

Ray Luke - Power Of Decision

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O now we will ask Brother Hicks of New York City Ecclesia to open this meeting with prayer.

Brethren, the next speaker this morning is our dear brother Raymond Luke. He comes from Jersey City, New Jersey, one of our sister Ecclesias in this neighborhood. So we rejoice to introduce to you Brother Raymond Luke, who will speak on the subject of the power of decision. Brother Luke thank you, Brother Michael. I'm indeed very delighted to be able to bring to you once again the greetings from the sister Ecclesia, Jersey City.

I say once again because I know yesterday Brother Dinwiddie had that honor, and I think it behooves me to once more repeat the scriptural bouquet as we like to think of it, to the convention here. Because if there were any scripture that we need to take heed unto and to apply in our daily lives at this particular stage of the church's history, I think Psalms 90:12, Jersey City's greetings to the convention is that text it so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. I thought, dear friends, we might just entertain some passing thoughts, and believe me, brethren, whatever a speaker might say in the limits of 60 minutes or less would have to be passing thoughts.

The Word of God is so profound, so broad, so deep, so infinite in its treatment of the Christian's life. But all we can do as we attempt to treat various aspects of it, is to, as it were, just scratch the surface, knowing that we are merely trying to prime the pump, that the speaker is merely presenting from the digestion of his own mind and intellect. Words that have edified him have been the words of life to him and to share it with his hearers so that they likewise might chew the cud and utilize it for their own spiritual development, and we thought we might just entertain a few thoughts on the power of decision. I love the general Epistle to James.

It is perhaps one of the more or one of the less familiar of the New Testament epistles, and sometimes the great personality and logic and experiences of Paul and of Peter and of John sometimes seem to overcloud the writings of James. Oh, indeed, there are favorite texts to be found in this book as well. But more or less James seems to be one of the, if I might say this, one of the minor writers of the New Testament, just as there are some minor prophets of the Old Testament. I am not saying that James is not as important to our total development in this Christian way as the writings of Paul or of John or of Peter.

Merely to state that James so often is somewhat neglected in our intensive study, and as we read the book of James, how pertinent indeed it is to the current scene of life, how the subjects which he treats are as current today as our daily newspapers, how the headlines that blazoned forth in the press and was given forth through the radio seem to be so contemporaneous with what James was talking about and his description of events at this time of the Church's history. But James had a burden, a message that he wanted to share with the brethren. I think, dear friends, if we could take all of James writings and try to summarize it into one little verse, it would be a great job to do. But I think that if we were to distillate, all of his burdens to the Church would be found in the first chapter and the eighth verse in which James states that familiar and oft quoted text.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. James was contrasting the old arrangement with the new, contrasting one who says he has faith in Christ, but yet his works do not seem to show evidence of that fact. He was contrasting those who believed in this glorious gospel, but yet were holding on to the things that were behind, the things that they treasure in their inmost being, and

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therefore he gives this caution, this sound apostolic. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

James is therefore saying that there is great power in decision. Brethren, I know that in our entire experiences of life, unless we are able to come to a point of firm decision, we are unable to move constructively in any direction or. They talk about schizophrenic people in these days, people who are divided amongst themselves, who are so much in conflict that because they are so undecided, they stand at an inertia. They stand at dead center, unable to utilize their capacities and their strengths and their resources in any constructive fashion, and James said that there is a condition in the Church where this also is true.

A person without any capacity to make a decision is a most woeful or most pathetic individual. Just seems to be, as it were, a vessel without a motor or a ship without a sail or without a rudder, just being tossed hither and yon and just going, as it were, by impulse, rather along a chart which is plotted and coursed according to a prearranged plan, and therefore, brethren, decision and all of our affairs is essential, and believe me, friends, you and I are making decisions almost every moment of our lives. I think if we could just take decisions in their little aspects.

Oh, whether it be at the office, or whether it be at home or whether it be at the ecclesia, we constantly find ourselves confronted with. Shall I do thus or so? Is it right or is it wrong? Shall I go or shall I not? And indeed, these might be little decisions, almost too small to invite our full attention.

But out of these little decisions there emerges a behavior, a pattern of life which will determine our Christian strength and health, and brethren, in this we need to be stable. We need to be single minded. We need to be slowly, lowly of mind. I like the version of that scripture of humility which talks about a humble man.

