

# (Hebrews - Part 39): Weight That Hinders

by A.W. Tozer

---

*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of laying aside weights and hindrances to successfully run the race of faith with patience and sincerity.*

**Duration:** 34:48

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:2

**Topics:** "Expositional"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of running the race of life without any hindrances. He uses the analogy of a rocket being streamlined to illustrate the need to remove anything that could hold us back from fulfilling God's purpose. The preacher highlights that we should not compete against other Christians, but rather work together against the common enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He concludes by mentioning four ways in which we can prepare ourselves to run the race effectively. The sermon encourages believers to apply the teachings of the Bible to their daily lives and to live with a sense of urgency and devotion to God.

---

## Transcript

Now, in the book of Hebrews, the twelfth chapter, verse 2, verse 2 verses, Wherefore, seeing we also are accomplished about with so great a cloud of witnesses, Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, And let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, Despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. I want to talk today about the weights and the race of life. Now, the Holy Spirit, knowing our mental and spiritual construction, sometimes lets us think of ourselves as Christians, and lets us think of ourselves as farmers, plowing and digging and planting and reaping.

And again he lets us think of ourselves as carpenters, sawing and pounding and building. And again he lets us think of ourselves as soldiers, wearing the strong armor of God and going forth to fight against the enemy. But here, the Holy Spirit refers to us as runners on the track, runners in the race of life.

And he's talking here about the race and about the danger of losing the race and what we must do to win the race. This is the language of the Holy Ghost as he spake by the mouth of the writer of the book of Hebrews. It is therefore of utter importance to us that we listen to him as he talks to us about the danger of losing the race and what we can do to win the race.

Now, about this race of life, there is one thing that I'd like to be able to tell you and am happy to tell you right away. It is that though the Christian is a runner competing in the race of faith, he is yet not competing against other Christians. There is never any place in the Bible for competition among the churches, and there is never any place for competition among Christians.

Christians are not competitors against each other. They are workers together and fighters together against a common foe. Our enemy that we run against, against whom we compete, is not another Christian, but the world and the flesh and the devil in their various manifestations.

And here the Holy Spirit gives us four ways that we can fit ourselves so that we can run the race. Now, I can only deal with one of them today, but I will deal with that one. He says that we are to lay aside every weight.

He says that we are to lay aside every besetting sin. And he says that we are to gaze steadily at the one who is pacing us, the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he says we are to do this whole thing patiently, that is, with steadfastness.

In the Bible, the race of life is never considered from its speed. No Christian is ever told to go out and try to break a track record. The word of God doesn't say that we are to run the race of life with speed.

It says we are to run it with patience. That's all. The young fellow who, at the crack of the gun, goes tearing along at his top speed and outdistances the rest by several yards, is very likely, before the race is over, to be several yards behind, because he has given everything he had to begin with.

The race of the Christian faith is not a hundred-yard dash. It is not a sprint at all. It's a long cross-country run.

Therefore, it's not the speed of the race so much as the patience. Speed must be coming there somewhere, finally. But it can come by patient steadfastness.

Now, he says that in order to be prepared to run this race and win it, we must lay aside, I don't think the words lay aside need any commentary at all, but we must lay aside every weight. And the weight here is not a sin. You know the Greek runners, and Paul took all his imagery from the Greek games here.

The Greek runners ran light. In fact, they ran all but naked. Clothing proper to them at other times couldn't be used on the track, because every tenth of an ounce of weight held them back that much.

And everything that was on them that could catch the wind, their every loose garment, even though itself it didn't weigh a small fraction of an ounce, yet it could catch the wind. They streamlined. Before the word was invented, they streamlined themselves so that nothing could catch the wind and hold them back.

And whatever encumbered them had to go. Whatever held them back in any way had to go. So he said, and they understood what he meant, that we are, in running the race of light, we are to lay aside the thing that would hold us back and slow us down so finally we would begin to drag our feet and lose the race.

Now, there are hindrances in the Christian life that are also sins. And about that we'll have to talk at another time. But he does not mention sin here in the first sentence.

He mentions hindrances which are not intrinsically sins. The difference between a spiritual Christian and an average Christian is that a truly spiritual Christian knows that he's not only to be delivered from sin, but

he's to be delivered from anything that would prevent him from winning. And now we'll discuss these.

