

# Gambling: The Seductive Fantasy

## Part 2

By John MacArthur Jr.

Well, as you know, last time we started a study on the subject of gambling, this seductive and destructive dream, and I was unable to finish it so we want to do that this morning.

At the close of the service I had some interesting reactions, last Sunday morning. One friend came to me and said, "Well, I just want you to know that that was utterly irrelevant to me." And I said, "Well, good!" I would like to preach on a lot of sins that are utterly irrelevant to folks. But, in fact, he said, "I did enjoy the music though." He was followed immediately by another person who came to me and said, "That sermon was very relevant to me. It was only a couple of months ago that I buried my brother who committed suicide over a gambling debt." I think that those two anecdotes illustrate the issue at hand.

I could preach a sermon, as I have in the past on homosexuality that would have some relevance to people, it would have great relevance to other people, and perhaps no relevance to some. But sins have their way of finding people and there are people, who in our own congregation, have been touched and are being touched deeply by this issue.

As we learned last time, gambling is a serious evil in our land. It affects the vast majority of the people in our nation, up to 95% of Americans have gambled, and it has devastating effects. We closed our discussion last time by understanding that the success of gambling is based on certain sins. If those sins didn't exist--gambling wouldn't either. The sins that support gambling are materialism, greed, discontent, exploitation, laziness, distrust of God's provision, disdain for the virtues of labor, irresponsible stewardship, and indifference to those in need.

Now, those are not the only sins connected to gambling; those are just the sins that feed it. You will also find that where there is an escalating preoccupation with gambling, there is usually an escalating involvement with every other kind of sin. Those are the sins that attend the explosion in gambling, but there are many others that go along with it, as we pointed out last time. Nothing, frankly, is more indicative of the corruption of our government than legalizing gambling, and nothing is more characteristic of organized crime than illegal gambling. And the combination of both provides a legitimacy and an availability to a sin that is very, very destructive of moral character, and even of the fabric of a nation. Our declining moral character; our dissolution as a nation is manifest through the epidemic of gambling.

As I noted last time, the Church hasn't made a big issue out of it, but it ought to. The Church has to be faithful to address this disturbing sin. The Early Church certainly did. I want to give you some excerpts from a sermon. This sermon was preached in Latin, originally, in North Africa, probably around Alexandria, when Rome was the power in North Africa. It was preached in the second century. It has stayed in existence until now, and translated into English and gives us a great insight into how the second century Church viewed gambling.

The sermon begins like this (we don't know who the preacher was),

"Christians, great and abundant is the Lord's mercy! Satan's temptations are numerous but the principals ones among them are idolatry, fornication, theft, extortion, greed, fraud, drunkenness, impatience, adultery, murder, jealousy, false witness, lying, envy, wrath, slander, heresy, and a thousand other crimes like them, and of this number is gambling."

Pretty contemporary list, wouldn't you say?

"The game of dice is an obvious snare of the devil," the preacher said. "He presides over the game in person, bringing to it the deadly venom of the serpent, and even inducing ruin, which when it is seen to be nothing, a great letdown is brought about in the players. I ask you, O Christians, why is the former the case? This hand has been purified from its sins, which were committed prior to conversion, and the same hand has been admitted to the Lord's Table, having received by God's mercy that which concerns the salvation of the soul. The same hand that rolls the dice is lifted up to the Lord in prayer. What shall we say when the very hand with which we make the sign of the cross on our forehead, and with which we consume the Lord's Table is involved again in the devil's noose, from which it formally had been delivered. I speak of this hand which is always given over to gambling, causing it's own ruin and damnation. This hand is accustomed to the unbridled passion of gambling because gambling is like the devil's hunting spear and those who play the dice are wounded with an irresistible allurements."

"It is at the gambling table," the preacher said, "I tell you, it is at the gambling table where the devil slyly watches for the moment when he shall surprise the players and immediately rejoice in his triumph over his victim. I tell you, it is at the gambling table where one loses his possessions and enormous sums of money. The loss leads him into court battles and insane passions of theft. O, noxious gamblers you are pernicious and filled with indolent iniquity. Oh cruel hands which turn their own arms against themselves, ruining with disgraceful zeal the estate which their ancestors have amassed by the sweat of their brow. Those savage hands that run to the dice, guilty and infatigable, applying themselves day and night without leave. You damn yourselves by your sin, yet after you have committed it, you do not stop."

