

Ferrill: Roman Military Decline; Hebrews 12:12a: Listless Hands**Hebrews 12:12**

Hebrews 12:12 is a quote from:

Isaiah 35:3 - Strengthen the weak hands and feeble knees.

In the Greek, the writer of Hebrews begins with the particle: *dio* - This is a conjunction which implies a self-evident implication. It is translated, “*therefore*” and implies that since the preceding is fully understood, then what follows is the self-evident conclusion of what should now occur.

All the rationales to encourage, bolster, inspire, and reassure the fallen believer have now been stated. Comparisons have been made between what they are presently experiencing and something familiar to them from childhood. An eternal family relationship with God has been demonstrated. Divine love has been shown as a motivation for goals while divine blessings have been demonstrated to be the objective.

Therefore, since all this is clearly understood, let’s get back to the gym and back under the *gumnasiarch*.

The process of reversion recovery is now stated with a little help from Isaiah. It begins with the aorist active imperative from the verb: *anorthoo* - “*to straighten*”; “*to rebuild*”; “*to restore*”; “*to strengthen*”

This is the word from which we get the English prefix “ortho-” which means to straighten or to correct. From this we get the familiar professions of orthodontist, one who straightens teeth; an orthopedic, one who straightens bones; and an orthodox pastor, a man who communicates straight doctrine.

In our context, those who are being addressed are believers who are in reversionism. Although they have lost the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and the resident power of Bible doctrine in their souls, they remain members of the royal family and therefore have access to the two power options. The words “*rebuild*” and “*restore*” indicate a process which requires reconstruction of a dilapidated structure to its former state.

At this point they are not capable of such a reconstruction project—they are much too weak. What they need is the power to begin the process and therefore the word “*strengthen*” is the best word to use here to translate: *anorthoo*.

aorist - Constativ; Contemplates the action of the verb in its entirety regardless of how long it takes to fulfill it.

It includes the entire reversion recovery process but it begins with rebound. This is where the strength to recover is activated into the first spiritual skill known as the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

active - The reversionist under discipline following his own personal repentance—admitting to himself that he is wrong—confesses his sins alone to God alone.

imperative - Command; the reversionist is ordered to enter into the strengthening process through rebound and then by means of the grace apparatus for perception.

“*Therefore, strengthen your hands.*”

Our idiom for this would be “*Get back in the ball game!*” Or, “*Get back in the gymnasium!*” The hands are described by a verb used as an adjective, the present passive participle of: *pariemi* + *cheir* - “*listless, weakened, or drooping hands.*”

TXL: “*Therefore, restore to strength the listless hands*”

In order to illustrate what is being said here, I want to go from our previous athletic analogy to a military one. This example involves the failure of the Roman military to maintain the high level of training and discipline necessary to defend the Empire.

Ferrill, Arther. *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1986, pp. 127–130 *passim*:

From the days of the Republic, strategists had taken it for granted that Roman armies might easily be outnumbered by barbarian tribes. Discipline and training, sophisticated logistics, the techniques of siege warfare, military engineering, a professional system of command, and high morale based upon justifiable confidence had given Roman armies an edge no barbarian horde could hope to match. The Visigothic victory at Adrianople, however, had robbed the Romans of their advantage in morale, and as time went by Roman armies, particularly in the West, lost some of their other distinguishing features.

We are fortunate to have available a remarkable work on warfare, written by a Roman, Flavius Vegetius Renuat, sometime between 383 and 450, that explains many of the reasons for the decline of Roman military power.

Vegetius book, *The Military Institutions of the Romans* [says] that Rome’s chief military problem was its weak infantry. Vegetius says that down to the death of the Emperor Gratian [A.D. 383],

“ . . . footsoldiers wore breastplates and helmets. But when, because of negligence and laziness, parade ground drills were abandoned, the customary armour began to seem heavy since the soldiers rarely ever wore it. Therefore, they first asked the emperor to set aside the breastplates and mail and then the helmets. So our soldiers fought the Goths without any protection for chest and head and were often beaten by archers. Although there were many disasters, which led to the loss of great cities, no one tried to restore breastplates and helmets to the infantry. Thus, it happens that troops in battle, exposed to wounds because they have no armour, think about running and not about fighting.”

To restore Roman greatness in infantry Vegetius recommends that recruits be selected for their likely good qualities as soldiers. More than anything else, though, Vegetius emphasized drill, drill, and more drill--in every weapon including sword, javelin, sling and bow, and in every militarily useful activity such as digging, marching with heavy pack, swimming, and precision parade-ground exercises.

His work is filled with common-sense maxims or aphorisms: a good army is no more expensive to maintain than a bad one; one who hopes for peace should plan for war; bravery is superior to numbers; men are not born brave but become so through training and discipline. Vegetius’ proposal for the reintroduction of ancient discipline and training was not implemented by the imperial government. Perhaps it could not have been. Lax troops in a lax age are the most difficult to reform, and there are political costs of various kinds connected with the effort, not the least of which is the possibility of open rebellion.

There are two things a professional soldier must have two of if he is going to train himself to the maximum: hands and knees. If he refuses to pick up the things with which he needs to defend himself in battle, or to train in becoming proficient in the use of the implements of warfare, his entire body becomes weak and cannot perform under pressure.

Because of his failure to train, the arm, shoulder, chest, and back muscles atrophy. Later, when he uses his hands to pick up a breastplate, a helmet, a sword, or a shield, they rapidly become listless.

If he is required to enter into a prolonged maneuver over rough terrain and then engage the enemy hand to hand, his knees are prone to blow out. Weak thighs, calves, and hamstrings cannot do the necessary work thus placing too much stress on the knees.

The implication from the term “*listless hands*” is no ability to fight; from “*disabled knees*,” no ability to endure under pressure.

Now let’s compare all this to Paul’s analysis of the Christian soldier's spiritual armor in:

Ephesians 6:13 - Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand fast.

Ephesians 6:14 - Stand fast, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Ephesians 6:15 - and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Ephesians 6:16 - in addition, take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

Ephesians 6:17 - And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

The Christian reversionist cannot accomplish these spiritual duties involved with the Angelic Conflict because his hands are listless and his knees are disabled. In order to return to the battlefield, in order to restore his lost expertise in spiritual warfare, he must enter into a recovery process.

Recovery begins with rebound followed immediately by a return to the drill field under the power of the three spiritual skills: the filling of the Holy Spirit, the Grace Apparatus for Perception, and the deployment of the ten problem-solving devices to the FLOT Line of the soul.

You do not return to top physical condition by going to the gym for a couple of days and then taking 10 days off. You must get back into a consistent regimen.

Hewbrews 12:12 - Therefore, restore to strength the listless hands and ...

The “*disabled knees*” is indicated first by the perfect passive participle from the verb: *paraluo* - “*weakened, or disabled.*”

Again, we see a verb used as an adjective describing the plural of the noun: *gonu* - “*knees*”