

Lay Aside Every Weight

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One of the problems, I think that we can have happen, is that we spend a lot of time moving through Hebrews chapter 11. This book of Hebrews starts out being inundated, with Christ. But then, Through the entire chapter of Hebrews chapter 11, we hardly see a direct reference to Christ, at all. What we find is. What repeated prominent word? “Faith”. Which faith assumes Christ, but sometimes we can begin to miss that. You know, Hebrews would have been read originally “vroom” right through. You wouldn’t have stayed months and months, just in chapter 11. So the thing that we have to feel here is. This “Faith” is all about; looking to Christ as this sacrifice. Looking to Christ and the blood He shed. Looking to Christ and His superior covenant. Looking to Christ and His superior Priesthood. Looking to Christ, in all of His glory.

This is a book about Christ, being better, better, better. He’s better than Aaron, He’s better than Moses, He’s better than Abraham. He’s better. His covenant is better. His blood is better. His sacrifice is better. We have to feel that, as we move through this chapter, and now as we move into Hebrews chapter 12. Let’s read the first two verses.

Therefore. That “Therefore” builds back to chapter 11, and all this great cloud of witnesses. Men and women who have run the race of faith, and they saw Christ. Jesus said, Abraham saw His day, and he rejoiced. They saw Christ, not like we see Christ. I mean there are things, there are promises that have been fulfilled for us, that they did not fully grasp. But they saw, they realized, they recognized something. Because, ever since the beginning you at least had Genesis 3:15. The revelation of Christ just increased, as the ages passed by. Just more and more revelation. But they knew.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2, ESV)

Now the title of my sermon is “The theology of weights”. There is verse one, it says “let us also lay aside every weight”. A “Theology of weights”. There’s the word “weight”. That’s the

theme of the sermon. I recognize that we are to lay aside weights. We are to lay aside sin. I'm not going to deal, hardly at all, with sin today. I want us to consider "weights".

You look at the Greek lexicons. Basically, the idea here is. A "bulk", a "mass", a "heap". ESV, King James, New King James, Holman Christian, New English, they use the term most of you have, weight. Tyndale, "all that presseth down". Now, a weight is a pretty neutral term, right? I have a ceiling fan in my office. Once a month I get the credit card statement out, and with ceiling fan on. I bring the receipts, I go through them, and they blow around. A Paperweight is good, right? The weight in the cargo hold of a Ship, creates ballast, and stability. That's good. But, if you're a runner, weight is bad. The word itself does not necessarily denote good or bad. But, in the context here, the New American Standard, and the NIV, the definitely pick up on this negative spin, in which the author of Hebrews is using this word. The NAS translates it as "encumbrance", and the NIV uses "everything that hinders". There's nothing good, even neutral about "weight", in the way that it's used in Hebrews 12:1. Weight is, all bad, it needs to be laid aside, if were going to run the way we need to run, to make it to the finish line. The only thing to be done with "weight", in the context of Hebrews 12:1, is lay it aside. Now, what's at stake? I want to be real clear about this. Listen to this:

One well-know Bible commentator, and many of you would know his name, if I said it. He says this: "Thousands of Christians are like water logged vessels, they cannot sink, but they are so saturated with inconsistencies, and worldliness, and permitted evil. That they can only be towed, with difficulty, in to the celestial port."

Brethren, I whole-heartedly reject that statement. I believe that commentator, though He has enormous amounts of good things to say, I think he's dead wrong, I think he's missed that. That commentator makes it seem, that what's at stake, in laying aside weights. Is simply your mode of entry into Heaven. I do not believe that's what the author of Hebrews has been doing for eleven chapters at all. I down believe it. This commentator makes it seem: That if Christians lay aside the weight in their lives. They won't be like waterlogged vessels, needing to be towed with difficulty into the celestial port. Rather, they are going to shoot in like a ship that's not all waterlogged. That has Its sails full of the wind, and gracefully shoots into this port. But if you don't lay aside weights, then your just, saturated waterlogged lame vessel of a Christian. That needs like a tugboat to haul you in.

So what's at stake in this guys mind is, rather our entry into heaven is waterlogged or not. But I don't believe that what's at stake. Laying aside weights, is not about coming into the celestial city like some spiritually fit Lightning Bolt. It's about rather you make it at all.

