;
- They block out any teaching that steps on their toes;
- They think of reasons to excuse their sinful behavior;
- They try to talk over the person correcting them;
- They try to get rid of the man who stands for anything;
- They apply the words to someone worse than themselves;
- They look for a fault in the teacher to avoid the force of his words;
- They accuse him of false motives.
- If you have a love for yourself, then don't refuse instruction.
- (Treasures from Proverbs, Volume 1)

**Discipline** (instruction) (04148)(**musar** from **yasar** = to discipline, chasten, admonish) refers to discipline, chastening, correction. God's chastening is always for purposes of instruction, and should not be ignored or resented. (Job 5:17 cp Job 42:2). Solomon instructs us "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof." (Pr 3:11) One of major purposes of wisdom literature is to teach wisdom and instruction (musar) (Pr 1:2) Isaiah describes the divine chastisement poured out on the Suffering Messiah (Isa 53:5).

**Musar** is translated in the Septuagint with the noun **paideia** which is used of rearing and guiding a child to maturity (Heb 12:11-note) and refers to God's fatherly discipline (Heb 12:5-note). **Paideia** means to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior, of providing guidance for responsible living, of rearing and guiding a child toward maturity.

**Musar** is a key word in Proverbs (31/50 uses are in Proverbs) - Pr 1:2-3, 7-8; 3:11; 4:1, 13; Pr 5:12, 23; 6:23; 7:22; Pr 8:10, 33; 10:17; Pr 12:1; 13:1, 18, 24; Pr 15:5, 10, 32-33; Pr 16:22; 19:20, 27; Pr 22:15; 23:12-13, 23; 24:32.

**NET Note** - To "despise oneself" means to reject oneself as if there was little value. The one who ignores discipline is not interested in improving himself.

**Despises** (03988)(**maas**) means to reject, abhor, refuse. The one who neglects discipline treat himself as loathsome! The Lxx translates **maas** with the verb **miseo** which means to hate and thus gives an even stronger picture of this man's sad state.

To **despise** one's self is a strong statement! This Hebrew word **maas** is used of rejecting God (1Sa 8:7, 10:19, Nu 11:20) and of God's rejection of His people (Hos 4:6)! In 1Sa 15:23 Samuel rebukes Saul's disobedience declaring "rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have **rejected** (**maas**; Lxx = **exoutheneo** = to despise, treat as of no account and so to reject) the word of the LORD, He has also **rejected** (**maas**; Lxx = **exoutheneo**) you from being king." (cp 1Sa 15:26).

**Kitchen** - The rejection of such counsel is, in fact, not so much a rejection of the counsel, but of one's own self (Prov. 8:36)!...The trouble is not the action, but its object. We reject that which we should embrace (Hosea 4:6), and we embrace that which we should reject (Ps. 36:4).

Prov 8:36 "But he who sins against me injures himself; All those who hate me love death."

**Listens** (08085)(**shama**) See note on Pr 15:31.

This reminds us of some of the last words of Paul to Timothy - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for **reproof**, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2Ti 3:16-17-note)

**Reproof** (08433)(**tokeha**) see note on Pr 15:31. The Lxx translates **tokeha** which the **elegchos** noun which indicates the act of charging a person with wrongdoing,

**Acquires** (07069)(**qanah**) means to get, possess, acquire.

**Matthew Henry** - He that hears reproof, and amends the faults he is reprov'd for, gets understanding, by which his soul is secured from bad ways and directed in good ways, and thereby he both evidences the value he has for his own soul and puts true honour upon it.

**Understanding** (03820)(**leb**) describes the inner man, the will, the heart. Remember that the heart of a man is like the "control center" of one's thoughts, emotions and actions. **Kitchen** adds that "The word has already been used in this metaphorical way in Pr 6:32; 7:7; 9:4, 16; 10:13, 21; 11:12; 12:11; Pr 15:21 (cf. also Pr 8:5). The heart describes the complex from which the thoughts, emotions and choices arise. The heart is who you are. Reproofs are a vital part of shaping who we are. We can never be all God wants us to be without remaining open to correction and teachable in spirit (Pr. 15:5, 10, 31)."

