



## ECCLESIASTES 7:15-29

15 In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. 16 Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? 17 Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them. 19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. 20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. 21 Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. 22 Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. 23 All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. 24 That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out? 25 I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness. 26 And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. 27 Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things— 28 which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. 29 See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

## STRUCTURE

- I. When moral outcomes defy logic, fear God (7:15-18)
  - a. Moral outcomes defy logic—the righteous suffer; the wicked prosper (7:15)
  - b. Don't try to control outcomes through self-righteousness and "self-wisdom" (7:16)
  - c. Don't despair over lack of control through self-indulgence (7:17)
  - d. Instead, fear God—because reverence, not control, is the proper response to life's mysteries (7:18)
- II. Fearing God grants wisdom that strengthens us with truth: all are sinners (7:19-22)
  - a. Wisdom gives strength to endure what can't be explained (7:19)
  - b. It strengthens by humbling us with the truth that all sin—and we can't take it personally when others sin against us (7:20-22).
- III. Wisdom doesn't just strengthen us; it protects us—despite its limits (7:23-29)
  - a. Wisdom is limited because it is too deep for us to master (7:23-25, 28)
  - b. Wisdom protects by revealing sin's snares; those who please God escape, while the self-directed fall prey (7:26).
  - c. The wise seek to understand God's scheme, but the foolish devise their own schemes—and therein lies humanity's ruin (7:27-29).

## GENERAL COMMENTARY:

For two chapters Solomon has shown that *situations* aren't always what they seem—pleasure can feel hollow, pain can yield joy, and the scoreboard of life rarely adds up. Here he turns from *circumstances* to *people*. Just as events can deceive, so can lifestyles. The long life of the "righteous" may hide corruption, while the short life of the "wicked" may mask favor. We misread the world because we judge by surface patterns rather than by God's hidden wisdom. That's why onlookers saw the crucified Christ and thought, "Cursed." Solomon's lesson is blunt: you can't read divine justice from human outcomes, because life is vapor and humanity is crooked.

The first section begins with the paradox that moral outcomes defy logic—the righteous perish and the wicked prosper. Some respond by trying to regain control through self-righteousness, as if holiness were a formula that forces God's hand. Others give up entirely and plunge into self-indulgence. Both are forms of pride: one trying to master life, the other trying to escape it. Solomon calls for a better way—the *fear of God*. Reverence, not control, is the only sane response to mystery. The fear of God steadies us when logic fails, humbles us when pride rises, and keeps us from self-destruction when life refuses to obey our expectations.

That humility produces wisdom, and wisdom gives strength more than ten rulers in a city. Yet its strength lies not in mastery but in realism. "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." The wise know this, and it steadies them. They neither exalt themselves nor take others' sins too personally, remembering how often

their own words have wounded. Wisdom's strength is moral clarity—it strips away illusions and trains us to endure the failings of others without bitterness or self-righteousness.

Still, Solomon's lifelong search for wisdom brings him to its limit. It is "far off, very deep—who can find it out?" The more we discover, the more we see how little we know. Yet wisdom, though incomplete, still protects: it exposes sin's snares and guards those who fear God from moral collapse. "He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her." But wisdom is rare—"one man among a thousand I found." God made humanity upright, but we have sought our own schemes. That's the great tragedy: we keep abandoning God's design for our own self-made plans of control or indulgence.

In the end, Solomon teaches that wisdom's goal isn't control but surrender. Life cannot be mastered; it can only be entrusted. The fear of God frees us from both arrogance and despair, calling us to stop scheming and start trusting. True wisdom doesn't erase the vapor—it teaches us to walk humbly with God through it.

## VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

*15 In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. 16 Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? 17 Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.*

—"In my vain life": Is Solomon just claiming to have lived a life of emptiness? This is the Hebrew word, *hebel*, which appears 38 times in Ecclesiastes and means "vapor." Solomon is saying that in his "vaporous life"—his brief and fleeting years—he has seen everything.

—"righteous man who perishes.... Wicked man who prolongs his life": This continues the theme of "life's scorecard," where we can't evaluate life on simple observations alone. Life is complex. Righteousness doesn't earn you an automatic hundred-year lifespan, nor does wickedness always terminate you promptly. Life doesn't make obvious sense. It is a confusing vapor. Therefore, we must be careful how we calculate "wins" and "losses."

