

THE
AMERICAN PREACHER;

OR, A

COLLECTION OF SERMONS

FROM SOME OF THE
MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,

NOW LIVING,

IN THE UNITED STATES,

OF

DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS

IN THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

VOLUME III.

ELIZABETH-TOWN, (NEW-JERSEY)

PRINTED BY SHEPARD KOLLOCK, FOR THE EDITORS,
WHO HOLD THE PRIVILEGE OF COPY-RIGHT.

M.DCC.XCI.

S E R M O N LVII.

CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

B Y

W I L L I A M L I N N, D. D.

One of the Ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church, city of
New-York.

I CORINTHIANS XVI. 13.

—*Quit you like men—be strong.*

AMONG the many comparisons used in scripture to illustrate the Christian life, that of a fight or warfare is a principal one. To this the apostle evidently refers in the text. He addresses the believing Corinthians, as a general would his soldiers, who expected immediately to engage with the enemy. We find nearly the same words used by the Philistines, in exciting one another to battle with Israel; *Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: Quit yourselves like men, and fight.* It is not improbable that the apostle had this animated speech in view; and if not, it was natural with the figure in his mind,

thus to express himself. It is as though he had said, " You are like soldiers in actual war; behave, then, not as children, who are weak and easily intimidated; but exert that strength, courage, and fortitude worthy of men in an hour of trial and danger."

This exhortation is proper to be addressed to Christians in every age; and it is now addressed to you, my believing brethren: *Quit you like men—be strong.* I shall, *First*, mention the enemies with which you have to contend. *Secondly*, shew what is implied in the exhortation; and then conclude with some motives to encourage and animate you in the fight.

The enemies with which you have to contend, are generally ranked under these three classes; the *devil*, the *world*, and the *flesh*.

First, The *devil* is a watchful, cunning and unwearied enemy. After his revolt from God, he seduced our first parents, and has thus brought the whole race into sin and misery. Opposed himself to all goodness, he is become the tyrant and destroyer of human kind. *As a roaring lion he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* Though we are not ignorant of many of his devices, yet it is impossible to tell either when, and in what way he will assail us, or to distinguish precisely his suggestions from the corrupt desires of our own hearts. With these he co-operates. He knows the frame of our bodies, and has near access to our spirits.—

He presents evil under the specious appearance of good. He suits his temptations to the various dispositions of men, and to the different periods in their lives. He leads to presumption, and he drives to despair. He withdraws for a time, and waits an unguarded hour, that he may attack with the greater success. Sometimes he shoots, like fiery darts, dreadful and blasphemous thoughts, occasioning extreme uneasiness and horror in the mind.

With this enemy, my Christian soldiers, you have to contend; a fallen spirit, active, powerful, naturally subtle, and long versed in the practice of guile; not only, indeed, with one, but many; for though there is a great adversary, the God of this world, yet under him hosts are marshalled, whom he leads to war. The apostle, in speaking of the Christian warfare, reckons those evil spirits to be numerous and powerful. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities—against powers—against the rulers of the darkness of this world—against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Secondly, The world is another powerful enemy. In this class we count the *men* of the world, and the *things* of the world.

The *men* of the world engage on the side of the devil. By their allurements they entice to sin, and by their reproaches, deter from duty. Not to mention the furious persecutions which they have sometimes carried on against Christians, and from

which we, in this age and country, are delivered, they are always dangerous. Their conversation and example are contagious. It requires no small resolution, at times, to withstand their smiles, and encounter their frowns—to adhere steadily and singularly to duty when the customs of the world all tend another way—to sacrifice popularity, and venture even character for the cause of religion.—It sometimes happens too, that those with whom the Christian is closely connected are his greatest opposers; when his foes are those of his own household. In this case the danger is peculiarly great. From others he may withdraw, but with these he is obliged to associate.

