

# (First Baptist Church) #7 - Decision

by J. Edwin Orr

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*The decision to accept Christ as Savior is a two-fold decision that requires meaning it in the heart and confessing with the lips.*

**Duration:** 48:33

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:8-13

**Topics:** "Decision"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal anecdote about his experience as a sports reporter and the importance of getting the facts right. He emphasizes the need to ask questions about who, why, how, what, where, and when in order to accurately report a story. The speaker then relates this concept to the word of faith and salvation, stating that the word of faith is as close as our lips and hearts. He reads from Romans chapter 10, highlighting the importance of confessing with our lips and believing in our hearts that Jesus is Lord for salvation. The sermon concludes with a story about a tired pilot looking for a place to rest and asking for light in the midst of snoring.

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## Transcript

I have spoken on conviction as well as conscience, I have spoken on commitment and the searching of heart, I have spoken on themes meant to help the Christian life. But last Sunday morning, do you remember what I spoke about, repentance. I am going to follow on from there because this message is meant to reach those who have not yet come to a place of accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, at the same time it may confirm those who have already done so.

I want to talk to you about decision. Now we make decisions every day of our lives. Some are trivial, I like to concentrate on big decisions, I would rather form habits regarding others.

For example, my wife asked me on the phone yesterday how I had been getting along. I said well, I eat in Denny's and I always have a senior citizens grand slam for breakfast. It's much easier to say, oh I'll have the usual.

But we do make more important decisions on what to eat for breakfast. When someone comes to the end of high school, getting ready for graduation, generally they decide what college to attend. In college they decide what profession to follow.

A most important decision is the decision for marriage. Young people can make the biggest mistakes and then live to regret it. But it's an important decision.

I remember when I decided to become a chaplain in the United States Army Air Forces. It was a two-fold decision. First of all, I had to declare my intention of becoming a chaplain to Washington.

And then in due course I was called before the 4th Military District in Chicago and I took the oath of obedience to the President as Commander-in-Chief. In marriage, one must announce his intention of getting married. He applies for a marriage license.

If he has a wife in another state that won't give him a license, he must have the proper intention. But that doesn't make him married. He must declare before God and man as far as church is concerned or before the state as far as registering the marriage is concerned.

It's a two-fold decision. It must be an intention, it must be a declaration. My wife is the only naturalized citizen in our family.

I was born in Ireland and I was born an American citizen. You say, how come? Well, you know, if you're born in this table it doesn't make you a horse. But my father was an American citizen, my mother was British, they were married in Ireland, that's where I was born, and I discovered after I'd come to the States that I was a citizen of the United States.

So I didn't need to be naturalized. But my wife, having been born in Africa of Norwegian parentage, had to be naturalized. And when she decided to go through with it, she had to first of all announce her intention and then she had to go and take the oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States.

So I find in the important decisions of life there are two main elements. The intention of the heart, the declaration of the lips. Now, life's greatest decision is the one I want to talk about this morning.

You may decide what college to attend, but that's only for four years. You may decide what profession to follow, but some people change after a couple of years. Even in marriage, it's for as long as ye both shall live.

If a man should lose his wife after his bereavement, he is free to marry again, if he so desire. There's only one decision that's eternal, that's the decision to accept Christ as Savior. It's for this life and the life to come.

When Billy Graham went to Haringey in London for his first big crusade over there, an Archbishop of the Church of England criticized him for his emphasis upon decision. Now you know Billy Graham's magazine is called Decision. You know they talk, there's a radio broadcast called the Hour of Decision.

Billy does make an emphasis, to be perfectly fair, Billy would say that decision is only five percent of it, discipleship is what really counts, Billy Graham would say that. But this Archbishop criticized Billy and he said decision is not a New Testament word. If I had been there, I was in India at the time, but if I had been there, I would have said yes, decision is not a New Testament word, but repentance is.

