

# WORKS OF THOMAS WATSON REFI

by Thomas Watson

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*A collection of writings by the Puritan pastor Thomas Watson, known for his vivid and practical exposition of Scripture. Includes his reflections on divine providence, Christian doctrine, and the comfort of God's grace for struggling believers.*

3 Chapters

## Table of Contents

1. Watson, Thomas - A Divine Cordial (choice excerpts)
2. Watson, Thomas - The Doctrine of Repentance (choice excerpts)
3. Watson, Thomas - The Duty of Self-Denial (choice excerpts)

## Watson, Thomas - A Divine Cordial (choice excerpts)

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A Divine Cordial

by Thomas Watson

### CHOICE EXCERPTS

If God left us!

The sins of the ungodly are looking-glasses in which we may see our own hearts. Do we see a heinous, impious wretch? Behold a picture of our own hearts! Such would we be—if God left us! What is in wicked men's practice—is in our nature. Sin in the wicked—is like fire which flames and blazes forth. Sin in the godly—is like fire hid in the embers. Christian, though you do not break forth

into a flame of scandalous sin—yet you have no cause to boast, for there is as much sin in the embers of your nature! You have the root of all sin in you, and would bear as hellish fruit as any ungodly wretch—if God did not either curb you by His power, or change you by His grace!

Why might not God have left you—to the same excess of wickedness? Think with yourself, O Christian—why should God be more merciful to you, than to another? Why should He snatch you, as a brand plucked out of the fire—and not him? How should this make you to adore free grace! What the Pharisee said boastingly, we may say thankfully—"God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers, etc."

If we are not as wicked as others—we should adore the riches of free-grace! Every time we see men hastening on in sin—we are to thank God that we are not such! If we see a crazy person—we thank God that it is not so with us. When we see another infected with the plague—how thankful are we, that God has preserved us from it! Much more when we see others under the power of Satan—how thankful we should be, that this is no longer our condition!

"For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, captives of various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful . . . ." Titus 3:3

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It is better to go to heaven with the few

"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it." Matthew 7:13-14

It is better to go to heaven with the few—than to hell in the crowd! We must walk in an opposite course to the people of the world.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ A beast with a man's head!

Love to God is an expansion of soul, or the inflaming of the affections—by which a Christian breathes after God as the supreme and sovereign good.

"There is nothing on earth that I desire besides You." Psalms 73:25. The Christian loves God above all other objects. God is the quintessence of all good things; He is superlatively good. The soul admiring in Him that constellation of all excellencies—is carried out in love to Him in the highest degree. God, who is the chief of our happiness—must have the chief of our affections. The creature may have the milk of our love—but God must have the cream! Though some drops of love may run to our kindred and friends—yet the full torrent must run out after Christ. Relations may lie on the bosom—but Christ must lie in the heart!

We set a high value upon God as being the most sublime and infinite good. We so esteem God, as that if we have Him—we do not care though we lack all other things. The stars vanish, when the sun appears. All creatures vanish in our thoughts, when the Sun of righteousness shines in His full splendor. The soul that loves God, rejoices in Him as in his treasure—and rests in Him as his center. The heart is so set upon God—that it desires no more.

We must love God more for what He is (His intrinsic excellencies)—than for what He bestows. True love is not mercenary. You need not hire a mother to love her child. Just so, a soul deeply in love with God needs not be hired by rewards. It cannot but love Him—for that luster of beauty which sparkles forth in Him!

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God." Romans 8:28

Despisers and haters of God—have no lot or part in this privilege. It is children's bread—it belongs only to those who love God.

This is a sharp reproof to those who do not love God, to such as have not a grain of love to God in their hearts—and are there such reprobates alive? He who does not love God—is a beast with a man's head! Oh wretch! Do you live upon God's bounty every day—yet not love Him! These are monsters in nature—devils in the shape of men! Let them read their doom: "If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed!" 1 Corinthians 16:22

How can he expect love from God—who shows no love to Him? Will God ever lay such a viper in His bosom—as casts forth the poison of malice and enmity against Him?

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Temptations work for our good

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Even temptations are overruled for good, to the children of God. A tree which is shaken by the wind is more settled and rooted. Just so, the blowing of a temptation does but settle a Christian the more in grace.

Temptations are overruled for good in eight ways:

(1.) Temptation sends the soul to prayer. The more furiously Satan tempts, the more fervently the saint prays. The deer being shot with the dart—runs faster to the water. When Satan shoots his fiery darts at the soul—it then runs faster to the throne of grace. When Paul had the messenger of Satan to buffet him, he says, "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me" (2 Corinthians 12:8). That which makes us pray more, works for good.

(2.) Temptation to sin, is a means to keep from the perpetration of sin. The more a child of God is tempted—the more he fights against the temptation. The more Satan tempts to blasphemy, the more a saint trembles at such thoughts, and says, "Away from me, Satan!" When Joseph's mistress tempted him to lust—the stronger her temptation was, the stronger was his opposition. That temptation which the devil uses as a spur to sin—God makes a bridle to keep back a Christian from sin!

(3.) Temptation works for good—as it abates the swelling of pride. "To keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud!" (2 Corinthians 12:7). The thorn in the flesh was to puncture the puffing up of pride! Better is that temptation which humbles me—than that duty which makes me proud! Rather than a Christian shall be haughty minded—God will let him fall into the devil's hands awhile, to be cured of his swelling pride!

(4.) Temptation works for good—as it is a touchstone to try what is in the heart. The devil tempts—that he may deceive us; but God allows us to be tempted—that He may try us. Temptation is a trial of our sincerity. It argues that our heart is chaste and loyal to Christ—when we can look a temptation in the face, and turn our back upon it. Many have no heart to resist temptation. No sooner does Satan come with his bait—but they yield; like a coward who, as soon as the thief approaches, gives him his purse. But he is the valorous Christian, who brandishes the sword of the Spirit against Satan, and will rather die than yield. The valor and courage of a saint is never more seen than on a battlefield, when he is fighting the red dragon, and by the power of faith puts the devil to flight. That grace is tried gold, which can stand in the fiery trial, and withstand Satan's fiery darts!