But I would say as I go along that the Holy Spirit here addresses an elect number. He never addresses the superficial man. This is, above all times probably in the history of the world, the time of superficial religion.

Religion is worn as a garment, a very light garment. Or it is to be considered as a little stream that results from a storm, a sudden thunderstorm, and it flows along and makes a lot of racket and stirs up a lot of dust. But it is so thin, give it just a little while and it'll run away and the sun will dry up where it used to be.

Some people's souls are like that. And the Holy Ghost never talks to the shallow man. If he is shallow, he cannot hear the voice of the Lord.

The Holy Ghost never talks to the defender, the self-defender, the fellow who believes he's right and will defend his right to be what he is. He never talks to the arguer, nor to the flippant person, nor to the insincere. Sincerity is an absolute prerequisite to the Christian life.

If I am not sincere, I am ruled out. God runs a line through my name because God can't have anything to do with the persons that are insincere. Now, whom does God address? Well, he addresses the meek.

And what do we mean by the meek? I don't know, translators have an awful time with that word, meek. But it means a kind person, and it means a humble person, and it means a lowly person, I would say. A lowly person is somebody who thinks very poorly of himself.

And a humble person is someone who thinks poorly of himself in relation to others. And a meek person is someone who thinks lowly of himself, or poorly of himself, in his relation to God. So meekness and humility and lowliness, you know they're not virtues that are much chosen these days, and they're not cultivated much.

The lowly man, the meek man, the humble man, we don't cultivate these virtues, nor desire that kind of Christianity. But the Holy Spirit can't talk to the man unless he's a lowly man, thinks lightly of himself, unless he is a humble man, thinks poorly of himself with respect to others, and of course before God. That is, he's poor in spirit.

The Holy Ghost addresses the poor in spirit, and the sincere, and the reverent persons. And he addresses the enlightened. One of the saddest things I know is the development in recent times, it started in the United States, started on the West Coast, the type of song that is religious, but it is flippant.

It talks about God in a plaintive, sad way, but it can smile while it's doing it. It's flippant. There is a song, for instance, that was born in the camp meeting a long time ago, maybe a hundred years back or a little less.

It's called When the Saints Come Marching Home. It's a typical camp meeting song, sung often by our colored friends and by the white people of the United States. It's not a high-class hymn, but it's a song that deals with that time when the Saints will march home and the people of God will, while the sun is refusing to shine.

It's one of those dramatic little numbers that deal with the Second Coming of Christ. But do you know that they've taken that and have jazzed it up now until you don't recognize anything religious in it? And men who don't believe in God, men whose lives are questionable, and in some instances not questionable, but definitely evil, sing When the Saints Come Marching In and dance to it. Well, this is, to my mind, a very

serious thing.

It's an affront against God, because reverence, that is, the fear of God and the sense of respect in the presence of God, is fundamental to any kind of real Christianity. If I am not a reverent man and have not a sense of solemn respect when I think of God or when I'm in the presence of God, God can't speak to me at all. And I only give that to one song, When the Saints Come Marching In, as an example.

There are hundreds of them, and there are people who have dedicated themselves to singing this kind of thing in nightclubs and before crowds. And they applaud and go on drinking their cocktails and smoking their cigarettes while they applaud this thing. It is using religion without any reverence, without any sincerity, without any sense of solemnity.

It's an awful thing. God says, I would thou wert hot or cold. God would rather have Khrushchev with his total unbelief than he would have this kind of smirking patronizing of the great God Almighty.

God doesn't need our patronage, and he doesn't need us to smile and nod toward him. He is the great God Almighty who sits on the circle of the earth and sees the inhabitants thereof as but grasshoppers. And the day will be when he will move forth, and his son will ride down the skies on a white horse with a sword at his side, and on his thigh will be written the name Faithful and True.

And in that hour when he calls the nations to judgment and puts some on the right hand and some on the left, those who have taken him so lightly and irreverently will then cry out for the rocks and the mountains that they might be saved from the wrath of the Lamb. Now, what are some of these weights? Up to now, you know, this has been general enough that I suppose everybody agrees. Everybody agrees while the doctor gets the syringe ready, while he's compounding its content and sterilizing the needle and doing those mysterious little things they do when they're about to stick you.

