



[Ecclesiastes 7:8-10](#)

(8) Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. (9) Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. (10) Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

King James Version

In [Luke 11:24-26](#), [Jesus](#) uses the illustration of an empty house, "swept and put in order," but what fills it makes a great deal of difference in terms of its "end." When we walk through an empty house, we may see possibilities for it, but because it is empty, it is not a warm, accepting, and welcoming place. Would not making the house a wonderful place to live be a fine project? However, such a project might also produce a number of potential pitfalls. [Ecclesiastes 7:8-10](#) lists some of the reasons why a project, good at the beginning, might not be carried through to its finish.

The contexts of Jesus' parable in [Luke 11:24-26](#) and Peter's counsel in [II Peter 2:20-22](#) assume the individual in question is called, forgiven, and changing, which are good things. Jesus calls this being "swept clean"; Peter describes it as having "escaped the pollutions of the world." But in their conclusions, the individual's vision, devotion, and discipline appear to be weak. The person regresses and becomes entangled again in his pre-conversion ways.

Thus, weak character prevents a good ending. Recall that Jesus curses the fig tree that produced no figs, and in the [Parable of the Talents](#), the man who buried his money is rejected. In other words, they showed no positive use of their gifts.

Solomon names four possibilities as to why progress ceases. They are pride, impatience, anger, and discouragement. Pride is in reality the father—the generator—of the other three. A person who can control his willfulness, as expressed by the examples of impatience, anger, and discouragement, controls them because he sees a far greater benefit to himself in what he is being asked to endure. Because he, by [faith](#), perceives [God](#) to be involved in his trials, a Christian concludes that they are positive preparation for the [Kingdom of God](#).

We can sometimes learn from our children what we may be like in our relationships with God. This scenario has unfolded for many of us: As a long trip begins, the family piles into the car. Invariably, it is not long before one of the children asks in a whining voice, “Are we there yet?” “When will we get there?” “How much longer will it be?” They do this because young children have little or no concept of time and distance. Their mental clocks move much faster than those of older folks because they have not had the experience to teach them such things.

In our trials as Christians, our lack of experience may be working against us in relation to God and His purposes. That is why we must come to know God and see matters from His longer, broader perspective. These verses in Ecclesiastes 7, then, really compare patient endurance with pride and its fruits of impatience, hasty frustration, and discouragement.

This section, beginning in verse 7, contains a muted suggestion that the long way is frequently superior to the quick-and-easy way that the immature almost invariably seek. We often do things hurriedly just to get them done, without being all that concerned about how well those jobs are done.

In both Jesus' and Peter's illustrations, God is clearly not satisfied with the partial solutions the carnal mind so easily considers acceptable. God desires that we overcome the flaws in our character, not merely cover them. In the midst of our relationship trials with God, we must remember that He is the Creator, not us, and He knows what He wants to accomplish.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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