The preacher says, "The gambling bored as the devil's snare and the enemy's trap, which entices greed, but in actuality brings other ruin. By gambling men become poor, squandering their own riches. Stop being a dice player and start being a Christian before Christ and beneath the gaze of the angels, and in the presence of the martyrs. Cast your money upon the altar of the Lord. Distribute your money to the poor before you allow it to be squandered by your unruly passions and trust your stakes to Christ who is always victorious. Divert all your fortune and surplus for the necessities of the Church. Deposit your gold and silver and all your riches in heavenly treasure. Snatch your hands back from the game, and turn your heart away from its allurements. Keep the darkness of the enemy out of sight and keep your hands pure from the sacrifices of the devil. Break away from these unruly customs and pursue being a self-controlled Christian. Apply yourself to wisdom and teach yourself in the counsels of the gospel. Lift pure hands to Christ. No longer look upon the dice. Amen."

Pretty strong sermon, uh? Saint Augustine said, "The devil invented gambling." John Calvin outlawed gambling in the entire city of Geneva. Martin Luther said, "Money won by gambling is not won without self-seeking and sin."

Now, we talked last time, something about the issue of gambling, but I want to speak today with regard to the Biblical principles that we must bring to bear upon it. To understand the immorality and sinfulness of gambling completely, we need to grasp some Biblical principles. Before I give you those principles, first of all, I want to speak to an issue that always comes up when gambling is discussed, and that is the issue of "casting lots." Some people want to justify gambling as a modern counterpart to "casting lots," and they say that "casting lots" was done Biblically, and therefore the Bible affirms the role of gambling. Well, I want to answer that, and it's worthy of careful thought, because we have to understand it.

It is true that "lots" were made of a sheep's knuckle bones and functioned very much like dice, ancient dice and modern dice. In the ancient world, sometimes these bones were used in gambling, and they were different shapes and sizes, and the role of those bones yielded a certain result with a certain meaning. In the ancient world those bones were not only used in gambling, but sometimes they were used in non-gambling games like children use dice in games they play today. But the association with gambling was fixed in ancient times. So, we do understand that people can assume that "casting lots" would be some form of gambling, and since God used it, therefore, gambling is alright. But any study of gambling in the Bible must then deal with the issue of

how we are to understand this matter of lots. Is "casting lots" an example of Biblical gambling, and did God condone, by that, the use of lots for us to gamble? Let's look at that in Scripture for just a moment.

The Israelites did use the casting of lots to determine the divine will. It was used, for example, in the Old Testament to make decisions, according to Exodus 28 and Leviticus 8. Lots were cast in the Old Testament to identify the man Jonah, who caused the storm, in Jonah, chapter one. Remember they were trying to decide who was the blame for the storm and they cast lots and it pointed towards Jonah. Lots were used to select Saul as King, in 1 Samuel, chapter 10. Lots were used in the Bible to chose soldiers for battle, in judges 9, to divide the land , and you see that repeatedly in the Book of Numbers, and a couple of times in Joshua. Lots were used to select animals for sacrifice in Leviticus 16:7-10. In the New Testament, lots were cast to select Matthias to replace Judas, and that is recorded in Acts 1:21-26. And the only other place in the New Testament where lots were used is at the foot of the cross, where the soldiers used lots to gamble for, as it were, the roll of the dice for who would get which part of Christ's clothing.

Lots were also used to determine who had committed a sin, in 1 Samuel 14. They were used to identify the holder of loot in Joshua, chapter 7. Remember when Achan had stolen the loot and buried it in his tent. Lots were used to distribute the sons of Aaron into the priesthood and also to determine the priestly rotation in office, according to 1Chronicles 24. And lots were also used to determine who had the privilege of living in Jerusalem, according to Nehemiah, chapter 11.

So we are simply affirming the fact that lots were used to determine certain things. At no time, mark this down, in the using of those lots was anyone ever putting something to risk. The use of those lots was not costing anyone anything, so it was not a gambling use of lots.