Everybody's satisfied that he's a wonderful scientist, but when it comes to saying, Now, roll up your sleeve, that's another matter. And so as long as a preacher preaches simply theoretically and stays out of people's hair and doesn't press nor insist upon it being personal, everybody likes him and says, That's going to hear that man, he's a fine Bible expositor. But brothers and sisters, we must have more than Bible exposition, we must have Bible application.

And therefore I want to apply this thing that I've given to you here as a theory that we must run the race free from impediments. Now, what are those impediments? What are those encumbrances? Well, amusements, for instance. I date back to the time when the holiness people and the full gospel people and the alliance people believed that the amusements of the world were not for Christians.

And so it was understood that when you got converted and got filled with the Spirit, you gave up the world's amusements. Then there was a slow change, and in the name of fundamental Christianity, one by one, we met those worldly amusements at the door and sprinkled them with the holy water. And now nobody is against them anymore much, and we now advertise them, and they're part of our structure.

But they're the amusements of the world. You know, amuse means to think, and amuse means not to think. That little A on there makes it negative.

A fellow said, Sometimes I sit on my front porch and think, and other times I just sit on my front porch. And the man who sits on his front porch and thinks is musing. But the man who sits on his front porch has to be amused.

That is, he has to see something or hear something to keep him from collapsing. So the devil has invented the amusements to keep us from collapsing. Now you say, What are these amusements? Name them now.

I shan't name them for the reason that there's no fixed rule about it. Christians are not alike. They're different from each other, and therefore what would be to one an amusement that hinders would not hinder another.

So the rule must be, If they encumber me, they will cause me to lose. And rather than lose, I will lay them aside. Some people can't drink coffee because it keeps them awake, but I can drink a cup of coffee and lie down as if I were drugged.

I don't have that problem. So what to them would be a hindrance isn't to me a hindrance. And so the hundred things, I don't put coffee as an amusement.

It's quite an American and Canadian and British now institution. But I say that what is hindering you might not hinder me, and what hinders me might not hinder you. So everybody has to find out for himself what am I doing by way of amusements, what am I indulging in that hinder me.

And then don't defend yourself and find an argument, but lay it off. If you find you can't make time, stop and lay off that thing that's hindering you. Each one knows his sacred heart, and a hundred reasons can be given why a certain thing can be done.

A hundred things can be given, a hundred excuses and examples of great souls who indulged in this. But if you can't, then you can't. And if it bothers you, then lay it off.

And somebody says, you're getting narrow. Pay no attention. Pay no attention at all.

I notice that when they send up a rocket into the far blue and start it around the earth, you notice how smooth it is. It's long and pointed and graceful and made of chrome steel outside of it so that there isn't anything there to catch the air and hold it back. After it gets out of the atmosphere, it could be octagonal and it wouldn't make any difference.

But while it's getting out of the atmosphere, it has to be streamlined so that nothing will hold it back. Try sometime sticking your hand out the window while you're driving along, somebody else at the wheel, and you'll find that you actually hold the car back. They told me in Pittsburgh when I was there, of a certain car.

I won't name it because it's a good car and I see a lot of them around here. But this particular model had a little set of wings on the back. It looked very graceful as it went along, but the police of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, they said, that is, the police department, had bought a fleet of these automobiles and had marked police on the side and numbered them and turned them over to the police.

And they went all right inside the city, but out on the highway, when a man, for instance, they were speeding to catch a criminal who was getting away from them at doing 100 miles an hour or over, and they had to do almost that much or fully that much to keep up with him, keep him in sight, they found that when they got up around the 90 miles an hour rate, that these wings in the back began to lift the rear end of the car so they didn't get tracked and they'd slow down. Then they'd speed up again and lift and then they'd slow down. They got rid of the whole fleet and bought something else.

They said, that's an encumbrance. Now, it's a pretty thing, and I can imagine artistically and oh, I can just hear men orating on what a beautiful thing this is, to see a car go by with its pretty wings, but they couldn't use it so they just got rid of them. Now, that's exactly what I mean.

What one fellow can argue in favor of and says it's good and it's good and cultural, and if it bothers you, get rid of it, brother. Don't waste your time. Because if it prevents you from winning the race of life, you'd far, far better give it up.

Then there are friendships. That's another. Those are others of the way.

It's friendships. To young Christians, I suppose it's the great universal encumbrance. It's great because young people are easily influenced, and it's universal because young people love to flock together.

