

## **Gambling and Christian Principles**

### **Fr. Jacob Nadian**

It is amazing how St. Paul points out a sharp contrast between two types of people: one who lives for the Lord Jesus Christ and one who lives for self. The one who lives for the Lord is focused on God's teachings, which lead to sound doctrine and promote godliness. This godliness, coupled with a deep sense of contentment, is of great benefit. On the other hand, the one who lives for self denies the teachings of the Lord. That person becomes characterized by conceit, lack of understanding, envy, strife, endless quarreling and disputes, etc. His life is ruined by the love of money and he eventually turns his back on God. The difference is evident: Know God—Know peace; No God—No peace. Let's read what St. Paul said:

✠ “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. Now 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 clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:3-10)

St. Paul is telling us that the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. For example, greed was involved in Judas' decision to betray the Lord Jesus Christ, in the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), was the root moral issue in the Rich Young Ruler's refusal to follow the Lord's command (Matthew 19), the destruction of the fool rich man who wanted to lay up treasures for himself (Luke 12) and the eternal punishment of the rich man in the story with Lazarus (Luke 16).

Money blinded all of these people and to get more, people went to gambling thinking they can get rich from gambling and forgetting the fact that we must work hard to live godly life and we must earn this money by our sweat:

✠ “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Genesis 3:19)

Because of this fact, the church cannot accept any donation from anyone who wins money from gambling, lottery or any source that you did not work hard for it and sweat to get it. Keep it to yourself for it will judge you on Judgment Day. Remember how the Lord warned against this ungodly money:

✠ “You shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God; nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like

it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed (anathematized) thing” (Deuteronomy 7:25-26)

† “They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him. It shall be like bread of mourners to them; all who eat it shall be defiled. For their bread shall be for their own life; it shall not come into the house of the Lord” (Hosea 9:4)

It is really sad that people try to go around their addiction to gambling by saying that there is no Scripture or biblical teaching against gambling and that as long as it doesn't hurt anyone, then gambling is ok. It is not ok. Satan is just deceiving you; as I will explain here in more details.

But before I start, let me ask you this: why do you gamble. It is not for fun because you can spend the gambling time with your family in a real godly fun way. It is not just to waste time, because time is so precious to glorify God and serve His people, and especially your family. You are stealing their rights of parenthood and guidance to please yourself and you are not providing for their needs. Remember how St. Paul warned those who do not provide for their families:

† “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8)

So, is it for money? It really shouldn't because God warned us through the story of the unfaithful steward who:

† “Was wasting his goods. So he (the master, our God) called him (the steward, that is you) and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? **Give an account of your stewardship**, for you can no longer be steward... He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:12-13)

So, if you are not faithful to your family with all what God has entrusted you, God will not grant you anymore of His gifts. Remember that He will ask you to “**Give an account of your stewardship**”. So, what will you tell Him when you stand before Him to give Him an account of your family and their welfare that you wasted on gambling and casinos. Simply put: You will be losing heaven and earth.

Now, how about Scriptures. You see, if no passage of Scripture explicitly forbids it, can we with confidence claim that gambling is wrong, a moral evil, sin? With good reason, Christians are hesitant to label sins that the Bible doesn't mention, yet we often have to distill principles from the Bible that we apply to contemporary situations. Pornography, computer hacking, or cheating on tests aren't mentioned in the Bible either, yet believers

who want to live like the Lord Jesus know intuitively and correctly that these behaviors run counter to the will of God. While Biblical texts may not mention them explicitly, Biblical principles speak to them directly.

In the same way, the ethics of Scripture clearly teach that gambling is wrong and a sin against God, not for one single reason but for many. The slot machine, casino, or poker table are not for believers submitted to the Lordship of Christ.