And when you look up the text in the strong concordance, that word humility really has a much deeper context or meaning than we sometimes ascribe to it. Sometimes the thought of humility is confused with meekness. So often we feel that if a person is childlike, if he just gives up his own wishes and they matter and defrays it to others, this is an example of humility. Well, I submit, dear friends, that strong gives a little different version of that meaning. If you look at your strongs under the word humility, you will find that humility is thought of as being loneliness of mind.

Not lowness of mind, but loneliness of mind. In other words, a single tracked mind, a mind that has only one direction, a mind that is only interested in doing this one thing. Therefore, a person who has humility is a person who has made decisions and who abides by them. We propose, dear friends, to just talk a little bit about what goes into decisions. So often we say, well, I'm going to do thus.

And so, as though it was decided at that particular moment and at the spot. But actually, if we could go into the background of thoughts to what happened to us that got us to that point, we would find that there's been a whole chain, almost like a chain reaction that may extend many, many months back. That brought us to the attitude of mind, to the readiness of condition to make that one choice. Therefore, brethren, in making decisions, decision, the final conclusion is merely the end product of a process that has begun before that time. Now, what are some of these steps leading to decision?

Well, I just outlined four or five of them. Friends, knowing that this is but a general treatment, and probably if you were just thinking of this subject, you would add several more. But it seems to me,

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first, dear friends, if anyone is to be stable in his thinking, there has to be, first of all, perception. Perception is an awareness of external environment about us. Oh, in our physical sense, we have the senses of hearing, the Senses of sight, the sense of taste, the sense of touch, the sense of smell.

All of this is essential. That we might know just what the world is around us now. All organisms, all animal organisms, that is, has this capacity of perception. Were you to look at the single one celled animal and look through a microscope, you would find a fat little amoeba or paramecium will respond to various stimulations that is placed in its way. It is able to perceive what goes on about it.

How much more? Therefore, dear friends, ought we in our spiritual lives to have the kind of perception that will be attuned to one thing? And that perception, dear friends, that sixth sense, that power in which we are able to communicate and to know that there is something beyond the mere material things around us. That perception is faith. Oh, friends, in our materialistic world there are many people who would deny that there is such a thing as faith.

I remember once getting into a little discussion with someone who said, he does not believe anything unless he can demonstrate it before his eyes in black and white. Well, I said to him, you were paid the other day, were you not? And I presume you put part of that money. He said, yes, I did. I said, can you be certain that when you want to withdraw that money that that will be available to you?

Can you be certain that there will not be a run on that bank as there was in 1929? Well, he said, no, I cannot be sure, but I have faith that it will not be so. There. I said, you have faith, but the question is what you have faith in. When the farmer plows his soil and drops a seed in the ground, he has faith that come harvest time that there shall be sufficient rain, that the sun will shine adequately enough so as to bring to fruition the fruits of his labor.

Therefore, brethren, we must have faith as the perception of the spiritual sensitivity. That there is a God and that he is the rewarder of those that diligently search him and seek Him, and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Oh, indeed. From our efforts to let the truth shine to others, in our efforts to give out a tract hither and there.

And to drop a word to those who might be of a hearing ear. How often we come across those who say that they have faith. But yet they are unable to receive and to accept the divine plan of the ages. Because, dear friend, there are degrees of perception. While all may have the potential to see, so few have the capacity developed to a point in which they are ready to do so.

You're all Familiar with that very familiar illustration. How if you go into the depths of the bowels of the earth in Mammoth Cave, how you'll see a little pool, and in the pool some fishes, minnow like in their appearance, and yet with the lights out, the surroundings so dark, not one shaft of light has ever penetrated that place from the outside, and yet when the light is turned on, those little fish do not respond to that stimulation simply because of the power that they have of sight.

The eyes which they have are non functioning because the retina and the optic nerve is just shriveled up because of disuse, and therefore there are many who would have a feeling after God. But because of disuse, because of allowing the things of time and sense to pre cloud whatever perception they would have, they turn back and deny that there are spiritual realities. Now, secondly, indecision. It is necessary to have memory because perception and memory blend into thought, which is the recall and the integration of perception.

