

lost heaven by it; he would keep earth and he lost heaven by it. But once more,

Be not only willing to part with all for Christ's sake, and at his command; but go and cast yourself at adventure upon his free grace and love, and then go and work, and perform duties and pray and use endeavour; work as if there were no grace to be saved by, and bear thyself still upon free grace, and build upon the grace of God, as though there were no works. Thus do and you shall be saved to all eternity, for ever and for ever.

SERMON IV.

"But so did not I, because of the fear of God."—NEH. v. 15.

In this chapter, there are three things most considerable.

First, The voice or cry, at the beginning of the chapter; "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives, against their brethren the Jews." And then,

Secondly, you have made known to you, what Nehemiah did in this case, in verse 6, 7, "And I was very angry when I heard their cry, and these words, then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers," &c.

Thirdly, You hear more of Nehemiah's acting at verses 14, 15, "Moreover from that time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor: for the former governors that had been before me, were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver, yea even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because I feared God, because of the fear of God."

From hence then observe this truth or doctrine.

That those that truly fear God will not do as others do.

The true fear of God will keep men from doing those things that other men will do; yea, though an action be to a man's advantage, yet they that fear God will not do it, if

it be evil; and so it was with Nehemiah. "But so did not I, because of the fear of God." For the opening of this we shall,

First, Inquire what it is to fear God; and we shall,

Secondly, Shew you that a man that truly fears God, will do as Nehemiah did, neither can he do as others do.

Thirdly, We shall shew you, what there is in this fear of God, that doth lay such a balance upon men's hearts, that they cannot do as others do.

Fourthly, We shall answer this question, whether a man that fears God, may not sometimes do as others do.

Fifthly, I shall shew you the issue and consequence of this truth.

And then I shall make some application.

First, If you ask what this fear of God is, I answer in the general. That it is a passion of the soul whereby a man doth flee from imminent evil. But now further, if you ask me, What the fear God is, I say that it is twofold:

A servile fear, and a filial fear.

A servile fear, whereby a man fears God upon the account of hell or judgment, or because of the wrath of God.

But now a fear of God, not only because of his judgments, but because of displeasing him, because of his love, because we would not offend; this is a filial fear, to fear him because we would not do contrary to his commands; and thus did Abraham, when he would have offered up his son Isaac: "For saith God, (Gen. xxii. 12.) "By this I know thou fearest God," because he obeyed his command, and was afraid to do contrary.

This fear of God, this filial fear, is not only because of his love, but of his love in conjunction with his greatness also: the greater a man is, the more we fear him, and the nearer he is in relation to us, the more we reverence him. Yet further, as the love of God in conjunction with his greatness, calls for our fear; so also,

The word and works of God call for our fear; for the word of the Lord is mighty, and his works are wonderful; for it is said of God, "that he is fearful in praises, working wonders." Thus if you ask me what this filial fear is, I say it is a fear whereby we fear him, because of his love, because of his

greatness, and because of his word, and works. That is the first.

Secondly, A man that truly fears God, cannot do as others can do; for in the text we find that Nehemiah had an opportunity in his hand, to *make* himself, to *raise* himself, to make himself rich, as to outward things: but you see what he saith, "But so did not I, as others did because I feared God;" where the true fear of God is planted in a man's heart, he cannot, he will not do, as other men can and will do: I shall clear this to you by instancing in some particulars.

He that fears God, cannot do as others do in the matter of his choice; you know how it was with the damsel, the daughter of Herodias, Matt. xiv. 7, 8, when she had danced before Herod, he was so delighted with her, that he gave her this privilege, to choose what she would to the half of his kingdom, and she asked the head of John the Baptist. She was bad, and her choice was bad; not having the fear of God in her heart. But when Esther had her choice, she chose the contrary, for she chose the freedom of John the Baptist, in the freedom of the Jews: she acted not as the other did, because of the fear of God; they that fear the Lord cannot do as others do. I may instance in Moses also, he would not do as others; for saith he "I will choose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb. xi. 25. And why did he thus? but only because of the fear of God.

