

## Being Righteous Over Much

By Elder David Pyles

*All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness. Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all. – Eccl 7:15-19*

When Solomon said we should not be righteous over much, he referred not to our actions but to the appearance we attempt to project. Some people attempt to impress others with how holy they are. Others attempt to impress with how wicked they are. Solomon said all this is foolishness. Even if one were successful in deceiving others into believing they were righteous, there is no guarantee any benefit would be received from such. In this perverted world, a righteous man can be ridiculed, persecuted and even put to death. On the other hand, a man who takes such pride in his wickedness that he seeks to impress with it is taking a sure path to divine judgment.

Solomon's last sentence is the key to the whole text: *"It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."* (Eccl 7:15-19). That is, the man who will prevail in the end is the one who will disregard how things appear to men and concern himself with how things appears to God.

Jesus taught the same lesson when He condemned the Pharisees saying, *"But all their works they do for to be seen of men..."* (Mt 23:6). The Pharisees prayed, fasted and gave alms in a very ostentatious way, hoping to be seen of others. Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward,"* (Mt 6:5). If one wishes to be seen of men, then praying in the middle of the street, having a trumpet blown when giving alms and wearing a sad, disfigured face when fasting should prove very effective. But the case of the Pharisees had been far better, even before the eyes of men, had they concerned themselves with pleasing God rather than putting on a good show. As Jesus promised three times: *"Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly,"* (Mt 6:4,6,18).