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Are We SURE Sin is Really Sinful?

Romans 1:28: (NASB) *And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper...*



What has happened to us? We live in an age where ego and emotion are more important than virtue and values. An age where personal preference outweighs personal worth and "I want it now" trumps integrity. We live in an age where absolutes are not - unless we decide they fit into our personal plan - and standards are only something to customize and remodel to our personal satisfaction. Ours is an age where the ancient principles of sin and objective morality are being relegated to the trash heap of history. So, what are we supposed to do? Should we go along with the flow of thoughts and emotions that are reshaping our social structure? Should we abandon what is considered to be the old and worn out moral thinking of the past and embrace the new and vibrant personally-based principles of the present?

To get started, let's look at the basic biblical definition of sin. Two Old Testament words most often translated *sin*:

Sin: Strong's #2403 an offence (sometimes habitual sinfulness), and its penalty, occasion, sacrifice, or expiation (meaning an offering for sin); also (concretely) an offender

Sin: Strong's #2398 to miss; hence (figuratively and generally) to sin; by inference, to forfeit, lack, expiate, repent, (causatively) lead astray, condemn

A brief look at the New Testament:

Sin: Strong's #264 to miss the mark

Sin: Strong's #266 to sin

Matthew 18:21: (KJV) *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother **sin** <264> against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?*

Matthew 26:28: (KJV) *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of **sins** <266>.*

Offense: Strong's #3900 a side-slip (lapse or deviation), i.e. (unintentional) error or (willful) transgression

Romans 5:15: (KJV) *But not as the **offence** <3900>, so also is the free gift. For if through the **offence** <3900> of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

The love of God through Jesus cancels this sin. That love is "agape" love - love in its highest form. Curiously, that very kind of love was the principle behind the founding of "situation ethics."

Joseph Fletcher was an American professor who founded the theory of situation ethics in the 1960's, and was a pioneer in the field of bioethics. He wrote the book: [Situation Ethics: The New Morality](#) in 1966.

))) **Introduction and Agape love, *Situation Ethics Explained by Peter Baron of Peped***

Sin brought the human race out of favor with God and under the rule of another: [Ephesians 2:1-2](#): Satan is the "prince of this world." He usurped God's authority and we are living under his control, to the extent permitted by God.

))) **Introduction to the four principles, *The Four Working Principles of Situation Ethics***

Positivism, pragmatism, personalism, relativism - all based upon agape love! At first glance, we might think that there is something here that is really valuable. But he said, "Love is for people and not for principles" - let's explore that further.

Thinking about situation ethics from the standpoint of its origin is probably a complete surprise to most of us because we generally see situation ethics through the eyes of "making things up as we go." Let's look at how the whole thing has come together for us in this age of enlightenment. How does it actually work and is there value to situation ethics?

))) **The four principles explained, *The Four Working Principles of Situation Ethics***



This all sounds like it has merit, but the big problem with our enlightenment is that it is polluted.

Paul in the following context is emphasizing his care and responsibility for the Corinthians, as they were experiencing other earthly influences that were drawing them away from the true gospel: 2 Corinthians 11:12-15: Those bringing the church "enlightenment" were false teachers. Paul was telling them there are higher standards that must be followed. *Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light* - If Satan is the ruler of this world and all light essentially filters through him, we receive polluted - not pure - light. We want to see sin for what it *really* is, not for what we *hope* it is.

So, as ruler of this world, how does Satan operate? He uses our **Feelings** about things to override our **Faith**. Faith requires following; feelings require managing. Faith and feelings are different.

What happens when we seek to live by how we feel? Let's look at the context of our theme Scripture: Romans 1:20-25: The world has seen the miracles of creation but has chosen to ignore them. Science displays the intricacy and beauty of nature but cannot say it was designed. Any light that humanity has in this darkened state will be tainted with the scourge of sin. *They became futile in their speculations* - God saw the trend and let it happen. He allowed hearts to be darkened, scourged with the taint of sin. Situation ethics exchanges the truth of God for a lie. It says the moment is bigger than principles. This is framed as idolatry, which is the epitome of darkness masquerading as light. Darkness likes more darkness.

