

# Ecclesiastes 8:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.

## Analysis

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**There is a vanity which is done upon the earth**—the Preacher returns to his key term 'hevel' (הֶבֶל, vanity/vapor), now applying it to moral incoherence in providence. What follows describes specific frustration: retribution seems inverted.

**Just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous**—the righteous experience what wickedness deserves (suffering, loss), while the wicked receive what righteousness merits (blessing, prosperity). This moral inversion appears absurd 'under the sun'—within temporal, earthbound perspective lacking eternal judgment. The Preacher doesn't explain away this reality but honestly names it as 'vanity,' driving readers toward faith that transcends present observation. Final justice awaits eschatological judgment when inversions are corrected (12:14; Revelation 20:11-15).

## Historical Context

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This theme pervades biblical wisdom: Job suffered despite righteousness while his false comforters prospered; Asaph nearly lost faith observing wicked people's

prosperity and righteous people's affliction (Psalm 73:2-14); Jeremiah questioned why the wicked prosper (Jeremiah 12:1); Habakkuk struggled with God using wicked Babylon to judge less-wicked Judah (Habakkuk 1:12-17). Post-exilic Judaism faced this acutely: faithful remnant endured hardship while surrounding nations flourished. Jesus himself—perfectly righteous—suffered criminal execution while his accusers prospered temporarily. Early Christians suffered martyrdom while persecutors advanced politically. Church history confirms the pattern: faithful believers often experience suffering while ungodly oppressors flourish temporally. This verse validates honest acknowledgment of moral incoherence within history while maintaining faith in ultimate justice.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How do you respond emotionally and spiritually when you observe righteous people suffering while wicked people prosper?
2. What prevents this observable moral inversion from destroying your faith in God's justice and goodness?

## Interlinear Text

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אֵשׁ רֹא	עַל	נַעֲשֶׂה הָ	אֲשֶׁר רַ	הַבָּל:	וְיֵשׁ
<b>There is</b>	<b>upon the earth</b>	<b>which is done</b>	<b>a vanity</b>	<b>There is</b>	
H834	H776	H6213	H1892	H3426	
אֵלֵיהֶם	שְׁמַגְ יַעַ	אֲשֶׁר רַ	הַצְדִּיקִים	יֵשׁ	
<b>men to whom it happeneth</b>	<b>of the righteous</b>	<b>There is</b>	<b>of the wicked</b>	<b>There is</b>	
H413	H5060	H834	H6662	H3426	
הַצְדִּיקִים	כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָ	אֵלֵיהֶם	שְׁמַגְ יַעַ	כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָ	
<b>of the righteous</b>	<b>according to the work</b>	<b>men to whom it happeneth</b>	<b>of the wicked</b>	<b>according to the work</b>	
H6662	H4639	H5060	H7563	H4639	
הַבָּל:	זֶה הָ	שְׁגָם	אָמַר רְתִי		
<b>a vanity</b>	<b>that this also</b>	<b>I said</b>			
H1892	H2088	H1571	H559		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ecclesiastes 7:15** (Righteousness): 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.

**Ecclesiastes 2:14** (Parallel theme): The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

**Malachi 3:15** (Evil): And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

**Psalms 73:3** (Evil): For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

**Job 21:7** (Evil): Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?

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