**The Duty of Self-Denial (self excerpts)**  
Thomas Watson, 1675

CHOICE EXCERPTS  
  
  
**A bad *Jacob's ladder* to climb up to heaven!**  
  
A Christian must deny his own righteousness—his moralities,   
duties, and good works. The *spider* weaves a web out of her   
own body. A hypocrite would *spin a web of salvation* out of   
his own righteousness. But Paul, like the *bee*, sucked salvation   
from the flower of Christ's righteousness. "That I may be found   
in Him—not having my own righteousness." Php 3:9  
  
Put gold in the fire—and out comes the dross. Our most   
golden services are mixed with sin. "Our righteousness   
are as filthy rags." Isa 64:6  
  
We must never trust in our duties—but only in Christ's   
righteousness, for salvation. Noah's dove made use of   
*her wings* to fly—but trusted the *ark* for safety!  
  
And if we must deny our *holy* things in point of justification,   
then much more our *civilities* and *moralities*. A stake may be   
finely painted—but it has no root. A man maybe *painted with  
morality*—and yet have no root of grace. A moral person is only   
externally washed—not internally changed. The life may be   
civil to men—when the heart is wicked against God; just as  
the sea may be calm—when the water is salty. The Pharisee   
could say he was no adulterer—but he could not say he was   
not proud. Luk 18:11  
  
*The moral person* may have a secret antipathy against godliness.   
He may hate grace—as much as vice. Morality is but a cracked   
title to heaven. A piece of brass may shine—but, lacking the King's   
image—it will not pass as currency. A man may shine with moral   
virtues—but lacking the image of God, consisting in holiness—he   
will not pass as currency at the day of judgment. Morality is good,  
but God will say, "You still lack one thing!" Luk 18:22. Morality   
is a good *Jacob's staff* to walk with among *men*—but it is **a bad   
*Jacob's ladder* to climb up to heaven!**  
  
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**Blown down with a breath of a young girl!**  
  
"Peter replied—Even if all fall away on account of You,  
**I never will**." Mat 26:33  
  
But how soon was his *self-confidence* shaken and **blown   
down with a breath of a young girl!** "He denied it with   
an oath, saying, I don't know the man!" Peter's denying of   
Christ, was the result of not denying his self-confidence.   
  
Deny *self-confidence*. It is just with God, that he who   
*trusts* himself—should be *left* to himself! The vine being   
weak—twists around the oak to support it. A godly man,   
being conscious of his own imbecility—twists by faith   
around Christ. Sampson's strength lay in his *hair*. Ours   
lies in our *head*, Christ. "I can do all things through   
Christ's strengthening me." Php 4:13  
  
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**High, supercilious thoughts of yourselves**  
  
"*Vain man* would be wise." Job 11:12  
  
In the Hebrew it is *"Empty man!"* Man is *a proud   
piece of flesh!* He is apt to have a high opinion of   
himself.   
  
Such as view themselves in *the flattering looking-glass   
of self-love*, appear bigger in their own eyes than they   
are! They think their *spark*—is a *sun!* They think their  *drop*—is a *sea!*That you may deny all **high, supercilious thoughts   
of yourselves**, consider that self-conceit is a great sin.   
Chrysostom calls it *"the mother of hell."* It is a kind of   
idolatry, a self-worshiping. *This should pull down the   
plumes of pride and self-conceit!*  
  
"What makes you better than anyone else? What do you  
have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is  
from God, why *boast* as though you have accomplished  
something on your own?" 1Co 4:7  
  
Consider that, whatever noble endowments you have,   
are **borrowed**. What wise man would be proud of a   
jewel which was *lent* to him? The moon has no cause   
to be proud of her *borrowed* light.   
  
Consider what a *hell of sin* you carry about you! Sin is   
*the accursed thing*, Jos 5:13. It is the quintessence   
of evil. It was typified by the menstrual cloth, which   
was the most unclean thing under the Law. This may   
demolish all proud imaginations.  
  
