

引言 INTRODUCTION

A loss can be a blessing in disguise. There is an ancient Chinese story that illustrates such reverse of fortune. Old Mr. Sai was a farmer. One day, his horse ran away. Everyone in the village felt sorry for him. Mr. Sai responded: “How do you know if it will not lead to a good outcome?” Several months later, the horse returned home. It brought along a few fine wild-horses. Neighbors congratulated the old man. But he said: “How can you tell if it may not bring me troubles down the road?” Later on, the old man’s son tried out one of the new horses. Unfortunately, he fell and broke his leg. People showed sympathy to the family. Mr. Sai reacted: “You never know? The accident may end in a good result.” Soon afterward, a war broke out. All the young men were drafted to war and some died. Mr. Sai’s son was waived of the duty because of his injury. The moral of the story is not to draw a conclusion too soon. How we interpret an incident depends on our perspective. Moreover, the same event can lead to a positive or negative consequence. Our response will affect the result. James brings up that intrigue in this chapter. Last week we talked about trials. God uses some tests to examine our faith. Today, we will discuss temptations. Trial and temptation are the same Greek word. The same test can be a trial or a temptation depending on our reaction. The readers of this letter were facing religious persecution. They could yield to the pressure and deny Jesus. They could also yield to God and overcome hardship with His wisdom. God intends to build our faith up, while Satan wants to break us down. Whichever side we choose will lead to different effects.

EXPLANATION

1. 罪導致死亡 Sin Gives Birth to Death (v. 13-15)

James presents his arguments by contrasting two kinds of birth. First, he tells us that sin gives birth to death. He states outright that God is never the source of temptation. God is holy and righteous. He will never sin nor will He entice us to sin. If God is not the culprit, then who should be held accountable? Satan is the ultimate enemy of God and His people. His goal is to steer us away from God. However, James does not mention the devil in this passage. He puts the responsibility on us. James says our desire triggers the chain reaction from considering sin to committing sin. Just like trial and temptation, the Greek word for desire can have positive and negative meanings. On the bright side, “desire” can refer to a zeal or an ambition. For example, some people have a strong desire for their hobbies or to help needy people. In this context, James is talking about the dark side of our desires. For example, some people crave after money, pride and gossip. If we let any evil desire run its course, it will lead to sin. The final outcome of sin is death. James uses pregnancy as an illustration for the progression of sinning. There is a starting point, development and result. A similar analogy I can think of is seed germination. Seeds require soil and water to sprout. You planted some trees in your yard. Other trees popped up randomly from seeds dropped