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That is to say that it might be well to perceive a thing. But if we are like James, you remember James talked about one who was so foolish in his ways that he looked at himself in the mirror, then straightways turned around and forgot the manner of person he was. There was perception, you see, but it was not integrated into memory, and therefore that experience of perceiving himself did him no good, and thus, dear friends, memory is the continuation of life's experience.

A dog has memory, but yet the dog's memory capacity is so limited that he can only learn a very prescribed number of patterns. Whereas the humankind being made in the image of God, having the potential within him of a mind which is beyond all material creation, he has a capacity and an enlargement which he is able to conceive and to perceive into the very mysteries of the universe and remember all of the lessons of times past. But there's more than perception and memory that goes into decision. I like to think of the next ingredient as that of the motivating spark. I think of it as alertness of mind.

Now, this is different from the foregoing because you can have perception, you can have memory, but yet without alertness of mind, you cannot have decision. What do you mean by that, Brother Luke? Well, simply, there are people, they call them idiot savants. These are people who are on the very subdued level of intellectual functioning. Were you to tell these people a complicated series of numbers, they would be able to multiply, divide, add and subtract that series of numbers much faster than maybe the latest computing machines.

But yet these people are so Limited. They are so stunted that they cannot function outside of this one little area of their lives. They, you see, lack the alertness of mind. They lack the motivating force which drives them on to more acceptable modes of behavior. The Greek word for energy is inward workingness.

Oh, I like that. That. Energy is inward workingness. All too often energy is expended on the outward workingness. Just we're so busy doing everything to the outside.

But there's so little time, so little energy left towards working on the inner part of our being. Alertness of mind might be compared to the steam in a boiler. Which is between the tank and the engine itself. The alertness is the energizing power. Oh, friends, a man without this keenness, this interest, this motivation to seek is like a watch, beautiful in appearance, but yet whose main spring is broken and it has no functioning or use.

Brethren, I think to us this energizing power might well be pictured by that hymn which we sing sometimes so glibly, as though this were such a simple matter. But yet in its real import, it goes to the very kernel of our heart divides, the very germ of our thoughts. I want a principle within, a jealous, a godly fear, a sensibility to sin, a pain to feel it near. I want the first approach to feel of pride or form desire to catch the grounding of my will and quench the kindling fire. This is the kind of energizing force, this sensitivity, this principle, this eagerness to do what one decides upon.

Friends, we need to channel this mental alertness. Oh, there are people who are so interested in everything that they are like butterflies just skimming along the countryside, touching hither and yon, and seem to be enjoying all of it, but not really being able to concentrate on any one thing, such as the bee would do. I think, brethren, that there are so many who hold to the truth. There are so many who are perceptive to it and who are memorizing it and who hold it and who are motivated to follow it. But yet, like these butterflies, they just seem to be going from one group to the other.

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They dabble here and they dabble there and not quite know just where they belong. I say, dear friends, that indeed fellowship is wonderful. I believe Brother Dinwiddie yesterday brought to your attention how sweet it is for brethren to dwell together in the unity of faith. But I can't help but feel also that it is so necessary for us to have a home Ecclesia. To have a home.

Responsibility to make one place our home base. So that this is the brethren. This is the group to whom we have a special obligation. Oh, it's so easy, dear friends, to fit from one to the other. The one accles to the other and therefore avoids some of the.

The experiences that we need in the organization of the new creation, the experiences of sitting together, say, in some of the business meetings, when we rub and we differ and we begin to challenge each other, and when the flesh would be most prone to assert itself. Oh, brethren, we do need indeed energizing power, but it has got to be channeled according to the way that the Lord would have us do, and thus, in the necessity to harness this alertness, we've got to step to the next wrong in this manner of decision, and that is mental deduction. Once we know a fact, we need to use this as a basis of deduction for other facts.

One of the most interesting studies, I believe, is the study of geometry, and one whole school of geometry was based on one simple deduction, one simple assumption. I should say, that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. Out of that common beginning, the mathematician Euclid was able to formulate any number of postulates and theorems and corollaries, so that from his concept of mathematics were able to build the Golden Gate Bridge, the George Washington Bridge, and able to build a structure such as this, because his logical reasoning on this basic assumption was valid, and so with us, dear brethren, in our understanding of the truth, we have got to use our sanctified reasoning power in deducting along the lines of present truth, that there are portions of truth and which are not spelled out in God's word in black and white.