Under the *things* of the world we count *honors*, *profits* and *pleasures*. How dangerous these are, we see every day, in the fatal experience of others, and the state of our own hearts. We need, and may lawfully enjoy a share of them, but they too often engross our affections and attention. The Christian is in the more danger from this quarter, because he is called to engage in the pursuit of these, and under the appearance of duty, they lead him astray. He is apt to set a higher value upon them than they deserve, to repine under disappointment, and to be improperly elated at success; besides the temptation, there is to seek them by unjustifiable ways. We *cannot serve God and Mammon*. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*. The evil we have to fear is not

from the things of the world, which are, in themselves, good; but from that temper and conduct which they produce in us. This leads me to mention,

Thirdly, That the *flesh*, by which is meant the corrupt nature, is the most dangerous enemy of all. The principle of sin is not fully subdued in believers. This is the law in the members which wars against the law of the mind, and brings into captivity to the law of sin. Were it not for this, the attempts of satan would be unsuccessful. Were it not for this, the things of the world would have no dangerous tendency. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*—This is the traitor within the walls, which betrays us into the hands of the enemy. Could we subdue this, we need not fear those without. The Christian, then, has to fight with himself. Remains of evil desires are still in his heart, and strive to prevail over him.

These are the enemies, my brethren, with which you are called to contend. Let not your hearts faint on the view of them; but, *quit you like men—be strong*. This exhortation implies,

First, That you banish unnecessary fears, and engage in the warfare with boldness and resolution. So much fear of an enemy as leads to watchfulness and caution, is highly useful. To despise an enemy is often the way to be beaten. Peculiarly in the Christian fight, *happy is the man that feareth always*.

There is a fear, however, which depresses the spirits and hinders exertion. This ought to be laid aside. Discouragements increase the difficulties; small ones are then magnified, and great ones assume a most formidable appearance; whereas, if encountered with patience, firmness and perseverance, those would vanish, and these lay aside their terrors. While an enemy is considered as dangerous, he ought not to be deemed invincible. To despair is to yield ground and encourage an attack. It is well known what advantage this temper gives Satan over believers, and how carefully he improves it. He then harasses them with distressing thoughts, horrid suggestions, and is only not permitted to drive them into final ruin. Believers, therefore, ought to maintain an undaunted courage and resolution.

Again, There is implied, that they fight in divine strength. In themselves they are, indeed, weak, and wholly unequal to the conflict; but the grace of God is sufficient for them. Hear the holy challenge of the apostle; *If God be for us, who can be against us?* Trusting in his power, and faithfulness to fulfil all his promises in Christ, they ought to engage with their enemies. He hath provided for them an armour which is proof against every assault. In putting on this and managing it aright, safety and victory are ensured.— *My brethren,* says the apostle, *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole ar-*

mour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Thus we see that, as in the ancient mode of making war among men, there were pieces of armour to protect the whole body from injury, and weapons with which to assail, so in the spiritual warfare, believers are armed and encouraged to go forth in the strength of the Lord. It need only be added,

Further, As implied in this exhortation, that they persevere in the combat. If they withdraw, or cease their exertions, they will be overcome.—The enemies continue their hostilities as long as believers are in this world. There is no rest or peace to them, but their whole life is a constant warfare. Let not him, therefore, that girdeth on his harness, boast himself, as he that putteth it off. Many, alas, who seemed manfully to begin the contest, and continued it for a time, being allured by the things of this world, or deterred by difficulties, have given it over, and returned to their former slavery. These are likely to fall a prey. He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Let

me now mention some motives to encourage and animate you in this warfare.