This is all about rather we get there, or don't get there. If you don't lay aside weights, what's at stake is **your life**. I just want you to also think about, where we've come from in eleven chapters. I mean, you tell me this: Where have you seen anywhere in the book of Hebrews, where the author is saying. "Hey, what I'm writing this book for is to encourage Christians to not come in, floating, waterlogged, and soggy into the celestial port"?

All the way through this book it's been life and death. It's rather you make it or don't make it. You start out in this book, and when you get this GLORIOUS TRUTH, of the superiority, and the preeminence of Christ in chapter one. The author says, you better pay much closer attention to this, why? You better not drift, why? If you neglect such a great salvation, we're talking. Folks, we're talking. If you neglect, how will you escape, if you neglect such a great salvation? We are to take care, brothers. Lest what? Lest we fall away from the living God. That's what at stake here. You come in the chapter 3, chapter 4, what is it? You are to be striving to enter this rest. Lest What? Lest you fall.

You come over to chapter 6 and what are you dealing with? Your dealing with coming into the knowledge of the truth. Your dealing with someone who has been exposed to all manner of spiritual privilege, and what have they done? They've come to a place where they are no longer capable of repentance. That's what's happening in Hebrew's. I mean you go over to Hebrew's chapter 10, and what is it? Once you've come to the knowledge of the truth. If you go on sinning deliberately; and I would say this: You might go on and sin deliberately, or you might put in: You go through weights in your life, and you neglect casting off weights deliberately. After you come to the knowledge of this truth.

If you don't have a Faith that can look at this blood, and look at this sacrifice, and look at this covenant, and look at this Christ, look at this High Priest, and say "He is everything, He is the radiance of the Glory of God. This is the One, this is the One who put away sin, this is the one that is superior to angels. He has a more excellent name than theirs. This is the one that God has said, "Your thrown O God is forever and ever. This is the One! And I need to have him." Your faith says I'm going to lay aside, what I need to lay aside. So I can run to get to Him. This is about rather you make it or not. There's nothing in the letter of Hebrews, that this has to do with mode of entry. This has to do with rather you enter. That's what's going on here, that's what's at stake.

The author of Hebrew's is not trying to discourage Christians from running a sloppy race to heaven, drifting, being sidetracked, being weighed down, sluggish, spiritually lazy, coasting. It's a book that says if you try and run that way. You're not going to make it.

I believe the reasoning of that commentator is flawed, and you know where his thinking is flawed. He **assumes** we have this group of Christians, *and they can't sink*. You see how his line of reasoning is going. We have Christians; we know they can't sink. So, if we find these "Christians"; with all this weight and baggage and everything, and waterlogged. They're going to have to be towed in to heaven, by a tugboat.

Well, the author of Hebrews does not reason that way. He's gracious, He'll call people brothers, he's charitable that way. He calls people brothers who claims to be brothers, but he warns them. That if you don't lay aside these things, if you don't pay much closer attention to these things, if you don't strive. If you're not clinging to Christ; laying to Christ, and holding to the promises that concern Christ. If your not trusting Him, if your not giving more attention to Him, if your in anyway drifting away from that. Letting the baggage in your life pull you away from that, sidetrack you from that, and dim your eyes in beholding Christ, as you run this race. You don't get there.

I just pulled some quotes out by Spurgeon, and Piper. Cause I think these guys hit it right on the head. Spurgeon say this, *"We can not win if we are weighted, the pace will have to be very swift, and we can not get to it, or keep it up, if we have weights to carry. Unloaded. We shall find the race taxing to all our powers, but weighted we shall be doomed to failure. O ye that would win, heed the caution, and lay aside every weight."*

This is a caution. It's not a suggestion. The book of Hebrews is full of warning. Not suggestion. It's warning. *"Lay aside every weight, rather great or small, and press towards the mark. Run for it man! Thou hast need to do nothing else but run."*

Piper says this, *"This command, (laying aside weights) it does not come out of the blue. This is the point of the whole book of Hebrews. Endure, persevere, run, fight, be alert, be strengthened, don't drift, don't neglect, don't be sluggish, don't take your eternal security for granted. Run the race set before you, don't stroll, don't meander, don't wander about aimlessly, Run as in a race with a finish line, with **everything** hanging on it. **Everything** hangs on the way you run this race."* These guys are dead right. Because, their message rings true; to the message of the author of Hebrews. Not like the other that I quoted to you.