Dear friends, it is were that this would not be a closed book to the masses of mankind. This would not be a test of our faith. But because we have to sit down and use our sanctified reasoning power in prayerful devotion, Then and only then, brethren, are we able to deduct as the Lord would want us to do. For example, in present truth, the matter of parallel dispensations, in which there are some who rejoiced in the knowledge of this fact, who are now disclaiming it. They would wonder as to what validity is there to draw the parallel between the first and second advents between AD 30 and 70 and 1874 and 1914.

But I say, dear brethren, that if we are to come to any decision regarding God's plan, we have to use our sanctified reasoning on the basis of His Word, and to do deduct accordingly. The same is true Dear friends, in the matter of the covenants, some take exception to the application of the covenants of Keturah, not representing the new law covenant, but rather that Keturah should not be considered at all in this allegorical presentation, as Paul gives us in Galatians. But again I say, dear friends, that on the basis of the entire weight peace deep upon evidence in God's program as shown by His Word, we would conclude, and justifiably so, we would deduct that certainly Keturah is pictured in this new covenant arrangement, and that this is an integral part of God's divine program as it relates to the world of mankind, and so, dear friends, we must deduct from the Scriptures. We must be able to sharpen our spiritual inciteness through each other.

I often think, friends, that when we come to the studies, and I dare say that more and more the study of the volumes seems to be in disrepute.

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When I say in disrepute, dear brethren, I merely state that there seems to be a trend, that it is perhaps a little old fashioned, perhaps it is a little elementary to go back and read over these volumes again and to spend time in reviewing these. We've been over them so long, and we know all that there is in this. But I say such a reasoning is certainly fallacious and is certainly playing into the master scheme that the great adversary would have the Church fall into today to try to take away from the Church the very basis upon which they are able to stand in this evil day, to take away the very spread that the Lord has given us at this second advent, and to replace it with this old husk and slopping garbage that was of the nominal system. Dear friends, how it behooves us that when we do prepare studies, when we do come together with those of like precious faith for the specific purpose of exchanging thoughts and ideas. That we do so not in a flippant manner, not in an indifferent, casual, haphazard way.

Just as we would not think of coming to the memorial feast in any indiscriminate or any promiscuous manner, so I think we ought to be in our studies, thoughtfully preparing for those studies, so that we might be able to contribute to those about us as much as we are capable of doing. I've often thought why Paul in ephesians, in the fourth verse and the fourth chapter in the 25th verse said, Wherefore put away lying, Speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another, and it just occurred to me that Paul is thinking more, not so much in turn, of telling those gross lies, of telling misstatements one to another. Certainly, I would say all of us here are beyond that level. But I think perhaps Paul might be meaning something a little more close to home.

Could he not mean, dear friends, and this is just a thought that came to Brother Luke, and I just wish to share it with you from the burden of my own heart? Could he not mean that if we come to a meeting and if a thought is expressed or an idea is presented which does not comport with God's word, if some error is given forth, and if that error is not checked or corrected, simply because you, as a member of that class were indifferent in the preparation of yourselves coming to that study, I wonder, were it not coming perilously close, at least, dear brethren, to this lying to one another, Not a willful lie, not a black misstatement of fact, but rather a misstatement of fact because of forfeiture, because of our own carelessness, our indifference and our lackadaisical attitude. I say, dear friends, that so often we are in danger of losing that which we have because we don't value and appreciate it further. But going on, that when we have this capacity to deduct, we are able to project that into the future. That is to say that if I saw railroad tracks, I would be pretty logical.

And I would have every reason to expect that if I wait long enough by these railroad tracks, sooner or later a train would come by, because this would be the normal relationship of cause and effect, and so it is different with our present truth. We are able to deduct and to consider the future events on the basis of what is already known. Oh, it is spoken of Jesus in the first Advent, that the world was in expectation of him. But yet there came this doubt in the minds of even John the Baptist, he who was to be the forerunner, who pointed to him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sinner of the world.

