

Situation-Ethics

By Mike Willis

The first time that I heard a review of situation ethics, was amused at the apparent self-contradiction which lay in its premises. The first universal law of situation ethics is that there are no universal laws! Being self-contradictory, the system falls.

Similarly, I cannot help being a little amused when I read Carl Ketcherside's Mission Messenger. Regardless of what he titles his articles, and some titles are eye-catchers, I know that he is writing on the same subject-unity-in-diversity. His main doctrine is that one must not have conformity in doctrine in order to have unity. Ketcherside goes to and extreme to get "conformity in doctrinal be-

lief" to his doctrine which says "doctrinal conformity is not essential to unity." Like the situation ethicist, he has a system based on self-contradictory premises.

While I might be amused at its self-contradiction, I am amazed that our brethren are believing the false doctrine. Men who have never even heard of Carl Ketcherside believe the very doctrine which he is promulgating. Brethren, let us wake up and study the issues that we might be prepared to prevent another major apostasy. Preach on the doctrines being attacked. The best defense is a strong offense! - **Truth Mag. 1974**



Micah 7:18-19 - Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.

Sick			
Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Ray Hambric (Elder at North Gardendale)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)	Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle)
Josie Keith (Friend of Heath Fowler)	Grandparents of Mary Ann Roberts	Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby)	Jerry Sandlin (Megan Lee's Grandfather)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother)	Mary Smith (Nathan Smith's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Larry Alexander (Friend of Phillip Box)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Betty Bradford	Ann Robinson (Sharon Bailey's Mom)	Debra Lowe (Toni Herd's Friend)

December Birthdays

- 1 - Preston Guthrie
- 2 - Brady Peek
- 4 - Justin Padgett
- 5 - Rusty Weldon
- 7 - Tim Morton
- 8 - Macy Johnson
- 10 - Kyle Gibson
- 11 - Will Holcomb
- 12- Hannah Marsh
- 13 - John Henderson
- 18 - Hannah Liu
- 18 - Tim-Yau Tam
- 20 - Joshua Melson
- 21 - Manna Jones
- 21 - Holly Johnson
- 22 - William Herd
- 22 - Laura Abell
- 24 - Jessica Yates
- 24 - Ryan Yates
- 25 - Dustin Marsh
- 29 - Joel Dembowski
- 30 - Holly Law

News and Notes

- Remember Matthew Johnson and Tim Morton in our prayers as they are deployed overseas.
- Laura Humphrey's dad, Frank Hand, was admitted to the hospital on Thursday with Kidney failure and is not responding well to medication.
- Betty Bradford has been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- We need those to sign up for the 2012 schedule to prepare the Lord's Supper. (See Bulletin Board)
- Let's continue to remember our expectant mother, Candy Long, in our prayers.
- Let's remember all who are travelling in our prayers.

The Auburn Beacon



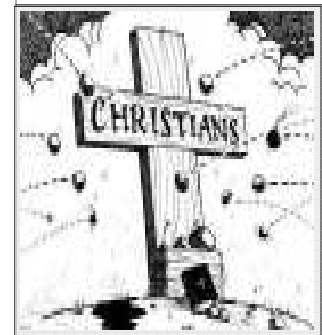
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

Volume 3, Issue 8

December 25, 2011

The Beatitudes: A Surprising Conclusion

By Paul Earnhart



Thoughts to Ponder

Prosperity has often been fatal to Christianity, but persecution never.

With this article we bring to a conclusion our study of the beatitudes. They end as they began, in a startling way.

"Blessed are the merciful" **(Matthew 5:7)**. Mercy is a quality not wholly unknown even in a world of basically self-seeking men. But it is a selective, capricious mercy that does not move from principle and is not a settled disposition of the heart and character. The same man who is capable of occasional compassion still finds the sorrows of others too burdensome and revenge too sweet.