The word repentance means to change your attitude, to repent and believe, to change your attitude and put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is a decision. How could anyone repent without deciding to repent? How could anyone believe in the Lord Jesus Christ without deciding to believe? So the Archbishop was

really only quibbling. By the way, later he became a good friend to Billy Graham.

This is the only decision that's eternal. All the others are passing. Now I would like to read for you a short passage of scripture, just six verses, and in them you'll find all the answers to your questions about decision.

Let me read this from Romans chapter 10. I'm reading from a modern translation. But what does the scripture say? The word is near you on your lips and in your heart, that is the word of faith which we preach.

Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says no one who believes in him will be put to shame.

There is no distinction between Jew and Greek. The same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Six short verses, yet they contain the kernel of the gospel. I'm going to ask some questions. It may be a great surprise to some of you to know that at one time I was a sports reporter, believe it or not, in Ireland.

I was very young, a teenager when I started. But the editor said to me, the secret of good reporting is get the facts. Get the facts.

He said you may misspell a word, we can always correct it. He said you may construct a clumsy sentence, we can always rewrite it. But if you don't get the facts, we can't invent them.

Supposing you say, did you hear that 271 people were killed? And you don't say where it happened. It's not quite the same if it happened in Bangladesh or if it happened in Tyler, Texas. People in Dallas want to know what's going on in Tyler, Texas.

But if you don't mention the place, what's the good of telling your story? Always get the facts. Always ask who did it. Why it happened.

How it happened. What was involved. And where and when.

So I learned to do that as a reporter. And I've learned to do that in my preaching. I'm going to ask this question.

This eternal decision, the greatest decision in life. Who makes the decision? Why must the decision be made? How does one make the decision? What does the decision involve? And where and when? All the answers are found in the verses I gave you. All of them.

The compressed gospel. All right, let's ask the questions and let's deal with them. Who makes the decision? It says here, there's no distinction between Jew and Greek.

The same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. No distinction between Jew and Greek. I have many Jewish friends.

I have some Greek friends. I remember when I was in seminary, I used to nip over to a little coffee shop run by Greeks. I remember ordering soup.

When you're working your way through seminary, you don't waste much money on food. So I ordered soup and I bowed my head to thank the Lord for the soup. When along comes the Greek proprietor, he says, what's the matter chum, don't it smell good? So I know some Greeks and I know some Jews, but you say, what has this got to do with me? There is no distinction between Jew and Greek.

I'm not Jewish. I'm not Greek. You might say I'm a born and bred Texan, or you might say I was born in Oklahoma.

You might say, well, it's definitely I'm a citizen of the United States. Or you might say I immigrated here, but you say I'm not Jewish and I'm not Greek. How can this be any help to me? The Apostle Paul was not speaking of nationality when he spoke of Jew and Greek.

Both Jew and Greek in those days were subjects of the Roman Emperor. Both Jew and Greek could be citizens of the Roman Empire. There was no distinction there.

So what is he talking about? Ah, there's a difference. The Jew was a God fearing man. The Greek was a godless man.

The Jew was a church going man. The Greek was a pleasure seeking man in those days. The Jew was a religious man.

The Greek, as far as Jehovah was concerned, was a neoreligious man. And the Apostle Paul is saying, in effect, whether you're religious or not, whether you go to church or not, whether you believe in God or not, you need to make a decision. One man said to me, why did you preach a message like that? He said, I'm a Presbyterian from a way back, far back.

Well, he says, since the time of the Revolution. Did you know George Washington personally? He didn't get the humor of the situation. Imagine claiming that you're a Presbyterian, or that you're a Lutheran, or that you're a Baptist from a way back.

I have a friend in the charismatic movement, you've probably all heard of him, David Duplessis. Don't agree with everything he says, but he's certainly a man of God. He told a Roman Catholic priest once, when they're flying together, he said, God has no grandchildren.

I think I heard somebody here say that. God has no grandchildren. You can't say I'm a Presbyterian from a way back.

I was having meetings in Bombay, in India, when an Indian came up to talk to me after Jesus. He said, Sahib, I enjoyed your sermon. I said, thank you.