—"Be not overly righteous... [or] too wise... Be not overly wicked":

- What in the world? Is Solomon recommending half-hearted holiness? How does this square with Christ's call to "Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48)?
- Interpreting this statement requires us to account for both the genre of literature and the context of the verses. First, as Wisdom Literature, this must be read like a proverb—a shocking but poetic statement designed to rattle us free from illusion. Second, the prior verse spoke of righteous people not being rewarded with long life and wicked people not being quickly punished. The context has already begun shattering the illusion that humans can control earthly outcomes through holy living. We can't. Our future is not a math equation: "righteousness now = earthly blessing later." If it was, we could control it, essentially forcing God to make the equation true in our lives—and the lives of our enemies.
- In light of this, "Be not overly righteous" is not warning us to moderate the pursuit of holiness. He's applying the "life is not a math equation" logic to practical experience. Self-righteous people treat it that way. I'm thinking of my friend from college who believed that if he kept himself sexually pure, God would give him a beautiful virgin wife. God gave him a beautiful and godly woman, but he broke up with her because she wasn't a virgin. He hasn't found anyone since. The problem was not with God letting him down, though. Life is not a math equation. God doesn't reward righteousness with all your fantasies coming true. We can't control God.
- "Do not make yourself too wise" (7:16) does not condemn the pursuit of wisdom itself—which Solomon praises throughout the book—but the posture of self-wisdom: being "wise in your own eyes" or pretending to possess superior understanding. Several factors make this interpretation the most coherent:
  - *Immediate context:* The phrase parallels "Be not overly righteous" in the same verse. Both warn against self-exalting religiosity—the illusion of control through moral or intellectual superiority.
  - *Near context:* Solomon himself has just pursued wisdom relentlessly (vv. 23, 25); it would be self-contradictory for him to denounce what he practices.

- *Verse 24 connection:* Since wisdom is described as “far off” and “deep—who can find it?” (v. 24), it follows naturally that we should not pretend to possess what lies beyond our grasp.
- *Broader context of Ecclesiastes:* The book consistently extols genuine wisdom (e.g., 2:13; 7:12, 19). Solomon critiques not wisdom itself but the misuse of wisdom—as a means of control or self-justification.
- *Canonical resonance:* The reflexive nuance of the verb (Hithpael of *ḥākam*) echoes Proverbs 3:7, “Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD.” That same fear-of-God theme anchors Solomon’s conclusion in 7:18, tying humility, wisdom, and reverence together.
- In sum, the warning targets self-sufficient intellect, not true wisdom. Solomon calls us to seek wisdom in reverence, not to play the sage—to be humbled by the mystery, not destroyed by pride.
- The Pharisees lived with this “math equation” approach to God. Like the rich young ruler (Matt. 19; Mark 10; Luke 18), they equated wealth with righteousness—as if the latter always yielded the former. In the same chapter where Jesus tells us to “Be perfect,” He also warns that our righteousness must surpass the Pharisees. This would have shocked His hearers, but when you read the whole sermon, you realize that the Pharisees weren’t righteous—they were self-righteous. They made a show of prayer, fasting, and generosity (Matt. 6), but they were more like the tree that bore bad fruit, the wolves in sheep’s clothing, the false prophets, and the man who built his house on sand (Matt. 7). God wants the deep-down righteousness, built on the rock of His Word, not a superficial self-righteousness that aims to control God and the future with hypocritical displays of holy sacrifice.
- Incidentally, I don’t take, “Be perfect,” as an exhortation to be morally flawless, as if that were possible. I agree with the many biblical scholars who note how the Greek word for “perfect”—*teleios*—can mean “mature and complete.” Jesus is calling us not to be immature or half-hearted in our love but rather to wholeheartedly reflect our Father who loves even His enemies.
- Solomon warns that such self-righteousness, rooted in the illusion of “life is a math equation”, will “destroy you.” It destroys you in one of two ways. On one hand, it leads you to despair over standards you can never meet. On the other, it fills you with pride in the lie you’ve built your life on: “I am righteous.” A few verses later, Solomon will say, “There is not a righteous man on earth” (7:20). Therefore, understanding this as self-righteousness is further supported by the context.
- But what about “Be not overly wicked”? Is Solomon suggesting a little dose of wickedness is okay? Absolutely not. He’s addressing those who see—like he does—that the math equation doesn’t check out. Sometimes wicked people live long, BUT this can’t mean we shrug off moral restraint. While it’s true that sometimes the wicked live easier and longer lives, it’s still generally true: recklessness kills.
- Therefore, he’s exhorting people: don’t be self-righteous (as though life is a math equation whereby you control your future by superficial godliness), but also don’t give up on holiness altogether (as if righteousness makes no difference). Both impulses are forms of pride—one tries to master life by control, the other tries to escape life by indulgence. Solomon’s point is that neither works.