They're gregarious like sheep. So unless we're ready to change friendships, let's wait and not say, now I accept the Lord, and then go back to your old friendships. There are some friendships that you can't keep and be a Christian.

Now, there are two ways to get rid of friends that you know are not going your direction. One is, talk to them so much about the Lord that you bore them stiff and they leave you. That often happens.

A new convert makes himself unwanted by his constant talk about his newfound Christ. I think that's quite normal. But if some have tough hides and don't care how you talk, and they still insist upon being with you and influencing you to do things that you wouldn't want to do and hear things you wouldn't want to hear and go places you wouldn't go of your own self, I say you'd better break that friendship.

A thousand times better break it than let it slow you down. For an unspiritual friendship is like a great loose garment being worn by a runner. You know what they called togas in the old days, great big old bathrobe affairs that went around them and were tied around the waist by a belt.

They didn't call it a belt, they called it, what did they call it? The thing they put around them. All right. But those things, as long as you walked they were all right, you didn't notice them.

Try to get up some speed and they begin to flap in the breeze, hold you back, get rid of them. So the Greek runner didn't wear his toga, he didn't put on his top hat, he didn't even wear his crown of leaves if he was an athlete because he had won two weeks before. He put everything off except what decency required and raced along against the breeze, a streamlined human body.

That's what the Holy Ghost says God's people have to do. And if a friendship that clings on to you and flaps in the breeze slows you down and holds you back, get rid of that friendship. Then there are social habits.

That is, habits about which there are not full agreement, but you know them in your heart what they are that hinder you. Those social habits. A rebellious heart, of course, will resent interference.

He will say, Now what? Who does that fellow think he is? One of the finest things I've ever done since I've been in this church was to send a young woman out of here storming mad. She was blue mad at me. She said, That ignorant fellow, that he would dare to say, that to be a Christian I have to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

She said, The idea that I have to believe in the deity of Christ to be a Christian, and she stamped out her high heels clicking on the sidewalk. I'm happy about that one. I enjoy that one.

Because that's exactly what I'm preaching, brothers and sisters. That's it. And if I don't make that clear, then I might as well stay somewhere else.

And if I say that there are social habits that you can't have and still be a Christian, or at least a successful Christian, and you get angry, I won't be happy about it, but at least I won't lose any sleep. But I hope there will be none such here today. I hope that you will understand that the habits that you used to have without any question, now that you're a Christian, you've got to get rid of.

It's all about the young man who was in prison, about to be sent away for a life term. The trial was over, and he had gotten drunk, he had been gambling, had gotten drunk and had committed some crime, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment. And one of the orderlies or guards came in with a... I think it was a pastor, if I remember the story correctly.

A pastor came in, bringing a bunch of flowers, bouquets. He said, Who are those from? He said, Those are from your mother, son. Your mother sent you these flowers.

And he grabbed them out of the hand of the pastor, flung them to the floor, and tramped them down. And said, You go tell my mother that I learned to gamble in our living room, playing bridge. Go tell my mother that I learned to drink while I was playing cards in her home.

And from there I went to become the convict I am now, to spend the rest of my remaining days of life behind the bars of a prison. You tell her I don't want her flowers. Of course, he was bitter, but he was right.

We allow habits in our homes, and we allow habits in our lives, which maybe we can get away with. But somebody else will pick them up and learn them from us and excuse them because we do them, and they'll go to hell over them. A Christian can't be too careful how he lives.

Social habits and their reading habits. The world will smile, I know. I have in one of my books a little quip about Jimmy Walker.

Jimmy Walker was the mayor of New York. He was called the Playboy Mayor. And he was, oh, you know, always going around in tails and gates of jar collars and silk hats and the rest of them, and around where the society people were and in nightclubs and all the rest.

And they called Jimmy in one time and asked him. He was one of the witnesses they had about censoring books. And he tossed off this little quip.

He said, I never heard of anybody that was ruined by reading a book. And of course, they grabbed that up and it was printed all over the world. It was supposed to be very, very brilliant.

But it was stupid. Completely stupid. Of course there have been people ruined by reading books.

Of course! If he never heard of it, maybe he didn't have time in between cocktails to read up on it. But everybody knows what books do to people. Everybody knows what a Communist book will do to a young fellow in college if he gets hold of it and takes it home and reads it and reads it again and marks it and pretty soon he has absorbed it and his eyes begin to blaze and he goes out to become a Communist.