These men know what's at stake here. A "Theology of Weights." In other words this is not a subject we ought to relegate to a category of insignificance. This is important it matters. Let's dive into it. I've got some points that I want us to bring out about weights.

Here's the first one: First thing I want you to see. Look at Hebrews 12:1 and 2. Your eyes shoot across there. There is only one primary verb here; everything else modifies it. It's

the verb run. You can see it towards the end of verse one. Let us **Run**. Everything else here modifies that. Laying aside weight, to **run**. Laying aside sin, to **run**. **Run** with endurance. **Run** with your eyes looking to Jesus. The matter of weights is significant to us only as it relates to the way we run. We need to run, it's imperative that we run. The purpose of life is to run. I mean Spurgeon hit it on the head, when he said "run for it man, thou hast need to do nothing else but run".

You think about the Apostle Paul. He looks back at his life, and how does he sum it up? I mean he's almost to the finish line, and he turns back, and he looks at his life, and he sees. "I have fought the good fight, I have ran the race, I have kept the faith." What kind of race do you think it is, when a man can say; on the one hand, it's a fight. On the other hand it's a race. It's the fight for faith, is it not? Is it not what this race is all about? The race itself is exactly: FAITH.

The race itself is what we have there in 12:2. "Looking to Jesus." Isn't that what this race is all about? Keeping my faith on Him. Steadfastly looking to Him. Keeping my heart Christ-ward. Keeping my eyes Christ-ward. Keeping my gaze there. Keeping my hope there. Putting all my joy there. Running with my eyes there, and not distracted by anything else. Not pulled away by the world. That's the fight. He kept the faith. He kept his eyes on Christ, all the way to the end. Do you get the feeling? ... "Paul, you make it sound like it was a cakewalk, you make it sound like it was a stroll through the park". That's not how he makes it sound. Because, Spurgeon was right: I mean, when you put away all the weight. You're going to have to do everything. You're going to have to give everything, to make it to the end. Everything!

The race of the Christian life is not an easy one. It is hard. If you think holding on to the baggage you going to get to the end. This is a race that is going to take the whole man. You've got wars with-in, you've got wars without, as you run this race. You've got to fight to hold on to the promises of God. Fight! To keep your eyes on Christ. You know the winds of hell, they blow against you. Do they not?

The whole while brethren, those winds are blowing. The devil is strategizing. You've got to RUN, You've got to RUN, and that's what the author of Hebrews is calling to you. RUN! RUN! RUN!

You know C.S. Lewis, in one of his Chronicles of Narnia. Called "The horse and his boy." That's a Christian allegory. It depicts the Christian's race to home. The Christian's race to the King. There's a place in here, where the main character of the book. It's a young boy

named Shasta. He comes upon this hermit, and he's madly seeking to get to the King. Because there's enemies at hand and he's running. This is the picture Lewis develops of somebody running, to get to the King. Here this Hermit says to Shasta; "If you run now, without a moments rest. You will still be in time to warn King Lune. Shasta's heart fainted at these words, for he felt that he had no strength left. He writhed inside at what seem the cruelty and unfairness of the demand. But all he said out loud was; "Where's the King". The hermit stood and pointed with his staff. "Look", he said. "There's a gate, right opposite of the gate you entered by. Open it, and go straight ahead. Always straight ahead, over level or steep, over smooth or rough, over dry or wet. I know by my heart that you will find King Lune, straight ahead. But RUN, RUN, **ALWAYS RUN!**"

That just rung in my head, as I'm hearing this: I must press towards the mark. That's what Paul is calling us. Paul is beckoning us on; all these cloud of witnesses, they're beckoning us on. The writer of Hebrews is beckoning us on. C.S. Lewis, in writing such an Allegory, **RUN Christian RUN! RUN! RUN!**

You have nothing to do but Run, press towards the mark. "Run for it man, as Spurgeon says. You've got to get serious about this race, the pace must be swift, everything hangs upon it. Run for your life, in faith.

The main thing you need to know about the Theology of Weights. Is that weighted, you don't run well. Weighted, you don't win. You that would run well must heed this caution. Be done with the weights. That's the first thing. Weights have to do with running.