—“It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand”:

- NIV: “It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other.”
- CSB: “It is good that you grasp the one and do not let the other slip from your hand.”
- In other words, Solomon is urging us to hold both truths in tension rather than drifting toward either extreme. Don’t fall into self-righteousness, but don’t swing to the other side either, imagining that wickedness is harmless just because judgment is delayed. Both are distortions.
- The wise person “takes hold of both” by recognizing the futility of trusting one’s own righteousness and the danger of disregarding righteousness altogether.

—“for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them”:

- The fear of God protects us from trusting in our own righteousness because self-righteous pride melts before the Almighty.

- The fear of God protects us from disregarding righteousness altogether because “the fear of God keeps you from sinning” (Ex. 20:20). In the Exodus context, Israel had just witnessed a manifestation of God’s glory on Sinai—a visceral reminder that the God who gives commands is not to be trifled with.
- The fear of God is awe at His glory. It keeps us from both ruinous pride (in this case, self-righteousness) and reckless rebellion. It avoids these two extremes.

*19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. 20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. 21 Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. 22 Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.*

—“Wisdom gives strength to the wise man”:

- Once again, Solomon extols the superiority of wisdom. Earlier, we saw that wisdom enlightens (2:14); here, it gives strength.
- Not just a little strength either—“more than ten rulers who are in a city.” Wisdom is wildly superior to folly. It strengthens your soul more than royal favor.
- Contextually, Solomon has just shattered the illusion of “life is a math equation” where righteousness always yields good fortune. When righteousness yields bad fortune—we need the strength that wisdom provides. Without it, fools crumble. They crumble beneath the weight of injustice. Wisdom helps us persevere in a world that makes no sense.

—“Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”

- This statement exposes why our math equation doesn’t work. Sure, people can be generally righteous or wicked. But at the end of the day, we all fall short. Nobody can without qualification complain, “I deserve better!” Actually, sin deserves death.
- Wisdom gives us strength (v. 19), but it won’t make us flawless (v. 20). Hanging onto wisdom requires us to remember this reality. When life makes no sense, we must continue fearing God—this is wisdom—rather than accusing Him of injustice.

—“Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you... many times you yourself have cursed others”:

- This verse serves three purposes: First, it provides practical proof that we have all sinned (v. 20) because we have all cursed others; second, it safeguards us from taking it personally when people slander us (21: “Do not take to heart...”); third, this safeguard, which protects our hearts against slander, springs from the wisdom he has just extolled (v. 19). Put differently, it is an expression of the “strength” wisdom provides, which is better “than ten rulers who are in a city” (v. 19).
- Knowing that “not a righteous man on earth... does good and never sins” affects how we relate to both God and man. With God, we refuse to accuse Him of injustice when life’s scorecard doesn’t add up (v. 15). With people, we refuse to take it to heart when sinners sin against us because we too are sinners (v. 22).

*23 All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, “I will be wise,” but it was far from me. 24 That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out? 25 I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness.*

—“All this I have tested by wisdom”:

- He’s tested how life’s scorecard doesn’t always tally pleasure in the win column or pain as total loss. Sometimes wealth makes us feel hollow and mourning yields joy. Sometimes righteous people suffer and wicked ones prosper.
- He’s tested self-righteousness and self-indulgence and discerned the self-centered pride that anchors them—not to God or the fear of God—but to self.
- He’s tested wisdom and found that it gives strength.
- He’s tested righteousness and found that none have it.
- He’s tested criticism and found that we all speak against each other, and we should lighten up—both in how hard we take it, and how hard we dish it.
- When Solomon says he’s “tested” these things by wisdom, he’s saying, “I didn’t casually draw these conclusions. I formulated them then evaluated my conclusions based on further observation.”

—“I said, ‘I will be wise,’ but it was far from me... far off... deep, very deep; who can find it?”