You're very kind. I said, are you a Christian? Oh, yes. He said, I am a Christian.

I said, how long have you been a Christian? He said, all my life. But I said, surely you've had some Christian experience. You've been converted, or you've confirmed your faith in some way.

Sahib, he said, you don't understand. It was not I that was converted. It was my great, great, great grandfather.

He was converted and brought the whole family out of Hinduism into the Christian faith. So he said, not only am I a Christian, but I come from a long line of Christians, as that's nice. I said, do you know the Taj

Mahal Hotel? He said, yes.

I said, supposing you saw a young couple there having breakfast together, and they look like what we call a honeymoon couple, if you know what I mean? He said, yes. I said, supposing you speak to the young men and say, how long have you been married? And he says, we're not married. But our parents were married, our grandparents were married, and our great-grandparents were married, and we both come from a long line of married people.

Even my Indian friend laughed at that, although they've got a different system of marriage by arrangement rather than by romance. And when someone says, well, I've been a Christian all my life, that's not really answering the question. There's no distinction between the religious and the non-religious, the church-going and the non-church-going.

Those who believe in God and those who don't believe in God, they must all come to a decision for Christ. This leads naturally to a second question, why must we make such a decision? Here it is in the scripture again, for man believes with his heart, and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips, and so is saved. Actually you'll find it repeated many times in this passage.

It says here, the word is near you, on your lips, and in your heart, it's a two-fold thing. It says if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart, that's two-fold again. Man believes with his heart, and so is justified, he confesses with his lips, and so is saved.

Then it says between two verses, no one who puts his trust in him will be put to shame, and everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord must be saved. So you see, here we have it. The decision must be made because we need to be justified, and we need to be saved.

Now what does it mean to be justified? I asked the question during the week, and the first person to respond said to be declared righteous. The next person said to be acquitted from guilt. We need to be set right with God.

That presupposes there's something wrong with us. I remember a man coming to me and saying, well, I believe if you do your best, God will do the rest. I said, that's a very nice religion.

What is that? That's what I believe. Do your best, God will do the rest. So I said, you believe that doing your best will save you.

He said, yes. I said, do you always do your best? Well, he said, not always. I said, you're disqualified right away.

If you believe that doing your best saves you and you don't do your best, you're disqualified. You need to be set right with God because you fall short. You have transgressed.

You have done things you shouldn't do. You have omitted doing things you should do. You need to be saved.

One man said to me rather sarcastically, I'm not lost. I'm right here. Of course, a little different with teenage today.

I have a granddaughter and for a while she went through a stage at high school asking, who am I? I never could understand that because I always knew who I was. But this is what they call in high school today,

the identity crisis. Who am I? Well, I know who I am and I like people to tell me who they are, but some people have a problem, you know.

But it says here to be saved. We've got to admit that we need to be saved. My wife was with me in Brazil during a wonderful year of awakening all over that vast country.

While we were campaigning in Belo Horizonte, we had a telegram from Central Africa. Her sister who was married to a Baptist pastor who went up to Central Africa was ill with cancer. It was terminal.

So my wife took the children and crossed to Cape Town. She made arrangements for someone to look after the children and she traveled all the way up into Central Africa to nurse her sister until she died. I finished my campaign at the end of the year and rejoined her over there.

Now the doctor told my wife that her sister must have had cancer for about 17 years. That was hard to believe. She was a Baptist minister's wife, very active in church work.

She'd been a schoolteacher. She was a highly organized person, so busy all the time, yet she had cancer for 17 years. My wife thought, that's right, 17 years or so ago she had complained of a backache but had done nothing about it until it metastasized and spread all over her body.

The tragedy was this, she didn't know she had it. And some people say, well, I know I'm a sinner but just a little bit, you know, just a little bit. I'm not one of these vicious creatures that's an enemy of society, I'm not public enemy number one, I'm not wanted by the police, just a little bit but no more than usual.