First, Your cause is good and highly important. The apostle calls it *the good fight of faith*. Do men in the wars of this world, boldly venture their lives when persuaded that their cause is righteous? Much more ought Christians to encourage themselves. They are engaged in the best and noblest of causes; on the side of God, against every thing that is base, cruel, and oppressive. No less depends on the part they act than eternal happiness or misery. Do the men of this world fight for fading honors and emoluments? Is it for these that millions, in every age, have been slaughtered, and this earth covered with blood? And shall not Christians contend for *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; for a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, will bestow on every conqueror*?—We admire the man, who, at the head of armies, has over-run nations, and spread his conquests far and wide; we almost adore him, who nobly withstands the iron-hand of oppression, and successfully vindicates the insulted rights of human nature; but the Christian soldier is a more noble spectacle, a more glorious character. Though not surrounded with those external things which attract and dazzle the attention of mankind, yet he possesses more true magnanimity, and more genuine worth. The judge of the universe approves, and exalted spirits

behold him with wonder and delight. Should not then the goodness of the cause, and the importance of its issue, as to yourselves, encourage and animate you my believing friends? Mahomet promised to his followers who fell in battle, immediate entrance into a Paradise; but to you, unerring truth hath given assurance of *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.*

A second motive to animate you is, that you are engaged in the presence of many spectators. You act continually in the sight of the great and glorious God. His eye penetrates into the inmost recesses of your hearts. He will be your impartial judge, and from his hand you will receive your reward, or your doom. How far angels are witnesses of our actions is not certainly known. They are, however, not uninterested in the redemption of man. At the birth of the Saviour they sang together in heavenly strains, and have been frequently employed on messages of grace. We are expressly informed, that *there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*; that the angels are *all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.* The apostle charged Timothy *before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels.*

The consideration of our being open to the view of those holy and exalted spirits, who have charge of us, and who earnestly desire our success, ought to inspire us with fortitude and resolution. Shall

we behave meanly in the presence of superior beings? Shall we disgrace ourselves in the sight of heaven? Could we suppose them to feel the least uneasy sensation, what grief and shame must they suffer on our account, when we act unworthy our character? Yea, what indignation, to see creatures redeemed at an infinite expence, and with the most glorious prospects before them, complying with the temptations of satan and the world, and yielding to the corrupt desires of their own hearts!

*In the third place, You fight under Jesus Christ, the captain of salvation. Are soldiers inspired by an attachment to their king? By a confidence in their leader? Surely believers may be of good courage, Jesus is the King of Kings. He is the author and finisher of faith. He leads you by his example, and encourages you by his words. Will you suffer me to introduce here an example from history, of the effect of the conduct and speech of an earthly king, before an engagement with his enemy? Or, is it not suitable, and may we not compare great things with small?—Henry the Fourth, of France, just before a battle, in which he obtained an entire victory, uttered a generous prayer in a voice, and with a countenance that inspired all who heard and beheld him, with like magnanimity; then turning to the squadron, at the head of which he designed to charge: “My
“ fellow-soldiers,” said he, “as you run my for-
“ tune, so do I yours; your safety consists in keep-*

“ing well your ranks; but if the heat of the action should force you to disorder, think of nothing but rallying again; if you lose sight of your colors and standards, look round for the white plume in my beaver; you shall see it wherever you are, and it shall lead you to glory and to victory.” Examples of this kind fill the mind with great and noble ideas. We admire the man who, in the conscious integrity of his heart, boldly faces great and immediate danger, and inspires all around him with the like magnanimity. But, how little does every human example appear, compared with him who leads the armies of the saints; with him who conflicted with the powers of darkness; with him who gave his life a ransom; who, by his own power, rose from the bed of death; who triumphantly entered into everlasting glory; and who is conducting his followers in safety thither, through all the difficulties and dangers which surround them! What encouraging words are these, *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Because I live, ye shall live also.* Hear how he animates them from his celestial throne: *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father on his throne.* Believers, your leader is great and successful; you fight under the banner of the cross; the motto is LOVE; be not afraid, how stern appearance soever your enemies may assume; for,

In the last place, You are sure of victory in the end. The prospect of success tends greatly to.

encourage in any undertaking; but in no earthly thing have you the same assurance, as in your spiritual warfare. You have the word of truth that you shall prove victorious. You are *compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses* from the beginning of the world till this day, who all declare that they have been *more than conquerors through him that loved them*. Your enemies are already subdued so far as that they can never recover dominion over you. Injure you they will, but cannot prevail; make opposition they will, but it is ineffectual. Jesus Christ by his blood has atoned for your guilt; by his grace he purifies your hearts; and he hath *spoiled principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them*; yea, he hath entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for you. Should not this consideration encourage and animate you? He is a coward, indeed, who will not fight when sure of success; he has not the spirit of a man, who will not withstand the shock with victory in his view.

