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

**The Mischief of Sin**

by Thomas Watson, 1671

CHOICE EXCERPTS  
  
**When you were marching to hell!**  
  
"Even though I was once a blasphemer and a   
persecutor and a violent man, **I was shown  
mercy**." 1Ti 1:13   
  
Literally, *"I was bemercied."* Christians, why might not  
you have been in the number of those who persist in   
sinning? Because God has *bemiracled you with mercy!*  
  
See what cause you have to admire the stupendous   
goodness of God, who has wrought a change in you  
—and checked you in your full career of sin!   
  
Christians, you who are *vessels of election—*were by   
nature as wicked as others—but God had compassion   
on you and plucked you as brands out of the fire! He   
stopped you in your course of sinning—**when you   
were marching to hell!** He turned you back to   
Him by sincere repentance. Oh, here is the banner   
of love displayed over you!   
  
Behold sovereign grace! Let your hearts melt in love   
to God. Admire His royal bounty. Set the crown of all   
your praises, upon the head of free grace! *"By the   
grace of God I am what I am!"* 1Co 15:10   
  
  
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**Another *stick* to heat hell**  
  
See what *vast treasures of wrath* are laid up for unrepentant  
sinners. "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant   
heart, you are ***storing up wrath***against yourself for the day   
of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed."   
Rom 2:5  
  
As *guilt* increases—so does *wrath*. Every *sin* committed, is  **another *stick* to heat hell**—and make it burn the hotter!   
  
It is a thing to be lamented—that men should live in the   
world, only to increase their torments in hell. While they   
commit new sins, they are burdening themselves with   
more iron chains, which will be so heavy at last, that   
they will not be able to *bear* them—or *avoid* them.   
  
Oh, sinner! Know that for every sin, you are only adding   
to your torment! **Every dish Satan serves you**—will   
only increase your fatal reckoning, and make your   
condemnation heavier.   
  
Every sin is a *drop of oil* upon hell's eternal furnace!

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**Linked together with adamantine chains!**   
  
Sin is the *womb of sorrow*—and the *grave of   
comfort!* Sin turns the body into a hospital.   
It causes fevers, ulcers, and cancers.  
  
Sin is the Trojan horse, out of which a   
whole troop of afflictions come.   
  
Sin drowned the old world, and burnt Sodom.   
  
Sin and punishment are **linked together with   
adamantine chains!** Sin as naturally draws   
punishment to it—as the magnet draws iron!  
  
Sin is a coal which not only blackens—but burns!   
  
Sin draws hell at its heels. "The *wicked* shall   
be turned into *hell*." Psa 9:7  
  
Sin lays men low in the grave, and in   
hell too—without repentance.   
  
Sin first tempts—and then damns!

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**They tempt the devil to fall in love with them!**  
  
"I hate pride and arrogance." Pro 8:13  
  
Pride runs in the blood.   
  
Augustine calls pride, *"the mother of all sin!"*  
  
Some people would be better—if they could   
pluck the *worm of pride* out of their head!   
  
Pride ruins our virtues—and poisons our mercies.   
  
Some are proud of their **estates**. Riches are fuel for   
pride. Eze 28:5, "Your heart has become proud   
because of your wealth." Men's hearts rise with their   
estates.  
  
Some take pride in their **abilities**. The Lord enriches   
them with wit and talents—and pride fumes from   
their heart into their head—and makes them giddy.   
  
Some are proud of their **bodies**. Pride is seen in   
long and meticulous *dressings*. They spend that   
time between the *comb* and the *looking-glass*,   
which should be spent in prayer and holy meditation.  
  
Pride is seen in painting their faces—*overlaying God's   
work with the devil's colors!* But *virtue* is most beautiful   
to God. "Don't be concerned about the outward beauty   
that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or   
beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty   
that comes from within—the unfading beauty of a gentle   
and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God." 1Pe 3:3-4   
  
Pride is seen in the outlandish *fashions* with which some   
people *dress—*or rather *disguise* themselves. They clothe   
themselves like the rainbow. Adam was ashamed of his   
nakedness; these should be ashamed of their clothing.   
They are so plumed and gaudily attired—that **they   
tempt the devil to fall in love with them!**  
  
"The Lord detests all the proud of heart! Be sure of   
this—They will not go unpunished!" Proverbs 16:5

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**The *devils* are scrambling for his soul!**  
  
"Covetousness, which is idolatry." Col 3:5  
  
Covetousness is the cancer of the soul.  
  