- Wisdom is like science. The more you discover, the more you have to discover. Jonathan Swift wrote a poem about it. It marvels at how even fleas have fleas living on them; every zoom of a lens opens a whole new world. Here’s the poem:

*So, naturalists observe, a flea  
Hath smaller fleas that on him prey;  
And these have smaller still to bite ‘em;  
And so proceed ad infinitum.*

- Solomon says wisdom is like that. No matter how deep you go—wisdom runs deeper still. No matter how far you search—wisdom extends further.
- The wiser you are, the more you realize how unwise you are.
- Why does Solomon say this about wisdom?
  - Like he has often done with money—highlighting its blessings and limitations—Solomon also does with wisdom.
  - As he already explicated in Ecclesiastes 2, where he pursued wisdom, wealth, and pleasure to the *nth* degree, he’s showing that wisdom PROVIDES answers but it’s not THE answer. THE answer is fearing God.
  - If I think wisdom is THE answer, then I run the risk of becoming “too wise” (7:15)—Solomon’s tongue-in-cheek critique of the self-sufficient intellect.
  - It’s wise to pursue wisdom, but not to achieve self-sufficiency. True wisdom “clips the wings” of our self-sufficiency (to quote Derek Kidner) because it recognizes that (1) no matter how wise we get, we are still not wise, and (2) no matter how wise we get, life is still “hebel”—a vapor—fleeting, frustrating, mysterious, and beyond our grasp.
  - True wisdom is rooted in the fear of God that resists pride and humbly submits to God in reverent awe.
  - The purpose of Solomon’s search for wisdom is not mastery, control, or self-sufficiency. It is humility, awe, and dependence.

—“I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom... to know wickedness”:

- Solomon already tested all things by wisdom (v. 23); now he turns his heart to fathom it even more (v. 27). After all, it is unsearchably deep (v. 24).
- The answer to human limitation—that we’ll never fully “get it”—is not to give up trying to get it. Wisdom keeps searching while also recognizing it will never find all the answers. Wise people search... and keep on searching. Every step of the way, we seek deeper understanding of “the scheme of things”—how the world works. The life of the wise looks like a stairway to heaven, always stepping, stepping, stepping up, and sometimes—because all are sinners—falling back a bit.

**26 And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.**

—Solomon is writing as a male about a female seductress, but the same would apply in the opposite direction: toward a man “whose heart is snares and nets.”

—“more bitter than death”: wisdom constantly EVALUATES. He sees what infidelity does. Mankind can slip up in many ways, but this tops the charts in terms of devastation.

—Framed in this way, Solomon emphasizes the craftiness of the one whose heart is set on adultery to warn against the folly of being taken in. This agrees with the warning in Proverbs 7 about the “naïve” young man who finds himself in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and without a plan. An adulterous woman comes out to meet him—“passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home... she lies in wait... She seizes him and kisses him”—then she delivers a persuasive speech, feigning religious devotion, smothering with flattery, promising both pleasure and concealment. The end is gruesome and permanent: an arrow piercing the liver, death, and Sheol are the young man’s lot.

—Not all who commit adultery are looking for it—yet they are no less guilty.

—If you don't have a plan for sexual purity, you are planning to fail. Part of the plan is to avoid the wrong place, the wrong time, and the wrong kinds of people.

—“He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her”:

- Another part of the plan is walking with God each day. Those who commit a grievous sin like adultery did not begin with open rebellion; they began with little rebellions. Perhaps they started by telling lies. Or neglecting their spiritual life. Or loving money. Or watching softcore porn—and then hardcore porn—and then full-blown adultery.
- The warning reminds us that nobody is immune. Remember, all are sinners (v. 20). All must realize the possibility that we might become homewreckers—if we aren't careful. “Be careful if you think you're standing firm, lest you fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).
- The warning also comforts us that if we make the little daily choices to maintain a friendship with God, He protects us. Sin begets grievous sin, but wisdom begets greater wisdom. Righteousness leads to more righteousness. We are all on a cycle, spinning upward or downward. Wisdom pays attention to which cycle we are on.
- Peter speaks of the upward cycle: “5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:5-8).

*27 Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things— 28 which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. 29 See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.*

—Verses 27-28 repeat the theme of Solomon's ceaseless search for wisdom—an example for all of us—as well as his limitation. He hits a wall. “I have not found” it, he says.

—Despite the wall he hit, his search did not come up empty. He found another nugget. This one is so important that he begins with, “Behold” (v. 27), seizing our attention.

—The nugget he finds is... difficult. Not unlike much of what he says in this book!

