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PROVERBS 15: 1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

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The soft answer. Useful correction. Stability of the righteous. The contented mind. The slothful man. The fool. The covetous. The impious. The wicked opposed to the righteous; to the diligent; and to the man who fears the Lord.

Verse 1

A soft answer - 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.

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PROVERBS 15: 2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of fools gush out folly.

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Verse 2

Useth knowledge aright - 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. All these are difficulties, often even to the wisest men. Even wise counsel may be foolishly given.

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PROVERBS 15: 3 The LORD's eyes are everywhere, keeping watch on the evil and the good.

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Verse 3

The eyes of the Lord are in every place - He not only sees all things, by his omnipresence, but his providence is everywhere. And if the consideration that his eye is in every place, have a tendency to appal those whose hearts are not right before him, and who seek for privacy, that they may commit iniquity; yet the other consideration, that his providence is everywhere, has a great tendency to encourage the upright, and all who may be in perilous or distressing circumstances.

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PROVERBS 15: 4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but deceit in it crushes the spirit.

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Verse 4

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life - Here again is an allusion to the paradisiacal tree, עץ חיים etc chaiyim, "the tree of lives."

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PROVERBS 15: 5 A fool despises his father's correction, but he who heeds reproof shows prudence.

PROVERBS 15: 6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure, but the income of the wicked brings trouble.

PROVERBS 15: 7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so with the heart of fools.

PROVERBS 15: 8 The sacrifice made by the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

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Verse 8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination - Even the most sedulous attendance on the ordinances of God, and performance of the ceremonies of religion, is an abomination to the Lord, if the heart be not right with him, and the observance do not flow from a principle of pure devotion. No religious acts will do in place of holiness to the Lord.

The prayer of the upright is his delight - What a motive to be upright; and what a motive to the upright to pray! But who is the upright? The man who is weary of sin, and sincerely desires the salvation of God; as well as he who has already received a measure of that salvation. Hence it is said in the next verse, "He loveth him that followeth after righteousness."

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PROVERBS 15: 9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but he loves him who follows after righteousness.

PROVERBS 15: 10 There is stern discipline for one who forsakes the way: whoever hates reproof shall die.

PROVERBS 15: 11 Sheol and Abaddon are before the LORD— how much more then the hearts of the children of men!

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Verse 11

Hell and destruction - שְׁאוֹל וְאַבְדּוֹן sheol vaabaddon. Hades, the invisible world, the place of separate spirits till the resurrection: and Abaddon, the place of torment; are ever under the eye and control of the Lord.

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PROVERBS 15: 12 A scoffer doesn't love to be reproofed; he will not go to the wise.

PROVERBS 15: 13 A glad heart makes a cheerful face; but an aching heart breaks the spirit.

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Verse 13

By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken - Every kind of sorrow worketh death, but that which is the offspring of true repentance. This alone is healthful to the soul. The indulgence of a disposition to sighing tends to destroy life. Every deep sigh throws off a portion of the vital energy.

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PROVERBS 15: 14 The heart of one who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.

PROVERBS 15: 15 All the days of the afflicted are wretched, but one who has a cheerful heart enjoys a continual feast.

PROVERBS 15: 16 Better is little, with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure with trouble.

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Verse 16

Better is little with the fear of the Lord - Because where the fear of God is, there are moderation and contentment of spirit.

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PROVERBS 15: 17 Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a fattened calf with hatred.

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Verse 17

Better is a dinner of herbs - Great numbers of indigent Hindoos subsist wholly on herbs, fried in oil, and mixed with their rice.

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PROVERBS 15: 18 A wrathful man stirs up contention, but one who is slow to anger appeases strife.

PROVERBS 15: 19 The way of the sluggard is like a thorn patch, but the path of the upright is a highway.

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Verse 19

The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns - 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.

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PROVERBS 15: 20 A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.

PROVERBS 15: 21 Folly is joy to one who is void of wisdom, but a man of understanding keeps his way straight.

PROVERBS 15: 22 Where there is no counsel, plans fail; but in a multitude of counsellors they are established.

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Verse 22

But in the multitude of counsellors - See note on Pro 11:13 (note). But רב יועצים rob yoatsim might be translated, chief or master of the council, the prime minister.

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PROVERBS 15: 23 Joy comes to a man with the reply of his mouth. How good is a word at the right time!

PROVERBS 15: 24 The path of life leads upward for the wise, to keep him from going downward to Sheol.

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Verse 24

The way of life is above to the wise - There is a treble antithesis here:

1. The way of the wise, and that of the fool.
  2. The one is above, the other below.
  3. The one is of life, the other is of death.
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PROVERBS 15: 25 The LORD will uproot the house of the proud, but he will keep the widow's borders intact.

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Verse 25

The house of the proud - Families of this description are seldom continued long. The Lord hates pride; and those that will not be humble he will destroy.

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PROVERBS 15: 26 The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked, but the thoughts of the pure are pleasing.

PROVERBS 15: 27 He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.

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Verse 27

He that is greedy of gain - He who will be rich; troubleth his own house - he is a torment to himself and his family by his avariciousness and penury, and a curse to those with whom he deals.

But he that hateth gifts - Whatever is given to pervert judgment.

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PROVERBS 15: 28 The heart of the righteous weighs answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes out evil.

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Verse 28

The heart of the righteous studieth to answer - His tongue never runs before his wit, he never speaks rashly, and never unadvisedly; because he studies - ponders, his thoughts and his words.

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PROVERBS 15: 29 The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

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Verse 29

The Lord is far from the wicked - He is neither near to hear, nor near to help.

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PROVERBS 15: 30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart. Good news gives health to the bones.

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Verse 30

The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart - Nature and art are continually placing before our view a multitude of the most resplendent images, each of which is calculated to give pleasure. The man who has a correct judgment, and an accurate eye, may not only amuse, but instruct himself endlessly, by the beauties of nature and art.

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PROVERBS 15: 31 The ear that listens to reproof lives, and will be at home among the wise.

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Verse 31

The ear that heareth the reproof - 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.

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PROVERBS 15: 32 He who refuses correction despises his own soul, but he who listens to reproof gets understanding.

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Verse 32

Despiseth his own soul - That is constructively; for if the instruction lead to the preservation of life and soul, he that neglects or despises it throws all as much in the way of danger as if he actually hated himself.

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PROVERBS 15: 33 The fear of the LORD teaches wisdom. Before honour is humility.

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Verse 33

The fear of the Lord - See note on Pro 1:7. Much is spoken concerning this fear;

1. It is the beginning of wisdom.
2. It is also the beginning of knowledge.
3. It is the instruction of wisdom. Wisdom derives its most important lessons from the fear of God. He who fears God much, is well taught.

And 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.