(5.) Temptations work for good—as God makes those who are tempted, fit to comfort others in the same distress. A Christian must himself be under the buffetings of Satan, before he can speak a word in due season to him who is weary. Paul was well-versed in temptations. "We are very familiar with his evil schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Thus he was able to acquaint others with Satan's cursed wiles (1 Corinthians 10:13). A man who has ridden over a place where there are bogs and quicksands—is the fittest to guide others through that dangerous way. He who has felt the claws of Satan, the roaring lion, and has lain bleeding under those wounds—is the fittest man to deal with one who is tempted. None can better discover Satan's subtle devices—than those who have been long in the fencing school of temptation.

(6.) Temptations work for good—as they stir up fatherly compassion in God to those who are tempted. The child who is sick and bruised—is most looked after. When a saint lies under the bruising of temptations, Christ prays, and God the Father pities. When Satan puts the soul into a fever, God comes with a cordial; which made Luther say, that "temptations are Christ's embraces," because He then most sweetly manifests Himself to the soul.

(7.) Temptations work for good—as they make the saints long more for heaven. There they shall be out of gunshot; heaven is a place of rest, no bullets of temptation fly there. The eagle which soars aloft in the air, and sits upon high trees—is not troubled with the stinging of the serpent. Just so, when believers are ascended to heaven, they shall not be molested by the old serpent, the devil. In this life, when one temptation is over, another comes. This makes God's people wish for death—to call them off the battlefield where the bullets fly so quick—and to receive a victorious crown, where neither the drum nor cannon—but the harp and violin, shall be eternally sounding.

(8.) Temptations work for good—as they engage the strength of Christ. Christ is our Friend, and when we are tempted, He sets all His power working for us. "Since He Himself has gone through suffering and temptation, He is able to help us when we are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). If a poor soul was to fight alone with the Goliath of hell, he would be sure to be vanquished! But Jesus Christ brings in His auxiliary forces—He gives fresh supplies of grace. "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!" (Romans 8:37). Thus the evil of temptation is overruled for our good.

Question. But sometimes Satan foils a child of God. How does this work for good?

Answer. I grant that, through the suspension of divine grace, and the fury of a temptation—a saint may be overcome; yet this foiling by a temptation shall be overruled for good. By this foil, God makes way for the augmentation of grace. Peter was tempted to self-confidence; he presumed upon his own strength; and Christ let him fall. But this wrought for his good—it cost him many a tear. "He went out, and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). And now he grows less self-reliant. He dared not say he loved Christ more than the other apostles. "Do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15). He dared not say so—his fall into sin broke the neck of his pride!

The foiling by a temptation causes more circumspection and watchfulness in a child of God. Though Satan did before decoy him into sin—yet for the future he will be the more cautious. He will beware of coming within the lion's chain any more! He is now more vigilant and fearful of the occasions of sin. He never goes out without his spiritual armor—and he girds on his armor by prayer. He knows he walks on slippery ground, therefore he looks wisely to his steps. He keeps close sentinel in his soul, and when he spies the devil coming—he grasps his spiritual weapons, and displays the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16). This is all the hurt the devil does when he foils a saint by temptation—he cures him of his careless neglect; he makes him watch and pray more. When wild beasts get over the hedge and damage the grain—a man will make his fence the stronger. Just so, when the devil gets over the hedge by a temptation, a Christian will be sure to mend his fence; he will become more fearful of sin, and careful of duty. Thus the being worsted by temptation, works for good.

Objection. But if being foiled works for good, this may make Christians careless whether they are overcome by temptations or not.

Answer. There is a great difference between falling into a temptation, and running into a temptation. The falling into a temptation shall work for good—not the running into it. He who falls into a river is fit for help and pity—but he who desperately runs into it, is guilty of his own death. It is madness running into a lion's den! He who runs himself into a temptation is like king Saul—who fell upon his own sword.

From all that has been said, see how God disappoints the old serpent—by making his temptations turn to the good of His people. Luther once said, "There are three things which make a godly man—prayer, meditation, and temptation." The wind of temptation is a contrary wind to that of the Spirit; but God makes use of this cross wind, to blow the saints to heaven!

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Charging God with wrongdoing

"It is the Lord's will. Let Him do what He thinks best." 1 Samuel 3:18

One who genuinely loves God, interprets all His dealings in the best sense. Though He afflicts sharply—the soul takes all well. This is the language of a gracious spirit: "My God sees what a hard heart I have, therefore He drives in one wedge of affliction after another—to break my heart. He knows how full I am of the cancer of covetousness, or the swelling of pride, or the fever of lust—therefore He gives me bitter remedies, to save my life. This severe dispensation is either to mortify some corruption—or to exercise some grace. How good is God, who will not let me alone in my sins—but smites my body to save my soul!" Thus genuine piety puts a good gloss upon all God's afflictive dealings. It is Satan who makes us have high thoughts of ourselves, and hard thoughts

of God. "Take away everything he has—and he will surely curse You to Your face!" Job 1:11

"Then Job fell to the ground in worship and said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.' In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing." Job 1:20-22

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Five sharp stings!

Many love sin, more than God. "They are haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They are forever inventing new ways of sinning." (Romans 1:30)

What is there in sin—that any should love it?

Sin is a debt. "Forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:12). Sin is a debt which binds over to the wrath of God!

And will you love sin? Does any man love to be in debt?

Sin is a disease. "The whole head is sick" (Isaiah 1:5). And will you love sin? Will any man hug a disease? Will he love his plague sores?

Sin is a pollution. The apostle calls it "filthiness" (James 1:21).

It is compared to leprosy and to poison of asps!

God's heart rises against sinners. "My soul loathed them!" (Zechariah 11:8).

Sin is a hideous monster. Lust makes a man brutish; malice makes him devilish! What is in sin to be loved? Shall we love deformity?

Sin is an enemy. It is compared to a "serpent". Sin has five sharp stings:

shame,

guilt,

horror,

death,

damnation!