**POSB** says fools "fail to see how discipline can help them, so they reject correction. In reality they hate their own souls. Put even more bluntly, they hate themselves."

**Charles Bridges** - But he who refuses instruction, despises his own soul. (Pr 15:10) He will not indeed own the charge. But does he not underrate its high value and imminent danger, when he despises God's warning and provision for its salvation? (Mt. 16:26, with Pr 8:35, 36) "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee." (Jer. 6:18. Comp. Zeph. 3:2)

**Lawson** - We are born like the wild ass's colt, and need not only instruction, but reproof, to make us wise; but some are such enemies to themselves, that they will not suffer themselves to be taught wisdom. The scorner hates his reprover, but he is the greatest enemy to himself, whilst he spurns at the physician for giving him those prescriptions that are absolutely necessary for his health, though disagreeable to his vitiated palate. He is more brutish than the horse or mule, for these animals, although they want the benefit of reason, and are stubborn at first, will rather be tamed than destroyed.

But the man is happy who suffers the word of exhortation and reproof, for though he is at present chargeable with many faults and follies, yet he is in the way of reformation, and takes the sure method of getting understanding. He is meek and teachable, and God will bless to his soul that word which he receives with meekness.

Solomon gives us frequent advices on this point, but they are all needful, for no duty is harder to our proud spirits, than receiving reproofs with calmness, and applying them to the correction of our lives.

- **fear:** Pr 1:7 8:13 Job 28:28 Ps 34:11 111:10
- **and:** Pr 18:12 25:6,7 29:23 Lu 14:11 Php 2:5-11 Jas 4:10 1Pe 5:5
- Proverbs 15 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE WAY TO WISDOM AND HONOR

**Fear of the LORD** is the theme if you will of the Book of Proverbs - This phrase occurs 25v most often in Proverbs - 2Chr 19:7, 9; Job 28:28; Ps 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Pr 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; Isa 11:2-3; 33:6; Acts 9:31; 2Cor 5:11. This godly fear is the beginning of knowledge (Pr 1:7) and the beginning of wisdom (Pr 9:10) as **fear of the LORD** represents the most elemental and fundamental aspect of a wise life. Fearing Jehovah includes reverencing, trusting, obeying, serving, and worshipping Him. And when we do this, we learn wisdom. Godly fear is a fear of wounding the dearest object of the heart.

The **instruction** that gives godly **wisdom** is **fear** of Jehovah.

**Kitchen** adds that "The '**fear of the LORD**' will bring one into a relationship to God in which He will lay bare things about us that need to be changed. These changes, when made, result in wisdom. In light of who He is, we see who we are and, for those with courage enough to change, we can become increasingly more like Him."

The antithesis of this proverb is Pr 16:18 = Pride [goes] before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

**Hubbard** - Though there may be mystical elements in our prayer lives, our sense of Christian call, our day-by-day appreciation of God's presence, the content of our faith is usually conveyed by teaching and preaching. "**Instruction of wisdom**" comes to us through preachers and teachers whose grasp of God's ways and Word enables them to open their insights to us and us to their insights (**Ed:** I would add even better is your own time with the Word and the Spirit - which is the essence of **inductive Bible study**). And before we can be accorded any "**honor**" or "**glory**" for either wisdom or obedience, we have to sit in **humility**" before that instruction, with a clear openness and a deep sense of neediness which are prime ingredients of **humility**. Our generation so exalts good communication that virtually all the weight for getting the point across rests on the speaker. This is neither fair nor realistic. The learner has a clear obligation as well—an obligation to recognize the need to learn and to do everything possible to aid that learning.

**A tender heart is comrade to a humble ear.**

**Matthew Henry** on **fear of the LORD** - To submit to our God, and keep up a reverence for him: The **fear of the Lord**, as it is the beginning of wisdom, so it is the instruction and correction of wisdom the principles of religion, closely adhered to, will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our way. An awe of God upon our spirits will put us upon the wisest counsels and chastise us when we say or do unwisely.

