



Proverbs - Chapter Fifteen

III Proverbs 10:1-22:16 - Wise Sayings of Solomon (continues)

Summary of Chapter Fifteen

A gentle answer turns away wrath. The eyes of the Lord are everywhere. Plans fail for lack of counsel. The Lord hears the righteous.

Introduction to Proverbs 15:1-17

This is a series of proverbs dealing primarily with the use of the tongue, submission to instruction, and God's governance of the world.

- ¹ A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath. When people come to someone in wrath, they are often tempted to be harsh in response. Wisdom shows the value of a soft answer, one without sharp edges or points. That kind of answer can actually turn away the anger of the person.

A harsh word stirs up anger. A harsh response to wrath will often only stir up more anger. It may feel good in the moment, but ends up making the situation worse, not better.

A harsh word is literally 'word of pain,' that is, a word that is hurtful. Words wisely chosen promote calm interactions rather than provoking anger (v.1), they instruct by example (v.2), and they encourage rather than discourage (v.4).

Solomon's own son, King Rehoboam, was advised to speak kindly to his people when they had a genuine grievance against their high taxation: <<*They answered him, 'If you will be kind to this people and please them, and speak*

good words to them, then they will be your servants for ever’>> (2 Chronicles 10:7), but he chose to ignore this advice and it cost him the majority of his kingdom and split the Israelites as a united people, leading to generations of civil war and ultimately exile from the Promised Land.

² The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge,
but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

Proverbs 15:2

The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge. The wise man or woman will show their right use of knowledge by the words they speak or write: <<***The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom***>> (Proverbs 10:31a). The words from their tongue or their mind demonstrate their wisdom. Adam Clarke commented, “This is very difficult to know: - when to speak, and when to be silent; what to speak, and what to leave unspoken; the manner that is best and most suitable to the occasion, the subject, the circumstances, and the persons. Even wise counsel may be foolishly given.”

The mouths of fools pour out folly. A fool will be revealed by their words. It is not enough for a man or woman to claim they have wisdom in their heart or mind; what they say proves either their wisdom or folly. This is confirmed elsewhere: <<***There they are, bellowing with their mouths, with sharp words on their lips – for ‘Who’, they think, ‘will hear us?’***>> (Psalm 59:7), and: <<***Words spoken by the wise bring them favour, but the lips of fools consume them***>> (Ecclesiastes 10:12).

³ The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the Lord are in every place. Wisdom understands that people are always under the eye of God. He sees people in every place, even when they are hidden to human eyes: <<***For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the entire earth, to strengthen those whose heart is true to him***>> (2 Chronicles 16:9a), <<***And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account***>> (Hebrews 4:13). The eyes of the Lord is a major theme in Proverbs: the Lord knows the actions and hearts of all, so he is neither pleased with nor fooled by one who offers sacrifices while continuing in the way of wickedness.

Keeping watch on the evil and the good. God takes note of both the evil and the good. He will deal with the evil according to his righteous judgement, and he will bless and reward the good. Among men, evil is often unpunished and good is often

unrewarded - but God sees and notes all: <<*For his eyes are upon the ways of mortals, and he sees all their steps*>> (Job 34:21), <<*For human ways are under the eyes of the Lord, and he examines all their paths*>> (Proverbs 5:21), and: <<*For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my presence, nor is their iniquity concealed from my sight*>> (Jeremiah 16:17). It could be said that God has night vision and sees all that happens under the cover of darkness. Therefore, in the fullness of God's time all wrong doing will be appropriately punished and those who chose to follow his ways will be rewarded with eternal life in his presence.

- ⁴ A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

Proverbs 15:4

A gentle tongue is a tree of life. Good words are like a tree that continually brings life from its shade and fruit. Words have the power to do far more good than people may often think.

But perverseness in it breaks the spirit. If someone's tongue is perverse, i.e. twisted, crooked, or corrupt instead of wholesome, their words will break the spirit of others: <<*For there is no truth in their mouths; their hearts are destruction; their throats are open graves; they flatter with their tongues*>> (Psalm 5:9). Words also have the power to do far more harm than people often think, realise or intend.

A gentle tongue; but perverseness. A gentle, rightly spoken word will often bring life and healing, but gentle speech can also be used to mask perverse intent – crushing the spirit, damaging morale, and causing injury.

- ⁵ A fool despises a parent's instruction,
but the one who heeds admonition is prudent.