Will a man love that which seeks his death? Surely then it is better to love God than sin. God will save you—but sin will damn you! Is he not a fool—who loves damnation! But love to God will never let sin thrive in the heart. The love of God withers sin. The flower of love kills the weed of sin! How should we labor for that grace of love to God—which is the only corrosive to destroy sin!

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We shall leave this staff at heaven's door

Love is the most abiding grace. This will stay with us, when other graces take their farewell. In heaven we shall need no repentance—because we shall have no sin. In heaven we shall not need patience—because there will be no affliction. In heaven we shall need no faith—because faith looks at unseen things (Hebrews 11:1). Then we shall see God face to face; and where there is vision, there is no need of faith.

But when the other graces are out of date, love continues. And in this sense the apostle says that love is greater than faith or hope—because it abides the longest. "Love will last forever" (1 Corinthians 13:8). Faith is the 'staff' which we walk with in this life. "We walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7). But we shall leave this staff at heaven's door—and only 'love' shall enter. Thus love carries away the crown from all the

other graces. Love is the most long-lived grace—it is a blossom of eternity. How should we strive to excel in this grace, which alone shall live with us in heaven, and shall accompany us to the marriage supper of the Lamb!

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A little honey in its mouth—but it has wings!

It is better to love God, than the world.

If you set your love on worldly things, they will not satisfy. You may as well satisfy your body with air—as your soul with earth! If the globe of the world were yours—it would not fill your soul. Will you set your love on that which will never give you contentment? Is it not better to love God? He will give you that which shall satisfy your soul to all eternity!

If you love worldly things, they cannot remove trouble of mind. If there is a thorn in the conscience—all the world cannot pluck it out. King Saul, being perplexed in mind, all his crown jewels could not comfort him (1 Samuel 28:15). But if you love God, He can give you peace when nothing else can. He can apply Christ's blood to refresh your soul. He can whisper His love by the

Spirit, and with one smile scatter all your fears and disquiets.

If you love the world, you love that which may keep you out of heaven. "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23). Prosperity, to many, is like a large sail to a small boat, which quickly overturns it. By loving the world, you love that which will endanger you. But if you love God, there is no fear of losing heaven. He will be a Rock to hide you—but not to hurt you. By loving Him, we come to enjoy Him forever.

You may love worldly things—but they cannot love you in return. You love gold and silver—but your gold cannot love you in return. You give away your love to the creature—and receive no love back. But if you love God, He will love you in return. "If any man loves Me, My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). God will not be behindhand in love to us. For our drop of love to Him—we shall receive an ocean of His love!

While you love the world, you love that which is infinitely below the worth of your souls. When you lay out your love upon the world, you hang a pearl upon a swine—you love that which is inferior to yourself. As Christ speaks in another sense of the birds of the air, "Are you not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26), so I say of worldly things, Are you not much better than they? You love a fair house, or a beautiful garment—are you not much better than they? But if you love God, you place your love on the most noble and sublime object—you love that which is better than yourselves. God is better than the soul, better than angels, better than heaven!

You may love the world, and receive hatred for your love. Would it not vex one, to lay out money upon a piece of ground which, instead of bringing forth grain or fruit, should yield nothing but nettles? Thus it is with all earthly things—we love them, and they prove nettles to sting us! We meet with nothing but disappointment. But if we love God, He will not return hatred for love. "I love those who love Me" (Proverbs 7:17). God may chastise His children—but He cannot hate them. Every believer is part of Christ, and God can as well hate Christ, as hate a believer.

You may over-love the creature. You may love wine too much, and silver too much; but you cannot love God too much. It is our sin that we cannot love God enough. How weak is our love to God! If we could love God far more than we do—yet it can never be proportionate to His worth; so there is no danger of excess in our love to God.

You may love worldly things—and they die and leave you. Riches take wings! Relations drop away! There is nothing here abiding. The creature has a little honey in its mouth—but it has wings! It will soon fly away. But if you love God, He is "a portion forever" (Psalms 73:26). As He is called a Sun for comfort, so a Rock for eternity. Thus we see, that it is better to love God than the world.

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A sea of sin—and not a drop of sorrow!

One sign of genuine love to God—is grief for sin. Where there is love to God—there is a grieving for

our sins of unkindness against Him. A child who loves his father, cannot but weep for offending him. The heart which burns in love—melts in tears. "Oh! that I should abuse the love of so dear a Savior! Shall I give Him more gall and vinegar to drink? How disloyal and hypocritical have I been!

How have I grieved His Spirit, trampled upon His royal commands, slighted His blood!"

This opens a vein of godly sorrow, and makes the heart bleed afresh. "Peter went out, and wept bitterly!" That Peter should deny Christ after he had received such amazing love from Him—this broke his heart with grief! "He went out, and wept bitterly!"

By this, let us test our love to God. Do we shed the tears of godly sorrow? Do we grieve for our unkindness against God, our abuse of His mercy, our non-improvement of the talents which He has given us? How far are they from loving God—who sin daily, and their hearts never smite them! They have a sea of sin—and not a drop of sorrow! They are so far from being troubled, that they make merry with their sins. "When you engage in your wickedness, then you rejoice!" (Jeremiah 11:15). Oh wretch! Did Christ bleed for sin—and do you laugh at it!

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The daughter helps to destroy the mother

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Afflictions work for good to the godly, as they are destructive to sin. Sin is the 'mother', affliction is the 'daughter'; the daughter helps to destroy the mother.

Sin is like the tree which breeds the worm; and affliction is like the worm that eats the tree.

There is much corruption in the best heart; affliction does by degrees work it out, as the fire works out the dross from the gold, "The Lord did this to purge away his sin." (Isaiah 37:9)

What if we have more of the rough file—if we have less rust! Afflictions carry away nothing but the dross of sin. Afflictions are the medicines which God uses to cure our spiritual diseases. Afflictions cure . . .

the swelling of pride,

the fever of lust,

the cancer of covetousness.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The chain which fastened Jesus to the cross!

"Because of His great love for us." Ephesians 2:4

Love made Jesus suffer for us. Love was the chain which fastened Jesus to the cross! "Because of

the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail." Lamentations 3:22

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Glittering sins!