**Biblical Illustrator** - The **fear** of the text is not slavish, shrinking fear, like that which the poor slaves in South America feel when the cruel overseer comes to lash them to their work. That is the way that devils fear God. To fear God means to have a solemn awe of Him, and of His holy law. But it means also, having love to Him reigning in our heart, whereby we fear to offend our heavenly Father. Slavish fear is a hindering thing, just as a strong cold wind hinders one from walking quickly and agreeably along the street; but loving fear is like the summer breezes mingling with summer sunbeams, causing all sorts of tender and beautiful things to spring up easily, and give forth their delightful fragrance. There are two ways of receiving instruction. You may get it from a fellow-creature, and yet be none the better, because stopping or resting in that; or you may get it from Jesus Christ, who is Wisdom, and then you may become wise unto salvation.

**Fear** ([03374](#))(**yirah** from verb **yare** = to fear) can describe dread (Dt 1:29, Dt 2:25, Ps 55:5), being terrified (Jonah 1:10), standing in awe (1Ki 3:28), or having reverence (Lev 19:3, Ex 20:20, Ps 5:7). **Yirah** usually refers to the **fear** of God in a positive sense (2Chr 19:9, Ps 19:9, 34:11, 111:10, Pr 1:7, 1:29, 2:5, 8:13, 9:10, 10:27, 14:26, 14:27, 15:16, 15:33, 16:6, 19:23, 22:4, 23:17, Isa 11:2, 11:3, 33:6). **Yirah** is produced by God's Word (Ps. 119:38; Pr. 2:5). The **fear** of the Lord may be lost by despair of one's own situation (Job 6:14) or envy of a sinner's (Pr. 23:17). **Fear** of the Lord restrains one from sin (Ge 20:11; Ex. 20:20), gives confidence (Job 4:6; Pr. 14:26); helps rulers and causes judges to act justly (2Sa 23:3; 2Chr. 19:9; Neh. 5:15); results in good sleep (Pr. 19:23); with humility, leads to riches, honor, and life (Pr. 22:4). With the Lord as the object, **yir'ah** captures both aspects of shrinking back in fear and of drawing close in awe. It is not a trembling dread that paralyzes action, but neither is it a polite reverence (a loose familiarity with God - as when I hear someone call Him the "Big Guy in the Sky!").

**The LORD** (Pr 15:3, 8, 9, 11, 16, 25, 26, 29, 33) - **Jehovah**



**Instruction** (04148)(**musar**) See Pr 15:32 note on this key word in Proverbs. The basic idea is instruction or correction that accomplishes learning. It is interesting to note that the English word instruct comes from the Latin meaning to build or erect. Indeed, godly fear builds wisdom!

**John Gill** on **fear of the LORD** - It is "the beginning of wisdom", Proverbs 9:10; it leads unto it, instructs a man in it; by means of it he attains to true spiritual and evangelical wisdom; it teaches him to abstain from sin, and to serve the Lord; and to seek the salvation of his soul in the way God has appointed, which is by his Son Jesus Christ, which to do is the highest wisdom;

**We can get INFORMATION "on LINE" (from Google)  
but WISDOM is from "on HIGH" (from God)!**

**Wisdom** (02451)(**chokmah**) from the verb chakam - to be wise) is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding. Wisdom is the ability to see something from God's viewpoint. Wisdom is "God's character in the many practical affairs of life." Chokmah is the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. The consistency of making the right choice is an indication of one's spiritual maturity. The prerequisite for this "wisdom" is the fear of the Lord (Pr 1:7-note). "Wisdom" is personified as crying out for disciples who will do everything to pursue her (Pr 1:20-note). The person who seeks chokmah diligently will receive understanding: (Pr 2:6) and will benefit in life by walking with God (Pr 2:20, cf Gal 5:16-note).

As **Waltke** says "wisdom is a matter of the heart." One can have great head knowledge and little heart wisdom!

**John Phillips** - before humility comes a healthy fear of the Lord. When we see Him as He is, we see ourselves as we are. When we see ourselves as we are, we see Him as He is. When we see Him as He is and ourselves as we are, He shows us what He intends us to be. When we see what He intends us to be, He shows us what He intends us to do.

**Before** (06440)(**paniyim**) is literally face.

**Kitchen** - This notion of humility before honor is oft repeated here (Pr. 16:18; 25:6-7; 29:23), as well as in the New Testament (Mt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14; Phil. 2:5-11; James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6).

