



THE REFLECTOR

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Is Gambling Right? Don't Bet On It!

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Three years ago, the Institution of Social Research at the University of Michigan made an extensive study of gambling in the United States. The study revealed that in 1974, two out of three Americans made a bet. Gambling is a multi-billion dollar business of crime and sin. More than 30 billion dollars is gambled each year in this country!

Gambling is defined by various sources as: "to play games of chance for money or some other stake." "Gambling is the betting or staking of something of value, with consciousness of risk and hope of gain, on the outcome of a game, a contest, or an uncertain event whose result may be determined by chance or accident, or which may have an unexpected result by reason of the better's miscalculation."

WHAT WE ARE NOT DISCUSSING

First, we are not discussing the stock market. One who "plays" the market purchases something of value. His money is used by the company. Both the buyer and the company may profit from the purchase of stock, or both may lose. The buyer may receive a return, a profit, or a loss in the business; this is economics,

not gambling as we have defined it.

Second, we are not concerned with a farmer who takes a risk in planting his crops. He does not expect something for nothing. He does not profit at another's expense. His success benefits and harms no one.

Third, we are not talking about the "gamble in the game of life." There is an element of risk in crossing a street, driving a car, and walking down a flight of stairs. This is not the issue.

Fourth, we are not arguing that the term, "gamble" is in the Bible. It is not. One who wants to dispute that fact may have the field to himself. That is not the question before us.

IS GAMBLING SINFUL?

"To gamble or not to gamble, that is the question," the point of dispute. Gambling is sinful because:

It violates the principle of stewardship. The child of God is to be a faithful and wise steward (Lk. 12:42; 1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 4:2). The prodigal son perhaps squandered part of his family fortune in gambling (Lk. 15:13). Though it was his "portion of goods," still, he
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had an obligation to use it wisely. The elder son recognized this when he sullenly said, "Thy son ... hath devoured thy living with harlots." It was the younger boy's possession from the father. Our possessions come from our Father in heaven. Everything ultimately belongs to Him (Psa. 50:8-10), though there is a sense in which it belongs to us (Acts 5:4). As such, we must oversee our share of this world's goods with the virtues of labor, benevolence, and thrift. Gambling is not a virtue. Would you want someone to take your gift and wager it?

It goes against the "golden rule" (Matt. 7:12) The Bible teaches that we are to love our neighbor as we do ourselves (Matt. 22:39), and, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor" (Rom. 13:10). However, in gambling, if one is able to acquire his brother's goods by trickery or chance, it is simply "too bad." Can the gambler say he does unto others as he would they do unto him? No, the gambler's motto is, "I hope I can do it unto you before you do it unto me."

It is stealing. Murder is wrong, but at times, nations have "legalized" duels; hence, murder by common consent. Likewise, men and nations have laws against stealing; yet, they often seek to legitimize it and call it gambling. Do you think God approves of murder just because it was done under the strict rules of a duel? What makes you think he endorses thievery under the guise of gambling?

It contradicts the work ethic. The Bible teaches that men are to earn their bread by work, by the sweat of their brow (2 Thess. 3:10; Gen. 1:19). Granted, a gambler may have cause to sweat because of a large debt, but his "labor" is not productive. His winnings do not represent remuneration for the exchange of goods and services. *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* extol the virtue of toil, or riches gained by honest labor. Gambling is not consistent with this view of work in the Scriptures; hence, it is sinful.

It exploits others. The Bible soundly condemns those who exploit others for their own advantage (Jas. 5:1-5). True, the text does not specifically deal with

gambling, but the principle is the same. Observe a parallel. In James 2, James condemns partiality. The prejudicial treatment is based on wealth. James convicts respect of persons on the basis of wealth. The principle would apply in regard to racial discrimination. As we may use Jas. 2:1-4 to condemn respect of persons based on race, though the text itself deals with wealth; so, we may use Jas. 5:1-5 to condemn exploitation, though gambling is not the immediate subject.

It results in intemperance. The Lord requires moderation, temperance, or self control in all things. Gambling is addictive. It maintains a grip on people like alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and pornography. To underscore that fact, there is a Gamblers Anonymous (GA) Organization like the more famous Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). There are as many as 10 million compulsive gamblers in the United States! They are literally hooked on gambling. Perhaps not everything that is addictive is wrong, but gambling is an addiction which results in the loss of things that could be put to use in one's life in the world and in the service to God, and, as such it is wrong.

It sets a bad example. Christians must be concerned about their influence for truth and righteousness (Matt. 5:13-16). Children of God must provide things honest in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21). One must not give occasion for the devil to desecrate the word and name of God (1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:5,10). Tertullian (160-220 A.D.) is reported to have said "If you say you are a Christian when you are a dice player you say what you are not, because you are a partner with the world."

It breeds other sins. In Reno, Nevada, the police department estimates that 75% of their embezzlement cases are related to gambling. Gambling corrupts and corrodes character. Dishonesty and deceit are its fruits, and a tree is known by its fruits (Matt. 7:16-18). As drugs addicts resort to stealing and prostitution to support their habit, so do gamblers use vice to sustain their habit. When it is observed that 75% of all murders involve the use of alcohol, people are often quick to condemn

Schedule of Services

Sundays:

Bible Classes . . . 9:45 a.m.
Worship 10:45 a.m.
Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesdays:

Bible Class 10:00 a.m.
Bible Classes . . . 7:30 p.m.

drinking. Well, if 75% of embezzlement involves gambling in Reno, should one let gambling stand without opposition?

