

Are You Playing “Let’s Make a Deal!”?

In the mythology of Blues music, a young musician meets the Devil at “the crossroads” and strikes a bargain in which the future of his eternal soul is traded for temporary but present *other-worldly* skills at playing guitar. In reality, many make the same deal but get even less in return.

Jesus, in Matthew 16:26, asks the question, “*Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*” Though the question was surely intended to be rhetorical, and the answer implied was/is that there was **nothing** that a **man could give** in exchange for his soul, such hasn’t stopped many men from trading their souls to the devil for much less than musical abilities. Satan merely has to dangle the fleeting flash of “*the passing pleasures of sin*” (cf. Heb.11:25) to entice some to trade. For others, *acceptance by peers*, or even a *measure of notoriety* is all the trade-bait Beelzebub needs. Still others drive a harder bargain, and require *all the things* that fleshly men think will bring them happiness, like *health, wealth, and/or the gratification of all their sensual desires*, to make the deal with the Devil for their souls. But in these kinds of transactions, the most common mistake is to look at the **deal** rather than the **Dealer!**

Notice a few things Jesus said about Satan. “*He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies,*” John 8:44. His purposes are to “*steal, kill, and destroy,*” John 10:10. Now, what kind of a “**deal**” should one expect from a *lying, murdering, and destructive thief dealer*? Anything promised in the transaction surely could not be expected to actually be delivered in the first place, or to be accurately represented or retained if it was! Why anyone would want to make a “deal with the Devil,” regardless of what was promised, is somewhat mind-boggling. He *lies*, he *cheats*, he *steals*, *destroys*, and *murders*. It doesn’t matter what “deal” he offers since he won’t *deliver it*, or it won’t be *as promised*, or he’ll *steal it back from you*, or he’ll just *murder you*. Then what will you have gotten in exchange for your immortal soul?

We also need to take this “deal-making” tendency of ours in another direction. Some folks want to make “**deals**” with God. You know what I mean. “God, if you will just **do this** for me, **then** I will *be good / do this or that for You.*” Have we really thought through such deal-making attempts? First, do you realize that *what we want* in such a trade is almost always something **physical**, while what we *offer* is something that we at least presume is **spiritual**? Strange. Second, God created not only us but the Universe as well, and did so with just His will and His words! Exactly what does He *need* from us, cf. Acts 17:24-25? It is true that He *desires* our love and devotion, but the Creator of all things does not *need* anything we can offer so that His blessings and favor can be bought with a “deal”! Lean in and read/listen closely, **GOD DOESN’T WANT A “DEAL” FROM YOU, HE WANTS YOU!** He wants **ALL OF YOU**: your *heart*; your *mind*; your *body*; and your *soul*, Mark 12:30. He doesn’t want some paltry portion **you’re willing to give up in a trade**, He wants **all of you**. And in case you’re still in a “let’s make a deal” mindset, He already purchased you with the blood of His only begotten Son, “*knowing that you were not redeemed (literally, to buy back) with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life...but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ,*” 1Peter 1:18-19.

Still other folks seem to want to make a different kind of “deal” with God; one that could be more accurately called a “bribe,” or “pay-off.” The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Philo, put it this way, “

“Impious wretches that they are, thinking that thus they are paying a price to buy themselves off from suffering punishment for their offences. But to such persons I would say, ‘O ye men, the tribunal of God is not be corrupted by bribes; so that those who have guilty minds will be rejected, even if they sacrifice a hundred oxen every day; and those who are innocent will be received, even if they never sacrifice at all,’” (Concerning Noah’s Work as a Planter, 25.107, 108).

To put it in perhaps in simpler terms, “We cannot buy or barter our way *out of hell or into heaven*.” Perhaps we need to stop thinking of our spiritual commitments, in part or whole, as a *sacrifice* that we make in **some sort of pay-off kind of deal**, and consider them more of a **surrender of all that we are, and all that we have**. Think of it, because it is just so, as a *spiritual marriage* in which we lovingly and willingly commit all that we are and all that we have to our *spiritual Husband, Jesus Christ*, 2Cor.11:2; Rev.21:9. And so...

We end where we began, with Jesus’ question: “*What will a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)