A Melbourne specialist once said to me, I wish cancer were more painful. I thought that was a dreadful thing to say until he explained, he said, I wish it hurt more at the beginning when we could do something about it. And I wish sinners would have more conviction of sin at the beginning when they are getting out of God's will.

Why must we decide? Because we need to be set right with God, we need to be justified, and we need to be saved from our sins. So we've asked two questions now, who must make the decision? Everyone. Whether he believes in God or not, whether he goes to church or not, whether he's religious or not.

Why must he make this decision? Because he needs to be put right with God and he needs to be saved from his sins. Now we come to another question, how is such a decision made? Again, here's the scripture, the word is near you, on your lips, and in your heart. I've already quoted this.

Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord as well as believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Man believes with his heart and so is justified, he confesses with his lips and so is saved. No one who believes in him will be put to shame, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Four times over in six short verses he says it's a double decision. You must believe in your heart and you must confess with your lips. It must be both.

Some people do one, not the other. A friend of mine asked me to go to his wedding in London just after the war. I was still in Air Force uniform.

He had served in the British Army. I went there, but there was something about the girl's attitude that distressed me. As a matter of fact, I said to him, you're sure you're doing the right thing? And he said, well,

we're getting married on Tuesday, it's rather late to talk about it.

I'm glad he didn't ask me to perform the marriage. I was uneasy. A month after the wedding, he came to see me, he said, I'm in trouble.

I said, what's your trouble? He said, my wife. Well, I said, you've only been married four weeks, maybe it takes a little while to get adjusted. I wasn't speaking from experience.

We got married and our honeymoon extended for years and years. I was discussing these things with John Cramp while he was driving me yesterday, and I said it was 17 years before we really had a big fight. We did have differences, but oh, we had an extended honeymoon.

Of course, I'm away a lot, and that helps, you know. But I said to him, you've only been married four weeks, maybe it takes a little while to be adjusted. He said, look, we went to Edinburgh for our honeymoon, and she wouldn't even speak to me during our visit to Edinburgh.

I said, what do you mean she wouldn't speak to you? He said, she huffed, you know, huffed, you know, like a teenage schoolgirl, I'm not speaking to you. Well, what's wrong? Well, you know what's wrong. No, I don't know what's wrong.

Well, I'm not speaking to you, and I'm not going to discuss it with you. If you don't know what's wrong, and so forth. The poor guy on his honeymoon.

I said, well, you made a bad start, I have to admit that. I said, are you living together like man and wife? He said, we've got an apartment. I said, I didn't ask you that.

Are you living together like man and wife? No, he said, we're like two disagreeable lodgers. I said, what did she marry you for? He said, I wish I knew. Then I discovered that this girl was a rather obstreperous character.

She quarreled with her mother, she threatened to walk out on her, but she couldn't get a place because in London during the Blitz, so many houses destroyed you couldn't get an apartment. You had to live with your parents, and after the war was over, there were so few apartments that they rationed them to veterans coming back from the war. This girl had the nerve to go through a ceremony of marriage with my friend in order to get a place to live despite her mother.

And then she told the fellow, you have your friends, I have mine, I'll make your breakfast in the morning, and so forth. She wanted him to go his way, and she would go her way. He said, should I divorce her? I said, you don't need to divorce her.

If you go to a judge and tell the judge what you've told me, the judge will annul the marriage. It's not enough to go through a ceremony if you don't mean it in your heart. You must mean it in your heart.

I see that the Bhagwan, have you ever heard of the Bhagwan, Rajneesh? I knew that outfit in India before they came to Oregon. You know what he's being charged with? Arranging marriages just to get aliens into this country. Going through marriages that don't mean a thing.

They're going to put him in jail for that, at least they're going to try, I suppose. It doesn't mean anything if you go through a public declaration if you don't really mean it in your heart. But the opposite is also true.

I started, by the way, I'm a school dropout. I dropped out of school when I was 15. Not because I was lazy, but because my father died and my brother who was supporting the home had died and I had to go to work.