As they that fear God, will not do as others do in the matter of their choice; so neither will they do as others do in the matter of worship; for what saith Joshua, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord;" Josh. xxiv. 15. "Do you what you please. Therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the God's which your fathers served, or the gods of Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." As for me I will worship God, worship you whom you will; thus you see what they will do that fear the Lord.

Will you instance in the matter of your callings, for a man really is what he is in his calling, in his trade; or will you instance in the divine calling, you know what the apostle Paul saith; some, saith he, "preach Christ out of envy, and some out of good will," some to get a livelihood by it, to make a

trade of it, to get riches, and honours, and estates; but so did not I, because of the fear of God; no great advantages will make a man that fears God, to do as others do; he saith always, others do so and so, but so will not I, because I fear the Lord.

A man that fears God cannot do as others can do, in the matter wherein he is intrusted. You know how it was with the spies, Caleb brought a good report of the land of Canaan, because he feared God; but so did not the others.

They that fear the Lord cannot do as others do, in the matter of afflictions. A man that fears the Lord, can love the Lord in adversity, and fear him in prosperity. It is said of king Ahaz, that he sinned more and more, because of his afflictions: but Jehoshaphat did not so, when he was under great afflictions and troubles, for he sought to the Lord, and laboured after faith and strength from him, that so he might be established: but so doth not the wicked man, because he feareth not God.

As there is a great difference between a good man, and a wicked man, or between one that fears the Lord, and one that doth not in the matter of afflictions: so there is a difference also in the matter of their refreshment, in their eating, and drinking and recreation. Job i. 5. "And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them." Job sanctified them, and so cannot a wicked man do; but a man that fears the Lord can do this. And,

A man that truly fears the Lord cannot do as others do, in the matter of right and propriety: they that fear not God will take advantage upon others, in the matter of their right and propriety. You may see what Abraham did; Lot would not let Abraham have his right, though it was his right, yet Abraham because he feared God, and for peace sake, gives up his right; but those that fear not the Lord cannot do so. Thus you see, that those that truly fear God cannot, will not do as others do, in the matter of his choice, of his worship, of his calling, of his afflictions, of his refreshments, or of his right and propriety. And that is the second general. But.

Thirdly, What is there in this fear of God, that should balance the soul, and cause it not to do as others do? Why,

By the fear of God a man is enabled to depart from evil, as

the Psalmist saith. There are two seeds in the world, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent: now these two seeds rule in the whole world; in some the seed of the woman rules, and in some the seed of the serpent: now they that are of the seed of the woman can fear the Lord, but they that are of the seed of the serpent cannot fear the Lord; and therefore no wonder that they that fear the Lord cannot, will not do as others do; why, it is because they are of another seed, they are of the seed of the woman.

As they that fear the Lord are of another seed, so they are also of another principle, and therefore they cannot do as others do. Principles are the springs of all actions, and every man acts according to his principle, according to the principle that is in him. Now he that fears the Lord differs from another man in his principles, and so he doth also in his actions and in his ends.

Look into his ends, and you shall see how they differ from other men's. Ends are the seeds of actions; and if so, a man that fears the Lord, his ends differ from other men's, and then no wonder that he cannot, will not do as others do. Again,

As he differs in his ends, so also in his conscience; every man is according as his conscience is. Take a man that fears the Lord, and he is tender of his conscience; but others that have their consciences burnt and seared are not so: and if so, then no wonder that he that fears the Lord cannot, will not do as others do.

As he that fears the Lord differs in the matter of his conscience, so he differs also in the matter of his restraints. A wicked man abstains it may be from one evil to commit another; but he that fears the Lord abstains from all evil because of the fear of God, which the other doth not. A wicked man is bad in good company, and a good man is good in bad company, yea he is the same in all company; therefore he that fears the Lord cannot, will not do as others do. But,

Fourthly, Is it possible for a man that fears the Lord to do sometimes as others do?