—“One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found”:

- Two questions arise from this statement. The first is, “Is Solomon sexist—claiming men are superior somehow?” The second is, “What KIND of man did he find, which he did not find among women?”
- The traditional interpretation, which the NIV and NLT translations fill in, is that Solomon found one-in-a-thousand more upright/righteous men. An alternative interpretation (mine) is that Solomon found one-in-a-thousand more wise men.
- I'll explain why I think he's referring to wise men, not righteous men, in a moment. First, though—Solomon is not being sexist. Rather than universalizing (“men are superior”), he's merely observing more righteous or wise men in his circles. It would not be different from someone in the twentieth century saying, “More women go to church than men,” or in the twenty-first century, “More men go to church than women.” Both of these are true empirical facts. We could make similar distinctions about male/female studies on physical strength, academic performance, college enrollment, and more. It's not a sin to observe reality. And realities change over time. Back to the men/women church attendance comment: In the twentieth century, female church attendance surpassed male attendance, but that trend has been changing. From 2008-2023, female church attendance dropped by nine percent among evangelicals, but male church attendance only dropped two percent. Today, 42% of men attend church weekly compared to 36% of women. These statistics show that the ratio of male-to-female religious engagement changes over time. We should not absolutize Solomon's snapshot in history.
- Now, back to question 2: “What KIND of man did he find, which he did not find among women?” Contra the traditional interpretation (“righteous man”), I interpret this to be a wise man for the following reasons:

- *Immediate lexical/grammatical context*: The repeated verbs "seek" and "find" (vv. 25–28) show Solomon's quest for wisdom; the object of discovery remains wisdom, not righteousness.
- *Logical flow*: Reading "wise man" avoids contradiction with v. 20 ("no righteous man") and keeps the argument cohesive.
- *Section context*: The entire unit (vv. 23–29) is a wisdom-search narrative; introducing righteousness breaks that continuity.
- *Theological logic*: v. 29 explains wisdom's rarity—human sin has corrupted reason—so Solomon's "one in a thousand" expresses scarcity of wisdom.
- *Canonical resonance*: "One in a thousand" (Job 33:23) denotes rare insight, aligning with wisdom literature's pattern of seeking and seldom finding true understanding.
- Of course, righteousness and wisdom are related—but they are not the same. Righteousness speaks of one's ethics, and wisdom addresses one's understanding of God's world. Wise people tend to be righteous people, but the ideas are distinct.

—“God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes”:

- We know that human beings are born sinners, for Paul says, “we were by nature objects of wrath” (Eph. 2:3). You don't have to teach a child to be selfish—it comes naturally.
- Therefore, “God made man upright” must refer to mankind in the Garden of Eden. This story lies in the background of Ecclesiastes. The curse of “hebel”—life as a vapor—is the direct result of our seeking out of schemes.
- “schemes”:
  - Plans, devices, inventions, contrivances
  - In the ESV, this word (“schemes”) is the same as in 7:25 and 27, where Solomon tries to understand “the scheme of things” by wisdom.
  - In the Hebrew, these words are slightly different but tied to the same root.
  - The echo is deliberate. Wisdom seeks to understand God's scheme, but man seeks his own schemes.
  - Solomon is essentially saying, “I sought to understand God's scheme (*ḥešbōn*)... but men have sought their own schemes (*ḥešbōnōt*).”
- How does this verse fit with the rest of what Solomon says in this section? Solomon has observed by wisdom the mystery of life that makes little sense. But as wisdom has pressed in, he has observed that the fear of God (7:18)—pleasing God (7:26)—protects us from extremes. This holy fear should drive us to understand God's schemes so we can cooperate with them. Unfortunately, people seek out their own schemes, resulting in greater *hebel*—life as a frustrating, fleeting, vapor.
- What “schemes” do we invent? Adam was created “upright” (7:29), but as humanity's representative, he cooperated with Eve to seek God-like status by deviating from His law and making creation ultimate. Mankind has repeated this error ever since. We make creation ultimate, as if it will satisfy, but it only leads to death. We make ourselves into little gods, bending everything into our orbit. This can manifest on one side as self-indulgence—chasing pleasure as a form of salvation, but on the other as self-righteousness—trying to control life and even God through moral performance. The fear of God protects us from all extremes. If you make God the center of your life, you cease scheming. You start trusting.
- Our “schemes” are the countless ways we repeat the Fall—reordering the world around *self*.
- I love what A.W. Tozer says about the “self-life” in his book, *The Pursuit of God*: *“It [the “veil” that obstructs our pursuit of God] is woven of the fine threads of the self-life, the hyphenated sins of the human spirit. They are not something we do, they are something we are, and therein lies both their subtlety and their power. To be specific, the self-sins are self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, and a host of others like them. They dwell too deep within us and are too much a part of our natures to come to our attention till the light of God is focused upon them... Self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere instruction. We may as well try to instruct leprosy out of our system. There*

*must be a work of God in destruction before we are free. We must invite the cross to do its deadly work within us. We must bring our self-sins to the cross for judgment. We must prepare ourselves for an ordeal of suffering in some measure like that through which our Savior passed when He suffered under Pontius Pilate."*