

The Sin of Situation Ethics

What is situation ethics? When the expression situation ethics is referred to in the midst of a religious discussion, it is used in the following sense:

Situation ethics is a system of ethics which is based on human wisdom, as opposed to Divine wisdom, by which acts are judged within their contexts. It is doing evil that some supposed good may come.

A good example of the above mentioned definition as applied to moral decisions is the case of a Christian man who was told by a worldly psychiatrist to quit the religion of Christ since it was causing him anxiety. The author happens to know for a fact that sin, not the religion of Jesus Christ, was the culprit causing the anxiety in his life. He needed to *cleave* to the Lord and His teaching rather than *blame* the Lord and His teaching.

What does the Bible have to say about this system of ethics? Obviously, the Bible condemns any system of thought devised by men which is in violation of His will as expressed in the written New Testament of Jesus Christ (Mat. 7:21-23). Notice some Biblical facts about this type of sin.

1. The apostle Paul was strongly against it! (Rom. 3:4). When his enemies accused him of it, he said that they were guilty of "slander" and they would one day receive "damnation."
2. To the church at Colossae, Paul warned, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit . . . which are not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). Note that a Christian who listens to a situation ethics practitioner will soon be robbed of his salvation in Christ. The word *philosophy* here refers to pagan wisdom and this would include the practicing

of sin in order to reach a desired goal. Situation ethics here is labeled the philosophy of a deceitful individual.

3. Peter was rebuked before the church for practicing situation ethics (Gal. 2:11-14). He first ate with the Gentile Christians and thus gave them the impression that they were in fellowship with Jewish Christians. But then, when he feared a loss of reputation from a certain segment of the brotherhood, he separated himself from eating with the Gentiles. This led to confusion on their part. Had Peter remembered that Paul was present he might not have tried such a prank. Paul's concern and love for truth overrode his friendship ties with Peter and he rebuked him to his face before them all. Peter's statement of good will toward Paul in his second epistle is a good indication that he repented of his practice of situation ethics (2 Pet. 3:15).

A close examination of the situation may help to see the sinfulness of situation ethics:

1. **Peter's desired goal: Acceptance** - by both the Gentile Christians in Antioch and the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem.
2. **His methodology in reaching this goal: Compromise** - by situation ethics {trust in his own human wisdom as opposed to the Divine wisdom found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ}.
3. **What the gospel teaches:** That **supreme loyalty to God** by obedience to the gospel is necessary in all situations of life (Acts 10:34-35; Matt. 6:33; 2 John 9). This is the case even though at times not all segments of the brotherhood will be pleased with a Christian's behavior. Peter should have continued eating with the Gentiles and confronted the ungodly behavior of the Jews. If the Jews loved the truth of the gospel, they would have repented. If they did not repent, then Peter would have been forced to fellowship only the Gentiles in Antioch (2 John 9-11).

HAVE YOU PRACTICED SITUATION ETHICS?

Only a blind man at midnight cannot see the many, many compromises ongoing in numerous congregations today. In view of the fact that Satan has done, is doing and will do all within his earthly power to destroy God's people, he tempts members to do evil to reach their goals. The sins of lying, stealing, hypocrisy and selfish ambition are not beneath one who is enslaved to a practice of situation ethics. The individual who practices situation ethics in the church may be an elder, deacon, preacher or one who works with the youth. The following are only a few examples of the terrible consequences of situation ethics:

1. Trusting in the *faulty* conclusions of secular psychology.
2. Church politicians who seek only the praise and applause of men.
3. Toleration of denominational churches with their instrumental music in the name of Bible unity.
4. The appointment of unqualified men to the office of the eldership.
5. The use of profanity in Christian counseling in the name of shock treatment.
6. Churches hoarding up tens of thousands of dollars of the Lord's money for moth and rust to corrupt.
7. Premature baptism in a desire to grow numerically.
8. The use of so-called translations which contain so much error that if the verses under question were marked through, one would be unable to read.
9. Accepting into fellowship members who are living in adultery.
10. Preachers who speak on lectureships with false teachers without preaching against the error of those false teachers.

WHY DO SOME PRACTICE SITUATION ETHICS?

A sincere desire to succeed can influence one to use an unlawful means. Elders desire to lead well, deacons want to serve successfully and preachers want to see results from their preaching. This is