Bargaining with God

Does God exist? The great philosopher and theologian, Saint Thomas Aquinas, explained that God is the origin of all changes or the cause of changes, but, God does not himself change. I beg to differ. While God is the source and origin of all life, He can and does change his mind.

In the Book of Exodus (32:7-14), God is upset that the chosen people have become depraved. Instead of worshiping the one true God, they have collected their gold and melted it into the form of a calf to worship a false idol. The Lord expresses his anger to Moses and his intention to punish them with his blazing wrath.

Moses is a skilled negotiator. He has learned a thing or two over the course of his relationship with God. Moses argues with God, “Turn from your burning wrath; change your mind about punishing your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and how you swore to them by your own self, saying, ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky’ (32: 12b-13a). Lo and behold, the Lord changes his mind.

The story of Jonah provides another example of God changing his mind. Jonah was the disobedient prophet swallowed up into the belly of a whale for three days and three nights. Out of distress, Jonah prays to the Lord crying for help. A lesser man, a worshipper of worthless idols, would abandon hope for mercy (Jonah 1:9). But Jonah keeps his prayer up until the Lord relents commanding the fish to spit Jonah up on to the dry land. (1:11).

Jonah sets out for Nineveh a second time and delivers the message he failed to do the first time: “Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (2:4). The king of Nineveh takes the message to heart and puts out an emergency order: “By decree of the king and his nobles, no man or beast, no cattle or sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. Man and beast alike must be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; they all must turn from their evil way and from the violence of their hands. Who knows? God may again repent and turn from his blazing wrath, so that we will not perish” (2:7-9).

Lo and behold, God is impressed that there is a complete change of heart. All the Ninevites turn from their evil ways. God responds to the new situation and relents. 120,000 people are spared the wrath of God.

God responds to prayer. God responds to humility. God responds to contrite hearts that beseech him for mercy. In the 1930’s as the world prepared for a second cataclysmic World War, Jesus appeared to Sister Faustina and instructed her in Divine Mercy.

God loves each and every one of us. His Divine Mercy is greater than our sins. We need to trust in him and call upon him to invoke that mercy. The Marian Fathers, explain it this way at https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message:

A - Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B - Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.
C - Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

To put it another way, you have the power to change God’s mind, but lo and behold it does require change on your part. Believe in God. Believe in his mercy. Repent of your sins. Be merciful to others and trust in Jesus.