

引言 INTRODUCTION

Separation is to divide people by their characteristics. A classic example is the caste system before India became an independent country in 1947. People were classified into four big groups based on their family background, economic status etc. Under the four categories, there were altogether three thousand castes! People were not allowed to marry and even eat together with others of a different rank. The only solution was to live a strict religious life by the Hindu beliefs, and hoped that they could move up to a higher social class in their next life. Mahatma Gandhi was an outspoken civil rights leader who criticized the system. In his autobiography, he says that at one time he thought Christianity was the answer to the problem. Gandhi read the Bible seriously as a young student. He was greatly inspired by the teaching of Jesus. On one Sunday, Gandhi went to a church. He had planned to talk to the pastor about converting to Christianity. However, he was stopped by an usher. The person told Gandhi to go back to his people and worship their Hindu gods. Gandhi was disappointed. He concluded that Christians were not peaceful people. He wrote in his book: "If Christians have caste differences and play favoritism, then I might as well remain a Hindu." Gandhi did not change his religious belief for the rest of his lifetime. The way we treat others can affect the way they see God. We can be a stepping stone or a stumbling block between God and non-believers. In today's passage, James mentions the problem of bias in the church. At the end of the last chapter, he tells his readers to care for the orphans and widows. Now he warns church members not to discriminate against poor people in the society. He gives us three reasons why that is wrong.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 違反常理 It Contradicts Common Sense

Reason number 1: bias contradicts common sense. Every person knows that discrimination is bad. James describes a hypothetical but highly possible situation. It could be a Sunday service, and a wealthy man walks in. People can tell his status by his clothing. An usher warmly welcomes him and leads him to a front row seat. Moments later, a poor guy arrives. From a distance, people can see his worn-out clothes. An usher gives the man two options: he can either stand by the side or sit on the floor. James says doing so shows partiality. The Greek word "partiality" means to look at the face. In other words, to judge people from the outside. Why do people accept the rich but despise the poor? Perhaps it is due to the assumption that wealthy people are smarter, successful and hard-working. Whereas, underprivileged people are considered dumb, incapable and lazy. It is also possible that some people hope to gain some benefits from the rich. It will build the reputation of the church if some celebrities register as members. Perhaps they will significantly increase the offering too! On the flip side, poorer folks may affect the image of the church. Members may feel the pressure to offer them help. All those speculations are based on appearance. James says in verse 4 that showing favoritism is to make **"distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts."** Those judgments are not only subjective and superficial, but James calls them evil! Those who have such mentality have made up their mind who to accept and who to reject. To them, the appearance is more important

than character. Such indifferent attitude will hinder people from worshipping God. A few years back my wife and I sent my older son to college. The dormitory assigned him to move in on a Sunday morning. We reasoned that we might not have time to attend church. We arrived the day before. The front-desk people graciously allowed us to unload the stuff. Therefore, we were free the next day. The problem was that my wife and I did not bring any “Sunday clothes.” My son and I wore shorts! We picked a church right behind the dormitory. In the future my son could walk there without a car. There were about 200 people in the congregation. Almost all of them were Caucasian. From the beginning to the end of the service, only one coworker came over and talked to us. It was a strange feeling. Afterward, I suggested my son to try out other churches with his classmates. Perhaps a multi-cultural church may be more suitable for him. I wondered why no one even said hi to us. Was it because we were strangers, people of a different race or simply because we did not wear the right clothes? Would it make a difference if I wore a shirt with big letters “I’m a Pastor” on it? There are some good lessons I learned from this negative experience. How do you respond when people different from us come here? Perhaps they have a different skin color or a different social status. They may have some disabilities or they were born with visible defects. Jesus received children, women, the poor, the sick, demon-possessed people and non-Jewish folks. Those people were despised in the society at that time. We must accept any person like Jesus did. We must see people through the lens of the gospel. God does not only look at our packaging. He knows us through and through. Every person is created in God’s image. They are precious to God regardless of their background. Moreover, each person is a sinner by birth who needs Jesus. As such, let us build a bridge and not to build a wall between God and people.

2. 違反公理 It Contradicts Social Sense

Bias toward others does not make common sense. Here is a second reason why such attitude is wrong: it contradicts social sense. James tells church members that those rich people will not return the favor simply because they receive a special treatment. He says in verses 6-7: **6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?** Those wealthy people did not have others and even God in their eyes. Christians could be someone they despised. Most people in the ancient world were poor. A small number of landlords controlled the majority of the wealth. With money comes power. Also, those who gained some wealth would be greedy for more! Therefore, the poor would become poorer and the rich would become richer. Many Old Testament authors are not shy to condemn such social problem. For example, God says in Amos 2:6-7 – **6 “...they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals – 7 those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted...”** Some rich people exploited the poor by selling them as slaves, perhaps when they could not repay a loan. They also bribed judges so that they would rule in their favor, thus creating injustice in the court. James says those wealthy people did not only oppress the poor, they also profaned the name of God. Perhaps they made fun of the Christians faith. Believing in a man named Jesus who rose from the dead was mind-boggling to them. But why did those rich people show up in the church if they were so disrespectful of the Christian belief? There could be at least two reasons. First, they wanted to make a spectacle by challenging Christians. Believers needed much wisdom and patience to react. Second, something the church did attracted those upper-class people. For example, they might wonder: “Why are

these religious fanatics always so joyful and content? Why are they not afraid of the Jewish and Roman officials when some church members are persecuted and even executed? Why are they willing to share everything with others when they have very little?" Once Jesus met a sincere seeker like that. A rich young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. The Lord ordered the man to sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow Him. The man was reluctant because he had a lot of money. He left with a sad face. Jesus then commented that it was hard for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God. The disciples were surprised by the remark. They questioned who could be saved if a powerful man could not make his way to heaven. Jesus replies in Luke 18:27 – ...**"What is impossible with man is possible with God."** No one can get into heaven by his money. People can only be saved by God's mercy. Jesus was not interested in the young man's cash. The Lord wanted his heart. Jesus' followers might not necessarily have to forsake what they owned. But they must forsake the ownership of all they have. Jesus has the same request to every person. There is only one gospel. There is only one type of sinner – the lost sinner. Whether rich or poor, oriental people or westerners each must submit themselves to Jesus before they can be saved. The church should not despise the rich, even though some of them may be arrogant. They may think that they do not need Jesus because they have everything already. We should welcome government officials, company CEOs or movie stars just like any guest. We treat them equally. We do not need to cook special dishes or brew exotic coffee to serve them. We do not have to change our programs either. We share the same truth without reservation. We tell them the same messages that all of us need to hear: repent and be saved.

3. 違反真理 It Contradicts Spiritual Sense

Bias toward poor people does not make common sense or social sense. Thirdly, it contradicts spiritual sense too. God saves the poor despite their low social status. James says in verse 5: **Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?** God saves the poor not because they have little money. Neither does He reject the rich due to their wealth. Poor people rely on others' mercy. Therefore, they gladly accept the God who accepts them. James' teaching echoes what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:28-29 – **28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.** God chooses people regardless of their background. The result is that no one can take pride in themselves. In God's eye, true poverty is not about our finance but it has to do with our spirit. God saves those who admit their brokenness before Him. We only deserve eternal judgment due to our sins. But God treats us with grace. We should constantly thank Him for His mercy. A church is a congregation of redeemed sinners. Those who receive grace should live out grace. Therefore, bias toward others is unbiblical. James goes on to say in verses 8-9: **8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.** Someone asked Jesus which is the biggest commandment in the Law. The Lord replied that all of God's requirements can be summarized by two mandates – love God with all our hearts, souls and minds; and love neighbors as ourselves. Neighbors are not only those who live close to your home. They also include the strangers you meet everywhere. Since God receives all people, it violates His command if we love people selectively. James says it outright that doing so is a sin. Besides poverty, another reason for discrimination is race. Paul urges Jewish Christians not to look down

on their Gentile members in Ephesians 4:2-6 – 2 With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Our unity in Christ is characterized by the seven “ones” in this passage. God draws people from every nation, every skin color and who speaks different languages into His Kingdom. Heaven will be a United Nations of believers. A church should be a microcosm of that diversity. It takes efforts to work things out when you put different people together. Many couples make adjustments in the early years of their marriages. You and your spouse have different “right ways” to squeeze a toothpaste or fold clothes. It takes a lot of communication and compromise to avoid conflict. How much more effort will it take for us to maintain unity in the same church? Do remember that your brothers and sisters are not your enemies. They are part of the family. Paul urges us to strengthen five virtues: humility, gentleness, patience, love and peace. Perhaps you are a capable person at work or at home. Are you willing to speak less and listen more? Will you be submissive to church leaders when you have a different opinion? Are you willing to work behind the scene than to stand under a spotlight? Will you react with kindness when others make mistakes? You accept people’s difference out of love. In all things you put God first, and put others above yourself.