The Second thing; notice verse one. "*Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run.*" I want you to see "weight", and "sin". Now sometimes we stick a conjunction between two words that are different, and sometimes between two words that are synonymous. "Black and White": Different. Paul would talk about compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience in Colossians 3. When you stick and "and" between humility and meekness. It's more synonymous. This is not synonymous. These are two different things. "Weights" are different from "Sin". Sin: is lawlessness, where as a weight may be very much lawful. The Apostle Paul gives us some great insight, in his first letter to the Corinthians. Don't turn there but listen to these:

In First Corinthians 6:12, Paul says this: "*All things are lawful for me*" now it true he may have been quoting what the Corinthians may have been saying. But, he's acknowledging that at least it can be true. "All things are lawful for me, but now all things are helpful." You see there are things that are not helpful, that are lawful. Right? That's what he's saying. In

other words, God doesn't specifically in His word prohibit you from it. But, just because he doesn't, doesn't mean that it's helpful to your life. He goes on to say; "*All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything,*" and again in a very similar fashion, over in 1 Corinthians 10:23, "All things are lawful, but all things are helpful" says the same thing. "All things are lawful, but not all things build up."

Can you see that there are things that are sin, and they are lawless. There are other things that are lawful, but they're not good, for you to run well with. They don't help you run. They hurt your running they don't build up. They're not profitable. Do ya'll see that? I mean, I'm not making this up. When I say there's a difference between those words. We have it on the authority of scripture, that there are indeed lawful things, that are not good if you want to get to the end.

Brothers and Sisters; do you know what this tells us, about the Christian life? It tells us: When you're living your life, and you are making decisions **about** your life.

It tells you; that when you turn on the music.

It tells you; that when you flip open the laptop.

It tells you; that when you think about what you're going to do this weekend.

It tells you; that if you are going to turn on that TV, or if you're going to go to a movie.

It tells you; that if you are going to spend time with people. There's more to life than just asking the question:

Is it sin?

There's more to life than that.

I've heard. I will hear people speaking sometimes, to one another in the church here, or I hear of a conversation that took place, that I didn't hear first hand. I know that we have some folks, who are very quick to respond. Someone will come to them and say "brother" and they will deal about something in their life, and the persons quick to shoot back "Show me in the bible where that's sin?" I mean; what sort of response is that? I have a feeling, typically: It's the kind of response you get from a person that is not necessarily taking seriously, running.

If you say to a marathon runner: "Hey they're going to have water and Gatorade, and other things, thirst quenchers, electrolyte replacement drinks along the way, you don't have to carry that gallon jug of water." Any of you see Joe Patron, he walks around with, you know. If I said; "Joe! You don't have to run this marathon with this..." He says: "Show me in the rule book where it says I can't do that!" You're like, huh? "This guys not serious about this

race.” That’s what some of the young people do. I’ve heard that. People respond that way to things in their life.

Listen, what does it say about the person, who’s always trying to identify the least possible holiness. Remember what Hebrews says; “without which no one will see the Lord... Peace, holiness.” It seems like you get certain people that are always interested in the minimum possible holiness that is required to see the Lord.

Think brethren think! When scripture says “few there be that find it.” When people like Paul get to the end of their life and they look back and say; “This was hard. This was a fight. This was a race.” When somebody like Spurgeon looks back and says; “It taxes all your powers to even make it to the end un-weighted.” When that’s the reality, when you know from scripture that vast multitudes of religious people are being deceived, and Christ is telling them to depart from Him, there in Mathew 7. When you find that only serious runners are going to make it. When Jesus Christ is saying; “Strive to enter in, there are many I say that are going to seek to enter in there at, and they will not be able.” You hear things like that. Are you going to sit there and start arguing for the minimal standards of righteousness that are required to get in to heaven? I mean what kind of talk is that? I suspect people that don’t eventually mature out of that, we’re not going to find them at the finish line. That’s the sense you get from this author. That’s dangerous.

You know what we need to be asking? It’s not rather it is just sin. We need to ask that, of course we need to ask that. But, we should be asking other questions, about what we do with our life, and what we allow into our life. We should be asking: Is this going to help me run? Lord, show me give me wisdom. Help me to see. Is this going to quicken my pace. I want to press towards the mark, and I must run, I need to get there. I need to do nothing else by run. Is it sin? Of course ask that question, of course. But not just for the minimal standard here. Is it going to help me run, is it going to incline my heart? Think about the things that matter in life, think about the things that matter to the Christian. Think about the things that Jesus said matter. “*You must always pray and not faint.*”(Luke 18:1). Ask yourself; is this going to help me pray? Do we not find: “*But above all these, love*”(1Cor. 13:3). Ask yourself: Is this going to help me love others?
Is this going to help me love Christ?
We find that we are running this race considering Christ, and looking upon Jesus. Does this help me look on Him?
Does this help me trust Him?

