Wisdom vs. Self-Destructive Tendencies
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Have you ever known someone who just could not stop from make bad decisions? Despite being warned and being aware, they seemed to almost seek the best way to bring calamity into their life. It is *not* a rare thing to see; indeed, in some ways, all people struggle with this. We refer to this characteristic as being self-destructive. The Bible often contrasts wisdom and folly with their "children", or the results of their impact in our life. The Bible clearly reveals that Folly is Self-Destructive. Many people are unaware that they are destroying their lives by their actions.

Saul is an important story in the Old Testament. It is the story of a man who had everything: looks, power, fame, and the blessing of God Himself. Yet his life ended in misery and suicide. What happened? It is the story of a self-destructive spiral, from the top all the way to the bottom. It is not unique in the Bible, but it is perhaps the best documented case, spanning an entire book.

Saul's story begins with blessings. 1 Samuel 9:2 tells us that Saul the Benjamite (the first king of Israel) was born with it all. He was the most handsome man in Israel, and he was the tallest of his people. AS well, we find in verse 3 that he came from a family of noble warriors, mighty men of God. From birth he was blessed.

But this was not all. In 1 Samuel 10:6-7 we are told how Saul the Benjamite became God's man. He was given the Spirit of God to allow him to prophesy, and he was divinely promised success as king. In his work as king God blessed him over all others.

These blessings paid handsomely. The net chapters record Saul's victories over his enemies. 1 Samuel 14:47 says "*when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment".* Saul was a winner who overcame enemies on all sides. He raised a national army and took it to field for victory. Saul was a mighty warrior leader.

In addition to his blessings from God, Saul also enjoyed that rare gift of being loved by his people. 1 Samuel 11:15 tells how all of Israel rejoiced in his kingship. Saul the Benjamite was a beloved king. A rarity in the work of monarchy, he was king by the people's choice; Saul enjoyed the support of all the people.

King Saul the Benjamite had it all. Good looks and standing; God was with him in his kingship; the Spirit of God was in him; he had victory after victory, and enjoyed the support of all of the people. Yet his story is not one of success, but of self-destruction.

Saul's downward spiral begins when he is at the top. In 1 Samuel 13:11-13 (and again in 1 Samuel 15:15) Saul offered an unauthorized sacrifice. In both cases he blamed others; he blamed Samuel and the people. He was told this condemned his reign; first he was told "*Now your kingdom shall not endure*", and on the second occasion "*The LORD has rejected you from being king*".

Soon after we meet David. Saul failed to see David as a blessing to his kingdom; instead, he became unhinged with envy and moved into paranoia and fear (1 Samuel 18:6-12). He repeatedly attempted to kill David. As this violent relationship progresses, Saul becomes more and more paranoid, turning more and more evil. This peaks in 1 Samuel 22:17-22 when he ordered the murder of the priests and the city

of the priests (Nob); every man, woman and child there, for what he perceived was their favor of David. Worse of all, when his people refused to do this, Saul used an Edomite, a Gentile, to do this thing.

At the end Saul lost everything. When he was facing his enemies he asked for the counsel of his dead spiritual leader Samuel, who from the grave told him he was soon to die. When wounded on the battlefield in 1 Samuel 31:4, Saul committed that final atrocity and took his own life.

Where did all of this begin? Proverbs 16:18 says "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling*." Saul began his long plummet from his over-estimation of himself. Saul's fall because of vanity might be seen among many. Adam and Eve in the Garden; David in his kingdom; Solomon in his kingdom; Hezekiah and the Babylonians. In each case someone was at the height of their blessings, and they stumbled because of their ego.

Why are WE Self Destructive? Why do YOU sometimes do things that destroy your own happiness? Certainly a big part of this is the deception of worldliness that is described in Mark 4:19 and 1 John 2:15-16. That deception is manifested in the absence of the love of God, love for ourselves, and love for others. It is present in the Lust of the flesh, Lust of the eyes and the Pride of life.

Another cause is the absence of contentment. Paul pointed at this in I Timothy 6:6-11. He said there that a desire for more makes for ruin; that ruin he described as people who "*pierced themselves with grief*". Being worldly is (by the nature of the world) self destructive.

As a Christian YOU HAVE IT ALL! Even more so that Saul, you have been blessed by God. The Spirit of God with you through His manifestation in Scripture. The Heavenly Father's eye on you in a way greater than Saul. The Son's intercession for you is beyond that which Saul or any of the prophets of old could have. Finally, you have an indescribable inheritance waiting. You have it all; don't fall prey to self-destructive behavior.

Do the things that are **best** for you. Don't live for self-satisfaction and don't be a victim. Manifest a love for God and others in all things and be content in all things. Finally, don't be deceived by the world; don't love the world or seek worldly attention.