

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

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.

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.

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.

Verse 4

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life - Here again is an allusion to the paradisiacal tree, *ץַיִּים* (*ets chaiyim*), "the tree of lives."

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."

Verse 11

Hell and destruction - *שְׁאוֹל* (*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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Verse 22

But in the multitude of counsellors - See note on Proverbs 11:13 (note). But *robyoatsim* might be translated, chief or master of the council, the prime minister.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Verse 29

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

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.

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.

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.

Verse 33

The fear of the Lord - See note on Proverbs 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

Adam Clarke Commentary Proverbs 15

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.