Proverbs 15:5

A fool despises a parent's instruction. Proverbs is written as advice from a father to his children. A fool would despise the wisdom that comes from a godly parent and God's word. The description of a fool who despises his father's instruction is complemented by that of v.20 and the foolish man who 'despises his mother.' In Proverbs, the nature of one's response to wise parental instruction is representative of and formative in the paths of wisdom or folly, respectively as confirmed in Proverbs 1:8, 4:1, 6:20, and 13:1. The related references in this chapter to how a person responds to reproof should also be carefully noted.

The one who heeds admonition is prudent. Learning wisdom is more than learning facts; it is to receive correction, as already seen: <<*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge*>> (Proverbs 12:1a). If what is learned only confirms what is already known, it probably is not wisdom that is being learnt.

- ⁶ In the house of the righteous there is much treasure,
but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.

Proverbs 15:6

In the house of the righteous there is much treasure. Because wisdom and godliness tend to bring prosperity, this is generally true of material treasure: <<*I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries*>> (Proverbs 8:20-21). Thankfully, the treasure in the house of the righteous is not only material; the greater treasure is spiritual. Much treasure is the expected outcome for the righteous who walk in the paths of honesty, diligence, hard work, and the fear of the Lord, which is the path of wisdom described in Proverbs; however, the word of caution in v.16 should also be considered.

But trouble befalls the income of the wicked. Even what the wicked man or woman earns can be a problem. Instead of treasure, they have trouble: <<*The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin*>> (Proverbs 10:16).

- ⁷ The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the minds of fools.

Proverbs 15:7

The lips of the wise spread knowledge. The wise man or woman will spread knowledge and wisdom. It is within them and will be given to others by the words they say or write.

Not so the minds of fools. Since wisdom is not in the heart of the fool, it will not be on their lips either. They are unable to spread the blessing of wisdom to others through their words, for: <<*On the lips of one who has understanding wisdom is found*>> (Proverbs 10:13a).

The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the minds of fools. Similar to v.2, this verse encourages people to be careful in what they say and to whom they listen, therefore: <<*Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not find words of knowledge*>> (Proverbs 14:7).

Introduction to Proverbs 15:8-9

The sacrifice of the wicked (v.8a) is hollow, while the prayer of the upright (v.8b) – i.e. his public worship as David wrote: ‘Supplication for Help against Enemies’ (Psalm 86 title), and: <<*these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples*>> (Isaiah 56:7), as a part of a life that pursues righteousness (v.9b) – is pleasing to the Lord.

- ⁸ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,
but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Proverbs 15:8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Without godliness, religious ritual such as sacrifice can be an abomination to God. As Samuel said to Saul: <<*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams*>> (1 Samuel 15:22).

The prayer of the upright is his delight. The godly man or woman delights God with their prayer. The wicked one goes to the trouble and expense of offering a sacrifice, but it does not delight God in the same way as the prayer of the upright pleases him: <<*We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will*>> (John 9:31).

- ⁹ The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,
but he loves the one who pursues righteousness.

Proverbs 15:9

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. God rejects the religious ceremonies of the wicked (v.8); therefore God considers the sinful life of the wicked as an abomination, irrespective of their futile attempts to reconcile their ways to him without real intention to change their heart towards him. Elsewhere it is written: <<*There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family*>> (Proverbs 6:16-19).

He loves the one who pursues righteousness. The one who lives and follows righteousness does so in surrender and love to God, and they do what Jude advised; they keep themselves in the love of God: <<*keep yourselves in the love*>>

of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life>> (Jude 21).

Introduction to Proverbs 15:10-12

These verses concern divine judgement and submission to correction. Both the apostate (v.10a) and the obstinate (v.10b) face judgement. Verse 12, like v.10b, concerns reproof and the fact that some people will not accept it; in fact, they do all they can to avoid those who will offer them wise counsel. Verse 11, similar to v.3, reminds the reader that God judges all.

¹⁰ There is severe discipline for one who forsakes the way,
but one who hates a rebuke will die.

Proverbs 15:10

There is severe discipline for one who forsakes the way. When a man or woman departs from God's path, i.e. the way, in mercy God will send them harsh discipline. This discipline is a warning and opportunity to change one's ways: <<*This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways"*>> (Haggai 1:7 NIV).

But one who hates a rebuke will die. The one who rejects God's loving and merciful correction seals his own fate and sets his own course: <<*therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices. For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them*>> (Proverbs 1:31-32). They are on the way of death and will remain there.

