

## Let's Make a Deal?

You don't have to be one of the Baby Boomer Generation to have watched the TV show Let's Make a Deal. Originally aired in 1963, a newer version of the show is still on the air. Members of the audience are invited to "come on down" and are given a prize. They consider exchanging that prize – an item of known value -- for something hidden behind one of the curtains on stage. Sometimes the hidden item is of no value at all and it is a bad trade. In any event, the contestants are taking a chance with any deal they make.



In our lives we often try to make a deal with God. I am certainly guilty of this, so I speak from experience. Perhaps you do, too. We face a crisis and want God to bail us out. When it reaches a state of desperation we propose a deal with God through prayer. It may sound like this: "God, if you help me on this I promise I will do \_\_\_\_\_" or perhaps you promise to never do something again. Our part of the deal is something that we know God wants us to do. Sounds like a no-brainer – offer to God what you think He wants. It is a no-brainer, but not in the way you think. The collateral we offer is something we should have been doing all along. We have held out this bargaining chip because we really don't want to do it in the first place. To make it worse, our pledge to God is a conditional offer. If things don't turn out the way we want we hold back on doing what we should have done in the first place.

This fits a human pattern. Throughout life we try to make ourselves right with God in an effort to earn salvation. We are thinking, "Lord, I will be good *if* you just answer my prayer. I will be closer to you, *if* you grant what I wish." Our response to God is only after-the-fact and totally dependent on getting our own way. It is a reflection of our desperation and an acknowledgement that something is beyond our control. We want things on our terms. God doesn't work that way.

God already did His part. His son died on the cross for our salvation. His crucifixion was in plain sight, not hidden behind curtain #1. God's part in the relationship was accomplished long ago. The offer of salvation is a known quantity, with a value far greater than anything we could ever offer to God. Our part in salvation is simple: all we have to do is to believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. If we truly do believe then salvation is ours as a free gift. We don't have to earn it or trade for it behind some hidden curtain. If we are one with God we will do the things we would have otherwise held back.

What about the dilemma that we face? We can face the difficult situations with confidence that God will be with us every step of the way. Instead of our conditional request we trust in His will for our life. We know that God knows what is best for us. *And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us* (1 John 5:14).

God's love is unconditional. You don't need to make a deal. The deal has already been made and (literally) executed at Calvary. And it is not just a good deal but a great one.

What was behind curtain #1? We already know because we can clearly see. The temple curtain was torn at the time of Jesus crucifixion, giving us direct access to the Father. Jesus exchanged His perfect life for our sinful one. He paid for our sins on the cross. Salvation is a gift that we don't have to bargain for. We can take comfort knowing that during times of trial God will be with us. *And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, . . . even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will be done"* (Matthew 21:21). Instead of a conditional offer to God just ask Him for strength and you can get through whatever issue you face.

**Question:** How do you resist the temptation to try and make a deal with God?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father. We trust you because we love You and You know what is best for us. Be with us as we face the issues of our lives with courage and strength. Amen.