Our best works are but glittering sins!

"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us

away." Isaiah 64:6

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Monuments of mercy

Admire and adore God's free grace in saving you—that God should pass over so many, that He should pass by the wise and noble, and that the lot of free grace should fall upon you! That He should take you out of a state of vassalage, from grinding the devil's mill—and should set you above the princes of the earth, and call you to inherit the throne of glory! Fall upon your knees, break forth into a thankful triumph of praise! Let your hearts be ten stringed instruments, to sound forth the memorial of God's saving mercy. There are none so deep in debt to free grace—as you are; and none should be so high mounted upon the pinnacle of thanksgiving. Say as the sweet singer; "I will extol You, O God my King, every day will I bless You, and I will praise Your name forever!" (Psalms 145:1-2). Those who are monuments of mercy—should be trumpets of praise! O long to be in heaven, where your thanksgivings shall be purer and shall be raised a note higher!

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The idol of self-righteousness

"Not having my own righteousness" (Php 3:9).

He whose heart God has touched by His Spirit, lays down the idol of self-righteousness at Christ's feet, for Him to tread upon. The true Christian denies not only sinful self—but righteous self. He becomes moral and pious—but he does not trust to his morality or piety. Noah's dove made use of her wings to fly, but trusted to the ark for safety.

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God calls us to glory and virtue

"In His kindness God called you to His eternal glory." 1 Peter 5:10

This effectual call is a GLORIOUS call. We are called to the enjoyment of the ever blessed God. It is as if a man were called out of a prison—to sit upon a throne! Curtius writes of one, who while digging in his garden, was called to be king. Thus God calls us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3)

First to virtue, then to glory. At Athens there were two temples, the temple of Virtue, and the temple of Honor; and no man could go to the temple of Honor—but through the temple of Virtue. Just so, God calls us first to virtue, and then to glory.

What is the glory among men, which most so hunt after—but a feather blown in the air? What is it, compared to the weight of eternal glory? God would have us part with nothing for Him—but that which will damn us if we keep it. He has no design upon us—but to make us happy. He calls us to salvation, He calls us to a heavenly kingdom! Oh, how should we then, with Bartimeus, throw off

our ragged coat of sin, and follow Christ when He calls!

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He opens the heart!

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

This is an inward and effectual call, when God wonderfully overpowers the heart, and draws the will to embrace Christ. God, by the outward call, blows a trumpet in the ear; by the inward call, He opens the heart, as He did the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14). The outward call may bring men to a profession of Christ—the inward call brings them to a possession of Christ. The outward call curbs a sinner—the inward call changes him!

See our deplorable condition before we are called—

We are in a state of bondage. Before God calls a man, he is the devil's slave. He is at the command of Satan, as the donkey is at the command of the driver.

We are in a state of darkness. "You were once darkness" (Ephesians 5:8) Darkness is very disconsolate. A man in the dark is full of fear, he trembles every step he takes. Darkness is dangerous. He who is in the dark may quickly go out of the right way, and fall into rivers or whirlpools. Just so, in the darkness of ignorance, we may quickly fall into the whirlpool of hell.

We are in a state of impotency. "When we were without strength" (Romans 5:6). We had no strength to resist a temptation, or grapple with a corruption. Sin cut the lock where our strength lay (Judges 16:20). Nay, there is not only impotency—but obstinacy, "You always resist the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:51). Besides indisposition to holiness, there is opposition to holiness.

We are in a state of pollution. "I saw you polluted in your blood" (Ezekiel 16:6). The mind coins only earthly thoughts; the heart is the devil's forge, where the sparks of lust fly.

We are in a state of damnation. We are born under a curse. The wrath of God abides on us (John 3:36).

This is our condition before God is pleased by a merciful call to bring us near to Himself, and free us from that misery in which we were before engulfed.

God effectually calls His people by His Spirit. The Word is the instrumental cause of our conversion, the Spirit is the efficient cause of our conversion. The ministers of God are only the pipes and organs; it is the Spirit blowing in them, which effectually changes the heart. "While Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word" (Acts 10:44) It is not the farmer's industry in ploughing and sowing, which will make the ground fruitful, without the early and latter rain. Just so, it is not the seed of the Word that will effectually convert, unless the Spirit puts forth His sweet influence, and drops as rain upon the heart. Therefore the aid of God's Spirit is to be implored, that He would put

forth His powerful voice, and awaken us out of the grave of unbelief. If a man knocks at a gate of brass, it will not open; but if he comes with a key in his hand, it will open. Just so, when God, who

has the key of David in His hand (Revelation 3:7) comes, He opens the heart, though it be ever so fast locked against Him!

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A crown which is unfading!

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God." Romans 8:28

If we love God, everything in the world shall conspire for our good. We know not what fiery trials we may meet with—but to those who love God, all things shall work for good. Those things which work against them, shall work for them; their cross shall make way for a crown! Every crosswind shall blow them to the heavenly port!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined—what God has prepared for those

who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

The eye has seen rare sights, the ear has heard sweet music; but eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

nor can the heart of man imagine—what God has prepared for those who love Him! Such glorious rewards are laid up that, as Augustine says, "faith itself is not able to comprehend them!" God has promised a crown of life to those who love Him (James 1:12). This crown encircles within it, all blessedness—riches, and glory, and delight, and it is a crown which is unfading! 1 Peter 5:4

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Prize their gold above God

One sign of genuine love to God, is crucifixion to the world. He who is a lover of God—is dead to the world. "The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14). That is, "I am dead to the honors and pleasures of the world."

He who is in love with God is not much in love with anything else. The love of God, and ardent love of the world—are incompatible. "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15) Love to God swallows up all other love—as Moses' rod swallowed up the Egyptian rods.

If a man could live as high as the sun—what a small point would all the earth be. Just so, when a man's heart is raised above the world in the admiring and loving of God—how poor and diminutive are these things below! They seem as nothing in his eye. Test your love to God by this.

