

## The Journey to Self-Edification 03-24-19 AM

The Bible is full of those who made the journey of Self Destruction. We can go through the bible and see Adam & eve, Cain, Esau, King Saul, King David, and Judas Iscariot as men and women who had everything and the lost it all. It is remarkable how similar these stories are; they begin with God's blessings and they end with ruin and often death.

The Bible tells us why we are self-destructive. It is our desire to be both spiritual and worldly at the same time. This is what Jesus referred to as the deception of the world in Mark 4:19. It is also because of the absence of contentment, as Paul says in I Timothy 6:6-11.

So how do we reverse course when we have begun a journey that leads to self-destruction? If the Bible lays out the path to self-destruction, we could probably guess that it lays out the way we escape. It is not complicated because there are only two paths to choose.

The path from Self Destruction begins with loving God with all your heart (1 John 2). We have seen that worldliness is the path of self-destruction (1 John 2:16). This passage points to us that love is either for the world or for God. Our study reveals that in each instance of self-destruction, a worldly path was selected (Adam and Eve: lust of the eyes, flesh & pride; Saul: pride of life; David: lust of the flesh; Judas: lust of the eyes). 1 John 2:15 tells us that the love of the Father is the opposite direction from the love of the world. Therefore, Loving God is the path away from self-destruction. But loving God is NOT a feeling; John goes on to tell us that it is obeying His commandments (1 John 5:3), loving His children (1 John 5:1), and abiding in His word (1 John 2:5). We need to understand that His love for you is unmeasurable (e.g. Romans 5:8) and that He does not make mistakes in loving us (1 John 4:10).

Obviously this means we must make a u-turn on the path to self-destruction. We cannot love the world or the things of the world, which are described as the works of the flesh in Galatians 5. Specifically, we are told there that the two choices are mutually exclusive; *"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please"* Galatians 5:17. Spiritual fruit opposes fleshly works (Galatians 5:19- 23). This is the path we must choose.

This path requires that we love God; to love God is to love the children of God. If you are a child of God, this path requires that you learn to love yourself appropriately. The key here is to love "appropriately". According to the Bible, love is desiring the best for others (e.g. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). The proper love for yourself means you must desire the things that are best for you. These things are spiritual, NOT worldly/fleshly. Consider 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; you are not your own to pursue the things your flesh and pride desire, but instead you are obligated to save yourself and keep holy the temple that is your body. If you love yourself appropriately, you hate the works of the flesh. You seek spiritual fruit vs. fleshly works; you refuse to be a victim.

This path requires you are committed to your fellow travelers, also called the church. The church is the first and greatest support group ever created. It is the divine support group where we are commanded to *"Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). You MUST get the support you need; your need is not one you "feel", but the one you are spiritually told you must have. *"Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day*

*drawing near*" Hebrews 10:24-25. If you want to remain on the right road, don't miss a single opportunity; do your best to be present for any time of worship and every Bible class.

Finally, consider how important it is that we all understand how change works. In other words, all change occurs one small step at a time. According to 2 Peter 1:5-8, spiritual change is no different. Peter describes there a series of steps we climb to reach the proper love. We do not immediately have the ability to properly love God or love ourselves; we must take the steps before us to reach that place. In particular, patience is a key virtue; "*By your patience possess your souls*" (Luke 21:19).

We can have better lives if we live by faith; that means living the way God has prescribed. Jesus did not give us his way to make our lives self-destructive, but to turn us from these things. "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10).