Laying Aside Weights

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INTRODUCTION

Urging believers to run the Christian race with endurance, the Hebrew writer says, “Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us” (Heb. 12:1-3).

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

We should lay aside every encumbrance/weight.

The Greek word ογκός, occurring only here, and translated “weight” (KJV) or “encumbrance” (NASB), refers to “bulk, an encumbrance” (Thomas 3591).

BDAG define it as “(1) material that is ponderously large, bulk; (2) that which hinders one from doing something, weight, burden, impediment, a figurative extension of 1.”

Louw and Nida define it as “that which serves to hinder or prevent someone from doing something—'hindrance, impediment.’” In Hebrews 12:1, it can be rendered “setting aside everything that serves as a hindrance” (13.149).

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV) — 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every *weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:1 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every *encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

We should also lay aside every entangling sin.

The Greek word ευπεριστάτως, occurring only here, and translated “ensnares” (KJV) or “encumbrance” (NASB), refers to that which is “easily encircling” (Thomas 2139).
BDAG define it as “easily ensnaring, obstructing, constricting.”

Louw & Nida define it as “pertaining to the exertion of tight control—‘being in control of, controlling tightly.’” In Hebrews 12:1, it may be rendered “the sin which controls (us) so tightly” (37.6).

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**The Weight of Worry**

We should lay aside the weight of worry resulting from either a lack of faith or the unnecessary compounding of past, present and future troubles (Matt. 6:25-34).

Matthew 6:25-34 (NASB95) — 25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 “And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32 “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

While worry is not inherently sinful, it can become so (Matt. 13:22; Luke 10:38-42), and is most certainly burdensome (2 Cor. 11:23-28, esp. v. 28; Col. 2:1-2).

Matthew 13:22 (NASB95) — 22 “And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Luke 10:38-42 (NASB95) — 38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called
Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (NASB95) — 23 Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

Colossians 2:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself.

**The Weight of Worldliness**

We should lay aside the weight of worldliness (1 John 2:15-17).

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB95) — 15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

**Lust of the Flesh**

Consider the consequences that King David faced because of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:7-15). In addition to the external judgments, he bore a heavy burden of guilt: “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer” (Psa. 32:1-5).
2 Samuel 12:7-15 (NASB95) — 7 Nathan then said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! 9 ‘Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. 10 ‘Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ 11 “Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. 12 ‘Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’ ” 13 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. 14 “However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.” 15 So Nathan went to his house. Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s widow bore to David, so that he was very sick.

Psalm 32:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! 3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

Lust of the Eyes

Consider the burden of being consumed by a love of money: “Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction” (1 Tim. 6:7-10, 17-19).

1 Timothy 6:7-10 (NASB95) — 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

The Greek word buthizō, here translated “plunge,” means “to sink, to cause to sink” (Thomas 1036). Elsewhere, it is used of Simon Peter’s boat that began to sink because of the great quantity of fish that had been caught (Luke 5:4-8, esp. v. 7). So likewise, we may sink into spiritual ruin from being weighed down with materialistic desires.
Luke 5:4-8 (NASB95) — 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” 5 Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.” 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to *sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

It is figuratively descriptive of the disastrous consequences of covetousness. Instead of obsessing over earthly treasures that perish, become defiled and fade away, let us store up treasures in heaven that will endure for all eternity (1 Tim. 6:17-19; 1 Pet. 1:3-5).

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NASB95) — 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NASB95) — 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**Pride of Life**


Proverbs 8:13 (NASB95) — 13 “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.

Proverbs 11:2 (NASB95) — 2 When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.

Proverbs 14:16 (NASB95) — 16 A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, But a fool is arrogant and careless.

Proverbs 15:25 (NASB95) — 25 The Lord will tear down the house of the proud, But He will establish the boundary of the widow.
Proverbs 16:5 (NASB95) — 5 Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

Proverbs 16:18-19 (NASB95) — 18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling. 19 It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 21:24 (NASB95) — 24 “Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names, Who acts with insolent pride.

Proverbs 28:25 (NASB95) — 25 An arrogant man stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.

Proverbs 30:11-14 (NASB95) — 11 There is a kind of man who curses his father And does not bless his mother. 12 There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, Yet is not washed from his filthiness. 13 There is a kind—oh how lofty are his eyes! And his eyelids are raised in arrogance. 14 There is a kind of man whose teeth are like swords And his jaw teeth like knives, To devour the afflicted from the earth And the needy from among men.

Reflecting the Hebrew writer’s exhortation, “let us lay aside every weight” (KJV) or “encumbrance” (NASB), we noted BDAG’s definition: “(1) material that is ponderously large, bulk; (2) that which hinders one from doing something, weight, burden, impediment, a figurative extension of 1.”

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV) — 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every *weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

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Illustrating the first definition, “material that is ponderously large,” BDAG cite an occurrence of the word by Papias, an early Christian writer, who referred to “the bulk of the head.”