Many Christians object that if they budget a certain amount of their discretionary entertainment funds for gambling and don't go beyond that, what's the harm? After all, Christian people waste money on all kinds of diversions. Far from convincing me that gambling is not necessarily wrong, this particular argument actually confirms it in my mind, because it reveals a complete disregard for what one's participation in gambling does to others. This argument reveals a self-centeredness and lack of concern for weaker brothers and sisters that believers ought to find disturbing:

✠ “It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (Romans 14:21)

In reality, even Christians who are not personally hurt by it are not free to participate in an industry that preys on the weak and the poor.

The Bible is full of references to God's view of economics. In the garden of Eden, even before sin entered the world, God established a work ethic by which humanity was to exist:

✠ “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food’; and it was so” (Genesis 1:28-30)

Part of God's creation of man in His own image was that man would work for his food. While God provided it, Adam and Eve had to exercise “dominion” over the plants and animals and till the soil, working for their sustenance. After they sinned, work changed to a more laborious task, but it remained the way God provided for them. In other words, God's way is that we should earn what we get.

**Simply put, gambling is sin and it violates Christian principles. Here are ten reasons why:**

1. Working and investing for a living is based on a win/win scenario, but gambling is always win/lose. God put His stamp of approval on commerce and work. When a carpenter builds a cabinet and gets paid, both parties win. One of them gets the cabinets

they wanted, and one of them gets the money they earned. They can both feel good about the transaction. Not so with gambling. Someone always loses and pays a price.

2. Gambling is motivated by greed. Let's be honest and admit that greed lies at the heart of all gambling. The desire to get something for nothing is really another name for covetousness:

✠ “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's” (Exodus 20:17)

✠ “The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all day long, But the righteous gives and does not spare” (Proverbs 21:25-26)

3. Gambling is a wasteful use of the Lord's money. I doubt that many Christians who gamble tithe, but even if they do, New Testament Christians understand that God doesn't have the right to only ten percent of our money, but all of it. Even though I am a tither, I am still required to be a steward of all I have because it belongs to God. I am no freer to gamble with God's money than I am with anyone else's. Even though others might waste the Lord's money on equally frivolous things, their sin doesn't excuse mine.

4. Gambling shows a lack of love for my neighbor. If I really love my neighbor, I want only what is for his good:

✠ “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39)

✠ “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being” (1 Corinthians 10:24)

5. Gambling fails to consider innocent families. We might be tempted to think that if a person gambles away all of his money, then that is his problem and serves him right. But what of his ten-year-old son who can't afford school supplies? What of his wife who has to work to pay off the credit cards she didn't even know she had? What of his ailing parents who cannot count on his help in their senior years? What of his daughter's college education?

✠ “He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live” (Proverbs 15:27)

Nowhere is that more obvious than in the gambling industry.

6. Gambling shows no concern for God's glory. A Christian should try to glorify God in everything:

✠ “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

And use his or her money to accomplish good for the kingdom:

✠ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:19-24)

7. Gambling is not an act of faith but a game of chance. St. Paul wrote that:

✠ “For whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23)

The Christian life is to be lived in dependence on God to meet all needs according to His glorious riches in the Lord Jesus Christ:

✠ “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19)

The Lord Jesus wouldn't do it. Can you picture the Lord sitting at a slot machine with a cup full of quarters? He was interested in doing His Father's business, alleviating suffering and grief, not contributing to it.

8. Gambling hurts your body, a talent you must nourish for the glory of God. How many hours do you spend sitting idle just concentrating on worldly lusts and gains? You are forgetting the fact that your body is the temple of God; as the Bible said:

✠ “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

✠ “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

9. Gambling can take over your life, which is against the teaching of the Bible:

✠ “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12)

✠ “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify” (1 Corinthians 10:23)

10. Gambling results from “Love of money”, and the love of money is one aspect of the “lust of the flesh” (1 John 2:16). The word used by St. John is one that means an inordinate desire for something. It is desire that goes beyond normal. The desire to get more and more is often caused by a lack of faith concerning the future:

✠ “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one

cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:25-34)

Finally, the Lord Jesus is asking you,

✠ “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36)

Rather than gaining more, the one who gambles usually loses what he already has—many times much more (family, children, income, health, friends, peace, love, etc.).