



[Ecclesiastes 7:15-18](#)

(15) I have seen everything in my days of vanity:
There is a just *man* who perishes in his righteousness,
And there is a wicked *man* who prolongs *life* in his wickedness.
(16) Do not be overly righteous,
Nor be overly wise:
Why should you destroy yourself?
(17) Do not be overly wicked,
Nor be foolish:
Why should you die before your time?
(18) *It is* good that you grasp this,
And also not remove your hand from the other;
For he who fears God will escape them all.

New King James Version

The two most significant concepts presented within this chapter are somewhat related, being two elements of the same subject. The first is accepting and surviving the paradox found in [Ecclesiastes 7:15](#), into which any of us could be drawn as we endure a difficult trial. The chapter also includes a few broad conclusions that help to give us some guidance.

The paradox seems to be the initial motivation for the second of these two concepts, which is Solomon's description of his detailed and diligent search for wisdom that continues for the rest of the chapter. His search was only partly successful, as he admits in verse 23 that a complete answer was far from him. However, he diligently kept at his search, and interestingly, his reflections reach back to creation and the introduction of sin into the world.

The danger within the paradox is for the Christian to misjudge that his circumstance is unfair. This error is initiated when he perceives that a Christian, a servant of [God](#), should

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be greatly blessed with peace and prosperity, while for the sinner everything should be going badly. However, in the paradox the circumstances are reversed. The Christian's life seems to be in tatters, while everything is coming up roses for the sinner. The Christian, not being as fully aware of this as he needs to be, is feeling pressure to make a choice as to how he will react.

The wrong reaction lies in his becoming motivated to rid himself of the burden by resorting to radical measures to correct what he concludes is the cause of his stress. On the one hand, he may be strongly tempted to resort to super-righteousness, believing it is the solution. Yet, on the other hand, he may, out of frustration and lack of [faith](#), resort to sinning deliberately as a means of relieving the pressure—and perhaps give up his place among the saved. Either of these radical measures can turn the paradox into a failed experience.

The correct solution is provided in Psalm 73, a complete commentary written by a deeply converted man who went through this very trial. The psalm reveals that the correct foundation of the solution is to understand that rarely is this difficult trial a punishment but a test. One must endure its stresses through a great deal of prayer, drawing on one's faith in and fear of God and believing in His promise never to allow us to be tempted above what we are able ([I Corinthians 10:13](#)). We must put our trust in God's faithfulness.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Fourteen\): A Summary](#)

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