

“Six Final Warnings”
(Galatians 5:17)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Flavel has been showing us how God designed trials to reveal whether we have true faith.
 - a. Even as we don't know the true character of gold until it is refined in the fire, so we don't know the true condition of our heart until it is tried.
 - b. Trials bring out the good and the bad, but it's the good we're concerned with – if we see it there, then we know the Spirit dwells in our souls.
2. Flavel told us that there are basically five trials the Lord uses:
 - a. Prosperity: does it draw us closer to God or to the world?
 - b. Adversity: does it purify us or make us bitter?
 - c. Sin: do we hate it because God hates it, or for some other reason? Do we grieve when we have committed it because it dishonors God, or because it costs us something we don't want to pay? Do we always fight against it, at least in some degree, or surrender to it without a struggle?
 - d. Duty: do we perform it from our heart when others can see us and when they can't? Or do we do it only when convenient, such as when others are watching us?
 - f. And, as we saw last week, suffering:
 - (i) Are we willing to confess Christ when it will cost us the things we love most in the world?
 - (ii) Are we willing to do so when it looks like we will suffer for it our whole lives?
 - (iii) Will we hold onto Him when no one else stands with us, and we must suffer alone?
 - (iv) Will we cling to Christ when those who are nearest to us hate and persecute us?
 - (v) And can we endure when we have to face two or more of these trials at the same time?
 - (vi) If we can, out of love for Christ, then we are true believers.
3. The Lord has several good purposes in putting both saints and hypocrites to the test:
 - a. When He tries the saint:
 - (i) His grace is glorified as they endure.
 - (ii) His people see their faith to be true and are strengthened (1 Pet. 1:7; Touchstone, 579-580).
 - (iii) Their fears are removed, their pride and self-confidence are mortified, and their graces kept in exercise.
 - (iv) Satan and his demons are defeated, and the saints bear witness by their lives to the reality of God (581-583).
 - b. When He tries the hypocrite:
 - (i) Their hypocrisy is unmasked and their sin is exposed (Jer. 13:25-26).
 - (ii) Some might be awakened and by God's grace escape from the snare of the devil (580).

- c. Many are deceived into thinking they are true believers when they are really hypocrites (586). But salvation is promised only to those whose faith will endure trial:
 - (i) James writes, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12; 586-587).
 - (ii) Realizing there is a day coming when everyone will be judged, it’s wise for us to try our faith now.
 - (iii) If our faith can’t endure the trials of this life, how will it endure the trial of that great day (587)?
 - (iv) If we’re true believers, we’ll want our faith tried, we’ll want to know the condition of our souls, so that we will be ready: David writes, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way (Ps. 139:23, 24).
 - (v) The hypocrite, on the other hand, does not want his heart examined, because he doesn’t want his sin to be exposed: Jesus said, “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (John 3:20-21; 588).

B. Flavel now closes his work with six final warnings or instructions, both to saints and to hypocrites.

- 1. We’ll look first at those directed at the saints not to judge themselves too harshly.
- 2. And second, at those directed at hypocrites not to judge themselves too lightly.

II. Sermon.

A. First, Flavel’s six general rules to the saints not to judge themselves too harshly.

- 1. Realizing that there is hypocrisy in the best of saints, he says, “Rule 1. We may not presently conclude we are in the state of hypocrisy, because we find some workings of it, and tendencies to it in our spirits.”
 - a. Even the best gold has dross; all soil has some weeds growing in it (595).
 - b. A Christian is not perfect: we should expect to see sin in our hearts.
 - c. Just because we do doesn’t mean we’re not converted.
- 2. Rule 2 is “Every true ground of humiliation for sin is not a sufficient ground for doubting and questioning our estate and condition.”
 - a. We shouldn’t question our sincerity every time we sin.
 - b. It’s true that we do sin and should be humbled by it, but even the most sanctified believers sin (every day in word, thought, deed; 596).
- 3. Rule 3 states, “A stronger propension in our nature, and more frequent incidence in our practice to one sin than another, do not presently infer our hypocrisy, and the unsoundness of our hearts in religion.”
 - a. Every saint wrestles with a particularly difficult sin, a besetting sin, one he is more liable to than others.
 - b. But this does not mean he is insincere in his faith, as long as he does not give himself over to it and continues to fight against it (596).