But even John, who had this great faith and who was prepared for this blessed work of introducing the Master into his public ministry, even he wondered about the validity of the Master and of his claims. The 12 had foresight and spiritual vision, but it was based on deduction, and until John was able to hear the reassuring words from the Master about the miracles that he had received wrought, there was doubt. But after that, the indication is that John was reassured and settled in his mind, and therefore, with us, as world conditions shape up and we know that the time is very much at an end, and that the kingdom is right at the door.

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How are we to be friends in our deductions, seeing that all these things shall be dissolved? What manner of person ought we to be in all holy conversation? This is a normal, this is a proper deduction from what we see about us, that since this world is being dissolved, then we have to be careful about the manner of our conversation. I must go on to the last point of decision, which is reason, and reason is a more mature development of deduction.

And friends, we sometimes use the term common sense, as though this were so usual, as though this were inherent within people. This was intuitive, and I dare say things that. One of the rarest things today is this common sense, this capacity to be able to reason and being able to fix the relativity of things, and it is to this point in which Isaiah calls us too, that we are to reason together with God on the basis of that which has gone before, on the basis of perception, memory, motivation, or alertness and deduction. Then we can come to a point where we begin to systematize our deductions into a reasoning process.

And thus we are at a point of the second. Then we can determine in whom and in what we believe. Then we're able to speak with the boldness and the surety that Paul did in all of his writings. This one thing I do, I know thus and so, and as we go through the writings of Paul and analyze his language, most of his words were not equivocal, none of his words were equivocal.

But most of his words of assurance, positiveness, really putting decision into action. Now, friends, we might just consider a few places where there is power in decision, and one place where there was not power in decision, and see the spiritual implications of this. While I'm sure that you all will think of my first illustration, of course it comes to our mind almost immediately one of the greatest evidences of what it means to be decisive. When on the mount, when Moses was getting the tablets of the law, when going up to commune with God and getting there all this wonderful panorama of God's dealings with Israel and getting the fundamental basis upon which God will have any relationship with these people, how when Moses came down after those 40 days and 40 nights and came down and saw this horrible scene before him, how at the instance of the camp of Israel, they casted this golden calf and they worshipped this as their God. Oh, you remember, dear friends, Moses reaction to this, how Moses laid the gauntlet down, and how he asked them who was on the Lord's side, Moses crystallized their confusion.

Moses wanted them to be decisive at that point, and there was a decision made, and those that stood on the Lord's side were later especially blessed. But be it noted that those who were the leaders of this insurrection, those who were primarily responsible for it, were slain by the sword, and they were slain by their own brethren.

Just think of that, what the meaning of this decision meant, that those who decided to stand on the Lord's side and to adhere to the wonderful guidance and direction that Jehovah had given in delivering them from Egypt, how, when they saw that their brethren were denying this, how they had the courage and they had the dedication to themselves run into the sword, those who just a moment prior were so dear and close to them in the flesh. You see, decision therefore leads to action. But it's interesting to note, friends, how like children, even the oldest and the most adult of people are, that when Moses, who was, as it were, the representative of God, the one whom the camp looked to as their leader, and who, when Moses was away from them for a while, how the Israelites, as it were, regressed, turn back to their former isles. It's just like a little child. Oh, it's interesting to watch them.

Oh, and how they grow and develop, and as they begin to have outreaching to their surrounding world, how many lessons we can learn from them. You know that when a child is threatened by

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new situations, when they seem to be puzzled, when they seem to wonder what is coming next, what is the first thing they will do? Well, one child might suck its thumb. Another child might, in some other infantile manner, react to a former behavior pattern which they had before, since they felt some security with this former pattern.

And thus it was with these Israelites that when they were threatened, when they were holding, when they were alone, when they thought that this man Moses had deserted them, they regressed, as it were, back to their former state, and just like the child sticking a thumb in his mouth, so these Israelites in their childishness went back to the worship of their idols. O friends, how indeed we need this point of decision, and were the camp to make this decision, how indeed much sorrow would have been spared unto those people. Then the second great illustration, I think, in the Old Testament, of decision and power of decision was that again, which you all know of the wonderful test of strength which Elijah had with the priests of baal.

Oh, you remember how because of Ahab's perfection and his relationship with, with Jezebel, how the Lord had to take special retribution against the Israelites, how Interesting it is how bearing out that old axiom that the best defense is an offense, how interesting it is that when Elijah first met with Ahab, the first thing that Ahab said, he turned to Elisha and I'm sure stared at him glaringly and pointed a finger and said, art thou he that troubleth Israel? He didn't give Elisha a chance to get the first blow in. He was guilty. He had a sense of guilt, and therefore he was going to turn the tables and blame Elijah for all of the troubles that were coming as a result of this drought.

