

# The Sin of Gambling

by Mose Stolfus

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*Gambling is a sin that can lead to addiction, loss of virtue, and eternal consequences, and Christians should shun it and seek contentment instead.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:5, Proverbs 13:11, Proverbs 22:16, Galatians 6:7, 1 Timothy 6:6

**Topics:** "Moral Decline", "Covetousness"

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## Description

Mose Stolfus delivers a powerful sermon on the sin of gambling, highlighting the alarming statistics of the billions spent on various forms of gambling in America. He emphasizes the moral decline and societal impact of gambling, warning against its addictive and destructive nature. Stolfus urges Christians to teach their children the wrongs of gambling, rooted in the principles of Scripture, and to cultivate a deep aversion to this vice. He stresses that gambling is a form of covetousness, akin to stealing, and leads to ruin, intemperance, and even eternal consequences.

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## Transcript

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a transcribed sermon

It is my desire to speak to the ears of society in America concerning the sin of gambling. There is an extraordinary silence in America on this issue. It is flooding our society like a tidal wave. Our preachers are not speaking. The newspapers are almost totally silent. I find when this happens, numbness slowly creeps over our hearts and minds, and we begin to shut our eyes to the sin. We just don't think it could be so wicked or wrong. We don't talk about it. We feel confident that surely no one would be involved in such things. I would like to say that all sin--of every description--is a temptation. It will set itself against our people at one time or another.

I can say that I have had to face it in my years, and I still have to. There is the attraction of the signs that come up, the speaking billboards, and flashing lights, that draw our attention. This burden has come from an article that I read this week. I will quote the article in its entirety before addressing it. A few weeks ago, a man by the name of Jack Whittaker won 170 million dollars on a Powerball lottery. He was a professing Christian, and he had some relationships with some churches and pastors. He immediately decided that he would tithe the money to three ministers. So, these pastors got hundreds of thousands of dollars. John

Piper, the author of the article, sends a message in "World Magazine" as a rebuke for accepting that money. Here is the story:

"The West Virginia pastors who accepted Jack Whittaker's tithe on the \$170 million Powerball lottery should be ashamed of themselves. One of them said that it was a blessing to have that kind of backing. Christ does not build his church on the backs of the poor. The engine that delivers His righteousness in the world is not driven by the desire to get rich. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not advanced by undermining civil virtues. Let the pastors take their silver and throw it back into the temple of greed...

In 2001 Americans wagered 7 billion dollars on lottery, 18 million on horses and dogs, 592 billion on casinos, and 150 billion on other forms of gambling. It is a total of 817 billion on gambling in 2001. That is well of three quarters of a trillion dollars spent into thin air by the over abundance of financial ability that Americans have, to throw around money, and still live their lives."

The article continues, "This is a blot on American life. Break it down to individuals. Massachusetts sells more than five hundred dollars worth of lottery tickets each year for every man, woman, and child in the state. Think how many do not gamble, and you will begin to imagine what thousands are throwing away."

The same thing happened when the money was going to Las Vegas years ago. Atlantic City built up in order to provide gambling for the east, so people would not have to travel so far. Now, Pennsylvania is becoming jealous of so many people driving to Atlantic City and is considering building casinos in Philadelphia. Our new governor would like to legalize it in other areas of the state. Those of us who have traveled in the western states have seen slot machines when stopping for gas. When you get off an airplane, you see slot machines greeting you in the lobby. It has been one of the most awful things to hit our society.

My first experience of gambling was when I got together with a few of my friends when I was fourteen. I remember them playing cards. One boy said to me, "If you're going to be among us, you need to do this." They were playing with pennies, but I still had an inward aversion to it. I thought a person should not do this. Later on that day, I went into the house and their older brothers were sitting around the table playing cards. They were throwing dollar bills on a pile. I was appalled that a man would take his hard-earned money and gamble it away at a card game. I know that in my innocence it was a shocking thing. I pondered those things. I realize today that it is actually becoming socially acceptable.

I would like to sharpen your conscience very deeply. It is amazing when you get cold in your spiritual life, what you will soon fall into. I want to speak out against the ills of American society. We are dead wrong on what we are thinking and doing. I want to warn every Christian, and every father, to sit your children down, and to teach them the ills of gambling--that it is wrong, very wrong. We must understand by the Word of God why it is wrong. We must plant such an aversion to it, that when ungodly temptations come their way, at some unique time in their life, they will never want to try it to see what would happen when the lights are flashing. It is so simple to put in a quarter and pull a lever and watch the wheel spin. This thing is addictive. It draws you in, and traps you. It will rob you of your virtue, your morality, and perhaps even your marriage.

It is a well-known fact that there has been a moral decline in our nation. The change has been so gradual that we hardly think about it. But if we look back over thirty years, there has been a phenomenal change in attitude on this subject. Gambling. Fraud. Deceit. Immorality. These are plainly evidences of a declining morality. So many times, things get so watered down and muddied, that people begin gambling in very small ways and do not think about it. They start betting among themselves, about certain facts, or maybe a

ball game. They begin to bet each other a dinner. And slowly they slip into this frame of mind.

