

**Wisdom about righteousness and wisdom  
Eccl. 7:15-8:1**

**Intro:** Solomon's observations about life move from topic to topic in order to give us a rounded view of life under the sun. He has shown us the futility of life without God and he has offered us wisdom to face life's trials which are many. He has commended a life of wisdom and righteousness; but now it is important that even those wonderful qualities be put into perspective of life under the sun. So in this section Solomon addresses the subject of wisdom and the righteousness that it produces.

**Seeking to be righteous will not enable us to avoid all life's difficulties, but it will help us live a better life.**

*Though we have confidence in the general administration of justice by God, it is not met out perfectly in this life. Bad things do happen to good people. Good things happen to bad people.*

*I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. (Ecclesiastes 7:15)*

**Should one then abandon righteousness and live like the wicked? Or is it possible to imagine that we can become so wise and so righteous that we can circumvent life's inequities? Not at all! Solomon offers two proverbs to add balance to the discussion.**

*Do not be excessively righteous, and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? (Ecclesiastes 7:16)*

**Solomon is not discouraging genuine righteousness or wisdom, but extremism. He notes two dangers: 1) Putting on an air of self-righteousness, pretending to be more righteous than we can be; 2) putting on an air of intellectualism, pretending to know more than we know.**

**On the other hand, the answer is not to abandon oneself to wickedness or to live in folly and suffer the consequence of self-destruction!**

*Do not be excessively wicked, and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? (Ecclesiastes 7:17)*

**What we should try to do is get a hold on both righteousness and wisdom. Solomon believes that respect for God will cause one to be both righteous and wise!**

*It is good that you grasp one thing, and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them. (Ecclesiastes 7:18)*

**Wisdom and its attending righteousness is a source of strength to a person. Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. (Ecclesiastes 7:19)**

**Yet, it is also important to remember in the quest for righteousness that no one reaches the state of perfection.**

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.

***Knowing this will make us more patient and forgiving with others who sin. It may cause us to “cover” the transgression of someone who has spoken badly about us.***

Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others. (Ecclesiastes 7:20-22)

**Seeking to be wise doesn't guarantee a perfect understanding of everything; but it can protect us from destructive temptations to which mankind is inclined.**

*I tested all this with wisdom, and I said, “I will be wise,” but it was far from me. What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it? (Ecclesiastes 7:23-24)*

***Solomon of course was very wise. He used the wisdom God gave him to discover that his wisdom was not adequate to discover all God had done or the purpose in His actions. Such is beyond the scope of man's knowledge, no matter how wise! But there are some things that wisdom can discover that will help us avoid spiritual danger.***

*I directed my mind to know, to investigate, and to seek wisdom and an explanation, and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness. And I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her. (Ecclesiastes 7:25-26)*

***By the first sentence, Solomon simply draws attention to the thoroughness or full scope of his deliberations. He has discovered a great source of bitterness in life—the woman who seeks out, like a hunter, a man for immoral purposes. The wise, the one pleasing to God, will escape her; but the fool will be captured by her lures.***

**Righteousness and wisdom are rare in this world, but wise and righteous men do exist and enjoy the blessings of their wisdom and righteousness**

*“Behold, I have discovered this,” says the Preacher, “adding one thing to another to find an explanation, which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found one man among a thousand, but I have not found a woman among all these. (Ecclesiastes 7:27-28)*

***Solomon is not asserting that there are no wise women; but both wise men and women are rare. He does say that he found wisdom slightly less often in women than men. I wonder if he was thinking of his 1000 wives? In a similar way his observations about man in general are not flattering:***

*“Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.” (Ecclesiastes 7:29)*

***What this all boils down to is that man is responsible for the deplorable condition of human injustice and sin. God made man upright; but man has chosen to invent various forms of evil that destroy.***

***Genuine wisdom is evident in the face and demeanor of the wise.***

*Who is like the wise man and who knows the interpretation of a matter? A man's wisdom illumines him and causes his stern face to beam. (Ecclesiastes 8:1)*

*The question of 8:1 is rhetorical. Perhaps the question is intended to set the wise man apart from most and show his unique and rare place in this world. What Solomon wants us to see that the illumination of wisdom brings joy to the life of the godly man. People without the illumination of the wisdom of God cannot ultimately discover the real joy of life. Instead there is a sternness in their appearance and a harshness toward others. But the wise man reflects in his face the joy of knowing what is right and consequently treats others with gentleness and consideration. I remember here the words of Jas. 3.*

*Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (James 3:13)*

**Conclusion:** Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes we've seen something of the pessimism of secularism; but here in this part of Ecclesiastes we begin to see the optimism of faith. We are able to see that the fear of God brings wisdom for living and producing righteousness in the wise. Such characteristics will not exempt us from all life's harms; but they will make this earthly life one of joy and hope for a better life with God.