from the trees. You will pull seedlings by their roots if they are in the wrong spots. Otherwise, given time, seedlings will grow into trees. The bigger the trees, the more effort it will take to cut them down. Sin is similar to wild trees. We need to get rid of temptations from their sources, otherwise more drastic actions will be needed to remove sins. What sows temptation in your heart? Someone said it wisely: you will become the friends you associate with. Those who use social media have to read posts with discernment. Or else before long, you will adopt those value systems. You need to set your foundation firmly on God's Word first. Then you can evaluate different opinions based on God's truth. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:22 – **So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.** Here “passions” is the same Greek word for desire in James 1. Paul encourages us to run away from fleshy desires and run to godly friends. They will motivate you to grow in God's virtues. One of Satan's schemes is to divide and conquer. We can easily fall to temptation when we are alone and are away from a faith community. But we can be stronger when we gather with fellow believers like burning a bigger fire by stacking wood. James says the outcome of sin is death. There can be different degrees of death. Unsaved sinners will forever be separated from God. That is an eternal death. While still living in the world, some people can be so indulged in sins that their conscience becomes dead. They may justify their acts by claiming that everyone is doing the same things. They may listen to the lies that they were born with some sinful genes or they grew up in a bad environment. Remember James was writing to Christians. Jesus has saved them and they will not be condemned forever in their sins. However, they will fall to sins repeatedly in this life. God does not put us on an island after He saved us. Rather, He keeps us in the fallen world to witness for Him. Satan will continue to lure us with temptations. If you are a follower of Jesus, you can never be sinless. But by God's grace you can sin less. In Christ, we can choose our reaction to temptations. Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam upfront not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Violation will lead to death. Then Satan lied to Eve in Genesis 3:4-5 – **4 ... “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** Let us analyze Satan's evil tactics here. Lie number 1: He said they would not surely die. The idea is that it may happen to others except you. For example, some people fall to gambling due to greed. They think that others may become addicted. But they are confident that they can quit any time they want. Lie number 2: Satan said eating the fruit would actually bring a favorable result. We may think that telling good from evil is a right thing. The problem has to do with the notion “you will be like God.” Satan meant: “Why listen to God when you are your own boss?” We reason that something is good if it can bring us benefits. Many people lose everything from gambling. But what if by chance I hit the jackpot? Besides, gambling generates a lot of scholarship funds. Is it not a good thing? Adam and Eve bought into Satan's lies. Sin thus entered into the world. In comparison, Jesus used God's Word to fend off Satan's temptations. The devil tempted the Lord three times in Matthew 4. First, he asked Jesus to turn stones into bread. Second, he asked Jesus to jump off the roof of the temple. Third, he promised Jesus glory and riches of the world if the Lord bowed down to him. Jesus quoted the Bible on all three occasions and said: **“It is written”** (verses 4, 7 and 10). We need to do the same thing when facing temptations. We must do a fact-check with God's Word. Some so-called experts make certain claims. Your good friends give their recommendation based on personal experience. They

ask you to try this and buy that. But you need to find out what God says in the Bible. Will the attempt draw you closer to God and pull you away from Him? God gives us freedom to make decisions. It may not matter much whether you wear blue or red today or eat rice or pizza for lunch. But other choices such as career, marriage and parenting have long-lasting impacts. Some results will only gratify us but not glorify God. It makes a huge difference if we follow God's Word, Satan's lies or our selfish desires.

2. 神帶來生命 God Gives Birth to Life (v. 16-18)

Sin gives birth to death. It will bring chaos and destruction. Whereas, God gives birth to life. The same Greek word translated as “brings forth” or brought forth” appear in both verses 15 and 18 to show a stark contrast. Sin leads to death while faith in God leads to life. God only gives us things that are bright and constructive. James calls God the Father of lights in verse 17. God shows no variation or shadow due to changes. Perhaps James gets an inspiration from observing the night sky. The moon has different phases. There are new-moon, half-moon and full-moon. Its shape and brightness vary depending on its position relative to the sun and earth. Hence, the “shadow” on the moon will change with time. Here is a trick question for you: what object will not produce any shadow? The answer is a light source. For example, the sun does not have a shadow because it gives light in all directions. God is the origin of all light. He will not create a shadow by shifting His positions. He always stays the same. God is unlike earthly kings. A new leader has different preferences, and that will affect his policies. In comparison, God's truth is absolute and perfect. It does not need any revision. God remains unchanged to the people in the past and in the future, and people in the east and the west. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. His nature and His will for us do not change either. That is why He is trustworthy. God is the source of all our blessings. That reinforces the notion that He will not use temptations to stumble us. God only wants the best for us. Of all the good gifts that He gives us, salvation is on the top of the list. James says in verse 18 that God gives birth to us in a new life through His Word. Faith begins from accepting God's truth. Paul says in Romans 10:17 – **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.** “The word of Christ” is another way to say the Bible. You became a believer because God's Word entered into your heart. You accepted Jesus by faith when the Holy Spirit convicted you as a sinner. Therefore, Paul stresses in the context that messengers must go and share the gospel to others. People will not believe unless they hear the good news. You accepted Jesus because someone told you about Him. Now the baton is in your hand. You must pass the blessing to your friends and relatives and help them become Jesus' disciples. Going back to the book of James. The author describes our new life in Christ as “a kind of firstfruits.” He borrows the idea from agriculture. Those who love to plant crops in home garden look forward to the first harvest as summer is approaching. Firstfruits indicate two things. First, the plants are healthily growing. Second, there will be more crops to come. Similarly, we will keep bearing fruits for God when we are connected to Him. We mentioned about leading people to Christ earlier. They become new fruits in God's garden. Besides, believers will produce fruits as they mature in their faith. The Bible calls those virtues the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Character traits like love, joy and peace will become more evident as we grow to be more like Jesus. One day those firstfruits will lead to a

