

Message Overly Righteous?



Neal Parker

Overly Righteous?

Paradox literary definition:

A PARADOX IS A SELF-CONTRADICTORY STATEMENT THAT HIGHLIGHTS TWO CONFLICTING IDEAS.

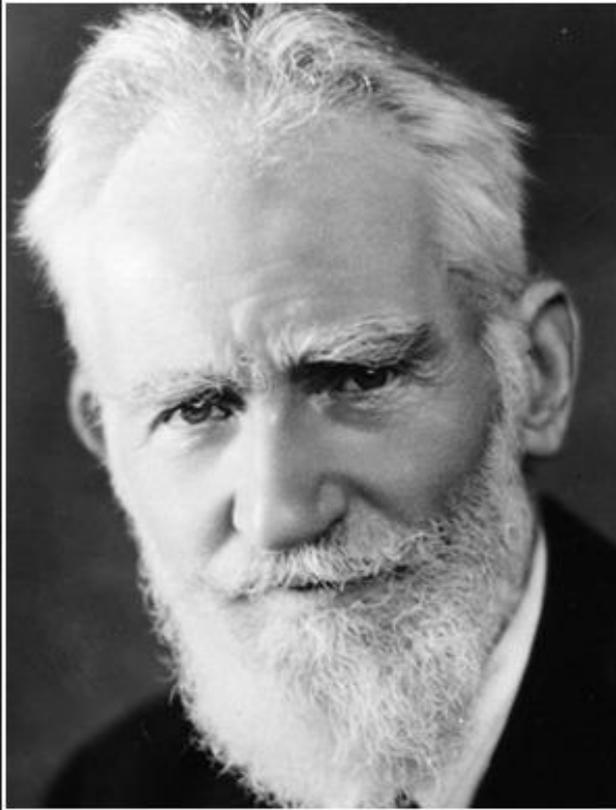


Examples of a Paradox

- **We are willing to fight for peace.**
- **I am nobody.**
- **Wise Fool**
- **Truth is honey which is bitter.**



Examples of a Paradox



It's a pity youth is wasted on the
young.

— *George Bernard Shaw* —

Examples of a Paradox



**I CAN RESIST EVERYTHING EXCEPT
TEMPTATION.**

OSCAR WILDE

Overly Righteous?

■ Ecclesiastes 7:15-21

- ...Do not be overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise...Surly there is no righteous man on earth who does good and never sins...
- **The Limits of Human Wisdom**



Overly Righteous?

- We need to be as clear as we can be about what Solomon's paradoxical situation has the potential to produce in a person's life, if it goes unrecognized and is allowed full freedom to take over and produce its fruits without resistance.
- Not everybody will end up this badly, but the potential exists, which is why God gives the warnings about its dangers.

Overly Righteous?

- **“Do not be greatly righteous”** must be taken ironically and must refer to the way a person thinks about himself and presents himself.”
- **“Do not make yourself overwise”** (RSV) contains a Hebrew hithpael which may mean ‘to play the wise man’
- **“Be not righteous over much”** - forbidding a self-made righteousness of outward performances.

Overly Righteous?

- **When the apostle Paul was pleading his defense before King Agrippa, gives us some insight, into Solomon's paradoxical statement.**
 - **Acts 24:5-8, 12-16**
 - **Acts 26:4-5**



Overly Righteous?

- The key phrase is “the strictest sect of our religion.” The history of the Pharisees shows that they had thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors that would fit well under the definition of over righteousness or super-righteousness.
- We know well the relationship Jesus had with them, those who “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.” (Matthew 23:24)

Overly Righteous?

- **The foul fruit of super-righteousness is pride, and that is why Solomon cautions us so strongly in Ecclesiastes 7.**

–Matthew 23:13-17, 23-24, 30

**Pride destroys
relationships, whether
with God or man**



Overly Righteous?

- Psalm 73 provides some explanation, as it presents an event in the life of a godly man that is a near-perfect fit for understanding the paradox.

–Psalm 73:1-28



Application: Overly Righteous?

- **Do not be overly righteous and do not be overly wise!**
 - **Pride destroys relationships, whether with God or man, because the proud person demands attention and submission that can never be satisfied.**
 - **While avoiding a self-sufficient righteousness, which often brings down God's judgments (Ecclesiastes 7:15-16), beware of the opposite extreme of utter laxity in practice.**
 - **“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)**

