



## [Ecclesiastes 7:15-22](#)

(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? (18) *It is good* that you should take hold of this; yea, also from this do not withdraw your hand; for he who fears God shall come forth from them all. (19) Wisdom makes the wise stronger than ten mighty men who are in the city. (20) For *there is* not a righteous man on earth who does good and does not sin. (21) Also do not pay attention to every word that is spoken; lest you hear your servant curse you. (22) For your own heart knows that you yourself have also cursed others many times.

*A Faithful Version*

A critical element will make [Ecclesiastes 7:15](#) a bit clearer. The Hebrew word translated as “perishes” (*’Ä•bad*; *Strong's #6*) creates a misunderstanding. In its strongest sense, if the context calls for it, it can indeed indicate death. Its first definition, though, is simply “to wander.” It can also suggest merely slipping away or declining. Solomon is indeed warning that danger is present, but it is not an emergency situation. Verse 15, then, is saying that the just man is declining in his righteousness, not that he is perishing because he is an evil sinner ignoring a character flaw.

The reality is that he is declining despite being righteous, which makes all the difference in [the world](#). He is not perishing because he is not righteous enough; he simply is not handling a trial well. Punishment from [God](#) is not the issue here, just as it was not the issue with the author of Psalm 73, Job, Paul, or for that matter, Christ, in the midst of their deep trials. However, it is a warning because danger is present.

Job, a righteous man, went through a great trial but not because he was a terrible sinner. [Job 1:1](#) clearly states, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was *blameless and upright*, and one who *feared God and shunned*

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 7:15-22 (<http://www.theberean.org>)  
*evil.*” He was clearly not an evil man. However, his friends thought he was hypocritically hiding the fact that he was a sinner. Job did not judge himself as such, so he defended himself—vigorously. Job was correct. When he repented, it was of his lack of understanding, and God accepted it.

As he served God and the church, was Paul being punished through his trials ([II Corinthians 11:22-33](#))? Did [Jesus](#) go through the horrible torture of [the crucifixion](#) and death because He was not righteous enough? He certainly received unjustified and painful punishment, but it was not for His sins but ours. Punishment from God is not the issue in this paradoxical circumstance either. It rarely is the issue with His children, and there are reasons why.

When we are called into God's Family and the church, our lives change radically because God's creative activities intensify. He must prepare us for our change. He has allowed Himself enough time, but He will certainly not waste any of it. Consider that God used Jesus, Job, and Paul, among others, for specific purposes in His great creative program. Their parts included difficult trials that were public enough to witness for God before the world and for us too. This factor will also be active in our lives.

In other words, paradoxical trials like the one described in Psalm 73, are not unusual for us. The stakes are high in our calling. We *must* be tested.

When a person is involved in such a scenario, in reality only three alternatives exist: First, with much [prayer](#) and steadfast submission to God's will, he can continue faithfully enduring. Second, he can give up in despair and leave the church. Third, he can strive all the harder to impress God by becoming super-righteous so that He will take notice and bless him for his righteousness, relieving the stress.

It is the third alternative that Solomon addresses in [Ecclesiastes 7:15-22](#), a “solution” that contains an element of danger. We may have lived through such a trial and been delivered, totally unaware of the peril. Super-righteousness is peculiar and dangerous because it is really a deceptive form of evil.

How does super-righteousness arise within a converted person? On the surface, it actually seems like a natural outcome unless the situation is controlled to prevent it. Though a form of self-righteousness, it is different from the self-righteousness we are more familiar with. It can develop from a resolve to obey God better, but those efforts are allowed to get out of control.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 7:15-22 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

**To learn more, see:**

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

**Related Topics:**

[Abad](#)

[Being Overly Righteous](#)

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living Paradox](#)

[Ignoring Danger](#)

[Impressing God with Our Righteousness](#)

[Lack of Understanding](#)

[Purpose of Tests](#)

[Purpose of Trials](#)

[Self-Righteousness](#)

[Slipping Away](#)

[Submission to God's Will](#)

[Super Righteousness](#)

[Super-Righteousness a Deceptive Evil](#)

[Super-righteousness as a Dangerous State](#)

Commentary copyright © 1992-2016 [Church of the Great God](#)  
A Faithful Version copyright © 2013 [A Faithful Version](#). All Rights Reserved.