

引言 INTRODUCTION

Does wildlife invade into our neighborhood or do we encroach into their home? It is a matter of perspective. Besides squirrels and deer, another frequent visitors around your house are Canadian geese. Yes, I am talking about our neighbors in the pond. They reproduce young ones and they produce lots of “landmines.” They are not that friendly when you approach them. YouTube is flooded with suggestions on how to chase those birds away. One trick is to use fake animals such as a tiger or wolf to scare them. But those props have a limitation. You must move them around every now and then. Otherwise, geese will eventually figure out that those animals are unreal! Having the look but without any substance can only fool people for so long. The same is true for our faith. Do we behave like Jesus did if we say that we belong to Him? The Bible says Christians are adopted into God’s family. Very often, we put our sole focus on going to heaven after we leave the world. It is like some adopted children only care if they are in the will of their new parents. Those children bear a different family name from now on. People will pay attention if they live up to their name. Likewise, James emphasizes on our current life in this passage. If we claim that God is our Heavenly Father, do we imitate after Him? Our works prove our faith in God. James presents three forms of faith. Only one of them pleases God. Here is an important reminder for you: do not judge others! Do not use the Scripture as a magnifying glass to check on people. Do not conclude in your mind that this person looks like a true believer and that person is probably not. James tells us in chapter one that the Bible functions as a mirror. Use God’s Word to examine yourself, then make changes as the Lord so leads you.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 不足的信心 Defective Faith

I call the first type of faith a defective faith. It is incomplete. James says people who have a defective faith lack actions. Verses 15-16 is a hypothetical but possible situation: **15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?** The person who needed daily necessities was a fellow believer. Before we think of helping strangers in the society, should we not care for someone in the church family first? The member who saw the needy person offered a prayer. That is a good thing to do, but it does not provide an instant solution. James comments in the next verse that such faith that is not accompanied by action is dead. A compassionate heart without any passionate deed does not help much. Sharing is caring. The apostle John brings up the same principle in 1 John 3:17-18 – **17 But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.** Those who withhold their hands to help others are withholding God’s love in their hearts. Love should not only be a feeling. It must also motivate us to take actions. Later in the book, John makes it clear that we cannot say we love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brothers and sisters we can see. Most people in the first century were financially poor. What we call “mercy ministry” today was a major function of the church at that time. Once there was a famine

in Jerusalem. Paul traveled around different places to share the gospel. He asked the churches in foreign cities to collect an offering for him to bring back to Jerusalem. The mother church shared spiritual blessings with them because it was the birth-place of the gospel. They should return the favor by sharing material blessings with them. Paul teaches them in 2 Corinthians 8:14 – **Your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.** The idea is that church A sends extra resources to church B. Perhaps in the future church B can provide for church A when it has shortage. In doing so, no one in the family of God would be lacking. Christians are willing to do so when they understand that every blessing comes from God. Paul says in verse 9 of the same chapter: **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.** Jesus sacrificed everything for us so that we can have an abundant life. We need to think more of Him whenever we are hesitant to help people. May Jesus' rich love motivate us to care for others. We should not only preach love in the church. We must also practice love. Someone may argue: "There are so many people in need. How can I help every one of them?" God is not asking you to sell your house and distribute the money to all the poor people. But are you willing to share what you have with those God brings to your attention? Other than giving money, there are other things you can do. It can be as simple as giving people a ride to the airport and picking them up on their return, or babysitting little ones so that their parents can run some errands. Other times, you can refer people to another person. Perhaps it is a handyman or a mechanic you know. You can also forward a job seeker's resume to somebody in the same field. It is true that helping people is inconvenient. You need to spend time, effort or even money. Those you help may not show appreciation and they may forget your effort. But God will surely remember your kindness. Therefore, there must be joy when you allow God to use you as a messenger of love to others. In the end, no one owes another person a favor because we owe it all to the Lord who gives us everything.

2. 虛假的信心 Deceptive Faith

Some people have a defective faith. They have words but no action. Then there is a deceptive faith. Such faith is unreal. James is debating with a hypothetical opponent in verse 18: **But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.** The person argues that faith and works are separate entities. James challenges the person to prove his faith without doing anything. It is impossible. Such faith is deceptive because it is empty. James continues by using an extreme example in verse 19: **You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!** Demons of course know that there is one true God. They do not even need to believe it because it is a truth. God is real not because Christians believe it to be so. He exists regardless of whether people believe in Him or not. It is like once there was a singing artist from Memphis called Elvis Presley. He lived in history even if you deny it. Does the knowledge about God help the demons in any way? Not really. They tremble when they think of God. The objective information about God does not produce true faith. We must take action and receive Jesus in order to be saved. A lot non-believers heard the stories about Jesus. They know that Jesus came into the world as a baby. He performed miracles to help people, and He taught some great moral lessons. He died on the cross but He somehow came back to life later. All that knowledge is true to the Bible. However, it cannot save people unless they receive Jesus into their hearts. True faith should be supported by actions. There was a true story about a tight-rope runner many years ago.