But I dropped out. I went to work. I worked in an office with 14 girls.

It cured me of romance for about five years. There was a girl there, it doesn't matter if I mention her name, I think she's dead and gone now. Her name was Ruby and she was engaged to be married.

Oh, she had a lovely engagement ring, but she didn't like you to admire it. Anytime you say, what a lovely ring, Ruby, she stiffened up. You see, they'd been engaged 17 years.

He was a gentleman. He had the intention in his heart, but he was a terribly shy fellow. Every time he said, John, don't you think we ought to get married next June? He got so scared he went away and didn't come back for two weeks.

She had caught the fish and couldn't land him. Now he had the right intention in his heart. He did love the girl, but it wasn't enough.

As a matter of fact, he was killed in the blitz. When I went back to my old place of work, I said, what ever happened to John and Ruby? Oh, he was killed in the blitz, so it never amounted to anything. He had the right intention.

He was honorable in his intentions. He bought her an engagement ring, but he never made the declaration. I'm trying hard to tell you that it must be in the heart and on the lips, both.

You must believe in your heart. You must confess with your lips. Confess what? I've said it many times before, the only evidence of the new birth is in the new life.

You must confess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ publicly, as well as believe in your heart. I'm sorry in one way we use that word believe in such a way. When it comes to salvation, we should make it clear, you must put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ if you want to be saved.

That sounds a little stronger than saying I believe, meaning you agree. No, no, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. I flew into Chicago many years ago to see an old professor of mine.

Well, he said, where have you come from? I said, Los Angeles. When did you leave? He said, this morning. He said, these jets, you know when I was your age, it took two and a half, it took three and a half days to go from Los Angeles to Chicago to Los Angeles.

That still takes two and a half days by train. I said, professor, you travel for the seminary in the summer, why don't you fly? No, he said, I'm old fashioned, I go by train. I said, look, if you flew to Los Angeles, you'd get there in a matter of hours, you'd save two days going out and two days coming back, four days is the bigger part of a week.

I know, he said, I know that's right, but I'm old fashioned, I go by train as nature intended. I said, what is it you're afraid of? He said, you're afraid perhaps you'd end up in the wrong city? No, he said, they generally take you where they've announced. He said, sometimes they make a little side trip to Havana, but he said, otherwise it's all right.

I said, are you afraid of an air smash? No, he said, air insurance is just as cheap as rail insurance. In fact, he said, there's more danger of being knocked down in Washington Boulevard in Chicago. It's true, air travel is comparatively very safe.

I said, then why don't you fly? Don't you believe in it? Oh, he said, I believe in it, all right, but not that much. He believed in air travel, but he wouldn't commit himself to it. Well, I'm a seasoned traveler, I buy my ticket, check through the gate, walk up the ramp, look for my seat, fasten my seatbelt.

I generally go to sleep. My wife says it's amazing, I go to sleep as soon as I get on a plane, it's so relaxing to me. But I commit myself to the pilot, I let him do the worrying about getting me to Los Angeles.

And that's what it means to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to be an effort on your part. You simply say, Christ died for me, he's offered to give me eternal life, I am going to put my trust in him. So the decision is a double decision.

You believe in your heart, put your trust in him in your heart, but you must confess with your lips. We've asked several questions, who makes the decision? Everyone. Why? We need to be set right with God, we need to be saved.

How do we decide? We believe in our heart, we confess with our lips. What does the decision involve? Well, here's the scripture again. These are wonderful verses.

Man believes with his heart and so is justified, he confesses with his lips and so is saved. What does he believe? What does he confess? If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, as well as believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Do you notice it concerns a person and not a religion? It does not say if you believe in God, you'll be saved, instead of being an atheist.

It does not say if you believe in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, you'll be saved. It doesn't say if you believe in the Ten Commandments, you'll be saved. It's not a system of religion.

It's a person. It says if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, as well as believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. I was speaking at the University of Chicago for intervarsity when a girl raised her hand.

