



12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise. 13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. 14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. 15 All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. 16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. 17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. 18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. 19 The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain. 20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. 21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly. (Prov 15:12-21)

These verses of Proverbs 15 continue the reinforcement of character strengths, and flaws, of the previous verses. There is one sure thing about God's Word – Truth is repetitively revealed throughout so that a studious believer cannot miss those things essential for his learning and growth. Does not repetition aid recall? Repetition is like a nail of wisdom struck time and again by the Hammer of God's Word. The more times the nail is struck, the deeper it sinks into the wood of our souls until it holds fast the truth that God desires to impart.

12 *A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.*
There is an old Arab proverb which has the appeal of truth: "If you are friends with my enemy, you, too, are my enemy!" We are defined by the friendships we make. Are we friends of worldly people? *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* (James 4:4) How can a believer in Christ take into his bosom the friendship of one who lives in open opposition to his best Friend – Jesus? There is one Friend, above all others, with whom we MUST establish a friendship realizing that it was He who loved us first. *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.* (Prov 18:24) If we are to keep that Friend, we must return the friendship. Do we not reciprocate so lofty a friendship? If Jesus has elected to be our Friend, should we not own Him as our best friend and try to be His best friend? Since all that God commands is for our benefit, we must accept His Commandments as a blessing and obey. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* (John 15:14) The kisses of worldly friends are contaminated with the germs of death. The criticisms of a faithful friend are better than the praises of the world. *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

(Prov 27:6)

13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. Remember the many times that Jesus restored sight to the blind, or healed the lepers, or revived the daughter of Jairus? Do you remember His often saying, following each miracle, ***“Go and tell no man!”***? (Matthew 8:4, Mark 7:36, Luke 5:14, Luke 8:56, et al) Did Jesus really expect a boy, blind from birth, to tell no man (even parents) that he could now see? Could he, or the leper, or the dumb, have concealed such a wonderful miracle of healing? I think not. I believe Jesus was giving an example of the tremendous blessing of salvation and healing – how we are absolutely unable to keep secrets concerning our fellowship and blessings from God. That which rules our hearts cannot be hidden away – even if commanded by God. So our hearts, being merry, will be reflected in our outward appearance. But if our hearts are full of sorrow and grief, how can our appearance not reflect that condition? Our faces are down and our shoulders sag. Our step is tentative, and our direction is uncertain. General George Patton believed that a soldier would act more like a soldier if his military appearance and bearing reflected the pride of a soldier. I believe he was right. Our dress and demeanor reflect what is in our hearts. This gives me cause for concern for the sloppy and unkempt appearance and dress of modern youth in America.

14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. When once we have tasted the mineral rich waters of the mountain spring, the tap water of the city will never again suffice. We crave for that spring water just as did David ***“crave the water from the well by the gate of Bethlehem.”*** (2 Samuel 23:15) Goodness always craves more of the same. Knowledge is never satisfied with its own level, but, unlike water, seeks the higher plane. Unfortunately, the same is true of the foolish words and thoughts of the fool. It hungers to remove all doubt that it feeds on foolishness. One of my great disappointments in so-called country music is that it feeds on the slaughter of the English language as if that were a badge of honor. Whatever language we are required to speak, should we not speak it with accomplished fluency? The bar room lyrics are nothing to brag about, either.

15 All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. The poor peasant of old Russia was far happier than the wealthy landowners of that land. Leo Tolstoi reveals much of that truth in his writings – having seen both sides of the issue. Affliction has many faces. The slow and tasty poisons of the world are killing us cell by cell. Greed, jealousy, envy, hatred, lust – all of these give no pleasure but only unseen pain. It shortens the life on earth and forbids the life in Heaven. But the man who places love and kindness above all else has no remorse for anything in his life. He may not be rich in the world, but he is wealthy in the joy and riches of Heaven. He sleeps well!

16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. A friend of mine (now deceased) in a nearby town had an engraving on the wall of his library which read: ***“He who has Jesus Christ, and much wealth, has no more than the man who has Christ alone!”*** This truth is difficult to fathom with a worldly mind, but a mind that comprehends, even partially, the Mind of Christ, will understand this truth. Christ is All-in-All. A little fear of the Lord will lead to a righteous and safe path, but fear of those things that trouble the man of wealth will afflict the heart and shorten the life.

17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred

therewith. A table spread with roots and leaves is better in a loving home than a Mercedes in the garage of a hateful man. Wealth cannot buy joy any more than it can buy friendship. (Something our Federal government might look into).

18 *A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.* Suppose our God were like a wrathful man. Who would be spared His wrath for the evil He would see every day? He has known our weaknesses and frailty, and He has, like a man slow to anger, made allowances for our overcoming them through the provision made through Jesus Christ. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* (Psalms 103:8) But we do not tempt the patience of a patient man, do we? We should neither tempt the patience of a gracious God. *He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.* (Psalms 103:8) This last verse from Psalms gives me most cause for pause for my Country. God will not forever withhold His Hand of Judgment against a wicked and adulterous generation. His warnings have been ignored. What next will He do? Do you wonder why America has ventured so far from the Will of the Father? Look around you at the silence of the shepherds who fear to speak out on the sins of the day! On all our nations' transgressions, their silence shouts volumes about their lack of courage and Godly indignation over sin.

19 *The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.* A hedge of thorns is a very difficult morass to navigate. A slight rub against either side of the path brings a thorny rebuke. The slothful man spends more energy in avoiding doing the right thing than required to DO the right thing. Our national government has built up a hedge of thorns and red tape for the created welfare class in our day. There seems to be no escape for these poor victims who actually believe they are being helped by the very power that enslaves them. With the righteous, there are no thorns or red tape – all is above board and plain to be seen.

20 *A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.* Paternal pride and joy over a wise and dutiful son or daughter cannot be measured. That son or daughter will cause the father great joy and they will love and honor their father and mother; however, the fool will not only despise the rule of his father, but will even despise the mother whose love bore him into the world. How could any hate his own mother? The fool is not playing with a full deck of cards – he is able to hate the hand that feeds him.

21 *Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.* A wicked folly is observed in Detroit every year on the day preceding All Saints Day as foolish hoodlums set fires to their own city. They call their little celebration "Devil's Day." Sometimes, entire blocks are destroyed. They thereby destroy the very facilities that provide their own food and clothing. "Devil's Day" indeed! The spark and excitement of a single moment has greater value to them than the convenience of shopping in a safe and plentiful environment. The person of understanding thinks the matter through a bit better than believing it good to destroy the neighborhood supermarket or department store. He will attempt to be upright in his neighborhood as well as in his duty to God. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* (Prov 3:6) I heard a young, articulate black lady yesterday say, "I wish all of our black children would simply read the Book of Proverbs." So do I, but more than just the black children – I wish children and adults of all colors and stripes would read, and digest, the Book of Proverbs. Do you, friend?