4. Along these same lines, Rule 4 reads, “A greater backwardness and indisposedness to one duty rather than another, doth not conclude the heart to be unsound and false with God, provided we do not inwardly dislike and disapprove any duty of religion, or except against it in our agreement with Christ, but that it riseth merely from the present weakness and distemper we labour under.”
 - a. Just as we may struggle putting off particular sins, so we may struggle putting on particular duties.
 - b. But again, there must be a *struggle*; there must be a wrestling of the Spirit against the flesh; there must be a desire for obedience, perfect obedience, even if we struggle to obey a particular duty as we reach for that perfection (597).
 5. Rule 5 states, “The glances of the eye at self-ends in duties, whilst self is not the weight that moves the wheels, the principle end and design we drive at, and whilst those glances are corrected and mourned for, do not conclude the heart to be unsound and hypocritical in religion.”
 - a. Every Christian struggles with sin – in his motives, as well as his actions.
 - b. But if his *main* end is the glory of God, his desire for his own recognition must be seen as Christian imperfection and not hypocrisy (597).
 6. Finally, Rule 6 states, “The doubts and fears that hang upon, and perplex our spirits about the hypocrisy of our hearts, do not conclude that therefore we are what we fear ourselves to be.”
 - a. We may doubt that we are true Christians, but that doesn’t mean we’re not.
 - b. God does not necessarily judge us to be in the same state we believe ourselves to be in. David, after his sin regarding Uriah, appeared to believe his integrity was “destroyed by that fall,” but clearly it wasn’t (Psalm 51; 597-598).
- B. Finally, six warnings to the hypocrite not to judge themselves too lightly. Flavel ends by giving six general rules by which a hypocrite might discern his hypocrisy, even though he may have appearances of sincerity.
1. Rule 1 reads, “It is not enough to clear a man from hypocrisy, that he knows not himself to be an hypocrite.”
 - a. A man is able to deceive others, certainly he may deceive himself as well.
 - b. Jesus said, “Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'" (Matt. 7:22; 599).
 - c. Flavel, in his *Husbandry Spiritualized*, writes, “Doth the work of faith, in some believers, bear upon its top branches the full ripe fruit of a blessed assurance? Lo! what strong confidences, and high-built persuasions of an interest in God, have sometimes been found even in unsanctified ones? John viii. 54. ‘Of whom you say, that he is your God; and yet ye have not known him.’ To the same height of confidence arrived those vain souls mentioned in Rom. ii. 19. Yea, so strong may this false assurance be, that they dare boldly venture to go to the judgment-seat of God, and there defend it, Mat. vii.22. ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?’ Doth the Spirit of God fill the heart of the assured believer with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, giving them, *through faith*, a prelibation, or foretaste of heaven itself, in those first fruits of it? How near to this comes what the apostle

supposes may be found even in *apostates*, Heb. vi. 8, 9. who are there said ‘to taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come’” (96).

2. Rule 2, “Zeal and forwardness in the cause of God, and for the reformation of his worship, will not clear a man from the danger of hypocrisy.”
 - a. Jehu is an example of a man zealous for reformation, but who in the end turned out to be a “painted sepulchre” (Touchstone, 599).
 - b. Motivation is the key: did he do this out of love for God, or a desire for his own glory? Clearly, it was the latter. Jehu said to Jehonadab, “‘Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD.’ So he made him ride in his chariot” (2 Kings 10:16).
 3. Rule 3, “It is no sufficient evidence of a man’s own integrity, that he hates hypocrisy in another.”
 - a. A hypocrite may allow in himself what he hates in someone else.
 - b. Our sins always look worse when they are worn by others (Psalm 35:16; *ibid.*).
 4. Rule 4 is, “The mere performance of private duties will not clear a man from hypocrisy.”
 - a. As Flavel told us earlier, the unregenerate may do the same things as the regenerate outwardly, but they lack the inner motives that make them truly godly (599-600).
 - b. So many pray to God in private merely to get what they want, without God’s glory in view at all.
 5. Rule 5 is, “The vogue and opinions you have got among Christians, of your sincerity, will not be sufficient to clear you from the danger of hypocrisy.”
 - a. Judas traveled with the disciples for three years, but only Jesus knew he was a hypocrite. When Jesus said one at the table would betray Him, the disciples asked the Lord if it was them, not if it was Judas (Matt. 26:21-22).
 - b. We may be able to deceive others, but we cannot deceive God (Revelation 3:1; 600).
 6. And finally, rule 6 reads, “Your respects and love to them that are the sincere and upright servants of God, will not clear you from the danger of being hypocrites yourselves.”
 - a. Merely to love a Christian is not the same as to love a man *because* he is a Christian.
 - b. Many things besides a man’s godliness may attract the unbeliever’s affections (*Ibid.*).
- C. To sum up:
1. Flavel believed it was every Christian’s duty to examine his own heart to make sure that his faith was genuine and not merely counterfeit.
 - a. This is difficult work.
 - b. Sadly, there are very few willing to put forth the effort, either because they are afraid they will find themselves to be false, or because they are too self-confident that their faith is genuine.
 - c. It is, however, in our best interest to examine ourselves presently, both because sound assurance can make us more fruitful in our work for the Lord, and because if we lack genuine faith, there will still be time to do something about it before the Day of Judgment.

2. Flavel believed this examination was best done under trial – the trials the Lord sends for this very purpose.
 - a. Trials reveal what is in a man's heart. They provide the best conditions under which a saint can make his own evaluation regarding his spiritual state.
 - b. The hypocrite's "faith" will only wither under trials; while the saint's faith will endure, be purified, and grow even stronger.
 - c. Trials draw the saint's affections away from the things of earth and place them firmly in heaven.
 - d. They burn up the dross of corruption and cause grace to become less encumbered and free in its expression.
 - e. The marks of grace then – which are as numerous as the many influences the Spirit exerts on the soul – can be clearly seen in the saint's response to trials, whatever those trials may be.
3. But Flavel is also quick to remind us that the saint – being a mixture of both good and evil – should not be disappointed if he finds many of the tendencies of the hypocrite in his heart.
 - a. Even the best of saints still sins. Every believer has besetting sins that he wrestles with above others. This is not necessarily a sign of hypocrisy, if the marks of grace are also present.
 - b. On the other hand, hypocrites should not be quick to consider themselves justified, for the deceitfulness of their hearts, the blinding influences of the devil, and the common work of the Spirit of God can lead them to the false conclusion that they are converted, when they are still dead in trespass and sin. They might be able to live outwardly like a Christian, but unless they can do so inwardly – with sincere love and the desire to glorify God – they are but almost Christians. Amen.