

## Self-Destruction

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Self-preservation is a basic instinct in all of God's creatures, and it is present in man also. For this reason, we tend to flee from danger and avoid harm. At times, it is necessary for us to find courage and bravery in order to overcome fear and put ourselves in harm's way for a good purpose. In most cases, it is best to follow the instinct of self-preservation and save ourselves from injury.

So then, why do so many people behave in ways that are self-destructive rather than self-preservative? "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt. 6:34), so why do some insist on adding more trouble for themselves? We understand when men enter into dangerous situations for noble causes, such as saving lives in the midst of a disaster, but why do some men risk themselves for no good reason at all?

The answer to these questions is that those who are bent on self-destructive behavior are deceived. In some cases, they are deceived into believing that their self-destructive behavior is actually good for them because it brings them pleasure. Others know that their behavior is typically self-destructive but believe that they will somehow be exempt. Still others know they will suffer for their behavior, but they think the pleasant benefits will outweigh the unpleasant consequences. All of these are deceived and wrong.

Many of these are partially self-deceived, and all of them are deceived by Satan. He still peddles the ancient lie about sin, which is, "You surely will not die" (Gen. 3:4). He promotes self-destructive behavior in a way that makes it appear attractive and pleasant. Man believes Satan's lies, falls for his lures, and destroys himself in sinful behavior. Even when he knows better, man often chooses to believe Satan and deceives himself in denial of the unchangeable law of God. He closes his ears to the immutable law of sowing and reaping, which says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

The book of Proverbs is filled with warnings about self-destructive behaviors. These warnings are given to save us from being self-deceived and deceived by Satan. They remind us of the inescapable consequences of sin and prove to us that no matter how careful we are to hide our sins, our sins will find us out (Num. 32:23). For example, Proverbs 5:22-23 says,

His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

Many of the Proverbs speak of the self-destructive nature of adultery:

- Proverbs 2:18-19 – For her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead; none who go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life.
- Proverbs 6:32 – The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it.
- Proverbs 7:22-23 – Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life.

Those who reject the warnings of God's word are addressed by wisdom herself in Proverbs 8:36, where she says, "But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death."

Despite these warnings, Satan continues to captivate men and convince them to destroy themselves with sinful behaviors. These behaviors include sexual immorality (1Cor. 6:18), adultery (Prov. 6:32), homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-27), alcohol use (Prov. 20:1), addictions to tobacco and drugs (1Cor. 6:12, 19-20), pornography (Matt. 5:27-28), violence (Prov. 21:7), greed (Prov. 21:6), uncontrolled anger (Prov. 19:19), and much more. All of these are avoidable behaviors that men choose to do to their own destruction.

Let us not be so foolish as to destroy ourselves. There is enough hardship in the world to go around, so we do not need to become our own enemies. Moreover, let us not rebel against our God, who loves us and reaches out to help us. The people of Israel foolishly rejected God's continuous overtures of grace and mercy, and the Lord said to them, "It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help" (Hos. 13:9). Therefore, let us not turn against God our help, but instead let us turn to Him for the preservation of our souls.

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