bountiful harvest. We have been saved the moment we received Jesus into our hearts. That is the starting point of our new life. God lives in us. The Holy Spirit helps us understand God's Word. He alerts us when temptations come. He convicts us when we fall to sin and He nudges us to repent. Our spiritual life continues to mature in this cycle of struggles. Sometimes we may not feel that God is that close to us. We feel ashamed to get near to God when we sin. Other times our faith may be shaken under trials. Paul describes a longing in us in Romans 8:23 – **And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** We are saved the moment we received Christ. Our eternal home has been secured. But meanwhile, we will still be bombarded by trials and temptations. The Bible never guarantees us that following Jesus is an easy road. The Lord promises us an abundant life. That does not necessarily mean a rich, long and trouble-free life. We used to be in the devil's team. We were transferred into God's family after we became believers. Do not be surprised that the devil will step up his attack on you. That actually proves that you belong to God. In the past, Satan fools us into believing that the world is a huge playground. He encourages us to grab all the toys we want and enjoy life as if there were no end. Everything is about the here and now. Once we joined God's camp, we realize that the world is a battleground. Satan sees us as enemies whether we like it or not. We can only win the spiritual warfare with spiritual weapons. We must use Biblical principles to screen the information we receive. Then we can discern the crafty tactics from Satan. We must guard our hearts with truth, lest we may fall to the devil's lies. We can only become victors and not victims by obeying our Commander-in-chief. We follow Jesus' guidance. We use the Bible as our strategic playbook. Trails and temptations help us realize that the world is not our permanent home. Those struggles should make us feel home-sick for heaven. The fight will come to an end when we see God in glory. Temporary joy will become a complete satisfaction as we enter into heaven.

結論 CONCLUSION

Trials and temptations may appear to be the same on the surface. Our response will affect the result. Let me close with a powerful story I read. A man went to the Niagara Falls for sight-seeing with his family. It was spring time. There were chunks of ice floating in the river. Dead fish were embedded in some of the ice. That attracted many birds. They landed on the ice and enjoyed a big feast. When it came to the brink of the fall, those birds would flap their wings and escape. Then there was one bird that seemed to be so focused on eating that it kept delaying to take flight. Finally, it opened its wing. It mounted up with great strength and carried a block of ice with it. Its feet were actually frozen and glued to the ice! Unfortunately, it could not bear the weight of the ice and it plunged into the water. The image illustrates the power of temptation. It may give us an initial reward. Those who hooked onto it will suffer from devastation, defeat and even death. James warns us not to be deceived. We must choose God and choose life!

引言 INTRODUCTION

損失可能是偽裝的祝福。有一個傳統故事，說明這種命運的逆轉。塞翁是個農夫。有一天，他的馬跑掉了。村裡的人都為他感到難過。塞翁回答：「你怎麼知道這不會帶來好的結果？」幾個月後，馬回家了。牠帶來了幾匹很好的野馬。鄰居們都向老人表示祝賀。但他說：「你怎麼知道這件事不會給我帶來以後的麻煩？」有一天，老先生的兒子騎上一匹新馬。不巧他摔倒了，還摔斷了腿。人們對那家人表示同情。塞翁回答說：「說不定這次意外會有一個好的結果。」不久之後，戰爭爆發了。所有年輕人都要去參軍，有些人還陣亡了。塞翁的兒子因為受傷而不用服兵役。這個故事提醒我們不要太早下結論。我們如何理解一件事情取決於我們的觀點。此外，同一事件可能導致正面或反面的結局。我們的回應將會決定結果。雅各在這一章中提出了這個巧妙的地方。上週我們討論了試煉。神用一些困難來考驗我們的信心。今天，我們將討論試探。試煉和試探在希臘文是同一個字。同樣的事情可以是試煉，也可以是試探，這取決於我們的回應。這封信的讀者正面對宗教迫害。他們可能會屈服於壓力而否認耶穌。他們也可以順服神，以神的智慧克服困難。神想要建立我們的信心，而撒旦卻想要打倒我們。結果是在乎我們選擇聽從哪一方。