What shall we think of those who never have enough of the world? They have the cancer of covetousness, thirsting insatiably after riches: "Who pant after the dust of the earth!" (Amos 2:7). "Never talk of your love to Christ," says Ignatius, "when you prefer the world before the Pearl of great price!" Are there not many such, who prize their gold above God? If they have a good farm—they care not for the water of life. They will sell Christ and a good conscience for money.

Will God ever bestow heaven upon those who so basely undervalue Him, preferring glittering dust before the glorious Deity?

What is there in the earth, that we should so set our hearts upon it? The devil makes us look upon it through a magnifying glass! The world has no real intrinsic worth; it is but paint and deception!

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He never thinks of God

The first sign of genuine love to God—is the musing of the mind upon God. He who is in love—his thoughts are ever upon the object of his love. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God. "When I awake, I am still with You!" Psalms 139:18 God is the treasure, and where the treasure is—there is the heart.

By this we may test our love to God. What are our thoughts most upon? Can we say we are ravished

with delight, when we think on God? Have our thoughts gotten wings? Are they fled aloft? Do we contemplate Christ and glory? Oh, how far are they from being lovers of God—who scarcely ever think of God! "God is not in all his thoughts" Psalms 10:4. A sinner crowds God out of his thoughts. He never thinks of God—unless with horror, as the prisoner thinks of the judge!

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How can we glorify God?

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God's glory." 1 Corinthians 10:31

How can we glorify God?

(1.) We glorify God—when we aim at His glory—when we make Him the first in our thoughts, and the end of our life. As all the rivers run into the sea, and all the lines meet in the center—so all our actions should terminate and center in God!

(2.) We advance God's glory—by being fruitful in grace. "Herein is my Father glorified—that you bring forth much fruit" (John 15:8). Barrenness reflects dishonor upon God. We glorify God when we grow . . .

in beauty as the lily,

in tallness as the cedar,

in fruitfulness as the vine.

(3.) We glorify God—when we give the praise and glory of all we do unto God. When the silk worm weaves her curious work, she hides herself under the silk—and is not seen. Just so, when we have done our best, we must vanish away in our own thoughts—and transfer the glory of all to God. The apostle Paul said, "I labored more abundantly than them all" (1 Corinthians 15:10). One would think this speech savored of pride; but the apostle pulls off the crown from his own head—and sets it upon the

head of free grace, "Yet not I—but the grace of God which was with me!"

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Why so?

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

See what cause the saints have to be frequent in the work of thanksgiving. In this, Christians are defective, though they are much in supplication—yet little in thanksgiving. The apostle says, "In everything giving thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Why so? Because God makes everything work for our good. We thank the physician, though he gives us a bitter medicine which makes us sick, because it is to make us well. We thank any man who does us a good turn; and shall we not be thankful to God, who makes everything work for good to us?

God loves a thankful Christian. Job thanked God when He took all away: "The Lord has taken away—blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Job 1

21). Many will thank God when He gives; Job thanks Him when He takes away, because he knew God would work good out of it. We read of saints with harps in their hands (Revelation 14:2), an emblem of praise. We meet many who have tears in their

eyes, and complaints in their mouths! But there are few with their harps in their hands, who praise God in affliction.

To be thankful in affliction is a work peculiar to a saint. Every bird can sing in spring—but some birds will sing in the dead of winter. Everyone, almost, can be thankful in prosperity—but a true saint can be thankful in adversity. A godly man will bless God, not only at sun-rise—but at sun-set. Well may we, in the worst which befalls us, have a psalm of thankfulness, because all things work for good. Oh, be much in blessing of God—who befriends us—and makes all things work out to our good.

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Let us not nourish this angry viper in our bosom!

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Learn how little cause we have then to be discontented at outward trials and troubles! What! Discontented at that which shall do us good! All things shall work for good.

There are no sins God's people are more subject to, than unbelief and impatience. They are ready either to faint through unbelief—or to fret through impatience. When men fly out against God by discontent and impatience, it is a sign they do not believe this text. Discontent is an irrational sin, because afflictions work for good. The devil blows the coals of discontent—and then warms himself at the fire.

Oh, let us not nourish this angry viper in our bosom! Let this text produce patience, "All things work for good to those who love God!" Shall we be discontented at that which works for our good? If

one friend should throw a bag of money at another, and in throwing it, should graze his head—he would not be troubled much, seeing by this means he had got a bag of money. Just so, the Lord may bruise us by afflictions—but it is to enrich us. These light afflictions work for us an eternal weight of glory—and shall we be discontented!

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A divine chemistry

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

See here the wisdom of God, who can make the worst things imaginable, turn to the good of the saints. He can by a divine chemistry—extract gold out of dross! God enriches by impoverishing; He causes the augmentation of grace by the diminution of an estate. When the creature goes further from us, it is that Christ may come nearer to us. God works strangely. He brings order out of confusion, and harmony out of discord. God often helps when there is least hope, and saves His people in that way which they think will destroy. He made use of the high priest's malice and Judas' treason—to redeem the world.

We are apt to find fault with God's dealings with us—which is as if an illiterate man should censure learning, or a blind man find fault with the work in a landscape. "Vain man would be wise" (Job 11:12). Silly men will be calling the wisdom of God to the bar of human reason. God's ways

are "past finding out" (Romans 9:33). They are rather to be admired than fathomed.

How stupendous and infinite is that wisdom, that makes the most adverse dispensations work for the good of His children!

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Good things work for hurt

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

To those who are godly—evil things work for good; to those who are ungodly—good things work for hurt. Notice the miserable condition of wicked men. Riches and prosperity are not benefits, but snares to them. Worldly things are given to the wicked, as Michal was given to David—for a snare (1 Samuel 18:21). Their mercies are like poisoned bread; their tables are sumptuously spread—but there is a hook under the bait! "Let their table become a snare" (Psalms 69:22).

Pride and luxury are the twin offspring of prosperity. Riches are not only like the spider's web, unprofitable—but like the cockatrice's egg, pernicious. "Riches kept for the hurt of the owner" (Ecclesiastes 5:13). The common mercies wicked men have, are not loadstones to draw them nearer to God—but millstones to sink them deeper in hell (1 Timothy 6:9). Their delicious dainties are like Haman's banquet; after all their lordly feasting, death will bring in the bill, and they must pay it in hell!