Grace can never thrive where pride and self-conceit grow.   
As a body with cancer cannot thrive—so neither can the   
soul thrive, which is *cancered with pride and self-conceit.*   
A proud *head*—makes a barren *heart!*  
A supercilious conceitedness is odious to God. The more  
one values himself—the less God values him. Such as   
have a high opinion of their own excellencies, are on the   
fast track to eternal ruin! The Lord sometimes lets vain,   
conceited people fall—not only *foully*, but *finally!* "The   
doves," says Pliny, "take pride in their *feathers*, and in   
their *flying high*. But they *soar so high*, that they are   
prey to the hawk!" Just so, when men fly high in pride,  
they become prey to the *prince of the air!*  
  
All this should make us *kill the worm of self-conceit!*  
  
Let *Paul* be our pattern. Though he was the chief of the   
Apostles, he says, *"I am less than the least of all God's   
people."* Eph 3:8. *"I am nothing."* 2Co 12:11.   
This illustrious Apostle, a star of the first magnitude,  
shrank into nothing in his own eyes!   
  
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**Many dig their graves, with their teeth!**   
  
A Christian must deny his appetite.   
  
More are hurt by *excess in lawful things*—than by   
meddling with *sinful* things. More are killed by *wine*  
—than by *poison*. Many make their belly their god,   
Php 3:19. And to this god, they pour their   
*drink offerings!*  
  
One writes of a fish whose *heart* is in his *belly*. This is   
an emblem of epicures—whose heart is in their belly;   
they are *devoted to their appetite*. Excess in food or   
drink—  
clouds the mind,   
chokes holy affections,  
provokes lust, and  
shortens life!  **Many dig their graves, with their teeth!**   
  
Seneca could say he was born to higher things, than to   
be *a slave to his body*. What a shame is it—that the soul,   
that *princely* part, which sways the scepter of reason,   
should be enslaved to the *brutish* part! What has God   
given conscience for—but to be a golden bridle to check   
the inordinacy of the appetite! Deny the sinful cravings   
of the flesh!  
  
"I beat my body and make it my slave." 1Co 9:27  
  
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**Take life easy!**  
  
"**Take life easy**; eat, drink and be merry!" Luk 12:19  
  
A Christian must deny his **ease**. "Ease slays the simple."   
The flesh is prone to sloth and softness. It is loath to take   
pains for heaven. Weeds and vermin grow in *untilled*   
ground; and all vices grow in **an idle, untilled heart**.   
  
How can they expect to reap a *harvest of glory*—who   
never sowed any seed? Is Satan so busy in his diocese,   
1Pe 5:8, and are Christians idle? Are they like the   
lilies—which neither toil, nor spin? O deny your ease!   
We must force our way to paradise.   
  
God puts no difference between the *slothful* servant   
and the *wicked* servant, "You wicked and lazy servant!"   
Mat 25:26.   
  
Those slothful people in Eturia, who like *drones* enter   
into the hive and *consumed the honey*, were expelled   
from others and condemned to exile. Such as idle away   
the day of grace and fold their hands to sleep when they   
should be working out salvation—God will condemn to a   
perpetual exile in hell.  
  
**Let us shake off sloth—as Paul did the viper!**  
  
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**Pull down these *flags* of vanity!**  
  
A Christian must deny sinful fashions. Rom 12:2,   
"Be not conformed to this world." That is—do not be   
conformed to the fashions and mode of it.   
  
If the *old Christians* were to rise out of their graves  
—our *new fashions* might frighten them into their   
graves again!   
  
Was there ever such excess in hair? 1Co 11:14,  
"Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has   
long hair it is a disgrace to him." More money is often  
laid out for a wig to cover one head—than would clothe  
twenty poor people. One asked Pastor Dod why he did   
not preach against 'those ruffians who wore long hair'.   
He replied, "If grace comes into their heart—it will make  
them cut off their hair."  
  
Nor can the women be excused for their excess in apparel.   
"The Lord will strip away their artful beauty—their ornaments,   
headbands, and crescent necklaces; their earrings, bracelets,   
and veils of shimmering gauze. Gone will be their scarves,   
ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and charms; their rings,   
jewels, party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses; their mirrors,   
linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls." Isa 3:18-23.   
  
Seneca complained of those in his time who hung two or three   
*houses* on their ears! Some wear half their incomes upon their   
backs! Lysander would not allow his daughters to be too gorgeously   
attired, saying "it would make them more *common*—than *lovely*.   
  
What painted faces and bare shoulders appear in the congregations!   
That professors should conform and comply with others in their antic   
dresses, is a reproach of piety! A *tear* in the eye—would more adorn   
than a *tower* on the head. O deny yourselves! **Pull down these   
*flags* of vanity!** 1Ti 2:9, "I want women to be modest in   
their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing   
and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair   
or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes." Let the hidden   
man of the heart, be beautified and bespangled with grace. "The   
king's daughter is all glorious *within*." Psa 45:13  
  
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**Blown to hell with the breath of popular applause!**   
  
A Christian must never aim at fame, or self-applause.   
He must not look with one eye at piety—and aim at   
himself with the other eye.   
  