EXPLANATION

1. 罪導致死亡 Sin Gives Birth to Death (v. 13-15)

雅各對比兩個截然不同的結果來提出他的論點。首先，他告訴我們，罪導致死亡。他指出神從來不是試探的來源。神是聖潔、公義的。祂不會犯罪，祂也不會引誘我們犯罪。如果神不是罪魁禍首，那麼誰該負責？撒旦是神和祂的子民的終極敵人。他的目標是要我們遠離神。然而，雅各在這段經文中並沒有提到魔鬼。祂把責任歸在我們身上。雅各說，是我們的私慾觸發了從想要罪犯到犯下罪的連鎖反應。就像試煉和試探一樣，希臘文的「私慾」這個字有正面和負面的意思。從好的方面來看，私慾可以指熱情或渴望。例如，有些人對自己的嗜好或幫助別人很有熱誠。在這段經文中，雅各提到私慾的陰暗面。例如，有些人貪愛金錢、自誇和講閒話。如果我們不約束邪惡的私慾，就會導致罪。罪的最終結果是死亡。雅各以懷孕為例來說明犯罪的進展。其中有起點，有發展，有結果。我能想到的另一個類比是種子發芽。種子需要土壤和水才能發芽。你在院子特定的地方種了一些樹。但是有些樹是從掉下來的種子隨意生長

的。如果幼苗長在錯誤的地方，你就要把它們連根拔掉。否則，幼苗逐漸會長成樹。樹越大，就要花更多功夫才能把它們砍掉。罪也是一樣。我們需要消滅試探的來源，否則就需要採取更激烈的手段才能消除罪。什麼因素會對你產生試探？古語說：近朱者赤，近墨者黑。你會變成你朋友的模樣。使用社群媒體的人必須有智慧地閱讀別人的文章。否則不久之後，你就會認同那些價值觀念。你需要在神的話語上建立穩固的基礎，然後你便可以根據神的真理來評估不同的觀點。保羅在提摩太後書 2:22 告訴我們：**你要逃避少年的私慾，同那清心禱告主的人追求公義、信德、仁愛、和平。**這裡也出現了「私慾」這個字。保羅鼓勵我們要遠離個人的私慾，和敬虔的人成為伙伴。他們能激勵你在神的美德中成長。撒旦的詭計之一就是分散並佔領。當我們單獨一個人並且遠離信仰團體時，我們很容易受到試探。但當我們與其他信徒聚集在一起時，我們會變得更堅固，就像木柴堆起來使火更旺盛一樣。雅各說罪的結果是死亡。死亡有不同的程度。未得救的罪人將永遠與神分離。那是永恆的死亡。有些人雖然還活在世上，卻沉醉在罪中，以致良心死亡。他們可能會為自己辯護，說其他人也在做同樣的事情。他們也可能會聽從謊言：比如說他們生來就有某些犯罪的基因，或者怪自己在不好的環境中長大。記得雅各是寫信給基督徒。耶穌拯救了他們，他們不會永遠被定罪。然而，他們在今生卻會重複犯罪。神拯救了我們之後，並沒有把我們放在荒島上。祂把我們放在墮落的世界中為祂作見證。撒旦會繼續用試探來引誘我們。如果你是耶穌的跟隨者，你不會停止犯罪。但靠著神的恩典，你可以減少犯罪。在基督裡，我們可以選擇對試探的回應。撒旦在伊甸園引誘夏娃。神老早告訴亞當不可以吃分辨善惡樹上的果子，否則會導致死亡。撒旦在創世記 3:4-5 欺騙夏娃說：**4 ... 「你們不一定死；5 因為神知道，你們吃的日子眼睛就明亮了，你們便如神能知道善惡。」**我們來分析一下撒旦的詭計。謊言之一：他說他們不會死。意思是，其他人會死，但你是例外。例如，有些人因為貪錢而去賭博。他們認為其他人或許會上癮。但他們自信有足夠的定力，隨時都可以停止。謊言之二：撒旦說吃果子其實會帶來好的結局。我們可能以為分辨善惡是一件好事。問題在於「你便如神」這個慾望。撒旦的意思是：「如果你可以自己當家，為何要聽神的？」我們認為，如果某些事情對自己有好處，那就是好的。很多人因賭博而輸掉一切。但如果我真的中了頭獎那麼就不一樣！況且，賭博還能帶來很多獎學金。這不是好事嗎？亞當和夏娃相信了撒旦的謊言，於是罪就進入了世界。相比之下，耶穌用神的話語來抵抗撒旦的試探。在馬太福音第 4 章中，魔鬼三次試探主。首先，他叫耶穌把石頭變成食物。第二，他要耶穌從聖殿的屋頂上跳下去。第三，他答應，如果主向他下拜，他將得到世間的榮華富貴。耶穌在三次試探中都引用了聖經，並說：**「經上記著說」**（第 4、7 和 10 節）。當我們面對試探時，我們需要做同樣的事情。我們必須用神的話來核對。一些所謂的專家提出了某些主張。

