

Gambling

You will not find a Scripture that says, "Thou shalt not gamble". Some Christians think therefore that the silence of the Scriptures gives us liberty. As a result they believe that to gamble or not to gamble is a matter of personal choice, not Scriptural precedent. Are they right?

By Their Fruits!

Money, Money, Money!

The naive sing, "Money makes the world go around, the world go around, the world go around". The fool believes money is the answer to everything (Eccl 10:19; Lk 12:16-34). The gambler is both naive and foolish because he relishes both lies. What is the point in gambling if there is no jackpot? The clink, clink, clink of coins pouring into the tray of a one-armed bandit or a one million Lotto pay-out or, better still, to break the bank at Monte Carlo. This is the stuff of gambler's dreams. He does not know that his love of money is the root of all sorts of evil in his life (1 Timothy 6:10). Nor has he considered that it is futility to "weary yourself to gain wealth" (Prov. 23:4-5). Money is a gambler's god, but "You cannot serve God and mammon!" Jesus forces us to make a choice. So which is it, God or riches?

A Lust That Can Master

The risk in gambling physically excites the punter. The adrenaline rush is real. The hype of gambling can make a horse race more personal. It has the ability to transport the spectator into a game. Mentally and emotionally he becomes the commentator, spectator, player, referee, winner and loser. Gambling is a strong passion with pleasurable side effects. It is a lust and an addiction. The compulsive gambler is an addict, as surely as a heroin user is an addict. Gambling has all the magic of Las Vegas and the dangers of an illicit affair. Gambling enslaves people, "You are the slave of the one who you obey" (Rom 6:16).

The apostle Paul says, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything."(1 Cor 6:12). Gambling masters people. Like all addictions it takes over the mind and the will. The ritual of gambling is obsessive. The unsuspecting are lured into gambling by disarming remarks such as "Everyone is doing it! It won't do you any harm! Anyway, it's just a bit of fun! Think of the good causes you are helping!" Gambler's Anonymous tells another tale. Christians are not ignorant of the devil's schemes to rob them of their salvation so, stay away from all gambling and you will never be addicted to any form of gambling.

Taking Advantage

In the Bible there are three legitimate ways of getting money: through work (1 Thess.4:11-12); the exchange of goods (Deut.25:13-16) or through benevolence (Acts2:44-45). Gambling is an attempt to beat the system, to get other people's money without working, or giving anything in exchange. A good Christian could not conscientiously take advantage of anyone in this way. Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you have I? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps? (2 Cor.12:17-18). Most of the people who bet can ill afford to throw away their money. Taking money from others when no goods or services are exchanged is wrong. "Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Rom 13:10). In the law of Moses it also says, "You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God, I am the Lord"(Lev.19:14). I believe this verse establishes a principle- you are not to take advantage of the disadvantaged. The gambler, contrary to the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, has no qualm about taking advantage of others, even if they are disadvantaged.

Bad Company

The betting shops cater to lay-bouts, get-rich-quick merchants, and other shady characters. The talk is frequently of greed and covetousness, laced with vulgarities and bad language. Casinos are a front for the underworld. Amusement arcades attract the homeless, the lonely, drug users, young gangsters and others who are out for a good time. Will Christians never learn, "Bad company corrupts good morals"(1Cor.15:33). By being with these people we compromise our principles. We

identify with them, give them approval and learn their ways. God wants us to “Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord, and I will be a Father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to Me” (2Cor.6:17-18). Yes, Jesus associated with sinners, but He was with them to show them the light, not to participate in their deeds of darkness (Mt.9:10-13).

Work Ethic

“If I win the big jackpot, I will never work again!” is a sentiment often expressed by people who play the Lottery. The desire to live like the idle rich motivates many a gambler. For these people work is a four-lettered word. Shangri-La is being rich enough to walk away from the drudgery of the eight-hour working day. All this day-dreaming is contrary to God’s wisdom. “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your own hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.”(1Thess.4:11-12). The work ethic is firmly entrenched in the Scriptures, “If a man does not work neither let him eat” There is more lasting benefit in one hour of work than in twelve hours of idleness.

Gambling With Eternal Life

In a place called the skull, Christ the innocent Son of God was crucified. While writhing in pain on the cruel cross, the Roman soldiers were able to ignore the extraordinary events of that day by engrossing themselves in casting lots. Truly, gambling blinds the eyes to reality, especially spiritual realities. The biggest gamble people take is with their souls. Achan took a chance that God would not condemn him for his sins. He was wrong and it cost him his life. (Joshua7). Millions are still gambling with their souls. They deny an after life, predicting that when they die, they will just cease to exist. This is a false vision, a deception of their own minds, (Jer.14:14). God cannot lie. He categorically states, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what we have done, whether good or bad” (2Cor.5:10). In the parlance of the gambler this is a dead cert. Be warned my friends! To wager your soul against God’s word is foolish indeed!

A Stumbling Block

Many Christians believe buying a raffle ticket now and then, especially when it is for a good cause is harmless. Brethren, the wager (big or small, frequent or infrequent) is not what makes gambling a sin. It is the principle. I say again, to try to get money apart from work, exchange of goods or benevolence is sinful. Even if the odd flutter were permissible, I would still adopt the same attitude to gambling that the apostle Paul had toward the eating of meats. "Therefore if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so I will not cause my brother to stumble" (1Cor.8:13). A brother who is trying to break the gambling addiction does not need me to put a stumbling block in his way, even if I am only buying a scratch card. "It is good not to eat meat or drink wine, or do anything (gambling included) by which your brother stumbles."(Rom.14:21).

Gambling Is Wrong

No, you will not find a direct command saying, "Thou shalt not gamble, Yet, as we have seen every Scriptural precedent teaches gambling is wrong. Can you continue to do wrong and be right?

by Steve Kearney E-mail 2good@iol.ie