Let us remember at the same time, that though the enemies are conquered, yet our own exertions are necessary. In the Christian warfare we are considered as rational creatures, and as free agents. Dependence on divine strength, and endeavors of our own are perfectly consistent. If we sit down in negligence and inaction, we need not hope for victory. There are two extremes in this case, from one or other of which we are in danger.

The one is the neglect of due watchfulness, and the attendance upon appointed means, thinking that God will do all for us; the other is a too great confidence in our own strength, and not relying on the strength of the Almighty. What God hath joined let us not put asunder. Look around you and see the connexion established between the means and the end; see that the means are necessary to attain the end; and that these are not successful without the divine blessing. Believe that you must *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; and that God must *work in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, otherwise you work in vain.

These motives surely are enough to keep you from dispondency, and to animate you against all your enemies. Your cause is good, and infinitely important. You contend in the presence of God and the holy angels; and under the banner of Jesus Christ, who will lead you to glory and to victory.

Allow me, on this subject, to expostulate a little with you, my friends, who have never engaged in the Christian warfare. Think, for a moment, on the condition in which you are, and the awful consequences of it. You serve the devil and your own wicked lusts. These have dominion over you, and will lead you to inevitable ruin. You cannot now fully reconcile yourselves to the service. There is that within you which tells you,

that you are guilty, and exposed to the displeasure of your Maker and Judge; but still you have neither will nor resolution to assert your liberty. *The wages of sin is death.* It now flatters and deceives you; it is, in the mean time, binding you fast, and you will, at length, be cast into utter darkness, where is *weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The Lord Jesus shall prove successful over satan and all who take part with him. You have joined the weakest side. All enemies shall be put under his feet. Hear that dreadful sentence which he will pronounce upon impenitent sinners of our race, when he comes to judge the world in righteousness; *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* If you now join on the side of those rebellious spirits, you must expect to share in their punishment.

My friends, there is yet hope. There is a treaty of reconciliation carrying on. Delay not to throw down the weapons of your rebellion. Flee from the camp of satan. Come inlist under the banner of Christ. He will reward you with glory, honor, and immortality. In justice he might have refused, before now, to listen to any proposals of peace but he is long-suffering and patient. Come, and what is past shall be forgotten. He will *take away all iniquity, and receive you graciously.*

Are there any here who formerly seemed to engage in the Christian warfare, and have returned again to the service of sin? What has been the

reason of this conduct? Did you meet with difficulties which deterred you? Or, were the temptations of satan and the world too powerful for you? You have forfeited the name of soldiers. You are cowards and deserters. Go, ye dispirited men, we would not fight in such company. Separate you from the camp of Israel, that we may know who are our enemies. Or, rather, let me call upon you, my deluded friends, to return while mercy is offered. Return and disgrace the cause no more. Return and retrieve the honors you have lost.—
Quit yourselves like men, and fight.

My believing brethren, to whom this subject is more particularly addressed, you have heard the enemies with which you have to contend; the duties to which you are called; and some motives to encourage and animate you. Why should any of you fear? May not each of you, under difficulties, say with the Psalmist, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Or, may you not adopt his more confident language, and say, *The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* It may be but a struggle or two more, and the warfare is finished. After crossing the Alpine hills, would you now sit down

in inglorious ease? After so many victories already obtained, and when the enemies fly before you, would you lose the cause for ever? No, if you have the spirit of men—if you would not submit to the galling yoke of sin and satan—if you would not suffer the reproaches of your own consciences, and the cruel scoffs and insults of tormented ghosts in their dungeons of eternal darkness—if you regard the glory of the great God—the love of a dying Saviour, and the inconceivable joys of heaven, yield not to the power of your enemies. *Watchye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men—be strong.*

