

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Is Gambling Sinful?

(Jerry Fite)

Gambling is defined as wagering something of value on an uncertain outcome to win something of greater value. Is putting money to risk when the outcome is uncertain a sin? If so, then farming is sinful. A farmer puts his money to risk in purchasing seed without the certainty that the planted seed will mature to a profitable harvest. Unpredictable weather conditions make farming risky, but without reservation God declares, “*The husbandman that laboreth must be first to partake of the fruits*” (2 Timothy 2:6).

Some say gambling is a sin because it leads to covetousness, the desire to want more. Gambling thrives on a heart desirous of great gain, but is the desire to want more sinful? If so, should you ever desire a raise? The desire to want more becomes sinful when it leads us away from God and the object of our desire replaces God in our life. In this sense covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Jesus’ parable of the foolish farmer does not condemn farming because it is a

risky endeavor thriving on the desire to want more, but condemns the farmer whose treasured gain is for self, and he is “*not rich toward God*” (Luke 12:21).

Some see gambling as sinful because it violates the principle of work. Paul exhorts those who once stole to “*...steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need*” (Ephesians 4:28). Working, offering our labor in exchange for money, is how one makes monetary gain. Adding the fact that if one will not work neither shall they eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10), work is indeed necessary, and the righteous way of gain. But does “earning” all gain from “work” instead of “chance” the only way of righteous gain? What about receiving gain through an “inheritance”? Jesus did not condemn this avenue of gain as sinful.

When asked to intervene in dividing an inheritance, Jesus warned of the dangers of “covetousness” which might be present

without one word condemning gain through an inheritance (Luke 12:13-15). Nor did Jesus condemn one receiving gain based upon “chance”. An inheritance is a matter of chance in one being his father’s son.

If the principle of work excludes all other forms of receiving gain, then does one receiving money, or things of value, due to benevolence sin because the recipient did not “earn” it through “work”?

Gambling is sinful because it violates the golden rule: “*All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men do unto you, even so do unto them*” (Matthew 7:12). Jesus makes us first consider how we want to be treated, then proceed to put such theorized contemplation into action, as we do the same to others. When one purchases a lottery ticket, He does not put up a monetary stake desiring that others will take his money, but does so intending to take the stakes of others, thus violating Jesus’ rule for life. Sinful gambling would end, if all applied the golden rule!