He found fault with those Ephesians; they lost they're first love.

Does this help me maintain that first love?

Does this keep my heart quick towards Christ?

Does this quicken me in this race?

Does this help me?

Does this help me hold fast to His promises?

Does this make me nimble and fleet footed as I run this race of faith towards glory?

Everything hangs on this. Is this going to help me run well?

Those are the kind of questions that we need to be asking. Because, if you know: You lose this race. You don't go home discouraged. Take a shower, eat supper, go to bed to rise up to race another day. If you lose, you lose big.

You think; a marathon runner. We know what this is like, if we all lined-up in the street right now to run a marathon. We could all take off running. When we got to Pine Street, we could be feeling pretty good. I could run in these shoes, and with these clothes on. I could even go out and get that box of a thousand DVD's, I could run and probably by Pine St. I would be feeling pretty good. But, do you think I'm going to be out there 26 miles down the road?

This is a marathon race, and you got to make it to the end. That marathon runner, when he takes off. May have those hiking running shoes. He may have a backpack on his back with water in it, and some energy bars, and a hooded sweatshirt. In case he gets cold. But I tell you what; ten miles down the road, he'll feel that.

You want the lightest shoes possible. Those marathon runners.... Those Greek Games. They ran naked, they shed everything. They wanted to be as light as possible. That's the imagery we have in Paul's mind undoubtedly, as he's talking about pressing towards that mark. As we're running and running this race. This is the imagery we had back then, they had those Olympic Games.

That would be the second thing I wanted to point out. The First: Weights have to do with running.

The Second: Weights are baggage, they're not necessarily sin. It's just that which weights us down, and slows us down in this race.

The Third thing: I want you to notice the word "also", in verse one. "Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight" So you can see the word "also". The point of the author is what? I mean you tell me. We are to

lay aside weight, but we're also to lay aside weight. What does it also have to do with? Not something else we have to do. It has to do with something, somebody else did, and we are to imitate. That the "also", they did it and we also must do it. Who is he speaking about? Who? Chapter 11. Remember chapter 11, isn't just bookended by chapter 12. It's bookended by chapter 10, and how did that chapter end? Verse 38 of chapter 10. "but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."

Again I want you to see, this is life and death. What chapter 11 is all about; is those who did not shrink back, those who made it. That's why they're put there, because they did make it. They are put there for us to imitate, and what our author is saying is: They made it to the end, having laid aside; not just sin, but the weights. That's how they made it, you also must do it if your gonna make it. That's what they're testifying to. Can you hear their voices? Being dead, as they yet speak. Is what chapter 11 says. Here's Moses, he can tell you, he's cheering us on. Saying: I had status, I had favor, I had riches. Look at them strewn out. It's what you can see in the life of everyone of these people that made it. Their path is strewn by weights that they have cast off. Follow the path of any true Christian, it is strewn with weights that they have thrown off. It's true, as you advance in life, as different things happen, different scenarios; you'll shed more as you go on. You've got a path here strewn with these things. That's the path to heaven.

My Third point on this Theology of Weights, is the witnesses did it. We also must do it. Well, let me give you some examples of weights: I want us to be serious about this race. So what are the things that tend to weigh us down? What are the things that tend to help? What are the things that tend to hurt? What are the things that hold us back? What is it that distracts us? I mean anything, that is going to slow us down. Remember, we have to keep it in our minds all the time. What is the nature of the race? The race is: A Race of Faith. That means trusting and holding on, not giving place to deception, not giving place to worldliness. Focused on Christ, yearning for Christ, loving Christ, running for Christ, serving Christ. For the glory of God. Our eyes set there, our eyes beholding Christ. As we fix our eyes on Christ. It's though He's at the finish line with His arms wide open. We're running, we're pressing towards that prize. We're reaching forward, straining every fiber, every nerve. You do not want the things in your life that tend to make you spiritually sluggish. You don't. Any thing that diminishes your hope in the cross. Any thing that is going to make Christ less glorious in