¹¹ Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord,
how much more human hearts!

Proverbs 15:11

Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord. These two destinies are symbolically pictured as persons who are before the Lord to serve his purpose. The sobering truth is that God has a plan and a purpose for both Hell and Destruction. Sheol and Abaddon represent the remote underworld and all the mighty powers that reside there; refer to Job 26:6, Psalm 139:8, Proverbs 27:20, Amos 9:2, Revelation 9:11, and the associated comments.

How much more human hearts! If God has a plan and a purpose for those two destinies, it is much truer that he has a plan and purpose for humanity: <<*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope*>> (Jeremiah 29:11).

Charles Spurgeon commented, “And not only so, but we have known cases in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge with their elbow, because they have got a smart hit, and I have heard them say, when they went out, ‘That is just what I said to you when I went in at the door.’ ‘Ah !’ says the other, ‘I was thinking of the very thing he said, and he told me of it.’ Now, if God thus proves his own Omniscience by helping his poor, ignorant servant, to state the very thing, thought and deed, when he did not know it, then it must remain decisively proved that God does know everything that is secret, because we see he tells it to men, and enables them to tell it to others.”

¹² Scoffers do not like to be rebuked;
they will not go to the wise.

Proverbs 15:12

Scoffers do not like to be rebuked. Because the fool and the scoffer hate correction, they will hate and not love the one who brings it: <<*The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters*>> (1 John 3:10).

They will not go to the wise. In rejecting correction, the scoffer rejects wisdom and will remain trapped in his folly.

Introduction to Proverbs 15:13-15

These proverbs focus on the heart. A cheerful face indicates a positive attitude toward life; this comes about when the inner self is healthy (v.13a). Such a person has inner joy all the time (v.15b). However, circumstances, whether internal (v.13b) or external (v.15a), can rob a person of tranquillity. The key to gaining a joyful heart is in v.14: seek knowledge through God’s wisdom and word.

¹³ A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance,
but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.

Proverbs 15:13

A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance. If someone has happiness and joy, it should be seen on their face. They should have a cheerful countenance: <<*On the day of prosperity be joyful, and on the day of adversity consider; God has made the one as well as the other, so that mortals may not find out anything that will come after them*>> (Ecclesiastes 7:14).

But by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken. Those who have deep sorrow of heart will display their broken spirit. Christians can and should observe both the happy

and the sad with understanding and sympathy for both the merry heart and those with sorrow of heart.

- ¹⁴ The mind of one who has understanding seeks knowledge,
but the mouths of fools feed on folly.

Proverbs 15:14

The mind of one who has understanding seeks knowledge. The scoffer avoids wisdom's correction (v.12), but the one with understanding and wisdom in his or her heart will seek after even more wisdom: <<*An intelligent mind acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge*>> (Proverbs 18:15).

But the mouths of fools feed on folly. In this sense, the normal course of humanity is that the wise become wiser and the fools feed on more foolishness.

- ¹⁵ All the days of the poor are hard,
but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.

Proverbs 15:15

All the days of the poor are hard. To live in days of affliction is to know the trouble and evil of life and this fallen world. Job had compassion for such people: <<*Did I not weep for those whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?*>> (Job 30:25), and David wrote: <<*Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him*>> (Psalm 41:1 ESV).

But a cheerful heart has a continual feast. When a merry heart instead of an afflicted heart marks a person's attitude towards life, there is a sense of continual bounty and enjoyment.

Introduction to Proverbs 15:16-17

These verses help establish a proper value system for forming the kind of heart described in vv.13-15. One who 'seeks knowledge' (v.14) recognises that contentment is found not primarily in external circumstances but in a life governed by the fear of the Lord (v.16a). To gain wealth through trouble (v.16b) or attended by hatred (v.17b) is to 'feed on folly' (v.14b), which afflicts the heart and crushes the spirit.

- ¹⁶ Better is a little with the fear of the Lord
than great treasure and trouble with it.

Proverbs 15:16

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord. Especially in this materialistic and consumer age, people constantly want more and they fear living with little. Yet life is better with little if lived with reverence and honour to God, i.e. the fear of the Lord.

Than great treasure and trouble with it. To have great treasure and great trouble is not a good life. Because the fear of the Lord spares believers from much trouble, it is better to have that than great treasure. Of course, there are those who fear the Lord for a different reason and rightly so: <<*You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder*>> (James 2:19).