**POSB** - The meaning of this proverb is really quite simple: the fear of the Lord-reverence for Him and submission to Him-is discipline in and of itself. It teaches people wisdom. When people humble themselves before the Lord, changes take place in their lives. The wisdom they display in their daily lives-love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control-stirs others to honor them (Ga.5:22-23). The Lord will honor them both in this life and when they stand before Him in judgment.

**Adam Clarke** - before honor is humility - That is, few persons ever arrive at honor who are not humble; and those who from low life have risen to places of trust and confidence, have been remarkable for humility. We may rest assured that the providence of God will never elevate a proud man; such God beholds afar off. He may get into places of trust and profit, but God will oust him, and the people will curse him, and curse his memory. So will it ever be with bad ministers and advisers of the crown.

**Jamieson** on before **honor** is **humility** - not, humility is preferable to honor; but "humility," under the Lord's discipline or correction (as the parallel clause requires) goes "before honor," just as "before destruction the heart of man is haughty" (Proverbs 18:12; Proverbs 22:4; Zephaniah 2:3).

**Arnot** - You must go to **humility** before **honor**. This is the law—the law of God. It cannot be changed. It has its analogies in the material creation. Every height has its corresponding depth. As far as the Andes pierce into the sky, so far do the valleys of the Pacific, at their base, go down into the heart of the earth. If the branches of a tree rise high in the air, its roots must penetrate to a corresponding depth in the ground; and the necessity is reciprocal. The higher the branches are, the deeper go the roots; and the deeper the roots are, the higher go the branches. This law pervades the moral administration as well as the higher works of God. The child Jesus is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel; but it is first the fall and then the rising; for "**before honor is humility**." Fall they must at the feet of the Crucified before they can rise and reign as the children of the Great King.... There are two mountains in the land of Israel, equal in height, and standing near each other, with a deep, narrow valley between. At an interesting point in the people's history, one of these mountains bore the curse, and the other received the blessing (Deu ). If you had stood then on Ebal, where the curse was lying, you could not have escaped to Gerizim to enjoy the blessing without going down to the bottom of the intervening gorge. There was a way for the pilgrim from the curse to the blessing, if he were willing to pass through the **valley of humiliation**; but there was no flight through the air, so as to escape the going down. These things are an allegory. All men are at first in their own judgments on a lofty place, but the curse hangs over the mountains of their pride.... All the saved are also on a lofty height, but God dwells among them, and great is the peace of His children. All who have reached this mountain have been in the deep. They sowed in tears before they went forth rejoicing to bear home the sheaves.

**Honor** (03519) (**kabod**) describes glory (Josh 7:19), esteem, respect, high regard and reward.

**Webster** says honor is esteem due or paid to worth, any expression of respect or of high estimation by words or actions

In the context of this passage **humility** could be described as exhibiting a willingness to listen to instruction (discipline, correction).

**Humility** is equated with **fear of the LORD** in Pr 22:4 - The reward of **humility** [and] the **fear of the LORD** Are riches, honor and life.

**John Gill** adds that " the **fear of God** and **humility** go together, where the one is the other is; and as the one is the way to wisdom, the other is the way to glory; Christ's humiliation was before his exaltation; men are first humbled and laid low in their own eyes, and then they are raised out of their low estate, and are set among princes; and shall inherit the throne of glory, being made kings and priests unto God; it is a frequent saying of Christ's, "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted", Luke 14:11; such an one is raised to a high estate of grace, and at last to eternal glory.

**Humility** (06038) (**anawah** from **anah** = to be bowed down, afflicted = when affliction has done its work one is humble) is a feminine noun which means freedom from pride and arrogance, modest estimate of one's worth, unpretentiousness. **TWOT** says **anawah** "sets forth the dual qualities gained by man in the school of affliction. Applied to the Messiah it connotes his **gentleness** in submission to his own nature (Ps 45:4)(**Ed**: Gentleness - **anawah** in **Lxx** = **prautes** = quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance.)." Proverbs places humility alongside the fear of the Lord as a prerequisite for true honor (Pr 15:33; 18:12; 22:4). The humble of heart are those who seek the Lord (Zeph 2:3).