你的好朋友根據個人經驗給你建議。他們要求你嘗試這個並購買那個。你需要了解神在聖經中怎麼說。聽從那些看法會使你更接近神還是使你遠離祂？神給予我們做出決定的自由。今天你穿藍色還是紅色的衣服、午餐吃米飯還是披薩都無所謂。但職業、婚姻和教養兒女等選擇會產生深遠的影響。有些結果只會滿足我們個人的期望，但並不榮耀神。我們遵循神的話語、撒旦的謊言或自己的私慾，會產生不一樣的結果。

2. 神帶來生命 God Gives Birth to Life (v. 16-18)

罪導致死亡。它會帶來混亂和破壞。然而，神帶來生命。「生」這個字同時出現在第 15 節和第 18 節中，形成鮮明的對比。罪導致死亡，而對神的信心則帶來生命。神只會給我們光明和建設性的東西。雅各在第 17 節中稱神為眾光之父。也許雅各從觀察夜空得到了靈感。月亮不斷在改變。有新月、半月和滿月。它的形狀和亮度會根據它相對於太陽和地球的位置而變化。因此，月球的「影子」會隨著時間而改變。請問大家：有什麼東西是不會產生影子的？答案是光源。例如，太陽沒有影子，因為它向四面八方發光。神是一切光的源頭。祂不會因為位置改變而產生陰影。祂始終如一。神不同於地上的君王。新領袖有個別喜好，因而影響他的政策。相比之下，神的真理是絕對的、完美的，也不需要任何修改。神對過去的人和未來的人、東方的人和西方的人來說都是不變的。昨天、今天和明天，祂都是一樣的。祂的本質和祂對我們的旨意也不會改變，因此祂值得信賴。神是我們一切祝福的泉源。這就再次說明祂不會使用試探來絆倒我們。神只會賜給我們最好的一切。在祂賜給我們的所有東西中，最寶貴的就是救恩。雅各在第 18 節中說，神藉著真道賜給我們新生命。信心的起步點是接受神的真理。保羅在羅馬書 10:17 說：**可見信道是從聽道來的，聽道是從基督的話來的。**「基督的話」是指聖經。你之所以成為信徒是因為神的話語進入你的心中。聖靈定你是個罪人，然後你以信心接受耶穌。因此，保羅在上下文中強調必須有人去傳福音。如果沒有聽到福音，人們是不會相信的。你接受耶穌是因為有人向你講述福音。現在接力棒就在你手中。你必須將祝福傳遞給你的親戚和朋友，幫助他們成為耶穌的門徒。回到雅各書。作者將我們在新生命裡形容為「初熟的果子」。他借用了農業知識。喜歡在家裡種菜的人都等待夏天接近時收割第一批農作物。初熟的果子表明了兩件事。首先，植物生長得很健康。第二，繼續會有收成。同樣，當我們與神連結在一起時，我們就會不斷為神結果子。我們之前提到帶領人信主。他們成為神花園裡的新果子。此外，隨著信徒的靈命成長，他們會結出其他果子。聖經稱這些美德為聖靈的果子。當我們變得越來越像耶穌時，仁愛、喜樂與和平等品格將變得更加明顯。有一天，這些初熟的果子將帶來豐收。當我們接受耶穌進入心中的那一刻，我們就得救了。那是我們新生命的起點。神活在我們心中。聖靈幫助我們