She said, I don't get this. If a man believes in Socialism, he's a Socialist. If he believes in Communism, he's a Communist.

She said, I believe in Christianity, am I not a Christian? I said, not necessarily so. She said, then I don't get it. I noticed she was wearing an engagement ring, so I said, could I ask you a personal question? She said, certainly.

I said, do you believe in marriage as a philosophy? She kept her seat. She said, that's much too personal. She said, I'm engaged to be married.

Well, I said, would you stand up and tell all the girls present why you believe in marriage personally? She said, that's my own affair. I said, well, you say you believe in marriage as a philosophy, yes. I said, how many of you girls agree with her? I said, how many of you girls believe in marriage? There was a lot of giggling, nudging, and so forth, but they all raised their hands except one advanced libber.

They all raised their hands. I said, that's very interesting. This girl says, if you believe in Socialism, you're a Socialist.

If you believe in Communism, you're a Communist. And I said, now you all tell me you believe in marriage. I'm a captain of the United States Air Force, and I'm authorized to conduct marriages in the state of Illinois.

I said, girls, why wait? Allow me to pronounce you all married. Well, there was a roar of protest, a lot of laughing, and so forth. One girl shouted, you're teasing us.

I said, of course I am. But I said, what was wrong with what I said? That girl said, well, marriage is not a philosophy. Marriage is a personal relationship.

I said, what was wrong with what I said? She said, you've got to get a guy. She said, that's exactly what I'm trying to tell you. Being a Christian is not believing in a philosophy called Christianity, or adopting a system of religion.

It's putting your trust in a living person. Jesus Christ becomes your Lord and Savior. It's a personal thing.

I remember my younger son was only four years of age. He came home from Sunday school talking about God. God said this, and God said that.

God did the other thing. I thought, I wonder what a four-year-old knows about God. I had learned in theological seminary that God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, transcendent, immanent, immutable, ineffable, eternal, sublime.

The definition of God is inexhaustible. So I said, David, what do you think God is like? He said, that's easy, Daddy. Well, I said, what is God like? He said, God's just like Jesus.

I couldn't say anything better than that. God is just like Jesus. So if you're willing to confess that he is the Lord, and that he's alive right now, that's what is required for salvation.

That brings me to the last question. Where and when must the decision be made? Well, here's the word again from this remarkable passage. The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.

That's the word of faith which you preach. The word of faith, what does that mean? Phillips translates it very well, the secret of believing, the word of faith. You have met people who seem to find that secret.

They really, you say, I wish I had faith like yours. The secret of believing. During the Battle of Manila in World War II, I was trying to sleep in a miserable old tent of bachelor officers' quarters.

I could hear the artillery roaring like thunder. They battered the old city of Manila into rubble. But that didn't keep me awake.

A soldier gets used to the silence of the battlefield, you can go to sleep in it. But what did bother me was what was going on in the tent. There's always one frog in the pond to start the other frogs croaking.

And soon they're all snoring, all 23 of them. Some were snoring bass, some baritone, and some tenor. I tried to sleep, but I couldn't sleep.

I counted, worked out mathematical problems, recited scripture to myself, but I'm still wide awake. One o'clock in the morning when I heard a step on the gravel path, it was a pilot lugging his flight bag. He was

tired and he was cross, he'd been flying all day and half the night, all he wanted was a place to lie down.

When he came out of the tent and heard the snoring, he let out a few swear words, and then he said, where is that light? He put other words in there, but I don't need to tell you everything he said. I said, if you stand right where you are, reach out your right hand, there's a cord hanging there. Pull the cord, the light will come on.

He sort of was startled when he heard the voice in the dark, but he started to swear again, he said, just tell me where it is, he said, the army, why don't they do things right? If they were in business, they'd be bankrupt, he said. I said, look, I'm trying to help you, you won't even listen to me. All he needed to do was to reach out and pull a cord.

It was within his reach. When he pulled the cord, the light came on and his bad temper evaporated. He didn't find out when the war was going to end, a lot of unanswered questions he had, no doubt, but he found where he needed to sleep.

