

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 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). If putting up something at risk is inherently sinful, then surely partaking of the fruits from such risk-taking would be sinful.

Some say gambling is a sin because it leads to covetousness, the desire to want more. Gambling thrives on a heart desirous of greater gain. This desire is not a sin in itself, or one would be wrong in desiring a raise from an employer. But when the heart is focused like a laser upon, and exercised by having more and more, such lust becomes our “god”. It drives one to pull the lever on a slot machine one more time, and another, and another, believing the jackpot will come on the next pull. Risking all those coins is worth it for the chance to be rich

in potential dollars. 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 righteous gain.

But is “earning” gain from “work” the only way of righteous gain? What about receiving gain through the “benevolence” of others? The New Testament authorizes such gain (*Acts 4:34-35*). What about receiving gain through an “inheritance”? Jesus did not condemn such gain.

When asked to intervene in dividing an inheritance, Jesus warned of the dangers of “covet-

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

While the desire to have a raise is not sinful, the mind set to become rich out of the love of money is soul damning (*I Timothy 6:9-10*). Gambling corrupts the desire to work. Why produce something of value deserving wages, when you can receive a bigger payout by doing nothing, but betting on chance?

Gambling is a sin because it violates the golden rule: “*All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men do unto you, even so do unto them*” (*Matt. 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. One 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! It thrives today, addicting many to its corruptible ways.