明白神的話語。當試探來臨時，聖靈會警惕我們。當我們跌倒犯罪時，祂會責備我們，並催促我們悔改。我們的屬靈生命就在這樣的循環中不斷成長。有時我們可能覺得神離我們很遠。當我們犯罪時，我們沒有面子接近神。其他時候，我們的信心會因著試煉而動搖。保羅在羅馬書 8:23 中描述我們內心的盼望：**不但如此，就是我們這有聖靈初結果子的，也是自己心裡歎息，等候得著兒子的名分，乃是我們的身體得贖。**我們接受基督的那一刻就得救了。我們的永恆去向已經得到保障。但同時，我們仍然會受到試煉和試探的衝擊。聖經從來沒有保證我們跟隨耶穌是一條容易的路。主應許我們豐盛的生命。這並不一定意味著富裕、長壽和無憂無慮的生活。我們曾經是與魔鬼同一陣線的。我們信主之後就進入神的家了。不要驚訝魔鬼會加強對你的攻擊。這實際上證明你是屬於神的。過去，撒旦欺騙我們，以為世界是一個大型遊樂場。他鼓勵我們去抓想要的東西，並盡情享樂。一切只在乎此時此刻。一旦我們加入神的陣營，我們就會意識到世界原來是一個戰場。不論我們是否同意，撒旦都視我們為敵人。我們唯有使用屬靈的武器才能打贏屬靈的戰爭。我們必須用聖經原則來過濾所接收的訊息。然後我們就能分辨撒旦的詭計。我們必須用真理保護自己的心，否則我們就會陷入魔鬼的謊言之中。我們唯有服從我們的總司令，才能成為勝利者，而不是失敗者。我們遵循耶穌的指示。我們將聖經作為我們的戰略手冊。世上的試煉和試探讓我們看清楚，這個世界不是我們永恆的家。那些掙扎應該讓我們更加想念天堂。當我們看到神的榮耀時，戰鬥就結束了。當我們進入天堂時，暫時的快樂將成為完全的滿足。

結論 CONCLUSION

試煉和試探表面上看起來可能是一樣的。我們的回應將會決定結果。最後，讓我以一個強而有力的故事作結束。有一個人和家人一起到尼加拉瀑布觀光。那時是春天。河裡漂浮著大塊的冰。一些冰裡面有死了的魚。於是便吸引了很多小鳥。他們停在冰上面享受大餐。當到達瀑布墜落的邊緣時，那些小鳥便會拍動翅膀飛走。但是有一隻鳥似乎太專心在吃東西，以至於牠一直捨不得起飛。終於，它張開了翅膀。牠用盡力氣往上飛，而且還抓住一塊冰。原本牠的腳被凍住，黏在冰上面！不幸的是，牠無法承受冰的重量，掉進水裡面。那個畫面說明了試探的力量。它可能會為我們帶來初步的甜頭。那些陷在其中的人將會遭受毀滅、失敗，甚至死亡。雅各提醒我們不要被欺騙。我們必須選擇神，選擇生命！