17 Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is
than a fatted ox and hatred with it.

Proverbs 15:17

Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is. The presence of love makes up for a lot. People can live on a humble diet, but can never flourish without love: <<*I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father. But now, dear lady, I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning – you must walk in it*>> (2 John 4-6).

Than a fatted ox and hatred with it. One may enjoy the extravagant abundance of a fatted calf, but hatred will spoil it all. Nothing really makes up for a lack of love.

Introduction to Proverbs 15:18-33

This is another extended section of proverbs that, like vv.1-17, begins with a proverb on avoiding provocative, argumentative language and ends with a reference to ‘the fear of the Lord.’ The sections also share references to the folly of despising parental instruction and reproof on the grounds that it is the Lord who knows and judges in these matters.

Verses 19-24 are framed by references to the path of the upright (v.19b) and the path of life (v.24a), which are contrasted with the way of a lazy person (v.19a) and the end of such a path, i.e. to route into Hell or Sheol (v.24b). Verses 20-23 illustrate the wisdom of heeding instruction and counsel; despising such things is like rejoicing in what is actually folly.

18 Those who are hot-tempered stir up strife,
but those who are slow to anger calm contention.

Proverbs 15:18

Those who are hot-tempered stir up strife. When strife is stirred up, it does not happen by accident. Usually the cause is a wrathful man or woman who stirs up strife: <<*One given to anger stirs up strife, and the hothead causes much transgression*>> (Proverbs 29:22).

Those who are slow to anger calm contention. The wise man or woman is slow to anger, and they have a way of bringing peace and smoothing over contention instead of stirring up strife. Abraham did just that when he calmed the dispute between his herdsmen and those of his nephew Lot when it appeared there was insufficient pasture for both men's herds and flocks: <<*Then Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left'*>> (Genesis 13:8-9).

19 The way of the lazy is overgrown with thorns,
but the path of the upright is a level highway.

Proverbs 15:19

The way of the lazy is overgrown with thorns. Those who are lazy may not see it in themselves. Often they may more easily see the result of their laziness, which is a life filled with constant trouble and irritations (like a hedge of thorns). Because of his past actions and resultant lack of God's blessing, the life of the sluggard has become like a hedge of thorns, which can be traversed only with great pain and effort. Therefore, the wise avoid them through their endeavours: <<*Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; the cautious will keep far from them*>> (Proverbs 22:5).

Clarke observed, "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."

Many times, Proverbs provides a reminder of what serious sin laziness is:

- Laziness is theft - such a person lives off the work of others.
- Laziness is selfishness - such people live for themselves and their own comfort.
- Laziness is neglect of duty - such a person does not do what they should.

In his sermon titled 'The Hedge of Thorns and the Plain Way' Charles Spurgeon used v.19 in a spiritual sense, speaking to those who are spiritually lazy: "The spiritual sluggard does not believe after that practical fashion. He says, 'It is true;' but he acts as if it were false. He is too much a sluggard to become an infidel; he is too lethargic to argue against the truth which condemns him; he nods assent, it is the nod of sleep." Therefore:

- His spiritual life is lived as if he were asleep.
- He once gave an effort to forsake sin, but did not follow it through.
- His spiritual life is a hard way, full of thorns.
- Spiritual things seem long and dreary.
- The Christian life is full of thorny perplexities, problems, and misery.
- He may find that his way to heaven is blocked.

The path of the upright is a level highway. The wise man or woman - upright and hard working before the Lord - does not know the same constant troubles and irritations of life that the lazy man must endure. Life for the upright is much more smooth and efficient in its progress. Spurgeon added, "Unthinking persons suppose that the sluggard lives a happy life, and travels an easy road. It is not so. Labour of a holy sort has ten thousand times more joy in it than purposeless leisure."

²⁰ A wise child makes a glad father,
but the foolish despise their mothers.

Proverbs 15:20

A wise child makes a glad father, which is a repeat of Proverbs 10:1b. A father has gladness and joy in the wise son, both for the blessing of knowing there is good for the son, and glad because it vindicates the father's trust in God and training of the son in wisdom.

But the foolish despise their mothers. The foolish man or woman brings disgrace to his parents, and their rejection of the parent's wisdom shows they despise their mother and father. On the fool who despises his mother, see the complementary proverb of v.5.