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Spiritual declension

"You have left your first love" (Revelation 2:4)

Satan labors to blow out this flame of love to God. Of all graces, love is most apt to decay; therefore

we had need to be the more careful to preserve it. If a man has a precious jewel, he will keep it safe.

What care then should we have to keep this precious jewel, of love to God! It is sad to see professors

declining in their love to God; many are in a spiritual declension—their love is decaying.

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How do afflictions make us happy?

"Happy is the man whom God corrects." Job 5:17

How do afflictions make us happy? We reply that, being sanctified, they bring us nearer to God.

The magnet of mercy does not draw us so near to God as the cords of affliction. When God sets our

worldly comforts on fire, then we run to Him, and make our peace with Him. When the prodigal was

pinched with need, then he returned home to his father (Luke 15:13). When the dove could not find any rest for the sole of her foot, then she flew to the ark. When God brings a deluge of affliction upon us, then we fly to the ark—Christ.

Thus affliction makes us happy, in bringing us nearer to God. Faith can make use of the waters of affliction—to swim faster to Christ.

Thus we see afflictions are not harmful—but beneficial, to the saints. We should not so much look at the evil of affliction, as the good. The worst that God does to His children—is to whip them to heaven!

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God draws, and the world draws

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Afflictions work for good, as they are the means of making the heart more upright. In prosperity the heart is apt to be divided (Hosea 10:2). The heart cleaves partly to God—and partly to the world. It is

like a needle between two loadstones: God draws, and the world draws. Now God takes away the world—that the heart may cleave more to Him in sincerity.

As we sometimes hold a crooked rod over the fire to straighten it; so God holds us over the fire of affliction to make us more straight and upright. Oh, how good it is, when sin has bent the soul awry from God, that affliction should straighten it again!

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Hear the rod

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Affliction works for good, as it is our preacher and teacher—"Hear the rod" (Micah 6:9). Luther said that he could never rightly understand some of the Psalms—until he was in affliction.

Affliction teaches what sin is. In the word preached, we hear what a dreadful thing sin is, that it is both defiling and damning—but we fear it no more than a painted lion; therefore God lets loose affliction—then we feel sin bitter in the fruit of it. A sick-bed often teaches more than a sermon. We can best see the ugly visage of sin in the looking-glass of affliction!

Affliction teaches us to know ourselves. In prosperity we are for the most part strangers to ourselves. God afflicts us—that we may better know ourselves. We see that corruption in our hearts, in the time of affliction, which we would not believe was there. Water in the glass looks clear—but set it on the fire, and the scum boils up. Just so—in prosperity, a man seems to be humble and thankful, the water looks clear; but set this man a little on the fire of affliction, and the scum boils up—much impatience and unbelief appear. "Oh," says a Christian, "I never thought I had such a bad heart, as now I see I have! I never thought my corruptions had been so strong, and my graces so weak."

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The Lord gave—and the devil took away

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Afflictions work for good, to the godly. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." (Psalms 119:71)

Afflictions to the godly, are medicinal. Out of the most poisonous drugs God extracts our salvation.

Those afflictive providences which seem to be harmful—are beneficial.

It is a heart-quieting consideration in all the afflictions which befall us—to know that God has a special hand in them: "The Almighty has afflicted me!" (Ruth 1:21)

Job eyed God in his affliction; therefore, he does not say, "The Lord gave—and the devil took away," but, "The Lord gave—and the Lord has taken away." Whoever brings an affliction to us—it

is God who sends it.

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The saints' graces are . . .  
weapons to defend them,  
wings to elevate them,  
jewels to enrich them,  
spices to perfume them,  
stars to adorn them,  
cordials to refresh them,  
evidences for heaven.

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Prayer

Prayer is the bellows of the affections; it blows up holy desires and ardors of soul.  
Prayer has power with God. It is the key which unlocks the treasury of God's mercy.  
Prayer keeps the heart open to God—and shut to sin.  
Prayer assuages the swellings of lust.  
Prayer is the Christian's gun, which he discharges against his enemies.  
Prayer is the sovereign medicine of the soul.  
Prayer sanctifies every mercy (1 Timothy 4:5).  
Prayer is the dispeller of sorrow—by venting the grief, it eases the heart. When Hannah had prayed, "she went away, and was no more sad" (1 Samuel 1:18)

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The mercies of God

The mercies of God humble. "Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and prayed—Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, that You have brought me this far?" (2 Samuel 7:18)  
So says a gracious heart, "Lord, who am I, with all my unworthiness, that it should be better with me  
than others? Who am I, that I should have those mercies which others lack, who are better than me?  
The mercies of God make a sinner proud—but a saint humble.

The mercies of God have a melting influence upon the soul; they dissolve it in love to God.

God's judgments make us fear Him—but His mercies make us love Him. Such a melting influence has God's mercy—it makes the eyes drop with tears of love.

The mercies of God make the heart fruitful. When you lay out more cost upon a field, it bears a better crop. A gracious soul honors the Lord with his substance. The golden showers of Gods' mercy, cause fertility.

The mercies of God make the heart thankful. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" (Psalms 116:12) Every mercy is an gift of free grace; and this enlarges the soul in gratitude. A godly Christian is not a grave to bury God's mercies—but a temple to sing His praises.

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Those goliath lusts

"He will subdue our iniquities." Micah 7:19

The power of God subdues our corruptions.

Is your sin strong? God is powerful—He will break the head of this leviathan!

Is your heart hard? God will dissolve that stone in Christ's blood! "The Almighty makes my heart soft" Job 23:16

When we say as Jehoshaphat, "We have no might against this great army!"—the Lord goes up with us, and helps us to fight our battles. He strikes off the heads of those goliath lusts which are too strong for us!

## Watson, Thomas - The Doctrine of Repentance (choice excerpts)

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The Doctrine of Repentance (choice excerpts) By Thomas Watson, 1668

### CHOICE EXCERPTS

If any ingredient is left out

"Unless you repent, you will also perish." Luke 13:5

Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit, whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and outwardly reformed.

Repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of six special ingredients:

1. Sight of sin
2. Sorrow for sin
3. Confession of sin
4. Shame for sin
5. Hatred for sin
6. Turning from sin

If any ingredient is left out, it loses its virtue.

"I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."  
Acts 26:20

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When we are lepers in our own eyes!

"Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices!" Ezekiel 36:31

A true penitent is a sin-loather. If a man loathes that which makes his stomach sick, much more will he loathe that which makes his soul sick! It is greater to loathe sin—than to leave it. The nauseating and loathing of sin, argues a detestation of it.

Christ is never loved—until sin is loathed.

Heaven is never longed for—until sin is loathed.

When the soul sees its filthiness, he cries out, "Lord, when shall I be freed from this body of death! When shall I put off these filthy garments of sin—and be arrayed in the robe of Your perfect righteousness! Let all my self-love be turned into self-loathing!"

We are never more precious in God's eyes—than when we are lepers in our own eyes!

The more bitterness we taste in sin—the more sweetness we shall taste in Christ!

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The damned in hell would be most penitent

"Unless you repent, you will also perish." Luke 13:5

There are several counterfeits of repentance.

A man has gone on long in sin. At last God arrests him, shows him what desperate hazard he has run

—and he is filled with anguish! But after a while, the tempest of conscience is blown over, and he is

quiet. Then he concludes that he is a true penitent because he has felt some bitterness in sin.

Do not be deceived! This is not true repentance! Both Ahab and Judas had great trouble of mind.

It is one thing to be a terrified sinner—and another to be a repenting sinner. Sense of guilt is enough

to breed terror in the conscience. Only infusion of divine grace, breeds true repentance. If pain and trouble were sufficient to repentance—then the damned in hell would be most penitent, for they are most in anguish.

"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!" Revelation 16:10-11

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A voyage to hell

"Who of us can dwell with everlasting burnings!" Isaiah 33:14

Sin is like oil, and God's wrath is like fire. As long as the damned continue sinning—so long will the fire continue scorching! "They cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they refused to repent of all their evil deeds!" Revelation 16:11

But men question the truth of this, and are like impious Devonnax who, being threatened with hell for his villainies, mocked at it and said, "I will believe there is a hell when I come there—and not before!" We cannot make hell enter into men—until they enter into hell.

If, for all this, men will persist in sin and are resolved upon a voyage to hell—who can hinder their damnation? They have been told what a soul-damning rock sin is—but if they will voluntarily run upon it and damn themselves—their blood is upon their own head!

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Satan warms himself at the fire!

Sin is a foolish thing. What greater foolishness is there, than to gratify an enemy! Sin gratifies Satan.

When lust or anger burn in the soul—Satan warms himself at the fire! Men's sins feast the devil.

Samson was called out to amuse the Philistines. Likewise the sinner amuses the devil! Nothing more satisfies him—than to see men sin. How he laughs to see them hazarding their souls for the world, as if one would trade diamonds for straws; or would fish for gudgeons with golden hooks!

Every wicked man shall be indicted as a fool, at the day of judgment. "But God said to him—You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Luke 12:20

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Ask him now how he likes his bargain!

"The deceitfulness of sin" Hebrews 3:13

Sin is a mere cheat. While it pretends to please us, it beguiles us! Sin does as Jael did. First she brought the milk and butter to Sisera, then she pounded the tent peg through his head! (Judges 5:26). Sin first courts, and then kills! It is first a fox—and then a lion. Whoever sin betrays—it kills!

Those locusts in Revelation are fit emblems of sin: "They had gold crowns on their heads . . . They had tails that stung like scorpions, with power to torture people" (Revelation 9:7-10).

Judas pleased himself with the thirty pieces of silver—but they proved deceitful riches. Ask him now how he likes his bargain!

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Worse than the torments of hell

Sin is worse than hell. Torment has its epitome in hell—yet nothing in hell is as bad as sin.

Hell is of God's making—but sin is not of God's making. Sin is the devil's creature.

The torments of hell are a burden only to the sinner—but sin is a burden to God.

In the torments of hell, there is something which is good, namely, the execution of divine justice. There is justice to be found in hell—but sin is a piece of the highest injustice. Sin would rob God of his glory, Christ of his purchase, the soul of its happiness.

Sin is the most hateful thing—for it is worse than the torments of hell.

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A holy antipathy against sin

There is no better sign of true repentance—than a holy antipathy against sin. Sound repentance

begins in love to God—and ends in the hatred of sin.

How may true hatred of sin be known?

When a man's HEART is set against sin. Not only does the tongue protest against sin—but the heart

abhors it. However lovely sin is painted—we find it odious—just as we abhor the picture of one whom we mortally hate, even though it may be well drawn.

Suppose a dish be finely cooked and the sauce good—yet if a man has an antipathy against the meat, he will not eat it. So let the devil cook and dress sin with pleasure and profit—yet a true penitent has a secret abhorrence of it, is disgusted by it, and will not meddle with it.

True hatred of sin is UNIVERSAL. There is a dislike of sin not only in the judgment—but in the will and affections. Many a one is convinced that sin is a vile thing, and in his judgment has an aversion to it—yet he tastes sweetness in it—and has a secret delight in it. Here is a disliking of sin in the judgment—and an embracing of it in the affections! Whereas in true repentance, the hatred of sin is in all the faculties, not only in the mind—but chiefly in the will: "I do the very thing I hate!" (Romans 7:15). Paul was not free from sin—yet his will was against it.

He who truly hates one sin—hates all sins. He who hates a serpent—hates all serpents. "I hate every

false way!" (Psalms 119:104). Hypocrites will hate some sins which mar their credit. But a true convert

hates all sins—gainful sins, complexion sins, the very stirrings of corruption.

A holy heart detests sin for its intrinsic pollution. Sin leaves a stain upon the soul. A regenerate person abhors sin not only for the curse—but for the contagion. He hates this serpent not only for its sting but for its poison. He hates sin not only for hell—but as hell.