Oh, how easy it is, dear brethren, to rationalize, to make excuses, to justify ourselves and thereby put the other one on the defensive, and Elijah, in calling this bluff, shall I say, Elijah challenged BAAL and the prophets of BAAL to this wonderful duel in which he ascended upon the mountain, and there he prescribed conditions which were foolproof and ironclad, and I wish we could go into some of the details of it, but we'll just touch them in passing. You'll remember that when Elijah had allowed or suggested that the prophets of BAAL be the first to have this trial by fire, as it were, that they had all afternoon and all morning cried to their false God, and he was impotent, and in spite of their pleading and imploring, they just seemed to make no difference.

And how, when it came Elijah's turn, how he made special preparations to make certain that no one would possibly say that this was a hoax, that there was some magic connected with it, and so he took 12 stones, made an alder, and then he did something strange. He had a trench around the stones, around the alder, and the trench was milled according to specifications, and the specification was as great as would contain two measures of seed, and under the alder was laid the bullock.

And they were brought on three different occasions, four barrels of water poured upon the altar, upon the burnt sacrifice, upon the wood, and that water was sufficient to cover the trench. I wondered what this meant in terms of lessons to you and to me. I think perhaps that we have a little clue in the statement that this was a trench, a circular trench around the earth. Now, we do know that a circle pretty much indicates God's love and God's infinite grace to us. That is why, I think, in the wedding ceremony we put a gold band on the finger, and it's customary to say that God's love is beginning without end.

And thus it is symbolized by this band, and Additionally in Colossians 3, 14, Paul states, and above all these Things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. Now, if you look up that word bond in your strongs, you will find that that gives the thought a circle, that love is the circle of perfectness, and therefore, using that as our little clue, the trench, being in a circle and being on the ground

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would illustrate God's love as shown to the world of mankind. God's love as is epitomized in this altar and the contents on that altar.

The twelve stones of cross represent the works of the twelve apostles, and the twelve barrels of water poured thereon are the waters of truth, and those waters were sufficient to cover the trench which is of two measures of seed. What are the two measures of seed? Well, I would suggest, friends, and submit, that the two measures of seed are.

Are the two elements of the great Abrahamic covenant, the values through thee, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed, and thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven and as the sands of the seashore. Here we have, therefore, brethren, God's love towards the world of mankind, exemplified in the seeds which were to fill that. Oh, how beautiful.

How beautiful are the pictures left for us, dear brethren, for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come for us to receive and to utilize them and to make them our own and to become more and more enthused and zealous as a result, and you know, friends, the result for this contest, how God responded to this wonderful test showing the nature of the true God and how the prophets of BAAL were discredited and thereafter destroyed. The message that Elijah gave, this message calling for decision is, if BAAL be God, worship baal. If God be God, worship him. How long halt ye between two opinions?

It's worthy of note, dear friends, that Elijah was concerned about their halting. He said, now if BAAL is the one whom you believe will follow him, go right ahead, it's up to you. But he was saying that it is the indecision, it is the halting that is even worse than making the wrong choice. Have you ever thought of that, dear friends, that sometimes God would rather have you make a mistake than because you cannot make up your mind. You don't do anything.

I think that is true, for example, with brother, with Saul of Tarsus. Saul was convicted in what he believed, and Saul was a man of decision and a man of action. There was no equivocation. There was no ands, ifs, buts, maybes, perhaps, could be.

But when Paul decided on a thing, or Saul decided on the thing that he carried out, and I say that there was nothing wrong with the heart of Saul of Tarsus as he was going on the road to Damascus. There was nothing wrong at all. It was merely his head. It was merely his decision having been a wrong one.

He had to be smitten by this wonderful vision, seeing the Lord in glory, and when he recognized that he was kicking against the prince, that heart of Saul was turned to the heart of Paul, and indeed he was one of the tower of strength, the one next to the Master. So you see, friends, a decision is necessary, and halving between two opinions is extremely distasteful to God.