Covetousness is *a key which opens the door* to further   
wickedness. 1 Timothy 6:10, "For the *love of money* is   
at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving   
money, have wandered from the faith and pierced   
themselves with many sorrows!"  
  
And what is one the better for all his wealth—**at death?**   
1Ti 6:10, "We brought nothing into the world—and   
it is certain that we can carry nothing out." When the **rich   
miser** **dies**—what *scrambling* is there!  
  
His *friends* are scrambling for his money!  
  
The *worms* are scrambling for his body!  
 **The *devils* are scrambling for his soul!**

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**Milk-white!**  
  
"The blood of Jesus *cleanses* us from all our sin!"  
1Jn 1:7  
  
Christ's blood is a CLEANSING blood.  
  
As the merit of Christ's blood *pacifies God*—so the   
virtue of it *purifies us*. Christ's blood is *heaven's bath*.   
It is a laver to wash in. It washes a *crimson* sinner—  
**milk-white!**  
  
The *Word of God* is a looking-glass to show us our   
spots—and the *blood of Christ* is a fountain to wash   
them away! "On that day a fountain will be opened  
—to cleanse them from all their sins and defilement!"   
Zec 13:1  
  
But this blood will not wash—if it is *mingled* with   
anything. If we mingle our good works with Christ's   
blood—it will not wash. Let Christ's blood be pure and   
unmixed—and there is no spot which it cannot wash   
away! It purged out Noah's drunkenness—and Lot's   
incest!

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**Make us 'clods of earth' into 'stars of glory'**  
  
Christ is that *golden pipe*—through which the *golden oil  
of salvation* is transmitted to us.  
  
"Because of His great love that He had for us" Eph 2:4  
  
*Nothing could fasten Jesus to the cross—but the golden link of love!*   
  
The emperor Trajan tore off a piece of his own *robe* to bind up   
one of his soldier's wounds. But Christ tore off His own *flesh* for us!   
  
"He gave **Himself** for us to redeem us." Tit 2:14. Christ gave   
*Himself* for us—*what more could He give?* If He had anything to   
part with of more worth—He would have bestowed it upon us!  
  
What astonishing love—that Christ should die for such as we are.   
What are we? Not only *vanity*—but *enmity!*   
  
When we were *rebelling*—He was *dying!* When we had *weapons*   
in our hands—then He had the *spear* in His side! This is the very   
quintessence of love! "God demonstrates His own love for us in   
this: While we were still *sinners*, Christ died for us!" Romans 5:8.  
When we were engulfed in misery and had lost our beauty—then   
Christ died for us. O amazing love, which should swallow up all   
our thoughts!  
  
What astonishing love—that Christ should die for us—rather than   
for the *fallen angels*. They were creatures of a more noble extraction   
and, in all probability, might have brought greater revenues of glory   
to God. Yet, that Christ should pass by those *golden vessels*, and   
**make us 'clods of earth' into 'stars of glory'**—O the hyperbole   
of Christ's love!

What a stupendous love is this!   
  
Who can meditate upon His love—and not be in ecstasy!  
  
We may behold the *odiousness of sin*—in the red looking-glass of   
Christ's sufferings. Sin is to be abominated, since it turned Adam out   
of paradise and threw the angels down to hell. Sin is the birthplace   
of our sorrows—and the grave of our comforts. But that which may   
most of all *disfigure the face of sin* and make it appear abominable   
is this—*It crucified our Lord Jesus!*  
  
O let us look upon sin with indignation! When a temptation to sin   
comes—let us say, "Is not this the sin which poured out Christ's   
blood!" Let our hearts be enraged against sin!   
  
When the senators of Rome showed the people *Caesar's bloody   
robe*, they were incensed against those who slew him. Sin has   
rent the white robe of Christ's flesh—and died it a crimson color!  
Let us, then, seek to be avenged of our sins!  
  
Under the Law, if an *ox* gored a man so that he died—the ox   
was to be killed, Exo 21:28. *Sin* has gored and pierced our   
Savior! Let it die!  
  