Those who have no antipathy against sin, are strangers to repentance. Sin is in them—as poison in a serpent, which, being natural to it, affords delight. How far are they from repentance who, instead of hating sin—love sin! To the godly—sin is as a thorn in the eye; to the wicked—sin is as a crown on the head! "They actually rejoice in doing evil!" (Jeremiah 11:15).

Loving of sin is worse than committing it. What is it, which makes a swine love to tumble in the mire? Its love of filth. O how many there are—who love the forbidden fruit! They love their sin—and hate holiness.

There should be a deadly antipathy between the heart and sin. What is there in sin, which may make a penitent hate it?

Sin is the accursed thing, the most deformed monster! Look upon the origin of sin, from whence it comes. It fetches its pedigree from hell: "He who commits sin is of the devil!" (1 John 3:8). Sin is the devil's special work. How hateful is it to be doing that which is the special work of the

devil—indeed, that which makes men into devils!

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Powerful orators for mercy

"Mary knelt behind Him at His feet, weeping. Her tears fell on His feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing His feet and putting perfume on them." Luke 7:38

Mary brought two things to Christ—perfume and tears. Her tears were better than her perfume.

Tears are powerful orators for mercy. They are silent—yet they have a voice. "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping." Psalms 6:8

They say that tears have four qualities: tears are hot, moist, salty, and bitter. It is true of repenting tears. They are . . .

hot—to warm a frozen conscience;

moist—to soften a hard heart;

salty—to season a soul putrefying in sin;

bitter—to wean us from the love of the world.

And I will add a fifth. They are sweet, in that they make the heart inwardly rejoice "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy!" John 16:20

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The devil has two places he dwells in

"I love foreign gods, and I must go after them!" Jeremiah 2:25

A hard heart is a dwelling for Satan. As God has two places He dwells in—heaven and a humble heart; so the devil has two places he dwells in—hell and a hard heart.

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Worse than affliction

Sin is worse than affliction. There is more malignity in a drop of sin—than in a sea of affliction—for sin is the cause of affliction, and the cause is more than the effect. The sword of God's justice lies quiet in the scabbard—until sin draws it out!

Affliction is good for us: "It is good for me, that I have been afflicted" (Psalms 119:71).

Affliction causes repentance (2 Chronicles 33:12). The viper, being stricken, casts up its poison. Just so, when God's rod strikes us with affliction, we spit away the poison of sin!

Affliction betters our grace. Gold is purest, and juniper sweetest—when in the fire.

Affliction prevents damnation. "We are being disciplined—so that we will not be condemned with the world." (1 Corinthians 11:32).

Thus, affliction is in many ways for our good—but there is no good in sin. Manasseh's affliction brought him to humiliation and repentance—but Judas' sin brought him to desperation and damnation. Affliction only reaches the body—but sin goes further—it poisons the mind, disorders the affections. Affliction is corrective; sin is destructive. Affliction can but take away the life; sin takes away the soul (Luke 12:20).

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You cannot make a beast blush

"The wicked know no shame." Zephaniah 3:5

Many have sinned away shame. It is a great shame, not to be ashamed. "Are they ashamed of their

loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush!" (Jeremiah 6:15).

The devil has stolen shame from men. When men have hearts of stone and foreheads of brass—it is a

sign that the devil has taken full possession of them!

There is no creature capable of shame but man. The brute beasts are capable of fear and pain—but not of shame. You cannot make a beast blush. Those who cannot blush for sin, do too much resemble the beasts. There are some so far from this holy blushing, that they are proud of their sins. They are so far from being ashamed of sin, that they glory in their sins! They look on sin as a piece of gallantry. The swearer thinks his speech most graceful when it is interlarded with oaths. The drunkard counts it a glory that he is mighty to drink. But when men shall be cast into the fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter by the breath of the Almighty—then let them boast of sin!

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A swine with a man's head

Sinners are compared . . .

to foxes (Luke 13:32),

to wolves (Matthew 7:15),

to donkeys (Job 11:12),

to swine (2 Peter 2:22).

A sinner is a swine with a man's head. He who was once little less than the angels in dignity—has now become like the beasts! The ungodly are, in a manner—wholly brutified! They do not act rationally, but are carried away by the violence of their lusts and passions. Our sins have taken away that noble, holy spirit which once we had. The crown has fallen from our head. God's image is defaced, reason is eclipsed, conscience stupified!

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Sin must drown

"Unless you repent, you will also perish." Luke 13:5

The two great graces essential to a saint in this life, are faith and repentance. These are the two wings by which he flies to heaven.

Moist tears of repentance dry up sin—and quench the wrath of God. Repentance is the nourisher of

piety—and the procurer of mercy.

Worldly tears fall to the earth; but godly tears of repentance are kept in a bottle. "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book." Psalms 56:8.

Either sin must drown in the tears of repentance—or the soul must burn in hell.

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Lose Christ and heaven

"How long will you love what is worthless?" Psalms 4:2

An unbeliever would rather lose Christ and heaven—than his lusts!

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The cancer of the soul

"Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep" Proverbs 19:15

Sloth is the cancer of the soul. Men had rather go sleeping to hell—than weeping to heaven! When Satan has by his witcheries lulled men asleep in sloth—then he destroys them!

## Watson, Thomas - The Duty of Self-Denial (choice excerpts)

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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." Isaiah 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. Luke 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!" Luke 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." Matthew 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-worshipping. 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?" 1 Corinthians 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, Joshua 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." Ephesians 3:8. "I am nothing." 2 Corinthians 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." 1 Corinthians 9:27

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Take life easy!

"Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry!" Luke 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, 1 Peter 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!" Matthew 25:26.

Those slothful people in Etureia, 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. Romans 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? 1 Corinthians 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." Isaiah 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! 1 Timothy 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." Psalms 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." Matthew 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." Matthew 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!

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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." 2 Timothy 2:12

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."  
Luke 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, Acts 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!" 1 Peter 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."  
Luke 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. Psalms 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. Revelation 18:7, "She has lived in luxury and pleasure, so match it now with torments and sorrows!"

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