Well it says here, the word of faith, the secret of believing is as close to you as your lips and your heart. It's within your reach. This is the 10th of November.

If you put it off to tomorrow, it's still the same decision. You must believe in your heart, you must confess with your lips. If you say, wait till I get married, it's still the same decision.

You must believe in your heart, you must confess with your lips. You say, wait till I retire, it's still the same decision. You must believe in your heart, you must confess with your lips.

You say, wait till my deathbed, the pastor who prays with you can't tell you any more than it's in your heart and on your lips. In that sense, it's as close to you as it ever will be right now. The word of faith, the secret of believing is on your lips and in your heart.

You must simply put your trust in Christ in your heart, but you must also tell people with your lips. I want to conclude with a very personal illustration. I was married in Africa.

We spent our honeymoon in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, among the Zulus. Now I had proposed to her quite a number of times. In fact, every day for quite a while.

She was a telephone operator, so it was easy to propose to her. I'd just call her up and when I recognized the voice, she said, I'm not supposed to speak to you on company time, but I'll see her afterwards and propose to her again. I think she married me to get rid of me.

But on our honeymoon, I said to her, when did you actually decide to marry me? She said, would you like to know? I said, that's why I'm asking. Well, she said, it wasn't when I told you, she said. It was the day before.

Well, I said, why didn't you tell me then? She said, I wanted to be sure in my own heart. My mother advised me this, my sister advised me that. She said, I wanted to be sure it was my decision.

So she decided in her heart. But I'm glad she told me next day. And I'm glad I was the first person to be told.

I wouldn't like somebody else to have told me. She has decided. No, no.

I'm glad she told me as the person most concerned. But after she told me, I said, now let's go and tell your mother, her best friend. And her mother gave us a great big hug.

That night in her brother-in-law's house, he was station master, we announced our engagement to our family and friends. Finally, we were married in a public ceremony. Up to the public ceremony, she could have backed out.

That was her privilege. But once she said it publicly, it was final. Why am I telling you this? Because far too many people expect those who are seeking Christ to make a public declaration before they've made a decision in their heart.

They put the cart before the horse. And in this meeting, I'm going to simply concentrate on that first point. Are you ready to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart? Let us bow in prayer.

Now if you are truly born again, your life has been changed. You don't need to make this decision. You've made the decision already.

But if you're not certain, or not satisfied. If you say, I made a profession the usual way, but my life's not much different to the people next door. Or if you say, I'm not satisfied, I'm just as sinful as I was.

Then you've every reason, if you're not certain or not satisfied, to make sure of the thing. Therefore I want to ask you, just to say in your heart, I truly put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to be a Christian.

Just you say in your heart, I want to be a Christian. That's your decision. I want to be a Christian.

Now tell the person most concerned. Tell the Lord. Just say, Lord, I want to be a true Christian.

They that call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. You tell him, I want to be a true Christian. That's your decision, and you've shared it with him.

We went and told the friend that was most sympathetic, her mother, the first person we told. I wonder if you would tell me. Say, if you've prayed in your heart this morning, I want to be a true Christian.

I'd like to pray for you. It's private, just between us. If you've prayed that prayer this morning, I'd like to pray for you.

You say, well how can I let you know? Just raise your hand and take it down again. If you say, I've prayed that prayer, just raise your hand and take it down again. Anywhere? Anyone.

I'd be glad to pray for you. You'll be able to tell people publicly once you've made a decision privately. O God, we pray that all who are seeking thee, all who are not sure or not satisfied, may come to a knowledge of sins forgiven, for Jesus Christ's sake.

As we close this meeting, it's the custom in Baptist churches and the Bible Belt to invite people who want to transfer their letter, who want to join the fellowship of the Church, those who have backslidden, want to come back again, those who are making a profession for the first time, to make themselves known. That's a pastoral function. I'm going to ask the pastor to carry that through.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12237.mp3>

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