Furthermore, Proverbs 16:33 is the key verse that defines all of this. Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." "The lot is cast into the lap;" they would put it in the garment and shake it around in the garment, but every decision is from the Lord. Lots were simply a way, by which a sovereign God, providentially revealed His will. Very much like the way He used the Urim and the Thummim, which was on the breastplate of the High Priest, in some fashion to reveal His will; God used lots in order to show people His will. When a decision needed to be made and there was difficulty in understanding the mind of God about it; God intervened providentially to control how those lots fell, in such a fashion as to reveal His will. It was the sovereignty of God that determined the lay of the lot.

Cotton Mather, again that American Puritan, said, "Lots being mentioned in the sacred oracles of Scripture are used only in weighty cases and as an acknowledgement of God sitting in judgment, and cannot be made the tools and parts of our common sports without at least such an appearance of evil as is forbidden in the Word of God."

There is no fate, there is no chance, there is no luck anywhere in using Biblical lots. It was simply a means that God used to reveal His will. And after Pentecost, the casting of lots was never again used as a means of determining God's will. There God had sent the Holy Spirit. He has given us His written Word as a source of His moral will. The practice of casting lots is no longer needed.

One thing, however, is very clear: casting lots was not gambling, nor can the practice of gambling be justified in any way from the Biblical use of lots. The soldiers, for example, whowere casting lots for Christ's robe at the foot of the cross, were not gambling, because none of them had paid to play. No soldier was taking any risk, nor was he getting an advantage at someone else's loss who was in the game. No one was going to win at another's expense, they were simply trying to determine who got the robe.

This example of casting of lots would be similar to what we call today "drawing straws." Even though the word "lottery" comes from the word "lot," casting lots and contemporary lotteries are qualitatively different activities,

the former is based on the working of God's sovereign purpose through His providence, and the latter on an imagined luck.

Now, let me give you the principles. Principles why gambling is wrong.

### **1. It denies the reality of God as sovereign by affirming the existence of luck or chance.**

Luck is an anti-God idea. By the way, there is no such thing as luck. The only real "Luck" I ever saw was a Chinese family that I knew in Los Angeles. It's true!

Luck is non-existent. Luck is an anti-God idea. Scripture clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is the sovereign of the universe, and that as the sovereign of the universe, He both miraculously, that's by suspending natural law, and providentially, that's by operating through natural law, controls every detail of the outworking of the events in this universe to achieve His own purposes. He is sovereign and He is in control of everything—nothing happens by chance. There is no such thing as chance, there is no such thing as luck—they are non-existent. They are the fabric of human imagination that wants to deny there is a God who is sovereign.

In Psalm 103:19, it says, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all." Now, you can see in Psalm 47, verse four, it is even God who determines how much of an inheritance every person gets. In Deuteronomy, it is God who gives you the power to get wealth. In Daniel, chapter 4, verses 17 and 25, it is God who lifts up rulers and puts them down. It is God who is the sovereign of the Universe. But most notably, I would draw your attention to Isaiah, chapter 65, verses 11 and 12, these are worth writing down. Isaiah, chapter 65, verses 11 and 12, help us to understand how God views this matter of gambling. It says in verses 11 and 12, "But as for you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you for the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter." Let's stop at that point.

This is a most interesting portion of Scripture. God says, "For you who spread a table for Fortune, and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you for the sword, and you will all bend down (or bow down) for the slaughter." "You will bend over to be decapitated by Me." Why? "Because you spread a table for Fortune, and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny." Spreading a table means bringing food to an idol. Filling bowls of mixed wine means bringing wine to an idol. And the two gods that the people of Israel were worshipping; one was the god Fortune and the other was the god Destiny. If you want another name for the Destiny it is "Luck or Chance."

God says because you are bowing to Luck and Chance, I'll decapitate you! Fortune comes from the Hebrew word "gad" and it means "luck." Destiny comes from the Hebrew word "meni" and it means "bad luck." "Gad" usually means "good luck" and "meni" means "bad luck." So, they were worshipping the god of Good Luck and the god of Bad Luck, and they were bringing offerings to the god of Bad Luck and offerings to the god of Good Luck. "Gad" combined as "Baal Gad" means "Lord of Luck," and they were worshipping "Baal Gad," the "Lord of Luck" as a part of their ancient worship of Baal. [Joshua 11:17, 12:7, and 13:5]

In Numbers 13:10, "Gad," "Gadiel," literally, "Gadiel" means "God of my luck" or "My Luck God." They were worshipping the "God of Good Luck" and the "God of Bad Luck." Faith in luck and faith in God are mutually exclusive ideas. Isaiah 65:12, that I just read to you, pronounces judgment on those who worship the false gods of Luck.