**Anawah NAS** Usage: gentleness(1), help(1), humility(4), meekness(1).

**Anawah** - 7v - 2Sa 22:36; Ps 18:35; 45:4; Pr 15:33; 18:12; Pr 22:4; Zeph 2:3

Proverbs 18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, But **humility** (Lxx = **tapeinoo** = verb in present tense = continual attitude and It means to bow down, to make low, to humble) goes before honor. (Note last line is virtually identical with Pr 15:33).

Proverbs 22:4 ) The reward of **humility** [and] the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life.

Zeph 2:3 Seek the LORD, All you humble (06035 - **anaw**) of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek **humility**. Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD's anger.

**Waltke** in discussing the noun **anawah** adds that it is "a religious term for the quality of renouncing one's own personal sufficiency for life and committing oneself to the LORD who alone is trustworthy to give instruction leading to life (Pr 3:5–7). In this way the disciple integrates himself into the moral order and the realm of life ordained by God and does not lift himself against it. Waving a white flag of surrender to the LORD in this book always [comes] before (see Pr 8:25) honor (see Pr 3:16; 18:12, 22:4). Paradoxically, the one who grants himself no glory before the glorious God in the end is crowned with the glory and wealth that give him social esteem. (see Pr 3:16; 8:18; 11:16). This radical humility toward the LORD paves the way for the next sub-unit contrasting the LORD's freedom with human limits (Pr 16:1–9).

**Homilist** - "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of Wisdom; and before honour is humility." This is a maxim of very wide application.

1. It is sometimes applicable to secular exaltation. As a rule, the man who rises to affluence and power in the world has had to humble himself. He has stooped to conquer. He has condescended to drudgeries and concessions most wounding to his pride.
2. This always applies to intellectual exaltation. A most humbling sense of one's ignorance is the first step to intellectual eminence, and almost the last.
3. This invariably applies to moral exaltation. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Homilist.).

## **Humility**

- Afflictions intended to produce. Lev 26:41; Dt 8:3.
- Averts punishment. 2Ch 7:14; 12:6-7.
- Before honor. Pr 15:33.
- Brings wisdom. Pr 11:2; Mt 11:25.
- Christ's example. Mt 11:29; Jn 13:14-15; Php 2:5-8.
- In believers. Mic 6:8; Ro 12:16; Eph 4:1-2; Php 2:3; Col 3:12; 1Pe 5:5.

## See Related Word Studies on Humility onsite...

- Humble ([5011](#)) tapeinos
- Humble (verb) ([5013](#)) tapeinoo
- Humble ([5014](#)) tapeinosis
- Humility of mind ([5012](#)) tapeinophrosune

**Archibald Alexander** - Humility is to the Christian what ballast is to the ship; it keeps him in his proper position and regulates all his thoughts and feelings.

**Phillip Brooks** - The true way to be humble, is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature.

**C. H. Spurgeon** - Let us be humble that we may not need to be humbled, but may be exalted by the grace of God.

"Humility is that low sweet root from which all the heavenly virtue shoot."

**NET Note** - The idea of the first line is similar to Prov 1:7 and 9:10. Here it may mean that the fear of the Lord results from the discipline of wisdom, just as easily as it may mean that the fear of the Lord leads to the discipline of wisdom. The second reading harmonizes with the theme in the book that the fear of the Lord is the starting point. The second clause is a parallel idea in that it stresses how one thing leads to another - humility to honor. Humble submission in faith to the Lord brings wisdom and honor.

**Lawson** - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and it instructs men in every other branch of wisdom; for a right impression of the excellencies of God upon our spirits, will dispose us with due reverence to search the scriptures, and to acquiesce in the wise instructions which they contain; it will powerfully influence us to make a thankful use of Christ, as he is made of God wisdom to us, and to follow the conduct of the Holy Spirit.\* The fear of the Lord will be a preservative to us from sin and folly, and an incentive to all holy conversation and godliness; and a good understanding have all they that do the commandments of God.

"And before honor is humility." For whilst we humbly renounce our own righteousness, and place all our dependence on the grace of God, we are exalted in imputed righteousness; and when we are pure in spirit, we are prepared for the kingdom of heaven. He to whom all judgment is committed, hath declared, and will make it good, "He who humbles himself shall be exalted."