And everybody knows how a humble, simple Christian not too well informed in the scriptures will get a hold of a book written by Jehovah's Witnesses falsely so called and read it and become all confused and then buy another one and read it and then have somebody in to talk. And pretty soon he's out cursing the churches, denying the Deity of Jesus and saying that the kingdom is coming and 144,000 will be saved and all of this nonsense. He got it by reading a book.

But on the other hand they can tell you stories by the hundreds of men who picked up tracts or who picked up a little book or who picked up the New Testament and were converted. So reading habits are important. The worldly wise will laugh and the teachers and the soft-voiced professors will recommend that you get acquainted with all literature.

There was a time I'm not going to tell you the poet's name because I know that even to mention those things it sure stirs people to go out and get a copy. But as I was growing up in my early life I came to love a poet, a certain poet. In English translation a very famous poem was on religion and philosophy and life and death and all the serious things.

But it was not written by a Christian nor by a man who knows God at all. It was written by a Sufi that is a Mohammedan mystic. And it is so brilliantly and beautifully written and in its English translation so beautiful, so musical, so smooth that I used to carry it around and memorize it.

I can repeat yards of it yet. Later on in my life as I began to seek God in earnest I began to see that this book was a hindrance to me. If it did nothing else it set a wrong mood.

A mood of unbelief and pessimism instead of a mood of faith and hope. So I have it there on this shelf. I have four or five copies of it indeed.

And I don't look in it once in three years' time. I love it. I like it.

It's brilliant, In its poetic and musical way it reminds me of Mozart. But I don't read it. And I don't read it because I can't stand the mood, he says.

It's a hindrance to me. I said over the air once that I didn't read Shakespeare anymore much. And a college professor heard me and he lamented the fact he's too bad, he said, for Tozer.

As if I had cancer or something. Well, I haven't missed the old Bart of Avon. I look at him occasionally, once in a great while, but very rarely anymore because I find not Christ in him.

He was the greatest poet that ever lived, seen from the standpoint of literature. He was a great poet. But by the time you wallowed through suicides and murders and adulteries and betrayals and wars and assassinations and fights and all the rest, even if it is classical, it isn't good for you.

So I just lay it aside. I wouldn't say that nobody ought ever to read it. If they give it to you in school, read it, find out what it is.

But don't make it your companion. I have a book here that's your companion, but that's your book. Well, in your personal habits, my use of money, my eating habits, just my general habits, and my dress, somebody says, Now you're interfering.

You're meddling in private affairs. It's none of your business. No, it isn't, sister, but it's an awful lot of yours.

You may laugh at me and say I'm old-fashioned, but your feet drag. Anything that makes your feet drag and prevents you from making time out there on the track, you'd better get rid of. By far and away, you'd better get rid of it.

Unblessed plans would be another one, but I'm not going to develop that idea. So many of the Lord's children have plans that God never gave them. They're not blessed plans.

They're their own private plans. And to carry them out, they sacrifice themselves. I have met men who, one time in their lives, were happy Christians, laboring with the church on the board, maybe leading singing and testifying, and people looked to them as good examples of what a Christian ought to be, and then their business got another business.

They had to miss the prayer meeting to keep it up, and they had to keep missing, and pretty soon there was no glow on their countenance and no joy in their voice and no willingness to testify. And while they were still Christians, they were losing the race because they were allowing their unblessed plans to hold them back. Better a hundred times have less and have God than to have more and cloud the face of God.

So the consequences of all these things would be to block the work of God in your own heart and in your own home and in your own church. And I say you can't afford to do it. Time is too short, judgment is too certain, eternity is too long, God is too wonderful, Christ is too beautiful, and heaven is too glorious for us to allow anything in our lives that hold us back from winning the race of life.

So to read the text again, Therefore, seeing we also are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every great weight and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Father, we pray thy blessing upon these words and upon the little commentary that we have made on them, trying to apply them to our practical living. We pray that thou wilt give consent of heart and willingness to obey and a cheerful faith to do as we are told by the Spirit in the scriptures.

And bless us during the day and for the afternoon and for the evening, and may this day be a big day, a great day. Not a dramatic day necessarily that the newspapers will talk about, but a day deep in the things of the Spirit. We give thee praise.

Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2035.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/hebrews-part-39-weight-that-hinders/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**