Now I think we might just move on and just introduce one more thought, dear friends, in this matter of making a decision and making it a correct one, I often think that this is essentially the difference between concision and circumcision. Paul speaks again to the church at Philippi in the third chapter and the second and third verses. He says, beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision, for we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. The concision and circumcision, dear friends, if we might just summarize, this, I believe, illustrates or points too a decisiveness in our Christian warfare. There are many who are of the concision, that is to say, many who are cutting off, but yet who are cutting it off piecemeal.

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They just seem to take a chop today and tomorrow, as the Spirit moves them, they will cut something else off and hope by the end of their course in life that they will complete the process. That's not what Paul is saying here. But Paul is saying rather that you've got to make your circumcision, cut the umbilical cord, as it were, to the flesh, completely sever it, and then in newness of life, walk without any confidence in the flesh at the Church of Philippi, as beloved as this church was to Paul, and if you read Paul's message to them, you'll find that he uses the word joy. He uses the warmest of terms to the church at Philippi, more so than any other, because this church was one of the first fruits of his labor.

And this church was so interested in his welfare that they didn't spare the greatest sacrifice to minister to him, and yet even there, he recognized that there were some who were endeavoring to serve God in a half hearted manner, whose decision was not as firm and as direct and as unequivocal. As it should be, and he is saying, therefore we are of the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus. Now we've given illustrations of what the power of decision can be.

I wonder if we might just in the next two or three minutes, talk about the effects of a lack of decision and how that might rob us our spiritual blessings. I often have a great feeling for Thomas and some of the experiences he went through during that very fateful week between the resurrection of Jesus and the message that the other disciples gave him, that he is risen, that the tomb is empty. Why seek ye the living amongst the dead? And how Thomas and his natural doubting mind, just one of these skeptics who was going to be shown how Thomas for a whole week must have gone through a lot of soul searching, must have gone through a great deal of spiritual agony, if I might use that term, wondering what was wrong with him, how I'm sure during that week all of the disciples were so enthused, Peter says, that he was begotten again to a lively hope. That is, all of the hope seemed to resurge one once more.

And there was newness of life. There was a great expectancy that they knew that at last the wonderful promises of the Messiah were coming about, and how Thomas must have stayed at the fringe of these rejoicing Christians, and how he must have wondered, what's wrong with him? Is there something wrong with his heart?

Doesn't the Lord accept him any longer? Why should he be denied the evidence of his resurrection? And how because of his doubt and because of his need to be shown, those days must have been tortuous to him, and how he was denied this rejoicing for over a week. Friends, I say that doubt is very much like fear and pain.

Doubt should be a sentinel, should be a warning signal. Doubt can be very constructive. For example, fear, pain are like allies. If I didn't experience pain, I would never know that there is any disease process going on in my body, and it might be that my body is decayed and dead before there's even any indication of disease.

And the same thing with fear that we all have got to have fear. Because there are certain things that we should fear, both spiritually as well as naturally. We either fear lest there be a purpose, promise left unto us unfulfilled. We ought to fear that when we get into dangers that we not expose ourselves unwisely, and therefore doubt likewise has a useful purpose.

Because if there isn't any honest question or honest doubt. If we are just so gullible, we might just swallow anything that masquerades as truth or as being proper, and therefore be like the like in a set of some people, being like concrete, that they are all mixed up and permanently set. If we are

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doubtful and if we are open minded, if we want to be shown. Indeed, this can be positively used. But with Thomas, unless he could see and feel, he would not believe.

He was allowed to see and feel, feel, and this demonstration was given to him with the admonition that blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears that they hear. But those who follow after are even more blessed if they can believe without such evidences. So, dear friends, I see that Charles, we may. It is difficult to compress further thoughts.

But we might say, dear brethren, in closing, that we must be very precise. We have to be very rigid in the decisions that we make in our new creature life. I think more and more, dear friends, that one of the greatest tests of the hour. Oh, I know the test is doctrinal. I know the test is love for the brethren.

