



The Happiness of the Christ: Stripping for Action: Isolating Distractions & the Sin which So Easily Ensnare; Advancing on the Run in the Conflict, Heb 12:1b

28. What we strip off is not the literal accessories Roman soldiers needed during a military campaign but whatever distractions prevent us from advancing in the spiritual campaign. This is summarized next by the phrase “every weight” which looks like this in the Greek:
- πάς ὄγκος, *pas onkos*** - “every impediment, encumbrance, or burden that impedes or hampers function or activity.”
29. ***Onkos*** is the direct object of ***apotithēmi*** and describes that which is stripped off and laid aside.
30. This does not refer to sin but to a concern about logistics which causes distractions and also to those things which you may enjoy but when overindulged create distractions as well.
31. These include baseball games, symphony performances, holiday activities, social functions, civic events, family outings, business engagements, or many varieties of entertainment such as raw oysters at Gerald Savioe’s.
32. These kinds of things are not only legitimate activities but quite necessary in leading a balanced life that contributes to the maintenance and preservation of one’s culture and traditions. But they may not become distractions to the top priority of preparing oneself for spiritual combat.
- Hebrews 12:1** -For this very reason also, since we keep on having the support of such a great battalion of witnesses surrounding us, having stripped for action by laying aside every distraction ...
33. Now comes sin. It is separated from the distractions just mentioned by the conjunction **καί, *kai*** translated “and.” Then we have the accusative singular noun:
- ἁμαρτία, *harmartia*** - “sin”
34. The type of sin is described next by a second direct object, the adjective:
- εὐπερίστατος, *euperistatos*** – “which so easily ensnares”
35. This reminds us to Romans 7 and the condition Paul addresses regarding facilitated wheel-tracks of wickedness. The first husband constantly sends out his commandos, the *agent provocateurs*, to challenge the volition of the soul.
36. The effort is to regain control of the *kardia*, the command post of the soul, where it can manipulate volition into executing the desires of the flesh.
37. When our sinful behaviors have been facilitated into paths of least resistance then we are highly vulnerable to being distracted by them.
38. Thus such a behavior pattern becomes a “sin that so easily ensnare us.”
39. The issue is that no matter what your distractions might be or what sin you are currently into, all these things must be stripped off and tossed aside.



40. This illustration is designed to emphasize good decision-making from a position of strength and that when we fail to make an immediate correction by using the problem-solving device of rebound.

Hebrews 12:1 -For this very reason also, since we keep on having the support of such a great battalion of witnesses surrounding us, having stripped for action by laying aside every distraction and the sin which so easily ensnares us ...

41. Let's note again the circumstantial participle of the verb ἀποτίθημι, *apotithēmi*: "having stripped for action":
1. The circumstantial participle notes contingency.
 2. This means that some will strip for action while some will not.
 3. Some will ignore distractions, some will not.
 4. Some will pursue truth, some will not.
 5. Some will rebound, some will not.
 6. Some will burden themselves down with both distractions and personal sins while attempting to fight the Invisible War and some will not.
 7. However, those who strip for action through good decision-making and rebound are ready and prepared to engage the enemy
42. How these warriors advance into the battle is described next by the first person plural, present active subjunctive of:

τρέχω, *trechō* - "to advance on the run"

- present: Tendentia; used for an action that is purposed or attempted, though it is not taking place. It represents the idea of that which is intended or inclined to occur—that which tends toward realization.
- The writer of Hebrews commands believers who desire to strip for action but are not presently doing so should begin immediately.
- active: Believers are commanded to participate in the action by advancing to spiritual maturity while avoiding all distractions.
- subj.: Hortatory; when one exhorts others to participate with him in any act or condition, the subjunctive is used in the first person plural.
- This is therefore a low-key request which invites believers to join him in this course of action: "let us advance on the run."

43. This hortatory command sets up a military advance which assumes those who are addressed have the inclination to make the advance and only need to be encouraged to execute the objective.
44. *Trechō* is the root word for the derivative τροχία, *trochia* which we have translated "wheel-track."
45. When a military phalanx [[A number of people forming a compact mass banded together for a common purpose. \(Eugene Ehrlich, et al. Oxford American Dictionary. \(New York: Avon Books, 1980\), 666.\)](#)] advances the churning feet of the soldiers create ruts in the battlefield, a typical occurrence graphically described by Steven Pressfield's version of the Battle of Antirrhion where the Spartan infantry routed the enemy:

Pressfield, Steven. *Gates of Fire*. (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 108:



There, on the Spartan right where the Herakles regiment had routed the Antirhionians, one saw the turf unchurned and the field beyond littered with enemy shields and helmets, spears and even breastplates, flung aside by the stampeding foe in his flight. Bodies lay scattered at intervals, facedown, with the shameful gashes of death delivered upon their fleeing backs.