結論 CONCLUSION

We can be a stepping stone or a stumbling block between God and others. We should not judge a book by its cover. We cannot change people’s appearance. We can only change our perception on others. The hippie era of the 1960s was a challenging period. But the time overlaps with the Jesus Movement. Churches around the world were zealous in sharing the gospel. A story was about a gospel seeker. A young man heard the good news and felt that God was tugging in his heart. He went to a church on a Sunday morning to check things out. He had no idea what customs to follow. It was a very conservative congregation. This long-hair guy wore rugged clothes and he was bare-foot. Everyone else put on a suit or a long dress. The young man walked into the worship hall and sat down on the floor by the front row. There was a dead silence because no one knew how to react. Moments later, an 80-year-old well-respected deacon stood up and walked toward the newcomer. He took off his shiny shoes, lowered his body and sat next to the young man throughout the whole service. In the end, the hippie gave his life to Jesus. This is a picture of the gospel. God does not say to us: “Sorry, you don’t fit in here. This is a members only area. Why don’t you clean up yourself first?” Jesus came down to us because we can never go up to Him by our own effort. Here is a challenge for us as a church: are we willing to serve in God’s welcoming committee? We do not only open our doors but also open our hearts to accept different people.

引言 INTRODUCTION

歧視就是按照人的特徵來分類。一個經典的例子就是 1947 年印度獨立前的階級制度。根據家庭背景、經濟狀況等條件，人們被分成四大類，四大類之下總共有三千個不同的階級！不同等級的人無法結婚，甚至不能一起吃飯。唯一的解決辦法就是嚴格地按照印度教的要求生活，並希望在來世能夠升到更高的社會階層。聖雄甘地是一個民權領袖，他毫無保留地批評那個制度。他在自傳中說，他曾經認為基督信仰是問題的答案。甘地在學生時代曾經認真地讀聖經。他被耶穌的教導啟發。一個星期天，甘地去到教堂。他本來打算請教牧師如何歸入基督教。很可惜，他被一個招待員攔住了。那個人建議甘地回到他的同輩中間繼續敬拜他們的印度教神明。甘地感到失望。他得出結論：基督徒不是愛好和平的人。他在書中寫道：「如果基督徒也實行種族分類，那我還不如繼續做印度教徒。」甘地終生都沒有改變他的信仰。我們對待別人的方式會影響他們看待神的態度。我們可以成為神與非信徒之間的踏腳石，也可以成為絆腳石。在今天的經文中，雅各提到了教會中的偏見問題。在上一章的結尾，他告訴讀者要關心孤兒和寡婦。現在他提醒教會成員不要歧視社會上的窮人。他給了三個理由來說明為什麼這樣做是錯的。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 違反常理 It Contradicts Common sense

第一個原因：偏見是違反常理。每個人都知道歧視是不對的。雅各描述了一個假設但是有可能發生的情況。那個場合可能是主日崇拜。一個有錢人進來。招待員熱情地歡迎他，並帶他到前排座位。過了一會兒，一個窮人也進來了。人們能夠從遠處看到他破舊的衣服。招待員給他兩個選擇：他可以站在旁邊，也可以坐在地上。雅各說這樣做便是按著外貌待人。希臘文的「按著外貌待人」的意思是看人的臉。換句話說，就是從外表來判斷人。為什麼人們接受有錢人但卻看不起窮人？或許他們認為有錢人比較聰明、成功、更勤奮。而窮人是愚蠢、不能幹和懶惰的。可能有些人希望從有錢人身上得到一些好處。如果一些名人成為會員，這將會提高教會的聲譽。他們或許還會明顯地增加奉獻的金額！另一方面，窮人可能會影響教會的形象。成員也會感到壓力，需要在經濟上幫助他們。所有這些猜測都是基於外表。雅各在第 4 節說，這種做法就是「**偏心待人，用惡意斷定人**」。這些判斷不僅主觀而且膚淺，雅各稱它們為邪惡