Yes, he may, for the apostle speaks plainly concerning the same, Rom. xii. 1. Mark what he saith: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye be not conformable

to this present world," &c. But now observe this, that it is one thing what a man doth in a sudden passion, and another thing what he doth in his serious consideration. For take a man that fears the Lord, and in his sudden passion he shall deny Christ as well as another; but in the way of serious consideration he shall never do it. And further take notice, that it is one thing what a man doth in a particular action, and another thing what he doth in his common practice; for you may find in Scripture, that God's people have sometimes run away from God as to a particular action, but yet in their constant course they feared the Lord. And therefore those that fear the Lord do not do as others do, because if they turn aside, they repent of their so doing and turn to God again. So I say there is still a difference between them that fear the Lord and those that do not. But,

Fifthly, Suppose a man do truly fear the Lord, what is the issue and consequence thereof? Why the issue will be this; if you fear the Lord, God will deal well with you, he will deal well with you in a special manner; he will make a difference between you and another in his dispensations. Ps. i.: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night; he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, but whatsoever he doth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like unto the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Thus you see how God's dispensations shall be to them that fear him; it shall go well with them, but not so to the wicked. It is said that "Those that feared the Lord spake often one to another." And it is said in Isa. viii. 11, 12, "For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, not to walk in the way of this people," &c. Ps. cxii. 6, 7, 8, you may find there that there will be a great difference one day, between them that fear the Lord and they that do not: "Surely he shall not be moved for ever, the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of

evil tidings, his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord: his heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it and be grieved, he shall gnash his teeth and melt away, the desire of the wicked shall perish. Yea God will do great things for them that fear him; he will put his law into their hearts, that thereby they may keep his commandments." He will do greatly for them, for his eye shall be upon them. The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous, and his ear is open to their cry. He is ready to answer those that fear him upon all accounts. Read what the Psalmist saith, Psalm xxxi. 19, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men."

Yea further, if you truly fear the Lord, the eye of God shall be upon you for good: "Unto him will I look that trembleth," unto him will I look that feareth, saith the Lord.

Again, if you truly fear the Lord, the Lord will delight in you.

Yea, God will be a God unto you, God will be a strong tower to you, and he will sanctify all unto you. And to say no more, they that fear the Lord shall want no good thing. Oh what a blessed thing is it then to fear the Lord, for from him God will withhold no good thing. And thus you see the issue of this fearing of God. Consider it, consider I say the consequence and issue of it, and let it be so many motives to stir you up more and more to fear the Lord.

So much shall serve for the doctrinal part, now then by way of application.

Here we may see what a sad excuse that will be which many make, that say they do but as others do; but alas, this is an excuse fit for the lips of those only who fear not God at all. But,

If this doctrine be true, then here you may see who those are that fear God in truth. There are many pretenders to it, but we find here that those that truly fear the Lord cannot, will not do as others do. They will not do as others

do in the matter of their choice, in the matter of their worship, nor of their calling, nor in what they are entrusted with, nor in their refreshments, nor in their afflictions, nor in their right and propriety; and if it be so, how few are there that fear the Lord in truth. They that truly fear God say always as Nehemiah, "But so did not I because of the fear of God." There are many that lie quiet under sins of omission, and under sins of commission too; but so will not I because of the fear of God. Do others sin, and do others act contrary to the will of God; yet let us not do so, but let us say with Nehemiah, But so will not I because of the fear of God. Oh therefore let me desire all to fear the Lord. And for you that do fear the Lord, be you comforted, for comfort belongs to you. Everlasting mercy belongs to you who fear the Lord. "I have loved you with an everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3.

But it may be some will say, I am afraid I do not fear the Lord, and so this comfort doth not belong to me. Why consider,

Do you make conscience of what you do, doth your conscience accuse you or not for what you do, do you find conscience accuse or excuse?