How much does the human head actually weigh? The human head contains the brain which weighs about 3 pounds. Then there is the skull, the eyes, the teeth, the facial muscles and skin. In all, an adult head weighs around 10 to 11 pounds. So go grab two 5 pound bags of sugar or flour and hold them with one hand. Or think about a 10 pound bowling ball. It is a lot of weight perched up there on your neck, especially if you are in a car accident or a fall.

Figuratively speaking, some folks “jus got da big head.” The Corinthian disciples were being weighed down and held back by manifestations of their overweening pride, as they pitted one brother against another (1 Cor. 4:6), tolerated rank immorality in their midst (1 Cor. 5:1-2), and used knowledge
as a whipping stick (1 Cor. 8:1-3). They needed to learn that agape love “does not brag and is not arrogant” (1 Cor. 13:4-7). While God bestows abundant grace, He does so conditionally, opposing the proud, but giving grace to the humble (James 4:6).

1 Corinthians 4:6 (NASB95) — 6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

1 Corinthians 4:17-21 (NASB95) — 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. 18 Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. 2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. 2 If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; 3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NASB95) — 4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

James 4:6 (NASB95) — 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

CONCLUSION

As illustrated in the life of Moses, we need the assistance of others, whether it be in the form of a helping hand (Exod. 17:8-16), or by sharing responsibilities (Num. 11:10-30).

Exodus 17:8-16 (NASB95) — 8 Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. 9 So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” 10 Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur
went up to the top of the hill. 11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses’ hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. 13 So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. 14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” 15 Moses built an altar and named it The Lord is My Banner; 16 and he said, “The Lord has sworn; the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation.”

Numbers 11:10-30 (NASB95) — 10 Now Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, each man at the doorway of his tent; and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly, and Moses was displeased. 11 So Moses said to the Lord, “Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? 12 “Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers’? 13 “Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, ‘Give us meat that we may eat!’ 14 “I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. 15 “So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness.” 16 The Lord therefore said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. 17 “Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone. 18 “Say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, ‘Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt.’ Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. 19 ‘You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20 but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’ ” 21 But Moses said, “The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 on foot; yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat, so that they may eat for a whole month.’ 22 “Should flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Or should all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be sufficient for them?” 23 The Lord said to Moses, “Is the Lord’s power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not.” 24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord. Also, he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the tent. 25 Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do it again. 26 But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit
rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. 27 So a young man ran and told Moses and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” 28 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, “Moses, my lord, restrain them.” 29 But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” 30 Then Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel.

As is illustrated in the life of David, we need the assistance of God, both in the form of divine forgiveness (Psalm 38, esp. vv. 4, 17-18), and divine assistance (Psalm 55, esp. vv. 1-2, 22).

Psalm 38:1-22 (NASB95) — 1 O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath, And chasten me not in Your burning anger. 2 For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me. 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; There is no health in my bones because of my sin. 4 For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me. 5 My wounds grow foul and fester Because of my folly. 6 I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long. 7 For my loins are filled with burning, And there is no soundness in my flesh. 8 I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart. 9 Lord, all my desire is before You; And my sighing is not hidden from You. 10 My heart throbs, my strength fails me; And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me. 11 My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague; And my kinsmen stand afar off. 12 Those who seek my life lay snares for me; And those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction, And they devise treachery all day long. 13 But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; And I am like a mute man who does not open his mouth. 14 Yes, I am like a man who does not hear, And in whose mouth are no arguments. 15 For I hope in You, O Lord; You will answer, O Lord my God. 16 For I said, “May they not rejoice over me, Who, when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me.” 17 For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me. 18 For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin. 19 But my enemies are vigorous and strong, And many are those who hate me wrongfully. 20 And those who repay evil for good, They oppose me, because I follow what is good. 21 Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me! 22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

Psalm 55:1-23 (NASB95) — 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; And do not hide Yourself from my supplication. 2 Give heed to me and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted, 3 Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the pressure of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me And in anger they bear a grudge against me. 4 My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. 5 Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me. 6 I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. 7 “Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. 8 “I would hasten to my place of refuge From the stormy wind and tempest.” 9 Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues, For I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10 Day and night they go around
her upon her walls, And iniquity and mischief are in her midst. 11 Destruction is in her midst; Oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets. 12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear it; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him. 13 But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend; 14 We who had sweet fellowship together Walked in the house of God in the throng. 15 Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol, For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst. 16 As for me, I shall call upon God, And the Lord will save me. 17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice. 18 He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, For they are many who strive with me. 19 God will hear and answer them— Even the one who sits enthroned from of old— Selah. With whom there is no change, And who do not fear God. 20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has violated his covenant. 21 His speech was smoother than butter, But his heart was war; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords. 22 Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. 23 But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You.

Psalm 68:19 (NASB95) — 19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, The God who is our salvation. Selah.

Jesus offers deliverance from our burdens: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB95) — 28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”