

## ARE YOU A GAMBLER?

*Pat Cowden*

I am not sure if I have ever heard a preacher or elder speak approvingly of being involved in gambling. There are numerous studies that show the dangers of the addictive nature of the practice. In addition, I have heard lessons about the sin of covetousness that is involved in the desire to have that which you have not worked for. I am not sure if there is another activity other than gambling that more closely resembles that which is condemned in 1 John 2:15-17.

I have to say that I completely agree with all of those arguments when you are discussing gambling to gain something that you have not worked for or are covetous about. There is one Biblical example, however, when the word that is closest to our English phrase “to gamble or gambling” is used and it is found in Philippians 2:30.

Paul, describing Epaphroditus, says that he “because for the work of Christ he came close to death, **not regarding his life**, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.” Some translations say: hazarding, risked his life, or disregarded his life, literally “to take a risk.” Epaphroditus was one of these <paraboleusamai>, literally “gamblers”, who visited prisoners and the sick, especially those who were ill with dangerous or infectious diseases.

The only other place that I am aware of in the New Testament that mentions addictive behavior in a positive light is found in the King James Version of 1 Corinthians 16:15- “I beseech ye, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”)

What is the lesson from these passages? If you have to be addicted to something, become addicted to serving your brothers and sisters and those who are sick and in need (James 1:27). No other addiction is approved of in Scripture. God bless.