your eyes. Any thing that is going to keep us distracted. That's the point of what David was saying this morning (earlier service). The issue is: People living their life without a Christ consciousness, without a God consciousness. That's how you get to the place where your saying; "I'm going to go over there, and do such and such." It's not just some mechanical terminology. "God's will be done." It's people living with heavenly mindedness. Where their minds our Godward all the time, as they're making their decisions. What is it that takes your mind off of being Godward? We are to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2). What is it that gets your minds on things below? You know what those things are. We know the things that tend to make us worldly. We know the things that tend to make us not want to run. I'll tell you this, they're people who weaken us. Sometimes they profess to be Christians, they're baggage. When your around them they don't incline spirituality. They don't encourage Christ's likeness. They don't encourage you to run. They pull you down, hold you back, and are basically, a Heap, a mass, and a bulk in your life. You need to be discerning. When Paul says; Bad companionship corrupts good morals (I Cor. 15:33). You got to think he was probably speaking about some people that were right there in the Corinthian church. Be discerning.

Second thing: Watch out for what makes you feel better, but not run better. Sometimes we want to escape loneliness. So we'll seek to escape loneliness, in a way that makes us feel better. But it does not make us run better. We get ideas about the changes we need to make in our life, because we don't like what we're suffering. There's nothing wrong with suffering, when you can run from it. In a way that is not going to slow you down in this race. There's a place to flee from this town, on over to this town. In the light of difficulty. Don't put yourself in a place, trying to escape one thing. That's only going to slow you down in this race.

How about a Third Thing: Do you have anything in your life that you have to argue against yourself about? You repeatedly have to try and persuade yourself. You know it. There's a thing in your life. Your spirit keeps bringing it to your mind. Your conscience keeps telling you, and you keep arguing.

"No, it's right, it's right, that's ok, it's not sin!" Beware of things like that.

Or things that your not willing to investigate. You just want to do it, and your not going to give a lot of time thinking about it. If you got things in your life, that you can't honestly bring before The Lord in prayer, and ask for His guidance and His counsel, and His direction, and examine thoroughly in light of scripture. If you got things in your life that

your not willing to do that to, because you don't want to know.

How about things you could quickly spot, if you saw them in someone else. You see in their life, that it's not good. But, when it's in your life, kind of looks different to you. I ask myself this, you know people often wear the band "WWJD". Do you ask yourself, would Jesus do this? Because you know what, if there ever was a fleet footed runner. It was Him. He ran the race to perfection, and He ran well. He ran in Faith, He trusted His Father. He Believed His Father. He held to the promises of His Father. He ran perfect. Watch how He runs, would He have put that thing in His life. Even if it's not sin, would He of allowed that in His own life?

How about this: Things that you've been convicted in your life that you have thrown away, that you later picked back up. It may be okay. There are seasons when certain things we should have tossed away. Then there are seasons when they may be appropriate again. I'm not saying it's absolute. It's worth thinking about. Things that at one time you were convinced that you shouldn't have in your life, you came to later justify.

One of the things I thought about too was. A bunch a baggage in your life that is all about yourself. I mean, just stuff in your life. It's not unlawful, but the majority of stuff in your life. The weight in your life; it's about you. Your life is not largely filled with the kind of stuff that shows that your really living to love other people.

Think about this: Stuff in your life, that isn't just NOT unlawful. It may in some respects be good, but you could replace it with stuff much better. I'm often reminded of Paul's words: Phillipians 1:9-10 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent... I often think of that. When I was a young Christian, I heard John MacArthur do a sermon on that text. He really hammered that into my head. "Don't give your life simply to what is good. Strive for excellence." A lot of times we have to think that way. You know, I came across somewhere; some guy had a pair of running shoes on, and he was out training. When it got time for the race he put on a different pair of running shoes. Somebody asked him about it. He said, "well, these are lighter", they were so light. It's the kind of thing; a pair of running shoes is good. A lighter pair of running shoes is better, if you want to make it to the end, if you want to do really well. Christians must discard a lot of good things. That's the thing, if you look down this path, that the Christian runs. It's got all these "weights" discarded along the side. A lot of the things are likely going to be good. The better you run this race, the more good stuff that's likely going to

be on that. Not because you got rid of the good, to replace it with the bad. You got rid of the good to replace it with Better. With that which is excellent. I mean, it's just madness ! Professing Christians fill their lives with so much garbage. I just marvel at it.

