

The Sin of Putting God to the Test

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7

Code: B110620



Here's a *third* characteristic of gambling. Remember, Gambling involves 1) Something valuable that is placed at risk; 2) Something belonging to someone else that is staked as a prize; and:

3. Gambling involves an element of chance that supposedly determines the outcome. This is a practical denial of the doctrine of divine providence.

God is sovereign over our prosperity. Deuteronomy 8:18 says, "It is [the Lord] that giveth thee power to get wealth."

Hope in sheer fortune is misplaced hope. Faith in "Good Luck" is misplaced faith. It is a kind of idolatry. We are not supposed to hope in such things.

In fact, there is no such thing as sheer, random chance. God is sovereign over all the details of life. The Bible says He even determines every roll of the dice: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD" (Proverbs 16:33, NKJV).

There is nothing random in gambling. There is no such thing as Lady Luck, or the goddess of fortune, or Chance as a determinative force. God is sovereign even over the roll of the dice; He is the one who sovereignly determines everything that appears to be random.

That is why in the Old Testament, many decisions were made by drawing lots. And even early in the book of Acts, a replacement for Judas was chosen by lots. That was one way people had of getting guidance from God before canon of Scripture was complete and the Spirit given. (I don't believe it's a legitimate way for you and me to determine the will of God, but that is a totally different matter.)

The drawing of lots in such cases was not "gambling," because there was no transfer of any assets from the loser to the winner.

Someone will surely ask, "If God is the one who determines the roll of the dice, then what's wrong with trusting the Lord for the outcome of a gambling contest? Why not put my money on the spin of a roulette wheel and trust God for the ball to fall in the right place?"

Think about that question seriously. If that were a legitimate means of gaining wealth *at all*—if such

an attitude were a true and warranted expression of authentic "faith" in any real sense—it would actually be better to bet your whole livelihood, your church's assets, and everything you could possibly get your hands on, on a single roll of the dice. Why squander an opportunity to make the most of an act of faith?

But we all know that's a ridiculous question, on the face of it. In fact, the question is not functionally different from the one with which Satan tempted Jesus: "Why don't you jump off the pinnacle of the Temple? You know the Bible says, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up."

Remember Jesus' answer? Matthew 4:7: "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" That's a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:16: "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God."

Although we know God determines everything, including every roll of the dice, we are *strictly* forbidden to put Him to the test.

And furthermore, you cannot pretend to "trust" God for something He has not promised. To speak of trusting God in such circumstances is to twist the meaning of faith. God has never promised to allow you to prosper at a game of chance, so to think that He will is not to "trust" Him, but to *presume* on Him, and that is sin.

In fact, I don't believe God would ever reward someone by letting that person prosper in an evil activity. When God permits someone to prosper in an evil pursuit, it is actually a prelude to judgment. So if you are a Christian who gambles and you have been winning, that might not be a good thing at all.

Betting on chance events when you know God is the One who determines the outcome is no better than jumping off a building because He has promised to provide you with angelic protection against calamity. To bet money on some kind of game is the moral equivalent of asking God to preserve you when you deliberately put your hand in the fire. Both are ways of putting the Lord your God to the test. And that is a sin. It's also one more reason why gambling is wrong in principle.

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