On the right where the stronger troops of the enemy had held longer against the Skiritai \ske-re' tah-Ἴ, the carnage spread thicker and more dense, the turf chewed more fiercely; along the battle wall which the foe had erected to anchor its flank, clumps of corpses could be seen, slain as they, trapped by their own wall, had struggled in vain to scale it.

Then the eye found the center, where the slaughter had achieved its most savage concentration. Here the earth was rent and torn as if a thousand span of oxen had assaulted it all day with the might of their hooves and the steel of their ploughs' deep-churning blades. The chewed-up dirt ... extended in a line three hundred meters across and a hundred deep where the feet of the contending formations had heaved and strained for purchase upon the earth.

46. The manner by which the spiritual application of such a military advance is to be executed is revealed next by the preposition **δι**, **di** plus the genitive of means of the noun:

ὑπομονή, hupomonē - “with endurance”

47. This advance on the run is executed by positive volition toward doctrine plus the consistency and duration of one's daily pursuit of truth.

48. As the Lakedaemonian phalanx pressed relentlessly forward to break the enemy line so must the believer move forward through difficulty, momentum testing, and adversity in order to reach the objective of Mount *Plērōma*.

49. The hortatory challenge to “advance on the run with endurance” has nothing to do with the athletic race of the national games as is implied by the King James Version.

50. This “race” is against the frontal assault of the enemy who hope to break the line of the front rankers, the *promachoi*, and thus breach the phalanx of the soul's deployed problem-solving devices. The military analogy continues with the Greek noun:

ἄγών, agōn - “in the conflict”

51. This word can be interpreted in several ways and it is helpful to consult:

Kittel, Gerhard (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:135, 137-38:

ἄγών. Hellenistic Usage. ἄγών originally means a “place of assembly,” then a “place of contest” or “stadium,” then the “contest” itself, and finally any kind of “conflict.” 2 Maccabees 15:9 [... putting them in mind of the battles (**ἄγῶνας, agōnos**) that they won afore, he made them more cheerful.]. (p. 135)

ἄγών in the New Testament. First is the thought of the goal which can be reached only with the full expenditure of all our energies. It is ... a passionate struggle, a constantly renewed concentration of forces on the attainment of the goal.



The struggle for the reward does not demand only full exertion but also rigid denial. The final assault is so exacting that all forces must be reserved, assembled, and deployed in it. The final goal is so high and glorious that all provisional ends must fade before it. If a man is not ready to set aside his egotistic needs and desires and claims and reservations, he is not fit for the arena. (p. 137)

Hebrews 11:33, in the style of the books of Maccabees, refers to heroes of faith. Here the place of conflict seems to be the battleground rather than the arena. Nevertheless there seems to belong to the whole concept of *agōn* the thought of obstacles, dangers, and catastrophes through which the Christian must fight his way. (p. 138)

52. The “conflict” is the Invisible War; the “battleground” is your soul; the “fight” is your constant participation in the phalanx of believers which is encouraged to endure all obstacles while moving inexorably toward the objective of the sophisticated spiritual life.
53. “Let us advance on the run with endurance in the conflict ...” is described by the present middle participle of:
- πρόκειμαι, *prokeimai*** - “laid out for us.”
- present: Signifies action in progress.
- middle: The subject acts in a view of participating in the outcome.
- participle: Ascriptive; denotes a general class of believers involved in the action.
54. The present participle indicates continuous action that takes place *simultaneously* with the action of the main verb which is the tendential present of *trechō*: “to advance on the run.” This participle when acted upon defines how this advance will be executed: “in the conflict laid out for us to engage.”
55. Our duty is to advance to spiritual maturity and that advance is decreed.
56. But this objective can only be attained through an ongoing, consistent advance which is not impeded by distractions or sins.
57. That which is marked out before us describes God’s perfect plan for our lives.

Hebrews 12:1 -(ETL) For this very reason also, since we keep on having the support of such a great battalion of witnesses surrounding us, having stripped for action by laying aside every distraction, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, let us advance on the run with endurance in the conflict that is laid out for us to engage,