The mercy which Jesus praises is borne of the penetrating awareness of one's own desperate need of mercy, not simply from men, but specially from God. It is a mercy that shows compassion to the helpless **(Lk 10:37)** and extends forgiveness even to the one who gives repeated offence **(Mt 18:21-22)**. This compassion is not prompted by the appealing qualities of the offender (How would we treat the "ugly" sinner?) but rises from our own sense of gratitude

And what is the cause of this hateful, knowing persecution of a humble, gentle people? Not some secret malignant conspiracy. Not the clandestine practice of unholy and immoral rites. Their crime is simple. They have chosen to be righteous in an unrighteous world.

for that mercy which God has shown us. We also were not appealing when God sent His Son to the cross **(Rom 5:8)**. Citizens of heaven's commonwealth have not forgotten which side of the tracks they came from **(Tit 3:1-5)**. One of the greatest expressions of this kind of mercy is its selfless concern for a sinful and unattractive but lost world **(Matthew 9:36-38)**. It is a driving force in gospel preaching.

Mercy toward men does not merit mercy from God, but it is an evidence of the penitent spirit which is a divine condition of forgiveness **(Mt 18:23-35)**. Kingdom citizens live

(Continued on page 2)

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or
E-mail:
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES	
Sunday	
Bible Class	9:30 AM
Worship	10:20 AM
Evening Worship	6:00 PM
Wednesday	
Bible Classes	7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

(Continued from page 1)

among their fellows, not as an arrogant spiritual aristocracy, but as forgiven, and forgiving men.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (5:9). This beatitude is not without its challenges. Men are tempted to apply it to those irenic spirits whose gift for negotiation and compromise pours oil on troubled waters. But the whole context of the sermon rebels against it. These are not peacemakers in the ordinary sense of mediating human disputes, but in the ultimate sense of bringing to men the peace of Christ (Jn 14:27). What is the value of peace bought at the price of principle or of a momentary tranquility that is not grounded on reconciliation with God? The true peacemakers are those who are themselves at peace with God (Rom 5:1) and men (Rom 12:18) and who preach in the world a gospel of peace and reconciliation (Eph 2:13-17). No other people could be called the children of "the God of peace" (Rom 15:33). When men are reconciled to God and the peace of Christ rules in their hearts, the spirit of compassion, meekness and forgiveness produced in them ministers reconciliation with all men (Col 3:12-15). If, in spite of all, others are still disposed to see such people as enemies' the fault does not lie in them. They are the true servants of peace in the world.

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake" (5:10-12). Here is a concluding surprise. These peacemakers have become the persecuted! Jesus, having now dealt with the attitude of kingdom citizens toward God, themselves, and others, now turns to consider the attitude of the world toward them. One would have thought that such people as Jesus has described would be received with great rejoicing in the world - a humble people, heedless of themselves, given to the needs of others. To the contrary, the Lord now reveals that they will stir the world to

a bitter animosity and hatred.

The Son of God has never sought to withhold the realities of suffering from His followers. His candor with those who enthusiastically sought Him is remarkable. He urged them even in their ardor to soberly count the cost (Mt 8:19-20; Lk 14:26-33). The Lord will have no disciples out of their naiveté. He wants no sudden shocks to destroy their faith. He has spoken plainly so that when His disciples suffer they can know that it is just as He said it would be and take heart with the assurance that their Master's promises of glory are just as sure "for he is faithful that promised" (Heb 10:23).

And what is the cause of this hateful, knowing persecution of a humble, gentle people? Not some secret malignant conspiracy. Not the clandestine practice of unholy and immoral rites. Their crime is simple. They have chosen to be righteous in an unrighteous world. They are too much like their Master (Jn 15:18-20). Their love and simplicity only serve to throw into harsher relief the dark selfishness of an ungodly generation which hates the light and feels keenly the silent judgment of the Christians' contrasting innocence (Jn 3:19-20).

The Lord's disciples should rejoice at an opposition which reveals that the spirit and character of their Savior has been seen in them. They should rejoice because they have been granted the privilege of suffering for one who endured such abuse for their sakes (Phil 1:28-29; Acts 5:41). But, most of all, they should rejoice because their suffering is not empty. They can embrace it joyfully, knowing that it transforms the character (James 1:2-4) and works for them "more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). No temporal threat can intimidate the one whose true treasure is secured in heaven. As one has observed: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."



Does the Restoration Plea Create Division?