Let us be deeply affected with the great love of Christ for us.   
Who can tread upon these hot coals—and his heart not burn?   
Cry out with Ignatius, *"Christ, my love, is crucified!"*

If a *friend* would die for us—would not our hearts be much   
affected with his kindness? That the God of heaven would   
die for us—how should this stupendous mercy have a melting   
influence upon us! The body of Christ broken—is enough to   
break the most flinty heart. At our Savior's passion, "the   
rocks split apart!" He who is not affected with Christ's love  
—has a heart harder than the rocks!

How should we be affected with Christ's kindness who, to   
spare our life—lost His own! Let us pray that, as Christ was   
fastened to the *cross*—so He may be fastened to our *hearts!*"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great   
you will never fully understand it!" Eph 3:19

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**The fire will make them forget the pleasure!**   
  
"Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."   
2 Timothy 3:4   
  
"Reveling in their pleasures." 2Pe 2:13   
  
"They actually rejoice in doing evil!" Jer 11:15  
  
It is worse to *love* sin—than to *commit* it. He who   
loves sin—his *heart* is in the sin. He follows it with   
delight—like a man hunts his game.   
  
Sinners say they hate the devil—but they love that   
which will bring them to the devil! *Lovers of sin* shall   
have more of hell torment. **The fire will make them   
forget the pleasure!** *Oh, who would, for a cup of   
pleasure, drink a sea of wrath!* "Don't be deceived:   
God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he   
will also reap." Gal 6:7

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**A private back door to hell**  
  
"*Can anyone hide in secret places so that I  
cannot see him? Do not I fill heaven and  
earth?* declares the Lord." Jer 23:24   
  
Let me not only speak to *scandalous* sinners,   
who seem to have 'damnation' written upon   
their foreheads—but to *secret* sinners.   
  
"Cursed is he who makes an idol and puts it  
in a *secret* place." Deu 27:15. Some   
of the Jews would not be seen openly bowing   
to an idol—but they would put it in their closet   
or some other secret place and there worship it.   
  
There are many in like manner who will not   
*sin on the balcony*, or be like Absalom and   
sin in the sight of all Israel, 2Sa 16:22.  
But they shut up their windows, and commit  
their sin in secret. They have **a private back   
door to hell**—which nobody knows of!   
  
Perhaps they live in secret *adultery,* or secret   
*envy* and *malice,* or secret *neglect of duty*. God   
knows that they are living in secret sins. What   
an aggravation of sin is this! These desperate,   
*heaven-daring sinners,* though they see the   
flaming sword of God's justice before them,   
resolvedly venture on in sin!  
  
*"I have been watching!"* declares the Lord.   
Jer 7:11   
  
"I have seen your detestable acts! Woe to you!  
How long will you be unclean?" Jer 13:27

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**A never-dying appetite for sin**  
  
"They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed   
the name of God, who had control over these plagues,  
but *they refused to repent* and glorify Him. Men gnawed   
their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven   
because of their pains and their sores, but *they refused   
to repent* of what they had done." Rev 16:9, Rev 16:11   
  
If men would men live forever—they would sin forever.   
  
Some think it harsh that for the sins committed in a few   
years—they should undergo eternal torment. But here   
lies the justice and equity of it—it is because sinners   
have *an everlasting principle of sin* in them. Their stock   
of corruption is never spent. They have **a never-dying   
appetite for sin**—which is justly punished with a   
never-dying worm! "Their worm does not die, and   
the fire is not quenched!" Mar 9:44

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**They commit their filthy sins against Him!**  
 *"In spite of all this, they kept on sinning!"* Psa 78:32   
  
See the sordid ingratitude of sinners. Notwithstanding   
the fact that they had such eminent and signal favors  
from God—the pillar of fire to lead them, the rock split   
to give them water—yet God's mercy could not, with   
all its oratory, prevail with them to leave their   
iniquities. "They kept on sinning!"  
  
God would draw men from sin by His mercies—yet they   
will indulge their lusts. Oh, how ungrateful! It is an ill   
nature—which will not be won with love. Beasts are   
wrought upon with kindness, Isa 1:3—but sinners   
are not! T*he wicked are worse for God's mercies!* They,   
like vultures—draw sickness from these perfumes!  
  
