

CHAPTER 1

LAYING ASIDE HINDRANCES:  
*Running with Freedom*

*Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

HEBREWS 12:1

*Man's perennial efforts to take himself in hand, however he attempts it, lead to the greatest bondage in which man misses what he was meant to be. . . . Man's true freedom does not consist of the unfettered power to direct his life, either in a political or in a Stoic sense. It lies in life with God, lived as it was originally intended by God for man. . . . He only gains this as he denies himself. . . . Paradoxically, the free man does not belong to himself. . . . He belongs to him who has set him free.*

J. BLUNCK, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*

IN LITERATURE AND IN SCRIPTURE, life is depicted as a race. How we choose to run the race determines our quality of life, and whom or what we choose to run toward determines our peace and joy.

All of us begin the race with a handicap—an inherited sin nature that subtly binds us and weighs us down so that the race can become strenuous and futile. God, in His great love, unbinds

us, frees us from our handicap, and gives us a new nature purchased by the death of His Son.

As we admit our inadequacy to run the race alone and accept God's gracious redemption, the race begins to have meaning, validity, and most of all, freedom. Matthew Henry observed that "none are free indeed but those whom Christ makes free."<sup>1</sup> We are free in Christ, but we must be aware that we often run the race with unnecessary baggage that can hinder our freedom. What is this freedom that Christ has made possible, and what can hinder us from living in freedom?

### LAYING ASIDE HINDRANCES

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Hebrews 12 tells us to lay aside the encumbrances, or the weights or hindrances, that keep us from running or progressing in our spiritual lives. Hannah Whitall Smith described burdens as "everything that troubles us, whether spiritual or temporal."<sup>2</sup>

G. Campbell Morgan commented, "Anything which has the remotest chance of interfering with our fellowship is to be put away, to be kept away."<sup>3</sup>

1. Look up the following words in a dictionary, and then write down a definition for each term:

FREEDOM: