



## The Sin of Gambling

In the 1980s there was a series of movies called "Back to the Future" starring Michael J. Fox. In these movies, the main character, Marty McFly, had a special car that could travel into the past and future. In the second movie on a trip to the future, Marty allowed his nemesis, Biff Tannen (played by Thomas F. Wilson), to get possession of a sports book that recorded final scores to every major sporting event through the year 2000 (which was still 15 years away in 1985). He took this book back to himself in the year 1955 which enabled him to obtain a fortune gambling on sports. He then used this fortune to turn their clean cut home town into a Las Vegas style gambling Mecca complete with strip clubs, prostitution, and large casinos. In the movie, the place was an obvious cesspool of decadence, corruption, avarice, and immorality. That was the 1980's perception of what gambling would do to one's life and town.

Times have changed and those involved in the business of gambling have retooled their product, at least, to the public eye. Las Vegas has spent billions of dollars trying to change the public's perception. They have built theme-park hotels with "family friendly" attractions. They offer free meals and cheap accommodations. They falsely "promise" that what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas. And by and large the

public has swallowed the lie hook, line, and sinker. The fact of the matter is that all of these peripheral attractions are driven by one necessary ingredient—gambling. Without the gambling, there would be no theme-park hotels, shows, free meals, cheap accommodations, and false promises of keeping secret "indiscretions." The gambling drives it all; that is where the money is made. They know that if people will come for these other reasons, then they will gamble.

Gambling itself has also been retooled in the eyes of the public. It was once associated with mob violence, prostitution, and corruption. Today it has been recast in the minds of many to simply be another form of recreation on which to spend one's "disposable" income. Many states have, in fact, legalized gambling in the form of lotteries, para-mutual gambling laws, or floating casinos all based upon the promise of an improved economy and better school systems. The word gambling is avoided in the industry, in favor of the term gaming as "gambling" still has such a negative connotation in the minds of many. But is gambling simply another form of recreation? Does its being legal make it right? What, in fact, is gambling?

At its most fundamental level, gambling is really nothing more than what the Bible calls covetousness. What is most com-

monly understood as "gambling" in our culture is to risk one's own money to gain someone else's money based upon some kind of chance. The American Heritage dictionary defines gambling in the following way: "To take a risk in the hope of gaining an advantage or a benefit." The same dictionary defines covetousness as follows: "Excessively and culpably desirous of the possessions of another." It is not hard to see that gambling is really an act of covetousness inasmuch as it is a desire to possess money that belongs to someone else through minimal investment of our own. This was exactly the attitude that Jesus rebuked in Luke 12:15 when he said to a man disputing his inheritance, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Covetousness is repeatedly condemned in the New Testament as a sinful attitude which the Christian ought not to possess. It is listed as a sin in Romans 1:29 alongside of murder and fornication. It is listed as a sin in 1 Corinthians 5:10,11 and 6:10 among theft, idolatry and drunkenness. It is listed as a sin in 2 Timothy 3:2 among pride, blasphemy and unholiness. And Ephesians 5:5 says that those who practice it will not have any inheritance in the kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5). In this regard, even if one wins at gambling, he has still

## The Sin of Gambling (cont.)



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sinned because he has taken something from another based upon an inordinate desire.

Gambling is also sinful because it is irresponsible. God has blessed us with earthly necessities based upon His expectation that we work for those necessities (Acts 20:34, Ephesians 4:28). God always retains ownership of these possessions (Psalm 24:1, 1 Corinthians 10:26). This means that we are mere stewards of these possessions and not true owners. It is our task, as stewards, to be faithful with those things and not use them irresponsibly (1 Corinthians 4:2). Can one be faithful with such things by gambling them? Can one be faithful to one's wife by gambling her to other men? Can one be faithful with one's life by gambling it with a game of Russian Roulette? Can one be faithful to one's children by putting them up as a stake in a game of chance? We readily acknowledge that one simply would not be faithful by so act-

ing. Why then, ought we to think that God sees us as faithful when we so act with His possessions?

Many say that gambling is just something they do for fun and is no different than playing a game. If such is truly the case, then why not simply pay to play the game without expecting something in return? Why doesn't Las Vegas simply give the money back to those who lost when they walk out the door? The fact of the matter is that gambling is only "fun" when you win someone else's money and that is the essence of covetousness. This sin is no different from any other in that regard. Sin has always been considered "fun" by those who practice it in the world. Moses refused to engage in such "fun" so that he could be with God's people (Hebrews 11:25). Something is only "fun" if, in fact, it isn't sinful to begin with. We may rationalize gambling as "having fun" but then so also

may someone rationalize fornication, adultery, or even murder. Saying that something is "fun" doesn't mean that it isn't sinful.

Gambling is a great evil upon our society. It robs the poor of their hard earned money while lining the pockets of the rich. It teaches men to covet his neighbors' possessions and wealth. It deceives with promises that usually are never fulfilled. It robs society of income that could be used for more noble projects than floating casinos and theme-park hotels. Yet each year millions throng these places of ill-repute to cast away their hard earned money. The con artist deceives himself by saying, "I don't take money away from other people; they give it to me," yet we recognize him as nothing more than a witty thief. Why ought we not to see the gambling industry in the same light? As Christians, let us have nothing to do with such profligate wickedness.

Kevin Cauley



### Bible Studies for the week of July 24th, 2005

- AM Sermon.....Who is God?
- Scripture Reading..... Exodus 3:13-15
- PM Sermon..... The Book of Job
- Scripture Reading..... NA
- Sunday Class .....The Book of Matthew
- Wednesday Class..... TBA

## Kevin's Korner—Visit to Mt. St. Helens

As most know, this past week the family and I went to the Northwest for our yearly vacation. We visited my wife's sister and her family while there as well as saw many of the sights of the beautiful Northwest. I could probably write about the trip for several pages describing the great beauty that we witnessed in that part of the country.

This past Tuesday was, at least for me, the highlight of the trip. We went to see Mt. St. Helens. Many remember the eruption of this volcano in May of 1980 when it literally blew itself apart. We got to see it and the country around it and although it has been twenty-five years since the blast, the devastation was still quite visible. At Johnston's Ridge and Visitor's Center, we listened as the Ranger pointed out large chunks of the mountain (called Hummocks) that had literally been rolled like marbles down the valley twenty-two miles away and then looked to see those chunks exactly where he said they were

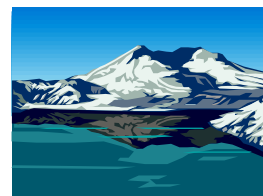
at. He told us how spirit lake had been sloshed like bathtub water between two hills and described how parts of the valley below us had been, in places, 600 feet deeper than they were today.

Yet as destructive a power as the volcano has, it cannot stop the reconstitution of life under it's wake. Remarkably, a mere twenty-five years later, flowers were blooming in almost every hill and valley. New trees had already begun to grow. Chipmunks, deer, and elk were now thriving in the lush new meadows created by the mountain's turbulent activity.

And the mountain was growing back. Every second a dump truck full of lava was coming out of the dome. The ranger told us that if the current activity is constant, the mountain will have replaced itself in a mere 50 year time period. On occasion we were able to see some large chunks break loose and slide down the side of the dome creating enormously large plumes of

dust and dirt flying high into the air above the mountain. Yet for all their show, these were not major events.

Such power, both destructive and creative, gives one reason to stop and pause and consider the power in God's creation. Upon such reflection, it is with much agreement that one can affirm the words the apostle Paul wrote as inspired by the Holy Spirit so many years ago, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). With what great awe God displays his power upon this earth, one cannot help but imagine the power that God holds in His hand in heaven and hell. Yet for all the power He holds, he chooses to reveal himself to us through a still small voice—the words that we find within His word, the Bible.



"With what great awe God displays his power upon this earth, one cannot help but imagine the power that God holds in His hand in heaven and hell"

## Records for the week of July 17th, 2005

Sunday Bible Class .....	46
Sunday AM Worship.....	65
Sunday PM Worship.....	45
Wednesday Night Study.....	42
Contribution.....	\$1488.00
Budget.....	\$1662.00



# Praises, Prayers, and Proclamations

## Announcements

- We are thankful to God for this new Lord's Day. It is the day we honor His Son and the Love that He has shown us through Him. Let us worship in spirit and in truth!
- Please remember the following in prayer: Kathryn Davis, Cooper Doss, Debbie Duncan, Bryan Guess, Hughetta Hand, Maxine Havink, Ruth Hill, Travis Jackson, Raymond Kimes, Jimmie Tucker, Billy Wylie.
- Remember our sister Opal Hull who is confined to home.
- This Thursday's Bible study at the nursing home will be at 2:00 on Mark 12.
- Our quarterly singing at the nursing home is next Sunday afternoon. Please make plans to attend.
- Be sure to check the outreach program board in the copy room.
- There will be a baby shower on July 31st for Rose Spencer after the evening service.
- My personal thanks to Richard White for filling in during my vacation time.
- Our pantry item is: Snack Crackers.

### God's Salvation Plan

1. **Hear** the Gospel—Romans 10:17
2. **Believe** on the Lord & His Word—Mark 16:16; John 8:24
3. **Repent** of your sins—Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30
4. **Confess** Christ—Matthew 10:32,33; Luke 12:8; Romans 10:9
5. **Be Baptized** for the remission of sins—Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:27
6. Live a **faithful**, dedicated life—Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-10

## Welcome!

Visit our web site: <http://www.the-churchofchrist.com>

## Family Times for Worship and Study

Sunday Morning Bible Class: .....	9:30 AM
Sunday Morning Worship: .....	10:20 AM
Sunday Evening Worship: .....	6:00 PM
Ladies Bible Class: .....	10:30 AM
Wed. Evening Bible Class: .....	7:00 PM

## Serving Each Other

	July 24th, 2005	July 31st, 2005
<b>Sunday Morning</b>		
Songs:	Barrett Brown	Ken Smith
Preaching:	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
Opening Prayer:	Glenn Williams	Barrett Brown
Scripture Reading:	Glenn Quigley	Michael Morrell
Lord's Table	Leon Duncan	Bob Phillips
	Bob Moore	John Gass
(assist)	Clay Bozarth	Jerry Roller
	Dan Hand	Matt Morrell
Closing Prayer	Bob Phillips	Irvin Hand
<b>Sunday Evening</b>		
Songs:	Bruce Foster	Glenn Williams
Preaching:	Kevin Cauley	Kevin Cauley
Opening Prayer:	Ken Smith	Dan Hand
Scripture Reading:	Jack Gentry	Barrett Brown
Lord's Table	Dan Hand	Michael Morrell
	Barrett Brown	Ray Duncan
Closing Prayer	Irvin Hand	Bob Phillips
<b>Wednesday</b>		
Songs:	Kevin Cauley	Clay Bozarth
Opening Prayer:	Clay Bozarth	Dan Hand
Invitation:	Leon Duncan	Kevin Cauley
Closing Prayer:	Ray Duncan	Brandon Foster

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