

"Overly Righteous?"
Ecclesiastes 7:16-18
August 27, 2023

I. Controversy Over Ecc. 7:16-18

A. Is Solomon recommending a middle-of-the-road morality?

B. No.

1. Whatever Solomon is recommending involves fearing the Lord.
2. Fearing the Lord means keeping all of God's commands.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 - *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

Proverbs 8:13a - *The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.*

II. Potential Interpretations of Ecc. 7:16-18

A. Option 1 – Don't go beyond God's commandments or word.

1. This is helpful and often necessary advice for any age.
2. This view doesn't make much sense of vs. 17, however. (Don't go beyond *normal* wickedness?)

B. Option 2 – Don't be self-righteous or wise in your own eyes.

1. Such attitudes are warned against elsewhere in Scripture.

Luke 18:9 - *And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt...*

Proverbs 26:12 - *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

2. Yet this view also does not make much sense of vs. 17 (Don't *think of yourself* as more wicked than you are?)

C. Option 3 – Don't be a moral show off or know it all.

1. This view fits well with the Hebrew grammar of vs. 16.
2. Such attitudes are condemned in other scriptural passages. (See Matt. 6:1-18 for example).
3. It also makes more sense of vs. 17. (Don't *advertise* one's own wickedness; that's bound to court trouble.)

D. Application of Option 3

1. We must avoid all occasions of moral showing-off.
 - a. Our habits in this regard are often quite subtle.
 - b. We should examine our hearts and lives.
2. The same must be said when it comes to putting our "wisdom" on display for others.

E. How are we to avoid making a show of our righteous and knowledge?

1. By a healthy fear of the Lord (vs. 18).
2. When we are only focused on God's standards of righteousness, our efforts to show off are exposed as ridiculous.
3. The same is true when we remember how little wisdom we have compared to the Lord's.