The honors of this world are so short-lived, that they are scarcely worth the naming. Sometimes the proud push themselves into high stations, and yet they cannot attain the summit of their ambitious aims, without the permission of that Providence from which promotion comes; and it is certain, that God hates the proud, and will not suffer them to rise into eminence for their real advantage, but rather to signalize his vengeance, by spurning them, in due time, into disgrace and misery.

Alexander and Julius Caesar blazed for a time; but how much more illustrious and durable were the honors of David, who thought himself quite unworthy to be the king's son-in-law, and compared himself to a partridge and a flea, but was exalted by God to the throne of his kingdom over Israel, and to the greater honor of being a prophet in the church, and the sweet singer of Israel!

**Bridges** - The fear of the Lord is described as the substance (Job 28:28)—the beginning or principal part (Pr 4:7; 9:10, Ps. 111:10)—here the instruction—of wisdom. For is it not the medium of the deepest—most heavenly—wisdom? Though given under the law, it is linked with the full privileges of the Gospel. (Acts 9:31, Heb. 12:28) The fear of terror melts away. The fear of reverence fills the soul. God rejoices in his mercy—the child of God in his confidence. But as it realizes the presence of a holy God, it must always be connected with humility. Indeed what Christian grace of the Gospel can exist without this conserving principle? Every dispensation of God strikes at the root of self exaltation, and tends to that real absence of self-esteem and self-sufficiency, which most of us rather long after than attain.

Most wise therefore is our Father's discipline. Before honor, humility. Indeed, without humility, honor would be our temptation, rather than our glory. Had not the Apostle been kept down by a most humbling trial, his honor would have been his ruin. (2Cor. 12:7–9) The exaltation of the Lord's people in providence, is therefore often conducted through the valley of Humiliation. Joseph was raised from the prison to the throne. Moses and David were taken from the Shepherd's fold to feed the Lord's inheritance. (Ex. 3:1–12, Ps. 78:70–72) Gideon acknowledged himself to be of "the least of the families of Israel." (Jdg. 6:15, 16) Ruth was humbled by adversity, ere she was raised to the high honor of a Mother in Israel, and progenitor of the Saviour. (Ruth 2, 4:13–22, Matt. 1:5) Abigail confessed herself unworthy to wash the feet of her Lord's servants, before she was honored to be his wife.<sup>5</sup> And in the daily walk of life, the lowest place is the pathway to honor. (Luke 14:7–11)

The same principle obtains in the dispensations of grace. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted in due time." (Pr 18:14, 1 Pet. 5:6) Not that in the forgetfulness of our high privileges and confidence, we are to be weighed down in a sense of degradation. The true humility, which realizes our vileness, casts us most simply upon the full resources of the gospel, so that the most humble is the

most triumphant believer. 'The lower, then, any descend in humiliation, the higher they shall ascend in exaltation. The lower this foundation of humility is laid, the higher shall the roof of honor be overlaid.'

And was not this the track of our beloved Lord—before honor, humility—the cross before the crown? How deep was that descent, by which he, who was infinitely more than man—became “a worm and no man!” (Ps. 22:6.) And yet the honor which rewarded this humility, what tongue can tell! (Phil. 2:5–11) 'We must not disdain to follow Jesus Christ.'<sup>11</sup> Is it a light privilege to follow in the pathway consecrated by his steps—irradiated by his smile? (Matt. 11:29, 30; 20:26–28, John 13:14, 15.)

**Warren Wiersbe on humility-** Andrew Murray said that humility is not thinking meanly of ourselves but simply not thinking of ourselves at all. Humility is the grace that, when we know we have it, we have lost it. God hates pride (Pr. 6:16–17) and we should hate it too, especially in ourselves (Pr 8:13). To better understand **honor** and **humility**, let's look at four persons found in biblical history.

**King Saul—from honor to humiliation.** Almost everybody admired Saul when he was made king of Israel. He was tall, strong, and apparently humble (1 Sam. 9:21), but in the years that followed, pride possessed him and he became envious, suspicious, and vindictive, what we today would call a control freak. He began in great honor but ended in greater humiliation because the Lord abandoned him. Instead of seeking God's will, he visited a witch to get guidance for a battle; and he ended up committing suicide on the battlefield (1Sa 28:3–25; 31:1–6). Had he humbled himself before God and listened to the prophet Samuel, matters would have been different.