的！存這種心態的人，已經決定好要接受誰，拒絕誰了。對他們來說，人的外表比品格更重要。這種冷漠的態度會阻礙人們敬拜神。幾年前，我和太太送大兒子去上大學。宿舍安排他在星期日早上搬進去。我們估計可能沒有時間去教會。我們是前一天到達的。前台的服務員允許我們馬上卸貨。因此，第二天我們就有時間去聚會了。問題是我和太太沒有帶任何禮拜天的衣服。我和兒子都穿著短褲！我們去了宿舍後面的一間教會。我想以後孩子沒有車子也可以走路過去。聚會現場約有 200 人，他們幾乎都是白種人。從聚會開始到結束，只有一位同工過來和我們講話，這讓我們覺得不舒服。後來，我建議兒子和同學去其他教會看看，或許多元文化的教會可能更適合他。我很奇怪為什麼沒有人跟我們打招呼。是因為我們是陌生人、不同種族的人，還是因為我們沒有穿適合的衣服？如果我穿一件寫著「我是牧師」的衣服，會有不同的待遇嗎？我從這次不愉快的經驗中學到了一些正面的教訓。如果有一些和我們不同的人來到這裡時，你會有何反應？也許他們的膚色不同，或社會地位不同。他們可能有一些殘疾，或者生來就有明顯的缺陷。耶穌歡迎兒童、婦女、窮人、病人、被鬼附身的人和非猶太人。這些人在當時的社會上是被歧視的。我們應該和耶穌一樣接納任何人。我們必須從福音的角度看人。神不只看到我們的包裝，祂深深地了解我們。每個人都是按照神的形象被創造的。他們在神眼中都是寶貴的，無論他們的背景如何。此外，每個人生來都是罪人，都需要耶穌。因此，讓我們在神和人之間建造一道橋樑，而不是建造一面牆。

2. 違反公理 It Contradicts Social Sense

對別人有偏見是違失常理的。這種態度是錯誤的第二個原因是：它也違反公理。雅各告訴教會成員，那些有錢人不會因為受到了特殊待遇而回報他們。他在 6-7 節說：**6 你們反倒羞辱貧窮人。那富足人豈不是欺壓你們，拉你們到公堂去嗎？7 他們不是褻瀆你們所敬奉的尊名嗎？**那些有錢人不只目中無人，他們也目中無神。基督徒可能是他們看不起的人之一。在古代的世界大多數人都是貧窮的。少數地主控制大部分財富。有錢就會有權。此外，得到一些財富的人會想要更多！因此，窮者越窮，富者越富。許多舊約作者毫無保留地批評這個社會問題。例如，神在阿摩司書 2:6-7 說：**6 「…他們為銀子賣了義人，為一雙鞋賣了窮人。7 他們見窮人頭上所蒙的灰也都垂涎，阻礙謙卑人的道路…」**他們也賄賂法官，讓法官做出有利於他們的判決，造成法庭的不公正。雅各說，那些有錢人不僅壓迫窮人，他們還褻瀆神的名字。也許他們嘲笑基督信仰。相信一個名叫耶穌的人從死裡復活，對他們來說是一件令人難以置信的事。但是，如果那些有錢人根本不尊重基督信仰，他們為什麼會走到教堂？至少有兩個原因。首先，他們要來挑戰基督徒並鬧事的。信徒需要很多智慧和耐心來應付這種情況。第二個可能性，是教會所做的一些事吸引了那些上流人

士。例如，他們可能會想：「為什麼這些宗教狂熱分子總是如此喜樂和滿足的？為什麼他們不怕猶太和羅馬官員呢？他們有些教會成員被抓甚至被殺。他們自己已經夠窮，為什麼還願意與別人分享一切財物？」耶穌曾經遇過這樣一位真誠的福音朋友。一位少年官問耶穌他必須做什麼才能得到永生。主吩咐他變賣一切所有的，分給窮人，然後跟隨祂。他捨不得，因為他很有錢。結果他憂憂愁愁地離開了。耶穌接著說有錢人很難進入神的國。門徒們聽到之後感到驚訝。他們想，如果連一個有權勢的人都無法進入天堂，那麼誰能得救？耶穌在路加福音 18:27 中回答：…「**在人所不能的事，在神卻能。**」沒有人可以靠金錢進入天堂。人們只能靠神的憐憫才能得救。耶穌不是要那個人的錢，祂是要他的心。耶穌的跟隨者不一定要放棄他們的所有東西，但他們必須放棄他們一切的擁有權。耶穌對任何人都有同樣的要求。因為只有一個福音。也只有一種罪人，就是迷失的罪人。無論貧富、東方人或西方人，都必須順服耶穌才能得救。教會不應該鄙視有錢人，儘管他們可能很驕傲。他們可能自認為不需要耶穌，因為他們已經得到了一切。但我們應該歡迎任何政府官員、董事長或電影明星。我們用同樣的方式招待他們。我們不需要為他們煮特別的菜或特別的咖啡。我們也不必改變我們的聚會程序。我們毫無保留地分享同樣的真理。我們告訴他們所有人都需要聽到的信息：必須悔改才能得救。