Years ago, children were taught early in life, by loving parents, that the Bible was true, and that people should obey its teachings. Even though the word gambling is not found in the Bible, the principles are crystal clear throughout the Scriptures. Our fathers were taught that gambling was an evil vice, and that it should be shunned by young and old alike. Gambling is big business today. Teenagers are entering the gambling world in increasing numbers.

Webster's Dictionary defines gambling, "To play or gain for money or other state; to hazard; to wager; to stake or wager in gaming." Many people seem to have trouble distinguishing between what constitutes gambling, and what does not. We recognize the devil as our enemy, but still continue to cover our eyes in this matter, so that we cannot see clearly. Gambling is playing for money, or playing a game of chance for money. Gaming always involves risk to obtain something for nothing, and it often means losing what one has and obtaining nothing. It is getting something for nothing without rendering service or exchange of goods. It is an attempt to get money without earning it; therefore, it is a vice and a sin, according to the wise man Solomon, and many other principles in Scripture. It is to reap without sowing.

In essence, gambling is stealing. It is a form of robbery. It is an attempt through chance to gain the possessions of another with nothing given in exchange. Every gambler is a parasite. He wants to live off what he can get from others. He is a leech on society; therefore, there is a loss of virtue and falling of society when you begin to gamble.

I have heard some people say that gambling is anything that involves a chance. They try to diminish it, and say that all of life is a chance. People will say that farming is a chance, or starting a business is a chance, or marriage is a chance. Yes, there are uncertainties associated with life. We often say, "The man who never takes a risk never gets anywhere." There is a certain amount of risk about getting out of bed in the morning, of driving to church. There is a certain amount of risk in having children. Yet, the averages are good. It is not a gamble in any sense of the word, and is not in any way analogous of the spirit of gambling we are warned about in Scripture.

Bible scholars through the years have long stated that gambling breaks the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." Gambling is a form of covetousness. To covet is to wish for with eagerness. No one can see the coveting heart. It is witnessed only by the Lord, and he who possesses it. Gambling is a desire to profit at the expense, or the loss, of another. You are hoping that somebody else will lose, so that you will win. And when you win, you are likely taking money out of the pocket of another poor, lost soul that is addicted to gambling, and possibly even on the verge of bankruptcy. Maybe his children are going hungry because you have won. I cannot see how any Christian can feel any clarity in conscience, having money in his pocket from a winning gamble.

Some even gamble for great sums of money, and lose it all. Gambling is a vice. It is dangerous, and deceitful. It is productive for many evils, and injurious to the morals and health of its people. It has been a ruin of many worthy families, and the loss of many a man's honor. It ends many, many times in suicide.

To the beginner, gambling is fascinating. The winner begins to push his good fortune, and then his fortune reverses. The gambler, in hopes of retrieving his loss, plays more in order to try and regain it. Finally, in desperation, he loses everything. I remember the story of a couple in Iowa. They were in their fifties, and had farmed all of their lives. Their farm was almost all paid for in a nice community. Along came riverboat casino gambling. The couple decided to try it out. They began to play and lose money, but somewhere

along the way, they won. Their friends found out that they had won 30,000 dollars. A few years later, to the shock of the community and relatives, both of them committed suicide. They eventually found out what had happened. The farm had been mortgaged and their credit cards were maxed out. This man and wife had become sucked into this thing. They lost everything through gambling. At the last and bitter end, they both decided to commit suicide. They were a respectable couple. I got a sick feeling when I heard of it, and to think that the local politicians are jealous for this debauchery in our community utterly bewilders me.

They have even had to develop "Gambler's Anonymous", right next to "Alcoholic's Anonymous", to work with compulsive gambling. It is a compulsive and evil habit. I remember in our witnessing, years ago, we decided to go to Atlantic City to witness and pass out tracts. We began to sing in the middle of a bunch of casinos. I never had such a disappointing time witnessing in all of my life. People were so cold. They had their faces set. They were carrying quart-size jars of quarters. They were going from place to place, trying their luck. We thought this might be an opportunity to preach the gospel to them. They gave us such a deaf ear. They were heartless.

Gambling has a powerful and corrupt influence on society. It almost inevitably leads to intemperance. Interested friends may warn. Wives may entreat with tears. But seldom, they say, is a man delivered from the fatal snare of gambling. I have seen it written, "Ruin is marked over the door of the gambling den. If one regards the salvation of his own immortal soul, and the happiness of his family and friends, he will shun this heartbreaking, soul-destroying, fashionable but ruinous vice."

Finally, there are eternal consequences to gambling. I believe a gambler will go to hell. Unless he repents, and comes back to the Lord Jesus, and lives an honest and godly life, he will lose his soul. Therefore, we should hate gambling. We should shun it. We should rebuke it, just as John Piper did. We should speak up against evil when we see it, and say, "That is not right. That is robbing money from the poor, causing them to be in bondage." Christianity and gambling are not compatible. They do not go together. I would like to encourage you young men to shun it. As a young person, I settled it in my heart. Make a commitment now, never to throw your money away on things that are of no value. May the Lord grant us boldness in this area.

"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Exodus 20:5

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Galatians 6:7,8

"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:6

"Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labor shall increase."

Proverbs 13:11

"He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." Proverbs 22:16

"He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."

Proverbs 28:22

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