**King David—from humility to honor.** Even as a very young man, David was submitted to the Lord, to his father, to his brothers in Saul's army, and to King Saul. God honored David by giving him victory over a lion, a bear, and the giant Goliath. As Saul's aide, David played the harp to help Saul get over his restless spirit. When David was an officer in Saul's army, he won so many battles that the people sang his praises and Saul became envious and tried to kill him. For perhaps ten years, David led his own small army as he waited for the Lord to give him the throne of Israel. He was a humble young man (Ps. 131) and God honored him when the time was right (Ps. 78:67–72). “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6).

**Absalom—from pride to great dishonor.** Absalom was one of David's sons, a handsome man with a winning personality and great ambition. But he was also a proud man with no faith in God. Absalom was popular, what today we would call a celebrity, but he had no character and used people to accomplish his own selfish purposes. More than anything else, he wanted to be king and was even willing to attack his own father to gain the crown. “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1Pe 5:5-7; see Pr 3:34). Unwisely, David wanted his army to spare his son, but God willed otherwise and Absalom was caught in the boughs of a tree by his thick hair and stabbed to death by Joab, commander of David's army. Absalom's body was thrown into a pit and buried under a heap of rocks, a monument to his arrogance and folly.

**Jesus—humbled and honored.** Two words summarize the evidence for our Lord's humility: sacrifice and service. Jesus “made Himself of no reputation.... He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him” (Phil. 2:7–9). His birth was humble and so was his life. He had no home and was at everybody's beck and call morning and night. “But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant,” he told his disciples. “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:11–12). Humility is the “soil” in which all the other Christian graces must grow and bear fruit, while pride is the “soil” that produces the noxious weeds of sin. Today Jesus is enthroned far above every power and every name (Eph 1:20-23). The humble, suffering servant is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! ([Old Testament Words for Today- 100 Devotional Reflections](#))

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**Spurgeon - Morning and Evening on Proverbs 15:33** - Humiliation of soul always brings a positive blessing with it. If we empty our hearts of self God will fill them with his love. He who desires close communion with Christ should remember the word of the Lord, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” Stoop if you would climb to heaven. Do we not say of Jesus, “He descended that he might ascend?” so must you. You must grow downwards, that you may grow upwards; for the sweetest fellowship with heaven is to be had by humble souls, and by them alone. God will deny no blessing to a thoroughly humbled spirit. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” with all its riches and treasures. The whole exchequer of God shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it. God blesses us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it is safe for him to do. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let your unhumiliated spirit win a victory in his holy war, you would pilfer the crown for yourself, and meeting with a fresh enemy you would fall a victim; so that you are kept low for your own safety. When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures to touch so much as a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of all grace, and fits us to deal efficiently with our fellow men. True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in every case. Whether it be prayer or praise, whether it be work or suffering, the genuine salt

of humility cannot be used in excess.

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**Is Fear Healthy?** - During a severe thunderstorm, a mother tucked her child into bed and turned off the light. Frightened by the tempest, he asked, "Mommy, will you sleep with me?" Hugging him, she replied, "I can't, dear. I have to sleep with Daddy." Stepping out of the room, she heard, "That big sissy!"

Fear is real. But it's not always negative. In 2 Chronicles 17:3-10, we read about a healthy, positive fear that prevented neighboring countries from going to war against Judah. What had caused this fear? We are told that "the fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat" (v.10).

A respectful fear of the Lord was also what King Jehoshaphat desired for his own people. So he made it a priority that they be taught God's Word. He knew that if the people were in awe of the Almighty, they would humble themselves and obey Him. Doing what was right would bring prosperity to Judah and respect from neighboring countries.

Proverbs 15:33 declares, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom." Those who fear Him act with wisdom; they walk faithfully before Him as they obey His commands.—Albert Lee

God dwells in light and holiness,  
In splendor and in might;  
And godly fear of His great power  
Can help us do what's right.  
—D. Deut Haan

**The right kind of fear will keep us from doing wrong.**