²¹ Folly is a joy to one who has no sense,
but a person of understanding walks straight ahead.

Proverbs 15:21

Folly is a joy to one who has no sense. For the fool, his or her foolishness is something to take pleasure in, since they: <<**rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil**>> (Proverbs 2:14). They only hate their folly when they have to pay the bitter consequences of it. Otherwise, it is joy to them. The

Hebrew noun translated as joy is repeated in v.23 referring to an ‘apt answer’ and is related to the verb ‘makes glad’ in v.20. The interrelated vocabulary helps make the point that the ‘wise child’ (v.20a) finds joy in a fitting response to tense situations, instruction, and the need of others for a good word, rather than in folly, i.e. despising wise instruction and ignoring counsel.

A person of understanding walks straight ahead. With wisdom, life is ordered and upright. The wise man or woman finds joy in what is good and upright.

22 Without counsel, plans go wrong,
but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 15:22

Without counsel, plans go wrong. The difference between success and failure can often be found in those who plan with or without counsel. Wisdom understands that other people also have wisdom.

But with many advisers they succeed. Normally there is more insight from many people than from one. Getting many eyes to see and many minds to think about plans can often see those plans established and successful. The gift of discernment should be sought in choosing who can give wise counsel, as David did: <<*I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me*>> (Psalm 16:7).

23 To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone,
and a word in season, how good it is!

Proverbs 15:23

To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone. Right and wise words have the potential and power to bring great joy to one’s self and to others, for: <<*From the fruit of the mouth one is filled with good things*>> (Proverbs 12:14a).

A word in season, how good it is! The value in a good word is often not only found in its content, but also in its timing: <<*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver*>> (Proverbs 25:11). The right word at the right time, i.e. in due season, is a powerful force for good.

An apt answer or **good word** likely applies as much to a fitting response to receiving instruction as it does to giving counsel to another.

24 For the wise the path of life leads upwards,
in order to avoid Sheol below.

Proverbs 15:24

For the wise the path of life leads upwards. One of the great benefits for a life of wisdom is that, generally, life gets better as the years go on. The progress of their life winds upward and not down; they move <<*from one degree of glory to another*>> according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18.

In order to avoid Sheol below. The progress of a wise life is not just in what it heads toward (upward), but also in what it moves away from. Heaven becomes closer and hell becomes a further distance behind.

Introduction to Proverbs 15:25-33

These proverbs are framed by a contrast: the Lord opposes the proud (v.25a), but is near those who act in humility born out of the fear of the Lord (v.33). Verses 24-32 expand on this by illustrating the pride of the wicked as represented in their: thoughts (v.26a), greed for unjust gain (v.27a), harmful speech (v.28b), and refusal to listen to reproof (v.32a). These are the opposite of the way of the righteous represented in: gracious words (v.26b and v.28a), maintaining justice (v.27b), and heeding instruction (v.31 and v.32b). At the centre of this section is the further reminder that the Lord is far from the wicked, but hears the prayer of the righteous (v.29).

²⁵ The Lord tears down the house of the proud,
but maintains the widow's boundaries.

Proverbs 15:25

The Lord tears down the house of the proud. Those who choose pride set themselves against God: <<*But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'*>> (James 4:6), and: <<*In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'*>> (1 Peter 5:5), and God will set himself against them. They and their house will be targets of God's destruction.

But maintains the widow's boundaries. The widow is the picture and representative of a humble, needy person who looks to and depends on God. She represents the opposite of the proud, and God takes special care of those who humbly depend on him. The story of Naboth in 1 Kings Chapter 21 illuminates the saying; but it is relevant to all kinds of exploitation.

²⁶ Evil plans are an abomination to the Lord,
but gracious words are pure.

Proverbs 15:26

Evil plans are an abomination to the Lord. Wickedness does not begin in the actions; it begins in the heart and thoughts. There is certainly a sense in which a person's actions are more important than their thoughts, but their actions begin in their thoughts, so what they think is also important to God even if: <<***The Lord knows our thoughts, that they are but an empty breath***>> (Psalm 94:11). Derek Kidner commented, "Thoughts (AV, RSV), in the first line, mean 'plans', and the contrasted language of the second line emphasises the fact that such plans are hateful to God even before they issue in words or deeds."

But gracious words are pure. Solomon knew that a person's thoughts would be ultimately revealed by their words. God hears the words of the pure and is pleased, contrasting with the thoughts of the wicked.