 **Jesus was relativistic, *Eight Situation Ethics: Compatible with Christianity***

Was Jesus relativistic? No. How do we know?

Here is the real context in which Jesus says to love: Matthew 22:36-40: This shows agape love based on godly instruction for living - it is *not* relativistic!

 **Jesus' associations and teaching, *Eight Situation Ethics: Compatibility with Christianity***

It might seem that Jesus took the relativist approach because he stepped outside the lines drawn by the Pharisees, but he did not step out of the lines that God drew.

John 12:44-46: Jesus was a direct reflection of the light of God. That is not relativistic. It is clear, concise and focused entirely on the highest principles.

Ethical Truth: Our highest and best example of universal ethics (Jesus) acted in accordance with God's Law.

Jesus always acted in accordance with principle, which was higher than the preferences of any given moment. We can all think of situations where standing for a higher good prevails. Having said that, this is where things always get sticky because it becomes a nearly impossible task to establish firm guidelines and principles to act in accordance with. Let's look at a couple of examples that shed some light on the how and why of the "higher good" and what we should watch out for.

 **Obi Wan Kenobi, *The Four Working Principles of Situation Ethics***

So, as ruler of this world, how does Satan operate? He uses our **Circumstances** to cause us to question our **Conviction**.

 **What is ethical cheating, *Ethical Cheating, Dr. Arthur Harkins***

In the days of Daniel and King Darius...Daniel 6:3-5: Daniel's behavior was so focused on doing right, he had such integrity, there was no "dirt" they could find on him. They had to make something up.

Ethical observations from watching Daniel's behavior: Daniel had a personal and private habit and responsibility of worship. Daniel unequivocally knew God's hand was with him in miraculous ways. Daniel's allegiance was unshaken by circumstance and he was willing to accept consequences. God was more important than his physical life. Daniel's ethics were NOT at all "situation ethics," rather, they were universal based ethics. He broke the law of the land because God had proven Himself as more important throughout Daniel's life.

 **Should we break God's word, *Eight Situation Ethics: Compatible with Christianity***



A lot of church traditions have gone off base, but God is a God of absolutes.

Peter and the Apostles were standing for something higher than the law of their day. Their preaching and healing caused an uproar among the High Priest, the Sadducees and the entire religious ruling class in Jerusalem. The Apostles were put in prison and told to stop their activities.

That night an angel released them from prison and told them to continue their preaching: Acts 5:21-31: Should they have obeyed the religious leaders or an angel from God?

Observation: Why did the Apostles not follow the laws of the land? The Apostles followed specific directions from God. This does not give us permission to break any law we want. The Apostles' ethics were NOT at all situation ethics; rather they were universal-based ethics. They were based in doing the will of God.

Ethical Truth: Disobeying any law requires crystal clear evidence of godly conviction and not just feelings!

It is one thing to proclaim that we are abiding by universal ethics but it is entirely another thing to actually do it. Why? Because we are human, we are sinful and we are emotional beings. Abiding by universal ethics depends on us knowing how to find and prove them to be true. If we cannot find them in Scripture and prove them to be true, we have no business standing for them. That takes the situational application of what we might be trying to label as a universal ethic. Proper application must take place.

 **Was Obi Wan Kenobi really loving, *The Four Working Principles of Situation Ethics***

So, as ruler of this world, how does Satan operate? He uses the fulfilling of our **Desires** to bury our focus on our **Discipline**. He uses our seeking of **Pleasures** to overpower our following of **Principles**.

Psalms 19:12-13: There are two sources of sin within us revealed in this text: 1. **Hidden Faults:** This first aspect of sin is the hidden, internal sin - perhaps sins that are a part of our very nature - hard for us to see clearly, as they are so natural to us. Perhaps these sins correlate to our desires. It is hard to deny such personal sin. 2. **Presumptuous sins:** This second aspect of sin - arrogance - has to do with outward display and action - a show that would correlate to outwardly seeking pleasure. The prayer was to cleanse us from both the inward and the outward sins.