3. 違反真理 It Contradicts Spiritual Sense

對窮人有偏見違反常理和公理。第三，它也違反真理。儘管窮人的社會地位比較低，神仍然拯救他們。雅各在第 5 節說：**我親愛的弟兄們，請聽，神豈不是揀選了世上的貧窮人，叫他們在信上富足，並承受他所應許給那些愛他之人的國嗎？**神拯救窮人並不是因為他們沒錢。神也不會因有錢人的財富而厭棄他們。窮人要靠別人的施捨。因此，他們欣然接受那位接納他們的神。雅各的教導呼應了保羅在哥林多前書 1:28-29 所說的話：**28 神也揀選了世上卑賤的，被人厭惡的，以及那無有的，為要廢掉那有的。29 使一切有血氣的，在神面前一個也不能自誇。**神的揀選不看人的背景，結果是沒有人能誇口。在神的眼中，真正的貧窮與金錢無關，而是靈裡的貧窮。神拯救那些在祂面前承認自己是破碎的人。我們因自己的罪本該接受永恆的審判，但神卻以恩典對待我們。我們應當常常感謝祂的愛。教會是被救贖的罪人的群體。蒙恩典的人，就應該活出恩典來。因此，對別人有偏見是不符合聖經的。雅各在第 8-9 節繼續說：**8 經上記著說：「要愛人如己。」你們若全守這至尊的律法，才是好的。9 但你們若按外貌待人，便是犯罪，被律法定為犯法的。**有人問耶穌，律法中哪一條誡命是最大的。主回答說，神所有的要求可以用兩個命令來總結：盡心、盡意、盡力地愛神；並且愛鄰舍如同愛自己。鄰居不僅僅是住在你家附近的人，也包括你碰到的陌生人。因為神接納所有的人，如果我們有選擇地愛人，就違背了祂的

命令。雅各直接說，這樣做是一種罪。除了經濟狀況之外，歧視的另一個因素是種族。保羅在以弗所書 4:2-6 勸猶太基督徒不要偏待外邦信徒：**2 凡事謙虛、溫柔、忍耐，用愛心互相寬容，3 用和平彼此聯絡，竭力保守聖靈所賜合而為一的心。4 身體只有一個，聖靈只有一個，正如你們蒙召同有一個指望。5 一主，一信，一洗，6 一神，就是眾人的父，超乎眾人之上，貫乎眾人之中，也住在眾人之內。**這段經文用七個「一」形容我們在基督裡的合一。神從各國、各種膚色、說不同語言的人吸引到祂的國度。天堂將是一個信徒的聯合國。教會應該是這種多元化的縮影。把不同的人放在一起需要互相適應。許多人在婚姻初期都需要做出一些調整。你和你的配偶擠牙膏或摺衣服都有不同的「正確方法」。為了避免衝突，兩個人需要很多溝通和妥協。我們豈不是需要付出更多努力才能維持教會裡的合一？請記住，你的弟兄姐妹不是你的敵人，他們是你的家人。保羅鼓勵我們加強五種美德：謙虛、溫柔、忍耐、愛心與和平。也許你在工作場所或在家裡是一個能幹的人。你願意少說多聽嗎？當你有不同的意見時，你會順服教會的領袖嗎？你願意在幕後事奉而不是在顯眼的崗位嗎？當別人犯錯時，你會以寬容來回應嗎？你因愛心而接受別人的差異。在任何事上你都把神放在第一位，而把別人放在自己之上。

結論 CONCLUSION

我們可以成為神與人之間的踏腳石，或是絆腳石。我們不應該憑封面來評估一本書。我們無法改變別人的外表，我們只能改變對他們的看法。20 世紀 60 年代的嬉皮士時代是一個充滿挑戰的時期。當時也有耶穌運動的興起。世界各地的教會都熱衷於傳福音。有一個故事是關於當時的一位福音朋友。一個年輕人聽到了福音，他感到神在觸動他的心。他在一個星期天早上跑到教會去看看。他不知道要按照什麼規矩。那是一所非常保守的教會。那位男士頭髮長長，衣服破舊，光著腳。其他人都穿上西裝或長裙。年輕人走進禮拜堂，坐在第一排的地板上。馬上一片寧靜，因為沒人知道該如何回應。一會兒之後，一位德高望重的八十歲執事站起來，走向那個男孩。他脫下發亮的皮鞋，彎下腰，在整個崇拜過程中都坐在年輕人的身邊。最後，那個嬉皮士在當天信了耶穌。這就是一幅福音的圖畫。神不會對我們說：「對不起，你不應該到這裡來。這是屬於會員的區域。請你先把自己弄乾淨再說吧。」耶穌降臨到我們中間，因為我們無法靠自己的努力到祂那裡。作為教會，神給我們一個挑戰：我們願意加入神的歡迎委員會嗎？我們不但要打開大門，也要打開自己的心去接納不同的人。