I know that the test is the sincerity of our consecration. But I think one of the greatest ways in which the adversary ends testing the brethren today is by making it so easy for us and trying to take away from us some of the decisions, some of the responsibilities that are ours, and yet conveniently, we can shift to others. I think of the adversary by the very fact that in this present society in which you and I live, and I must confine my experiences to those on this side of the iron curtain, not knowing what goes on the other side. But I dare say, brethren, that life, physical level of life, has been made so comfortable for the general population and for the church that so often the conveniences, so often the standard of living around us somewhat detracts from the kind of experiences and the kind of suffering, the kind of sacrificing that should be true of new creatures.

How easy it is, dear friends, to just be comfortably settled in our own little ruts, to just sit back and enjoy the blessings of this society, to enjoy the blessings of truth and all of the help that we have, and yet not really spend ourselves for it. We freely get it. You see, it is not the kind of Christ sonnet that was in the early church, when to speak up for Christ meant sentencing in the Coliseum, when to show your credentials for Christ was to bring onto yourself the sword, when to speak boldly for the word of truth indicated persecution, suffering, torture. You are a mocked man today, dear friends. Sometimes it is so easy.

And Brother Russell indicated that one of the times where this harvesting work is over is when things get so easy for you. You're not able to suffer very much sometimes, you know, of course, I don't believe we're at that point. I don't think we will. I think rather the reverse will occur. But so often we can just very indifferently allow decisions being made by others just coast along on the tide and then perhaps just lose our power of making the decision when the time comes, when we have to.

And I believe different. The time will come. We don't know when it will be. But certainly the trend of events cannot be extended too much longer. I mean, as we see the things coming to a head, certainly all of the prophecies are so beautifully being fulfilled.

Oh, I believe that there are some yet to be fulfilled. But they can come in so quick order. Brethren, if the time will come when we might have to pay with our lives in the more of a moderating sense, and unless we've been able to make the decisions here and now in the little experiences of life, in the little sacrifices, will we be able to make them. When the great issue, when the matter is set before you, life or death, it's questionable that you see, is the trouble of the great company. They do not make these little decisions.

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They do not consecrate day by day, step by step. But rather they allow these spots to accumulate on their robes of righteousness. Therefore, the Lord in his mercy, in order to preserve them from extinction, he gives them this great trial, this great tribulation, so they can wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. They have to make the decision to consecrate and to sacrifice their all at that time.

But if they made these little decisions day after day, they would be of the overcoming class. They would be of those who are faithful in the little and therefore will be given a great portion in the infinite glory, honor and immortality. Brethren, may we become more perceptive to our responsibilities and more secure in our decisions for God. May the Lord add his blessing.

Thank you, brother Raymond. If there are any in here who perhaps have not made a decision to serve the Lord fully and completely, I think that talk perhaps will help us to consecrate, to make a decision to serve the Lord and turn our backs on the world and make a decision for Christ and for our great heavenly Creator. Well, brethren, as you see on our program, we have a little note lunch served by the class, and so I want to welcome you to partake of Lunch with us here. Our sisters have been very busy working at it.

And so right after this meeting is over, we'd like you to line up at the cafeteria and enjoy our lunch here. I don't know what the menu is, but I know it'll be good. But I would like to read you the menu for the rest of the day. The spiritual menu. I think it'll be very good indeed.

We will meet again at 1:45. Brother Adam Miskwitz of Chicago will address the friends. Then at 3:15 there will be a testimony meeting. At 4:00, a discourse by Brother Levi Jacobs of New Haven. Then supper served by the class again.

Then at 6 o' clock this evening, we'll have the last talk of the day. Brother Eugene Burns will address the of friends. So while I wouldn't say that the best is yet to come, but we have plenty of good spiritual food to follow yet. So, Brother, may we close this meeting by singing hymn number 303.

Let him walk with me.

My sa.

The name of battles, Jes.

And now our great God and eternal Father. Indeed Thou art our everlasting portion. Make our hearts more attuned and our lives more dedicated. That we might the more feast upon Thee and upon the riches of Thy word, and grant that which we've been endeavoring by feeble tongue to put in the word that Thou wilt put into our lives, into our hearts.

That this might bring forth greater fruitage to Thy praise and to Thy honor, and now our Father, as Thou so abundantly doth provide along every need of life, we thank Thee for the portion, temporal portion, which Thou art giving to us, and we ask that as we partake thereof, that we do so with mind single, deserving the amusing all of the its strength derived therefrom. To Thy honor and to Thy praise. In Jesus name and for his sake.

Amen.