To believe in luck is to believe that God doesn't exist or that God is not sovereign. If God does exist, and He does, and since He is all-powerful, all-knowing; He is the creator and sustainer of the universe; He is the One who upholds everything by His own power and brings to pass His own will, there is no such thing as luck—it is non-existent and chance is non-existent. Things just don't just happen randomly by chance. Chance is nothing, it is non-existent.

They tell us, these very educated scientists, that the whole universe came into existence by chance. That is a level of idiocy that is beyond description, because that is to say that the whole universe came into existence by chance, from absolutely nothing—because chance is nothing. But if you believe that everything in this universe came into existence from nothing and that it all just happened because of luck or chance; if you will buy those odds, then go to Las Vegas, because gambling is certainly a clear corollary to that view of the universe. But if you know that God created the universe, every molecule of it, every atom of it, every component of every atom of it, and that He created it all precisely the way He wanted it, sustains it the way He wants to sustain it and directs it to the ends for which He has made plans; if you understand that there no such thing as luck or chance, then why would you gamble?

Chance stands in direct opposition to a purposeful creation. It stands in direct opposition to a creation ordered and directed by the sovereign God of the universe. Chance is the personification of anarchy. It is the personification of nihilism. God is in control of everything. Chance is non-existent. Luck is non-existent.

When people say to me, off the cuff, "Good luck," I am prone to sermonized. Don't say, "Good luck," that's nothing! You might as well say "nothing." "Chance" is only another word for human ignorance. Gambling is a kind of secularized divination based on non-existent chance. It is superstitious witchcraft. We are talking about some pitcher for the Dodgers who has been wearing the same undershirt the whole season—it is his lucky undershirt. I think it was Vince Scully (sp.) who was saying, "Not so lucky if you have the locker next to his!" Life is not a gamble, there is no such thing as luck. There is no such thing as chance. Rabbits can keep their feet.

God is in control of the non-Christian's life; God is in control of the Christian's life and God is in control of life itself. Depending on luck and chance is a philosophy which deifies "nothing." It is a form of idolatry and Israel was doing it—they were worshipping the god of Good Luck and the god of Bad Luck—unbelievable!

Our God is a sovereign God and He reigns in heaven above and on earth below, and the worship of idols is detestable to Him, and believing in luck and chance is idolatry. Whatever you have is not by chance—whatever you have is from God. Whatever you don't have—God didn't give you. Whatever you do have--He gave you. If He has withheld from you; it's according to His purpose. If He has given to you; that's according to His purpose also, and in the end it works into His plan.

## **2. Gambling is not good stewardship of what God has given us.**

In fact, it is not stewardship at all. The Bible teaches us—and here is the bottom line on this point—"The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." [Psalms 24:1] Everything is God's. Everything is the whole universe belongs to Him, it doesn't belong to us—it belongs to Him. And it is all to be used for His glory, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all for the glory of God. Everything is to be for His glory. Psalm 50, listen to verses 10 to 12, "Every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all it contains." Everything is His, He owns it all. It is all His and we have it put into our trust to be used to bring Him honor.

The illustration of this that is most notable is found in Matthew, chapter 25, and I want to have you to turn to it for a moment. We don't have a lot of time this morning because we want time for the Lord's Table and we will. But this passage needs to be addressed, because it teaches such a good point. Matthew 25, Jesus, in verse 14, gives a parable of some stewards who were given some property to manage by the estate owner, the home owner, the land owner. And he was going away and He wanted to see how they would manage what they were given. When he came back, you remember the story, he gave to the first one five talents (those would be a measurement, a talent was a measurement of silver—usually).

So he gave him five talents; gave another one two, verse 15, and another one: one, and he went away to see what these guys did with the stewardship. And immediately, verse 16 says, "The one who received the five talents went out and traded—went out and went to work." He went out and did some business—buying and selling, whatever, and investing, and whatever he did he doubled his money. And the next guy took the two and did the same thing. The one who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. He didn't do anything, he just buried it in a hole and just kind of hung around.

