

Gambling

The habit of gambling is of all others the most hardening, for men could practise it even at the cross-foot while besprinkled with the blood of the Crucified. No Christian will endure the rattle of the dice when he thinks of this. —C. H. Spurgeon, Treasury of David

T. DeWitt Talmage on Gambling: — Christ had been condemned to death, and His property was being disposed of. He had no real estate. He was born in a stranger's barn, and buried in a borrowed sepulchre. His personal property was of but little value. His coat was the only thing to come into consideration. His shoes had been worn out in the long journey for the world's redemption. Who shall have His coat? Some one says: "Let us toss up in a lottery and decide this matter." "I have it!" said one of the inhuman butchers. "I have it!" "Upon My vesture did they cast lots." And there, on that spot, were born all the lotteries the world has seen. On that spot of cruelty and shame and infamy there was born the Royal Havana lottery, in which some of you may have had tickets. There was born the famous New York lottery, which pretended to have over \$144,400 worth of cash prizes. There was born the Topeka, Kansas, Laramie City, Wyoming Territory lotteries. There was born the Louisville lottery, with diamonds and pearls, and watches by the bushel. There was born the Georgia lottery, for the east and the west. There was born the Louisiana lottery, sanctioned by influential names. There was born the Kentucky lottery, for the city school of Frankfort. All the lotteries that have swindled the world were born there. Without any exception all of them moral outrages, whether sanctioned by legislative authority, or antagonized by it, and moral outrages though respectable people have sometimes damaged their property with them, and blistered their immortal souls for eternity. Under the curse of the lottery tens of thousands of people are losing their fortunes and losing their souls. What they call a "wheel of fortune" is a juggernaut crushing out the life of their immortal nature.

In one of the insolvent courts of the country it was found that in one village \$40,000 had been expended for lotteries. All the officers of the celebrated United States Bank which failed were found to have expended the embezzled moneys in lottery tickets. A man won \$10,000 in a lottery. He sold his ticket for \$8,500, and yet had not enough to pay charges against him for tickets. He owed the brokers \$9,000. The editor of a newspaper writes: "My friend was blessed with \$4,000 in a lottery, and from that time he began to go astray, and yesterday he asked of me ninepence to pay for a night's lodging." A man won \$4,000 in a lottery. Flattered by his success, he bought another ticket and won still more largely. Another ticket and still more largely. Then, being fairly started on the road to ruin, here and there a loss did not seem to agitate him, and he went on and on until the select men of the village pronounced him a vagabond and

picked up his children from the street, half-starved and almost naked. A hard-working machinist won \$400 in a lottery. He was thrilled with the success, disgusted with his hard work, opened a rum grocery, got debauched in morals, and was found dead at the foot of his rum casks. Oh, it would take a pen plucked from the wing of the destroying angel, and dipped in human blood, to describe this lottery business. A suicide was found having in his pocket a card of address showing he was boarding at a grog-shop. Beside that he had three lottery tickets and a leaf from Seneca's "Morals" in behalf of the righteousness of self-murder. After a lottery in England there were fifty suicides of those who held unlucky numbers.

There are people who have lottery tickets in their pockets – tickets which, if they have not wisdom enough to tear up or burn up, will be their admission tickets at the door of the lost world. The brazen gate will swing open and they will show their tickets, and they will go in, and they will go down. The wheel of their eternal fortune may turn very slowly, but they will find that the doom of those who reject the teachings of God and imperil their immortal souls is their only prize.

What is gambling? – Gambling is risking something more or less valuable with the idea of winning more than you hazard. Playing at cards is not gambling unless a stake be put up, while on the other hand a man may gamble without cards, without dice, without billiards, without ten-pin alley. It may not be bagatelle, it may not be billiards, it may not be any of the ordinary instruments of gambling, it may be a glass of wine. It may be a hundred shares in a prosperous railroad company. I do not care what the instruments of the game are, or what the stakes are that are put up – if you propose to get anything without paying for it in time, or skill, or money, unless you get it by inheritance, you get it either by theft or by gambling. A traveller said he travelled one thousand miles on Western waters, and at every waking moment, from the starting to the closing of his journey, he was in the presence of gambling.

A man, if he is disposed to this vice, will find something to accommodate him; if not in the low restaurant behind the curtain, on the table covered with greasy cards, or in the steamboat cabin, where the bloated wretch with rings in his ears winks in an unsuspecting traveller, or in the elegant parlour, the polished drawing-room, the mirrored and pictured halls of wealth and beauty. This vice destroys through unhealthy stimulants. We all at times like excitements. There are a thousand voices within us that demand excitements. They are healthful, they are inspiring, they are God-given. The desire is for excitement; but look out for any kind of excitement which, after the gratification of the appetite, hurls the man back into destructive reactions. Then the excitement is wicked. Beware of an agitation which, like a rough musician, in order to call out the tune, plays so hard he breaks down the instrument. God never yet made a man strong enough to endure gambling excitements without

damage. It is no surprise that many a man seated at the game has lost and then begun to sweep off imaginary gold from the table. He sat down sane. He rose a maniac.

The keepers of gambling saloons school themselves into placidity. They are fat, and round, and rollicking, and obese; but those who go to play for the sake of winning are thin, and pale, and exhausted, and nervous, and sick, and have the heart-disease, and are liable any moment to drop down dead. That is the character of nine out of ten of the gamblers. You cannot be healthy and practise that vice. It is killing to all industry. Do you notice that, just as soon as a man gets that vice on him, he stops his work? Do you not know that this vice has dulled the saw of the carpenter, and cut the band of the factory-wheel, and sunk the cargo, and broken the teeth of the farmer's rake, and sent a strange lightning to the battery of the philosopher. What a dull thing is a plough to a farmer, when, in one night in the village restaurant, he can make or lose the price of a whole harvest! The whole theory of gambling is hostile to industry. Every other occupation yields something to the community. The street sweeper pays for what he gets by the cleanliness of the streets; the cat pays for what it eats by clearing the house of vermin;...but the gambler gives nothing. I recall that last sentence. He does make a return, but it is in the destruction of the man whom he fleeces, disgrace to his wife, ruin to his children, death to his soul.