I'll just leave you with this thought about examples of weights: What you conclude is a weight in your life, may not be in somebody else's. You be slow to judge, what others allow. There's a place to encourage people to think about these things. But, be careful before you condemn somebody else. You may actually find; what you find somebody else allowing, may actually be helpful to them. In a way that you never really figured out.

I've one more heading here: A Fifth. This is all about choices we must make. Look, there are those who make the choice to unload baggage, and there are others who don't make that choice. You know what it does? It does just what this book of Hebrews says: It induces sluggishness, it induces weak knees, arms that droop down, it encourages drifting, and will almost certainly find people that are not serious about these things. Falling out of the race at some point. Hebrews 12:1 is a command; to look at your life. To think hard about whats going on in your life, and being ruthless about what stays, and what goes. We need to be determined people, we need to be disciplined people. We need to be people who do things on purpose. Can you see it? The racer, the runner, the marathon runner. He is not just; lackadaisical, indifferent, about what he allows in his life. He's not indifferent about what he wears. Look, if you get in the race and you really don't know if your going to finish or not. Your kind of toying with this thing. You may get in there, and wear "Converse All-Stars". But I'll tell you, if your one of the guys, that's getting in the race, and you mean to win. You don't wear those. Are you in this race to win? I mean seriously, and if you are. I mean if your faith says: "Yes, that "blood" we sang about. That's where my hope is. Christ is everything. My soul; I don't want to lose it." It's not just about cutting off hands and feet, and plucking out eyeballs, that are clearly sin. There's other weight there, that may be lawful, even good. But, if you going to excel. You make decisions, you have to decide.

You decide,

I decide,

We decide the sort of things that go into our lives, and the things that don't. Mark it down, we all make decisions about what goes into our lives. Your life is not filled with things that just got there accidentally. Your life is filled with the things you have put there. Things you have allowed. This has to do with our decisions, with our choices. You decide, I decide the sort of things that we put there. That might strengthen our faith, encourage heavenly mindedness.

We know the things that we allow in our lives that weaken us. And you know the truth is. Everybody in this church, is running at a different pace, and some are running a whole lot better than others. It comes down to that, it comes down to the choices. We have choices.

Victory!

You have to have victory, in this area. Fill your life with the good things. Fill it with the people that help you. Fill it with the word of God. Fill it with intimacy with Christ. Fill it with books that stir your soul and encourage your faith. Fill yourself with those things that just strengthen your faith in The Lord. Fill it, be ruthless in casting away the weights that take you from looking to Jesus. Your life depends on this. Christians are Men and Women, who must be coming running men, that's what we have to do. That's what we have to do with our lives. We need to Run! We need to Go! We need to run, we are running men. Christians are running men, not lazy men, not luxuriant men, there not these lounging men. They are desperate, they are determined. They are men who are driving towards a mark. Driving towards a goal. We're told to strive, and it's going to tax you for everything. It's a race many are going to fall out of. Many, even when they get there to the end. There going to find that they did not run lawfully. Christ is going to say, "Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Mathew 7:23) You didn't run this race right. You didn't run it. "I never knew you." I mean Many! Remember that, many, many, many, versus the few. You recognize this? Only few who run the race well, only few. Your life is for running. Don't toy with this.

This is a science, the science of weights. It's worth your consideration.

RUN ! Your life depends on it. Just like C.S. Lewis; Run ! Run ! Always Run ! God help us to Run.

Lord we pray for your help. Lord give us the determination, and the desperation. Give us to be a people that are driven. Towards the Preciousness and the Glory of Christ. Towards His Beauty, towards the one who laid down his life for us. What it will be in that day to cross that line, to fall into his arms. To hear; well done... well done. It's just for this, that I've desired and I've longed for. That you should behold my glory. To be with me where I am. What will it be in that day to those who receive the victors crown. Lord we know we run, with our eyes set on Christ. Not in our own strength, but abiding in Him. We know we run in the power of the Spirit of God. We run looking to You, we run hoping in You. We run looking to you to be our help. To give us fleet footedness, to give us strength in our legs, to not let the weak knees blowout. But rather we look to you to strengthen them. Help us Lord. Help us to endure. Help us to press through. Lord help this group of people here. Lord, I

pray that you would so convict, so work in our minds in hearts, that we would be a people that we would cast away things that are unnecessary in our lives. To be serious about this race.

In Christ name I pray, Amen.