



## [Ecclesiastes 7:15-17](#)

(15) All *things* I have seen in the days of my vanity; there is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked one who prolongs *life* in his wickedness.

(16) Do not be righteous over much, neither make yourself overly wise; why should you destroy yourself? (17) Do not be overly wicked, and do not be a fool; why should you die before your time?

*A Faithful Version*

Ecclesiastes 7:15 presents a Christian with a paradox about Christian living. A *paradox* is a circumstance, statement, activity, or conduct that is contrary to expectation. It is an inconsistency, a sharp irregularity, that often produces a conundrum, which is a riddle or puzzle. In Solomon's paradox, the righteous person may ask, "Why should such a situation exist? Where are the blessings [God](#) has promised? Where is God in this picture? Has He not promised prosperity and long life if we obey Him?" Yes, indeed He has.

There are two problems that may arise from this experience, both of which involve misjudgments made by the righteous. The first is to misjudge God and accuse Him of being unjust, assuming we know a better way than He does. Not much humility is shown in coming to this conclusion! We need to spend no more time on this one.

The second problem arises when one misjudges, not only God, but also the self, the circumstance, and the possible "solution." This combination can lead to making the paradox truly destructive to one's spiritual health.

In the vivid description in Psalm 73, we see the spiritual and emotional agony of a converted man experiencing a situation similar to what Solomon describes. The author survived it because he responded in the correct way. God intervened to ensure his rescue, or he might have slid "right out of the church," as we might say today. The author never slid into the "righteous over much" mode, as the King James Version phrases it in [Ecclesiastes 7:16](#), or into "super-righteousness," as some modern

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 7:15-17 (<http://www.theberean.org>) commentators call it. Solomon warns us that this reaction is destructive.

In [Ecclesiastes 7:16-17](#), Solomon gives a warning right on the heels of his mention of the paradox, making a clear connection between the paradox and the possible reaction of a righteous person. He does it with a strong admonition: “Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time?” A stern caution indeed. Super-righteousness is a misguided response that seems to arise from our judgment that we are having all this trouble because we are being punished.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

**To learn more, see:**

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Eleven\): Paradox, Continued](#)

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