By Mason Harris

Jesus showed his intention to unite men of every nation when he said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). To this end he said to his apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20). John explained the purpose of their preaching by saying it was that "you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). There is a fellowship of men who walk in darkness. But John here speaks of a fellowship with God and fellowship with one another by virtue of the relationship with him. It is a fellowship we have by being drawn to Jesus. When people learn of Christ and are drawn to him, they would be become one with him and with one another. This is illustrated in Acts 2:41-47 where the baptized were added to the church and served the Lord together in this relationship.

Paul spoke of Christ being our peace in that he has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God in one body by the cross, thus making peace (Eph. 2:14-16). Peace is the end result of the gospel. Paul could then say to those who accepted Christ, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

But there is somewhat of a paradox in this. Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36). Jesus did not mean to say that the purpose of his coming was to produce discord, but that such would be one of the effects of his coming. Jesus here described the result of his coming as though he had deliberately come to bring that about.

Loyalty to the law of Moses made it difficult for many to see members of their family accept Jesus as the Christ. And no doubt it was much the same way among the pagans when members of their family accepted Christ. It is the same way now with many who are deeply involved in the denominational world. They do not want to see members of their family becoming members of the church of Christ. Jesus knew that sharp differences would arise between those who accept and those who reject him. It was so in the first century. It is so now.

I was asked to write an article under the above title as part of a review of LaGard Smith's book, Who Is My Brother? My assignment comes from Chapter 2 where Smith quotes from a speaker who used Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell to support the view of a fellowship that extends to all believers in Jesus, even though they have not been baptized. As I understand Smith on this point, he was critical of the speaker for his reference to these men and used the latter portion of the chapter to show these men were quoted out of context. Regarding this point, we are in agreement.

For a long time I have been concerned about the danger of some trying to restore the restoration movement with all its imperfec-

tions, rather than seeking to restore New Testament Christianity. This reference rekindles my fear. It reminds me of my school days when I was learning to write. Across the top of the chalkboard, and sometimes on my sheet of paper, there was a perfect example of the alphabet as the letters should be written. As line after line was written below the perfect example, the writing looked less like the original as I progressed down the page. Why? Because as I wrote each new line, I was looking at the imperfect example just above, and not at the perfect example at the top of the page. The restoration leaders of the 19th century did a wonderful work as they worked their way out of the denominational world that grew out of the reformation in Europe. But the perfect pattern for us to follow is the New Testament. While we might like to speak in defense of Stone or Campbell, it is not important to our work to know what they said or meant. Our concern must always be: What does the Bible say? We do not have to live with any mistakes that may have been made by any person in restoration history.

When some of the restoration leaders advocated a return to the New Testament and that alone as their rule of faith and practice, they showed their willingness to stand apart from the mainstream of religious thinking. It appears to have been with great agony that they went against family beliefs and long standing practices in the churches where they were members. They did not want the discord that resulted from preaching the gospel, but their preaching called for a separation of those who would follow the Bible only from those who were wedded to the creeds of men. Being often alienated from family and friends because of their choice, they longed for unity among those who were of the same mind. That the lines of fellowship were sometimes breached only shows the weakness of man and should not serve as examples worthy of imitation.

Does the restoration plea create division? This might lead us to ask another question, "Does the restoration plea result in the preaching of the gospel?" If so, then the restoration plea creates division in the same way the preaching of the gospel created division in the first century. It divides the believers from the unbelievers, the obedient from the disobedient. Yes, it often severs the fellowship of families. But know this: It is the ignorance and/or the rebellion of man that causes the hostility and division, and not the gospel of Christ. But in the same way that unity came out of the preaching of the gospel in the first century, the plea to speak where the Bible speaks and to remain silent where the Bible is silent will produce unity now among those who follow it. This will not be because it is a part of restoration history, but because it will be doing all things "in the name of the Lord" (Col. 3:17).

I am indebted to the leaders in the restoration movement, as well as to the courageous reformers before them, who sacrificed so much in providing me with such a background of religious instruction as I have. I read their material with gratitude and profit. But I recognize them as uninspired men, subject to mistakes as all men are. I see them as men pointing me to Jesus and to his word — the perfect way.