²⁷ Those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their households,
but those who hate bribes will live.

Proverbs 15:27

Those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their households. Many of those who are greedy for gain justify it with the excuse that they do it for their family. This is not wise, because being greedy for gain will ultimately bring trouble to one's family.

But those who hate bribes will live. The one who hates bribes is set as a contrast to the one who is greedy for gain. The greedy man or woman will do anything for more money and loves bribes if they can bring more money, power or ungodly influence: <<***You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right***>> (Exodus 23:8), and: <<***Surely oppression makes the wise foolish, and a bribe corrupts the heart***>> (Ecclesiastes 7:7). God's blessing is on men and women of integrity who hate bribes and other dishonest ways of doing business.

²⁸ The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer,
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil.

Proverbs 15:28

The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer. The idea behind the phrase 'how to answer' is simply of what one says. God's righteous ones - men and women of wisdom - think beforehand what they should and will say. Their words are not based only on impulse and reaction.

The mouth of the wicked pours out evil. There is little self control when it comes to the mouth of the wicked: <<*If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless*>> (James 1:26), and: <<*So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue – a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so*>> (James 3:5-10). Evil words and ideas simply pour out from their mouth, with no wise thought beforehand.

²⁹ The Lord is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Proverbs 15:29

The Lord is far from the wicked. Men and women who are wicked do their best to separate themselves from God, and in this sense God is far from them. There is another sense, especially in light of the work of Jesus, in which God draws near to the wicked to offer redemption and wisdom: <<*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us*>> (Romans 5:8).

He hears the prayer of the righteous. God draws near to those who draw near to him: <<*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded*>> (James 4:8). The prayer of the righteous man or woman is always effective before God: <<*Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective*>> (James 5:16).

³⁰ The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
and good news refreshes the body.

Proverbs 15:30

The light of the eyes rejoices the heart. The eyes are something like a lamp to the whole body: <<*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*>> (Matthew 6:22-23). When the eyes are full of light it brings

happiness and contentment to the heart and the whole body. Kidner concluded, “The light of the eyes may perhaps refer to the radiant face of a friend (confirmed in Proverbs 16:15); if so, the two lines of the proverb will be speaking of the heart-warming effect that persons and facts, respectively, can bring.”

Good news refreshes the body. Good news cheers the spirit and brings health to the body. The ultimate fulfilment of this is the Gospel - the good news, the good report of what God did in Jesus Christ to demonstrate his love for humankind and to rescue them from sin and spiritual death: *<<Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you – unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me>>* (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

³¹ The ear that heeds wholesome admonition
will lodge among the wise.

Proverbs 15:31

The ear that heeds wholesome admonition will lodge among the wise. Not every ear will listen to correction, but there is blessing to those that do. Also, life has its own rebukes for those who have the ear to hear. In general, life rewards wisdom and rebukes folly. One of the more important aspects of wisdom is the simply ability to hear and learn: *<<Whoever corrects a scoffer wins abuse; whoever rebukes the wicked gets hurt. A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you; the wise, when rebuked, will love you. Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain in learning>>* (Proverbs 9:7-9). If people cannot learn, they can never abide among the wise. Clarke added, “That receives it gratefully and obeys it. ‘Advice is for them that will take it,’ so says one of our own old proverbs; and the meaning here is nearly the same.”

³² Those who ignore instruction despise themselves,
but those who heed admonition gain understanding.

Proverbs 15:32

Those who ignore instruction despise themselves. To refuse wisdom and the instruction that comes from wisdom is to hate one's own soul. Those who reject wisdom hurt many people, but most of all they hurt themselves.

Those who heed admonition gain understanding. To hear and heed rebuke is to get and grow in wisdom, to receive true understanding. Receiving rebuke is rarely pleasant, but it is worth it for the wisdom it brings: *<<It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools>>* (Ecclesiastes 7:5). On those who heed admonition Church of England preacher and theologian Charles Bridges commented, "Correction is infinitely preferable to the poison of sweet flattery."

³³ The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom,
and humility goes before honour.

Proverbs 15:33

The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom. A common and foundational theme in Proverbs is repeated here. Wisdom begins in the fear of the Lord, and true wisdom flows from it.

Humility goes before honour. An essential aspect of the fear of the Lord is humility. To properly fear God is to see and recognise him as he really is: *<<All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word>>* (Isaiah 66:2). When people see and recognise who they really are, humility comes.