Well, the man came back and of course, he rewarded the ones who had demonstrated such good stewardship. In verse 24, "The one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.' (I think that he exaggerates the case here, on how tough this guy is, expecting something out of nothing). "And I was afraid and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours." "I didn't lose it! It's here! I buried it real deep in a secret place so nobody could get it! Here!" You say, "Well, you know, he could have lost it. Maybe this is ok, maybe this is passable?"

Well, verse 26, "His master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave!'" And there is the point. Why didn't he multiply the amount? Because of what? Laziness. Every opportunity was provided for him, with a little bit of effort to multiply that. And it was not enough for the master that he hadn't lost it, that didn't gain him any ground at all. He said, "The least you could have done was taken a walk to the bank and put it there and it would have had some interest." So, verse 28, "Take away the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents." And then verse 30, "Cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness, in that place where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Send him to hell!" You say, "Well, boy, he didn't lose what he had!" No, but the point was he should have made something of it.

God is not content that we just keep what we have; He wants us to use it for His honor and His glory. I'll tell you something, if that servant was sent to hell just for keeping what he had, and not multiplying it, what's going to happen to the person who wasted it? When God gives you a stewardship of resources in life, He expects you to use them for His glory, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Moreover, 1 Corinthians 4:2, has required of stewards that a man be found . . . ." What? "Faithful."

You certainly can't gamble. You can't bring your offering and bow before the god of Destiny, or the god of Fortune, or the gods of Luck, and expect that to be a stewardship to God's glory. Everybody who gambles loses their money. The few who win a little usually lose that later on. The worse stewardship of God's gift, possible, is to throw it away at some god called Luck—that's idolatry and bad stewardship.

### **3. Gambling displaces and demeans the God-given place of work.**

Gambling displaces and demeans the God-given place of work. God has designed work as a blessing. Do you understand that? The old saying, "Idle hands are the devil's playthings," is true. God didn't just give us work because it was good for Him, He gave us work because it was good for us, because fallen people need to be preoccupied with something other than temptation. Genesis 3:19, God laid it out, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." You are going to have to go to work. It's for your benefit. The battle for bread. Proverbs 12:11 says, "He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment." Now, there is not a better example of chasing fantasies than gambling, which cause people to disdain work and to throw away their money like fools. Now you can even do it by phone on the Internet, and throw away money you don't have and get so badly in debt that you may never be able to extract yourself. Proverbs 13:22 says, "A good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren." Instead of wasting your money chasing the god of Chance, you ought to be setting it aside so that, as a good man, you have something to leave to your children and your grandchildren.

Work is a command from God, it is a gift from God. It is a good gift. Ephesians 4:28 says, "Let the one who stole, steal no more, but let him work with his hands, providing for himself and those around him." Colossians

three, as we saw last Sunday night, in our discussion of work, talks about how we are to work, as if we were working for the Lord Himself. 2 Thessalonians says, "If you don't work, you shouldn't eat." 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "If a man doesn't work and provide for his household, he is worse than an infidel," and unbeliever.

Irresponsibility in the realm of work is an abdication of what it is to be human. To say nothing of abdicating and disobeying the duty that God has given to us. God's world is a place of order and purpose, it is not a place of undefined chaos being run by the gods of Luck. God has designed for us to work and that we should be blessed by that work. He has designed for us to use our reasoning capability and be blessed through the application of that reasoning ability, and by those means he would meet our needs and we would enjoy the goodness of life.

#### **4. Gambling is driven by the sin of covetousness.**

Gambling violates, directly, the tenth command, which is not to covet, Exodus 20:17, Deuteronomy 5:21. Gambling exists because the sin of greed feeds covetousness, it betrays discontent with God's provision. Luke 12:15, Jesus said, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

Did any of you see that thing on "happiness" the other night, on "20/20," John Stossel's (sp.) report where he interviewed all the people who won the lottery and who were so miserable? They were miserable! Their marriages had broken up. Their families were a mess, and all their friends hated them, because they wouldn't give them any of their money. John Stossel (sp.) was giving the report on "happiness" and somebody said to him, "Are you happy?" and he said "No." "A man's life doesn't consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." I mean, we are warned about that repeatedly, over and over and over again. Whatever you have is what God has provided for you, and whatever you don't have is what He hasn't provided for you.