The wicked deal with God as we do with the Thames.   
The Thames brings us in our riches—our gold, silks   
and spices—and we throw all our filth into the Thames.  
Just so do the wicked deal with God. He gives them all   
their mercies—and **they commit their filthy sins   
against Him!** *"They kept on sinning!"*  
  
If mercy is not a magnet to draw us nearer to God—it   
will be a millstone to sink us deeper into hell. Nothing   
is so cold as lead—yet nothing is more scalding when   
it is melted. Nothing is so **sweet** as God's mercy—yet   
nothing is so **dreadful**, when it is abused!

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**Take these three spears**  
  
Do with your sin—as Joab did with Absalom.   
He took three spears and thrust them through   
the heart of Absalom! 2Sa 18:14   
  
**Take these three spears**—the Word of God,   
prayer, and mortification—and strike through  
the heart of your lusts, so that they die!   
  
What is the end of all a Christian's duties, praying,   
and hearing—but to weaken and mortify lust!   
Why is this spiritual medicine taken—but to kill   
the child of sin! Sin will insinuate itself and plead  
for a reprieve—but show it no mercy!  
  
Saul's sparing Agag lost him the kingdom—and   
your sparing sin will lose you the kingdom of heaven.   
Do with your sin, what Samuel did to Agag, "He   
*hacked Agag to pieces* before the Lord at Gilgal."   
1Sa 15:33.

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**Nothing will convince them**  
  
If we could see hell-fire in every sin—it would   
make us fear to commit it! The fiercest creatures   
dread fire. When Moses' rod was turned into a   
serpent, he was afraid and fled from it. Sin will   
prove to be a stinging serpent. Oh, fly from it!   
  
Most people are like the leviathin—a creature   
devoid of fear, Job 41:33. They play upon the   
hole of the asp. Sinners never *fear* hell—until   
they *feel* hell! **Nothing will convince them**  
—but fire and brimstone!

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**A shortcut to hell!**  
  
The *unchaste* heart is a volcano—burning with lust!   
Immorality is the shipwreck of chastity—and the   
murder of conscience.  
  
Immorality is a **brutish** sin. "They are well-fed,   
*lusty stallions*, each neighing for another man's   
wife." Jer 5:8  
  
Immorality is a **costly** sin; it proves a *purgatory* to   
the purse. Pro 6:26, "The prostitute reduces you   
to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your   
very life." "You will lose your honor and hand over to   
merciless people everything you have achieved in life.   
Strangers will obtain your wealth, and someone else   
will enjoy the fruit of your labor. Afterward you will   
groan in anguish when disease consumes your body!"   
Pro 5:9-11   
  
Immorality is a **foolish** sin. Pro 5:20. "The man   
who commits adultery is an *utter fool*, for he destroys   
his own soul!" Pro 6:32  
  
The immoral person *hastens his own* ***death*.** "She   
seduces him with her persistent pleading; she lures   
with her flattering talk. He follows her impulsively like   
an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer bounding   
toward a trap until an arrow pierces its liver, like a   
bird darting into a snare—he doesn't know it will cost   
him his life!" Pro 7:21-23. By an early death—  
the immoral person takes **a shortcut to hell!**   
  
The fire of lust—kindles the fire of God's anger.  
  
"Nothing impure will ever enter it." Rev 21:27   
  
"Outside are the dogs, the sexually immoral."   
Rev 22:15  
  
  
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**The heart of a beast**  
  
"Man, who is vile and corrupt, who drinks up  
evil like water!" Job 15:16  
  
People sin with greediness, "Having lost all sensitivity,   
they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to   
indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust   
for more." Eph 4:19. They have grown rampant   
in wickedness, having laid aside the veil of modesty.   
"The wicked know no shame." Zep 3:5   
  
We read that Nebuchadnezzar had **the heart of a beast**   
given to him, Dan 4:16. If all who have the hearts of   
beasts, had the faces of beasts—men would be very scarce!  
  
  
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Were our sins engraved upon our foreheads,   
**we would be ashamed to look up!**~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~  
 **Worldly things** can no more relieve a troubled   
mind—than a silk stocking can ease a broken leg!   
  