Once he advertised in a newspaper that he planned to walk on a steel cable that connects between two tall buildings. It drew a large crowd on the day of his performance. The daredevil did some warmup by taking a few steps and then returned to safety. The audience showed their appreciation by clapping hands. The man then announced: “Can you believe that I can walk to the other side?” The crowd showed its confidence: “Yes!” The performer then suggested: “I can carry one of you on my back and walk together if you really have faith in me. Is there any volunteer?” The crowd instantly came to a dead silence. It is one thing to have faith in someone else. It is quite another thing to prove your faith by risking your own life! But as James says all along, true faith must be accompanied by actions. Many Christians know Ephesians 2:8-9, in which Paul says that we are saved by God’s grace through faith. We are not saved by anything we do, so that we cannot take pride in ourselves. Verse 10 continues: **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** Believers are masterpieces in God’s hand. Although we are not saved by good works, we are saved to do good works. True believers are those who received a new life in Christ. He changed us from the inside. As a result, there must be obvious changes in our conduct. Jesus describes our relationship with Him is like grafting a branch to a tree. You know the connection is a success when there are new leaves coming out from the branch. It gets water and nutrients from the tree through the connection. Subsequently, there will be fruits. Similarly, we can do things that please God only when we are attached to Jesus. God’s virtues will flow out from your life naturally if Jesus lives in you. They will become your instinct. You do not even have to remind yourself to be patient in a stressful situation, be gentle toward a rude person and be gracious to overlook people’s mistakes. You do not need to act like a Christian because people can tell that you are one.

3. 有效的信心 Effective Faith

Defective faith is incomplete. Deceptive faith is fake. In comparison, only an effective faith is a real faith. James uses two Biblical characters as illustrations. First, it is the story about Abraham offering his son Isaac based on Genesis 22. God assured Abraham that he would have numerous descendants. How would that promise be fulfilled if his only son died? You know how the story ends. An angel stopped Abraham when he was about to kill his son. God provided a ram as a replacement. Abraham displayed an unshakable faith even though God asked him to do an irrational thing. James draws a conclusion in verse 22: **You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works.** We get the word “synergy” from the Greek term for “active” here. The word means working together. Many companies maintain a synergy between various departments to ensure a success for the firm. Likewise, faith and works are closely related. James says works complete faith. It means that works bring about the intended effects of faith. Then we skip to verse 24: **You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.** The word “justified” means making it right. In plain language, we say that a person is saved by God. Abraham was already justified when he obeyed God’s calling and left his home country. Circumcision, offering Isaac and other steps could not produce faith. Rather, they were the results and proofs of Abraham’s faith. Another person who showed an effective faith was Rahab. Her story is found in Joshua 2. At that time, the Israelites were about to enter into Canaan. Jericho was the first city to capture. Two spies went to survey the area. They hid at Rahab’s home. Someone informed the king about it. He then sent soldiers to hunt down the two enemies. Rahab lied to the guards that the spies had left. Why did she protect them? Rahab told

the spies that her people heard that the Israelites walked across the Red Sea and they defeated strong enemies. She concludes in Joshua 2:11 – “And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.” She credited all those achievements to the Hebrew God. Rahab reasoned that it would be wiser to make an agreement with the spies. You know the rest of the story. God caused the wall of Jericho to fall. The Israelites won. Rahab and her family were spared. She put her faith not just in the two foreigners, but ultimately in a foreign God. Rahab and Abraham demonstrated the same faith. James uses similar words to summarize in verses 21 and 25: **Was not Abraham/Rahab justified by works when he/she did such and such a thing?** Both persons proved their faith through actions before seeing the results. Why does James cite Rahab’s story when there are other examples he can refer to? Rahab was a gentile woman who had a shameful profession. God declared her to be righteous despite her background. He accepts anyone who puts his/her faith in Him. We can never earn righteousness. It is God who justifies us. All we can plead is: “God, have mercy on me, a pitiful sinner.” God activates faith in people in different ways. Abraham’s faith grew through life experience, in particular, from the birth of Isaac. Rahab’s faith began when she heard how God helped the Israelites. Today, God works in you in similar ways too. Perhaps something beyond logic happened in your life. You wondered: “That’s impossible! Was it from God?” Perhaps God shows you that He is real. Or perhaps a Christian friend shares his testimony with you. For example, he walked out unharmed from a major car accident or he got a job even though he was not fully qualified. You reacted: “That’s incredible! Could that be from God?” In either situation, God is shedding light in you. Do not ignore his calling. He invites you to come to know Him. Jesus promised us that those who seek Him will find Him.