 **Short cuts not cheating, *Ethical Cheating, Dr. Arthur Harkins***

Acknowledging our passions that drive us from within and our arrogance that puts them on display gives us a foundation for fighting against "situation ethics:" **Romans 6:12-13:** Discipline not arrogance!

 **Love is not the only thing, *Eight Situation Ethics: Compatible with Christianity***

God must be the foundation for our ethics, not how we feel or what others say. Relying on true agape love is the framework that is built upon that foundation:

Romans 5:18-19. Our ethical building is constructed with the materials of praise, reverence and obedience to God: **Matthew 4:10**

Ethical Truth: The object and direction of our reverence and passion determines the kind of ethics we practice!

The defining characteristics of worship directly impact our ethical thoughts and behavior:

- The **object** of your worship - what is it? *What ethical approach does it lead to?*
- The **reasons** for your worship - why is it? *What ethical approach does it lead to?*
- The **methods** of your worship - how is it? *What ethical approach does it lead to?*

We are not to worship anything that is not worthy of our admiration, praise and loyalty! God Almighty and His son Jesus are higher than we are. It is incredibly important to identify how to build our ethical belief system. Just as important is the responsibility to continually test the application of that belief system, as we are inherently faulty when it comes to ethics. Testing can be tedious and disturbing but is vital to our ethical success!

So, as ruler of this world, how does Satan operate? He uses our **Emotions** to hide our **Ethics**.



 **Cheating is not cheating if you say so, *Ethical Cheating, Dr. Arthur Harkins***

We are going to highlight Mahatma Gandhi's list of seven deadly sins, as they track closely with Scripture. The following are all examples of "enlightened" highest common objective thinking taught in the Bible thousands of years ago. Universal ethics shine through here!

Wealth without work: 2 Thessalonians 3:10: Ethical action: Always be willing to contribute and always do so when it is possible and appropriate.

Pleasure without conscience: Ephesians 4:19-20: Ethical action: Always apply God's standards of right and wrong above our own feelings in the moment. Humans are sensual beings and there is an appropriate place for sensuality, but for a Christian, it must be in the context of how the Scriptures define it - within marriage. We want to apply God's standard - not how I feel, not what I want, not what is tempting in front of me.

Science without humanity: James 4:17: Ethical action: Respect human life as it was meant to be respected - originally created in God's image. Of all the earthly creation, humans were the only ones created in the image of God.

Knowledge without character: 1 Corinthians 8:1: Ethical action: Decide that all knowledge will be filtered through a godly character before use. What would Jesus do?

Politics without principle: 1 Peter 2:13-14: Ethical action: Hold the passion of politics at arm's length knowing that principles are not based in emotion. If we can get past the emotion of the different points of view and get to the principles, we can have a conversation.

Commerce without morality: Proverbs 20:10: Ethical action: Treat all transactional experiences with equity as though Jesus were your business partner.

Worship without sacrifice: Romans 12:1: Too often we get into situation ethics within the context of Christianity when we make our Christian experience about ME - what I can get, what I like, what God can do for ME. Worship without sacrifice is situation ethics because it takes the focus off of God and makes ME the powerful one.

Ethical action: Honor God with a heart of personal *giving* rather than with a desire of personal *getting*.

Ethical Truth: Checking and testing our ethical reasoning regularly will reduce the temptation of "situation ethics" as we will be constantly reminded of the overriding power of Godly thinking and actions.

In order to be truly ethical, we have to be constantly reminded of the overriding power of godliness. The Ethical Truths we reviewed today are important to remind us to live up to something and not down to what everybody else is doing. Situation ethics are based on situations and therefore are fallible and full of holes. Godly, universal ethics are based on the solid foundation of God above us and righteousness.

***So, are we SURE sin is really sinful?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***