"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before   
men, to be seen by them." Mat 6:1. They prayed   
and gave alms—that they might be seen by men. **The   
oil of vain-glory fed their lamp!**It is a saying of Spanhemius, that there is in every man   
by nature—*a measure of Pharisaism*—a seeking after the   
glory and applause of the world. "Everything they do is   
done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide   
and the tassels on their garments long; they love the   
place of honor at banquets and the most important   
seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in   
the marketplaces and to have men call them, *Rabbi*."   
Mat 23:5-7. Luther confessed that, although he   
was never tempted with *covetousness*—yet he was   
sometimes with vain-glory!   
  
The moth breeds in the finest cloth; and self-seeking   
is apt to breed in the best duties. Sinister aims corrupt   
piety. A good aim will not make a bad action, good—  
but **a bad aim** will make a good action, bad.  
  
Some ships which have escaped the *rocks*, have been   
wrecked upon the *sands*. Many who have escaped the   
*rocks of gross scandals* have been wrecked upon the   
*sands of self-seeking.*   
  
*Popular applause* is the **golden arrow** which glitters   
in the eye—but wounds the heart! How many have been  **blown to hell with the breath of popular applause!**  
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ **There are nails in that cross!**  
  
Some think of *reigning* with Christ—but not of *suffering*   
with Christ. *The* ***cross*** *leads to the* ***crown****!* "If we suffer,   
we shall also reign with Him." 2Ti 2:12  
  
"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself  
and *take up his cross daily* and follow Me." Luk 9:23   
  
Christ shows us His cross. If we will not have Him upon   
these terms, the match is not likely to go on. Sufferings   
are waiting for us, Act 20:23. "Everyone who wants to   
live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."   
*The devil has not grown kinder.* "Your enemy the devil   
prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone   
to devour!" 1Pe 5:8  
  
The flesh cries out, "That cross is painful! **There are  
nails in that cross** which tear me!"  
  
Can wicked men be content to suffer for their   
lusts—and shall we not suffer for Christ?  
  
The prophet Isaiah sawn in half.   
Jeremiah was killed by stoning.   
Amos was killed with an iron bar.   
Luke was hanged on an olive tree.  
  
I read that Irenaeus was carried to a place where a   
cross was set on one side—and an idol on the other.   
He was given a choice either to bow to the idol—or   
suffer on the cross. He chose the latter.  
  
Basil speaks of a virgin condemned to the fire. She   
was offered her life and estate if she would bow down   
to an image. She answered, "Let life and money go;   
welcome Christ!"  
  
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**He will go laughing to hell**  
  
"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself  
and *take up his cross daily* and follow Me." Luk 9:23   
  
This justly indicts those who live in a contradiction to the   
text, who instead of *denying* themselves—they let loose   
the reins and give themselves up to all manner of pleasure   
and licentiousness. *Pleasure* enchants men's minds, and   
transforms them into beasts!  
  
There is a place in Africa called *Tombutium*, where the   
inhabitants spend all their time in singing and dancing.   
And have we not many who consume their hours in plays   
and brothels? As if God has made them like the leviathan  
—to play in the sea. How will their countenances be   
changed when God shall say, "Give an account of your   
stewardship!" *These frolicking sensualists* live as if there   
were no world to come. They pamper their bodies—but   
starve their souls! As if one should feed his dog—but   
starve his wife!  
  
Do epicures deny themselves? Indeed, in one sense they do.   
Enjoying their lusts—they deny themselves a part in heaven!   
  
In the country of Sardinia there is an herb-like balm, that   
if a man eats of it—he shall die laughing. Such an herb is   
'pleasure'. If one feeds immoderately on it—**he will go   
laughing to hell**.  
  
Esau lost the blessing while he was hunting. O! How many,   
while they are hunting after worldly pleasures, lose eternal   
blessedness? There is a *'sin cup'* brewing which will spoil the   
sinner's mirth. Psa 75:8, "For the Lord holds a cup in His   
hand; it is full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours   
the wine out in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it,   
draining it to the dregs!" This wine is the wrath of God, and   
it is mixed; the *never-dying worm* and the *eternal fire* are   
mixed the cup! The Lord will proportion a sinner's torment   
to his pleasure. Rev 18:7, "She has lived in luxury   
and pleasure, so match it now with torments and sorrows!"

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