Have you not sinned in the dark, when none could accuse but God only; and do you act and walk and live and labour as if you were in the presence and sight of God? If you do thus, then you do fear the Lord, "and then it shall be well with you," Eccles. viii. 12. Again,

Do you run and speak one to another? If so, then this is to fear the Lord, for it is said that they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. And,

Do you truly desire to fear the Lord, then look into Nehemiah, and observe his spirit well, and do accordingly. And to say no more,

Have you had advantages to make you rich in this world, and would you not take them, because of the fear of God? Then certainly you have received free grace, and you have the Spirit of God; for this is a true sign that you have true grace in your heart, and that you are one of them that truly fear the Lord; and therefore be you comforted, for comfort belongs unto you, everlasting mercy belongs unto you.

But it may be some will say, Suppose I do not fear the

Lord, what shall I do that I may fear the Lord, fear him as I should do, fear him more and more.

For answer, If you would fear the Lord in truth, then

Be humbled for want of this fear. That man is not far from grace, who is humbled for the want of grace. A man will never be humbled for unbelief, unless he be humbled for the want of faith.

Go to God and beg of him to fulfil his promise. God hath said, "I will put my fear into their hearts;" now go to God, I say, and beg and desire him that he would make good this promise to you.

If you would fear God in truth, then observe what that is that is nearest and dearest to you, and give that up to God. You know Abraham offered up Isaac, his only son, and saith God, "By this I know thou fearest me." And further,

If you would fear the Lord in truth, then worship God according to his own appointment; take heed of mingling of God's worship with any of man's inventions, for he that doth so, feareth not God nor worshippeth him according to his own appointment. And then,

If you would fear the Lord in truth, then take heed of sinning when you have an opportunity. Again,

If you would fear God more, then love the Lord more, labour to strengthen your love to God. Again,

If you would have your fear strengthened more and more, then study much the free grace of God in giving out his mercy to one more than to another: "Two in a field, the one taken and the other left; two walking together, the one taken and the other left." If you would strengthen your fear study much the free grace of God.

If you would fear the Lord in truth, live much in and study much upon dependence wholly upon God; it is our great duty to depend upon God.

If a man be upon a high tower, and another holds him from falling by the hand only, he will certainly be very fearful of offending him that holds him so. Why we are thus in the hand of God, and our dependence is upon him for every thing; how fearful ought we then to be of offending this God. Oh, study your dependence upon God more and more. And,

Again, use the world as using it not. Deal with men as

in the presence of God; and when you are dealing with men, be sure to deal with God before all the men in the world.

Again, let your eye be very much upon the severity and justice of God, upon his severity and justice. Consider God's severeness to Adam in eating the forbidden fruit; and his severeness to Moses for a word, that for one word God would not let him enter into the promised land; and consider his severity to David for numbering the people. Yea,

Again, consider that God can not only destroy the body, but soul and body too. Therefore, O man, fear him "that can destroy both body and soul, when he will, in hell fire."

Thus, now, if you would have your fear strengthened, then study these things; consider and meditate upon these things. But yet a little further.

If you would strengthen your fear of God more and more, then labour after more communion with him now, in this world, while you are here. We use to say, 'Too much familiarity breeds contempt; but here it is not so, for by familiarity and communion with God we shall have more sweetness and more delight in his ways, more strength in his service, more comfort in our afflictions. If you would, therefore, have these advantages, then labour to walk more close with God, and to have more communion with him; labour therefore, I say, to have more communion with God if you would fear him more and more. The greater a person is here on earth, as I told you before, the more we fear him; and the nearer he is in relation to us, the more we reverence him.

My friends, would you obtain everlasting mercy, would you have everlasting mercy belong to you? then labour to fear the Lord in truth yet more and more. And I beseech you to think of this truth, meditate upon it, think of it upon all occasions, and say, Do others slubber over duties? so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Do others walk injuriously? so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Do others do contrary to the will of God? but so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Let this truth go up and down with you, and it will keep you in your dealing both with God and man. Remember the character of one that fears the Lord; he is one that cannot, will not do as others do, for so saith the text: "But so did not I, because of the fear of God."