  
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**A father who chastises his child with tears**  
  
"When My anger is spent and I have vented My  
wrath on them—I will be comforted." Eze 5:13  
  
God does not take delight in punishing. Jdg 10:16,   
"His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." He is like   
**a father who chastises his child with tears**. But God   
was so provoked with the Jews, that it seemed a *delight*   
to Him to afflict. "When My anger is spent and I have   
vented My wrath on them—I will be comforted." Oh,   
what a venomous, accursed thing sin is—which makes   
a merciful God take comfort in the destruction of His   
own creature!  
  
  
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**It will soften a stone!**  
Christ's blood is a SOFTENING blood.   
  
There is nothing so hard, that it cannot be softened   
by this blood. **It will soften a stone!** Water will   
soften the earth—but it will not soften a stone; but   
Christ's blood mollifies a stone. It softens a heart of   
stone. It turns a flint into a spring. The heart, which   
before was like a piece hewn out of a rock, being   
steeped in Christ's blood—becomes soft, and the   
waters of repentance flow from it.  
  
How was the jailer's heart dissolved and made tender   
when the blood of sprinkling was upon it! "Sirs, what   
must I do to be saved?" Act 16:30. His heart was   
now like *melting wax*. God might now set whatever   
seal and impression He desired, upon it.  
  
"I will give you a new heart with new and right desires,  
and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your  
stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart."  
Eze 36:26   
  
  
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**Keep this medicine next to your heart**  
  
"The people of Israel called the bread *manna*.   
It was white like coriander seed and tasted  
like wafers made with *honey*." Exo 16:31  
  
The *manna* was a lively type and emblem of Christ, for   
manna was *sweet*. It was a delicious food—and was   
called **angel's food** for its excellency. Psa 78:25. So   
Christ, the sacramental manna, is sweet to a believer's   
soul. "His fruit was sweet to my taste," Son 2:3 .

Everything of Christ is sweet. His name is sweet. His   
virtue is sweet. This manna sweetens the bitter waters of   
Marah.  
  
Nay, Christ's flesh excels manna. Manna was *food*—but   
not *medicine*. If an Israelite had been sick, manna could   
not have cured him. But this blessed manna is not only   
for food—but for medicine! Christ has healing under His   
wings, Mal 4:2. He heals the *blind eye*, and the *hard  
heart*. **Keep this medicine next to your heart**—and it   
will heal you of all your spiritual distempers.   
  
Also, manna was corruptible. It ceased when Israel came   
to Canaan. But this blessed manna will never cease! The   
saints will feed with infinite delight and soul satisfaction   
upon Christ—to all eternity! The joys of heaven would   
cease—if this manna would cease.   
  
*Every crumb of this Bread of life is precious!*  
  
  
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**Must we have our *bracelets* and *diamonds***,   
when Christ had the *nails* and *spear* going to His heart!  
  
  
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**The scum**  
  
Murmuring against God is not the way to get out   
of trouble—but rather to go lower into trouble!  
What does the child get by struggling—but more   
blows? Oh, do not lisp out a murmuring word  
against God! Murmuring is **the scum** which   
boils off from a discontented heart!  
  
"I was *silent*; I would not open my mouth—for   
You are the one who has done this!" Psa 39:9   
David's ear was open to hear *the voice of the rod*—but his mouth was not open in complaining.   
  
  
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**That *duty* which makes me proud!**  
  
"I hate pride and arrogance." Pro 8:13  
  
Some take pride in their **duties**. This *worm of pride*,   
breeds in *sweet fruit.* They have said so many prayers,   
heard so many sermons. Luk 18:12, "I fast twice a   
week, and give a tenth of all I get." Now they think   
they have made God amends—that He is indebted to   
them and they shall be accepted for their religious   
performances. What is this but pride? Is this not to   
make *a Christ* of our duties? The devil destroys some   
by making them *neglect* duty, and others by making   
them *idolize* duty. Better is that *infirmity* which humbles   
me—than **that *duty* which makes me proud!**  
  
Some take pride in their **graces**. They look down on  
others whom they think are inferior to them in grace.   
  
  
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**The more bitterness we taste in sin**   
—the more sweetness we shall taste in Christ!

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