But gambling makes a persistent appeal to covetousness, and it is fundamentally opposed to the unselfishness, which was taught by Jesus Christ, and by the New Testament. The attempt, inseparable from gambling, to make a profit out of the inevitable loss and sufferings of others is certainly the antithesis of loving your neighbor as yourself. If we are ever going to curb gambling, we are going to have to curb covetousness—a pretty formidable task. Greed, materialism, a love of money, they flourish in a gambling environment. Gambling, built on covetousness, is an act of unfaithfulness to God, because it assumes that God has not given us what we ought to have—he hasn't given us enough, and it assumes that more is a good thing. Is it?

Listen to Proverbs 30, verse 7, "Two things I ask of Thee; do not refuse me before I die." I only want two things in life, he says. One, "Keep deception and lies far from me." "Keep deception and lies far from me," I want the truth, I want truth. That's a noble request, much like Solomon seeking wisdom. Here's the second one, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion." You know what I can handle, you know what you want me to have—give me that. If you give me too much, I will be full and deny You and say, "Who is the Lord? I don't need Him," or if I have too little I'll steal, and profane the name of my God. I know myself, and if I have too much I'll be proud and boastful, and I won't need God! And if I have too little, I'll be tempted to steal and I'll become a thief.

God knows you, and he knows me, and He knows what we need, and He knows what we can handle, and He knows what tests He wants to bring into our life, and He has defined the stewardship and the character of that stewardship for each of us. I don't want yours and I hope you don't want mine.

#### **5. Gambling seeks gain from the loss of others.**

Gambling is a violation of the eighth commandment because gambling, in the end, steals. You might as well break into the house and take what they have. It steals from the losers. It is fundamentally a violation of the command to love your neighbor. It takes money from others. It strips families of resources. It increases debt. It leads to poverty. It leads to suicide: 20% of addictive gamblers have attempted suicide and the suicide rate of

the spouses of compulsive gamblers is 150 times the national average. Gambling is pursuing prosperity at another's expense, exploiting the poor and the undisciplined. It teaches greed, covetousness, and attacks the ethics of hard work, saving, self-denial, capital accumulation, exalts hedonism, and on-demand gratification.

So, gambling is seductive. It lures people in, and Paul says, "Some things are permissible--but not beneficial. Some things are permissible—but I won't be brought under the power of any." Gambling is so seductive. Forty percent of white-collar crime, in America, is caused by compulsive gamblers. Gambling is a choice—it's a bad one, it's a bad one. It destroys individuals, it destroys marriages, it destroys families, it destroys society. Well, for anyone to support it, including the United States government, is a travesty on moral and social responsibility. The government might as well sell drugs.

Gambling is the result of post-modern pessimism, the hopelessness of practical atheism, that says, "There is no God, no hope, no future, no reason, no rationality—just luck." That is something that we can thank evolution for—"there is no God, it's all just luck." And so the senselessness of gambling makes sense. It succeeds in a mood of despair and hopelessness. A mood of moral relativism and atheism, but it doesn't belong with Biblical Christianity. It is a sin to be avoided, and bless God—a sin to be forgiven.

Father, we come to You now, as we close this service time at Your table, asking that You would forgive the sin of gambling in the lives of any of us where that sin exists. Wash it away and give strength over that in the future. Help us to understand the Biblical issues that are involved in this. Lord, this sin of gambling is but one of a myriad of sins. For some of us it doesn't relate, like the sin of homosexuality, or the sin of robbery, or whatever. But Lord, there are sins that we do relate too, we all have our areas, our arenas of spiritual war in the heart. We come now, to this Your table, knowing that this is the time to confess those sins, to repent of those sins, to turn from those sins, and to affirm anew our devotion to walk with you in obedience, so that we might be blessed, that we might bring honor to Your Name. We know we can't take the bread and the cup, the Apostle Paul said, "If there is any sin," so may we examine ourselves right now, so we can partake in a worthy manner. We confess our sins and seek your forgiveness. And Lord for those who have struggled with gambling, forgive them Lord, and restore them and give them strength over that seductive habit, so that they may be good stewards, and worshippers of the true and living God, the only God. The God who sovereignly controls everything. In the Name of Your Son we pray. Amen.

*This message was delivered by John MacArthur Jr., of Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California. It was transcribed, by permission, from the tape, GC 90-165, titled "Gambling: The Seductive Fantasy" Part 2. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412 or by dialing toll free 1-800-55-GRACE.*

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