It destroys the home. Nearly every gospel preacher or marriage counselor has seen the adverse affects of gambling on a marriage or home. One beset by alcohol evilly affects others and destroys his family, and so does the gambler. In Reno, Nevada, for example, there is an organization called Gam Anon for families that are torn asunder by gambling. Surely, anything that besmirches the sanctity of the home is wrong.

It puts one with evil companions. It is a generally accepted fact that organized crime profits from most public gambling. Gambling attracts evil men like a dead animal lures a vulture. Gamblers are not known as spiritually minded people. Gamblers are identified with drinking and immoralities of all kinds. "Evil companionship corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33), and Paul said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11).

YOU CATEGORIZE GAMBLING

Let us put the ball in our court. Paul said that we are to "deny (1) ungodliness and (2) worldly lusts" and that "we should live (1) soberly, (2) righteously, (3) godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11, 12). In which category would you place gambling? Would you think it strange if you should see a Christian whom you greatly admire engaged in gambling? You be the judge.

WHAT ABOUT "INNOCENT" BETS?

The question always arises. "I know it's wrong to gamble, but at the office we match pennies to see who buys the coffee;" or, "We have a little 'pool' for every heavyweight title fight and the World Series. Nobody puts in more than a dollar. It's harmless. Is that wrong?"

Gamblers Anonymous, the organization designed to help compulsive gambler, urges its members not to gamble on who buys the coffee. They see a danger. The fruits of gambling do not warrant even a little bet. Do not take a chance that a little gambling will not hurt. A defense of "Innocent, little bets" is like condemning alcoholism and then having someone attempt to justify "just one beer after work." Christians should shun the very appearance of evil (Prov. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:21). This means do not bet on gambling, not even a little. You will be the loser both here and hereafter.

*from WORDS OF LIFE
Pleasant Grove, AL*

Onesiphorus

Edward O. Bragwell, Jr.

In the second letter that Paul wrote to Timothy, we read of a man named Onesiphorus. This godly man is nowhere else mentioned in the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, when compared to many characters in the New Testament relatively little is said about him. (II Tim. 1:16-18). But what little is said tells us much about his character. Paul thought very highly of him.

At this time Paul was imprisoned in Rome. As a result of his imprisonment, it appears that many of his brethren had turned their backs on him. Paul mentions some of these by name -- Phygellus and Hemenogenes (1:15), Demas (4:10), and Alexander (4:14). Luke remained by his side (4:11) and he was not asking that Timothy and Mark come to him also. While we might expect to see men like Luke, Timothy, and Mark standing with Paul at this time, it is interesting to see a man singled out by Paul of whom we have never heard anything before. This man, Onesiphorus, may or may not have been known throughout the "brotherhood", but he was indeed a man worthy of any praise that Paul could heap upon him.

Onesiphorus went to Rome, found out where Paul was and went to him. Paul says that he was refreshed by this brother. We are also told that he was

not ashamed of Paul's chains. It didn't matter to him what others might think of him. He did what he thought he must. It seems that many became embarrassed by that had happened to Paul. Some may have wanted to distance themselves from him to avoid persecution themselves or to avoid receiving the same criticism from some brethren that Paul might have received at this time. It is obvious from reading Paul's letter that Paul was not always popular with all the brethren of his time. Of course Paul didn't set out to be popular but to follow the Lord. Since Paul wasn't always popular, then those who stood with him would not always be popular. I imagine that there were some brethren who probably thought that Paul was a trouble maker and that in being imprisoned he got what he deserved. Onesiphorus, however, appreciated Paul for his loyalty to the Lord despite all this and did whatever he could do to stand by Paul. He had done so in the past (1:18) and he would do so now.

We can learn much from this Onesiphorus. How often do we see good faithful brethren who take a stand for what is right receive criticism from their brethren today? Perhaps someone takes an unpopular stand because they don't care what is popular, but are only concerned with what is right and what the Lord's will is. Often when this happens, brethren who have stood with them, turn their backs on them because they don't want to receive the same

criticism. Many are more concerned with that is popular rather than what is right. How often men find themselves fighting against a destructive doctrine or taking a difficult stand against error and carrying on the fight almost alone. We need more men like Onesiphorus, who are willing to back up righteous men who want to fight error. We need more men who are willing to encourage one who fights the good fight of faith and comfort one when others ridicule and criticize one's stand for the right. Are you an Onesiphorus?

When ...

When parents use movies and television sets for baby sitters, regardless of the nature of the pictures and programs...

When workers come to church meetings only if there is nothing else to do ...

When people feel no responsibility for the welfare of others besides those in their own families...

When workers do not fill places of service at the church and do not explain their absence to leaders...

When parents leave little children in the care of others while they make money for luxuries...

When workers are unwilling to spend three hours a week preparing to teach Bible truths in the Sunday school...

Then ... it must be time for a moral awakening in America!

--Adapted from *Speaker's Sourcebook*

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May 10 - 15
LYNN HEADRICK, Speaker