結論 CONCLUSION

Our works prove our faith in God. How you behave reveals what you believe. I had an interesting conversation with my younger son recently. We were eating lunch at home. A football game was about to start on TV. As usual, the national anthem was sung before the game. My son asked how I would feel if someone refused to stand. I said some people put too much emphasis on freedom. They do not want others to force them to do something they do not like. The fact is that if they truly love their country, then they will stand without being asked. I added that Christians should express their faith in the same manner. Jesus says those who love Him will obey His commands. Reading the Bible, coming to church meetings and sharing the gospel, etc. are more than obligations. They are expressions of our love to the Lord who loved us first. If you follow God’s instructions only when you have free time or when it is convenient to you, then who do you love the most? Real actions reflect true faith. Those who have a defective faith need to correct it. Those who have a deceptive faith need to convert to a true faith. Those who have an effective faith should continue to cultivate it and convey it to others.

引言 INTRODUCTION

到底是野生動物侵入我們的社區，或是我們會佔領牠們的地頭？這是一個觀點的問題。除了松鼠和鹿之外，加拿大鵝也可能常常在你家附近出現。那些鳥把我們教會的池塘當作牠們的家。牠們繁殖後代，也出產很多「地雷」。當你靠近牠們時，牠們並不那麼友善。在 YouTube 上有許多如何趕走鵝的建議。其中一招是使用假的老虎或狼等來嚇走牠們。但那些道具有一個限制。你必須時不時地移動它們。否則，鵝最終會發現那些動物是假的！光有外表而無實質只能欺騙人一段時間。我們的信仰也是如此。如果我們說我們屬於耶穌，我們的行為也應該像耶穌。聖經說基督徒是被收養進入神的家庭的。很多時候，我們只關心離開這個世界之後去天堂。就好像有些被收養的孩子只在乎他們是否在父母的遺囑裡。從現在起，那些孩子有不同的姓氏。人們會注意他們有沒有代表他們的家族。同樣，雅各在這段經文中強調了我們在世上的生活。如果我們宣稱神是我們的天父，我們真的效法祂嗎？我們的行為證明了我們對神的信心。雅各提出了三種不同的信心，只有其中一種是討神喜悅的。這裡有一個重要的提醒：不要批評別人！不要把聖經當作放大鏡來評估別人。不要在心裡認定這個人看起來像個真信徒，那個人可能不是。雅各在第一章告訴我們，聖經就像一面鏡子。我們要用神的話語來檢查自己，然後按照主的心意做出適當的改變。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 不足的信心 Defective Faith

我把第一種信心稱為不足的信心。它是不完整的。雅各說，信心不足的人缺乏行為。第 15-16 節是假設但可能的情况：**15 若是弟兄或是姐妹，赤身露體，又缺了日用的飲食；16 你們中間有人對他們說：「平平安安的去吧！願你們穿得暖，吃得飽」；卻不給他們身體所需用的，這有什麼益處呢？**那個有需要的人是一位信徒。在我們考慮幫助陌生人之前，我們豈不是應該先關心教會裡的肢體嗎？為有需要的人禱告是一件好事，但不能馬上解決問題。雅各在下一節中說，沒有行為的信心是死的。只有憐憫的心而沒有實際行動是沒有多大幫助的。分享資源就是愛的表達。使徒約翰在約翰一書 3:17-18 中提出了同樣的原則：**17 凡有世上財物的，看見弟兄窮乏，卻塞住憐恤的心，愛神的心怎能存在他裡面呢？18 小子們哪，我們相愛，不要只在言語和舌頭上，總要在行為和誠實上。**那些不願意伸出援手去幫助別的人，就是不願意分享神的愛。愛不應該只是一種感覺。愛也必須激勵我們採取行動。約翰在這卷書的後面補充，如果我們不愛那些看得見的弟兄姐妹，我們就不能

說我們愛那位看不見的神。第一世紀大多數的人都是窮人。救濟窮人是當時教會的主要功能。我們今天稱之為慈善事工。有一次，耶路撒冷發生了飢荒。保羅到處去傳福音。他要求外邦城市的教會收集奉獻，讓他帶回耶路撒冷。那是福音的發源地，母會的領袖與外邦人分享屬靈的祝福。現在外邦的信徒應該以物質來回報他們的恩情。保羅在哥林多後書 8:14 教導他們：**乃要均平，就是要你們的富餘，現在可以補他們的不足，使他們的富餘，將來也可以補你們的不足，這就均平了。**那個原則是，教會 A 分享資源給教會 B。將來教會 B 有需要的話，也可以向教會 A 求助。於是，大家都不會缺乏了。當基督徒明白一切祝福都來自神之時，他們就會願意那樣做。保羅在同一章的第 9 節說：**你們知道我們主耶穌基督的恩典：他本來富足，卻為你們成了貧窮，叫你們因他的貧窮，可以成為富足。**耶穌為我們犧牲了一切，賜給我們豐盛的生命。每當我們猶豫是否要幫助別人時，我們應該多想到主。願耶穌的愛激勵我們去關心別人。我們不應該只在教會裡談論愛，我們也必須實踐愛。有人可能會問：「到處都是有需要的人。我怎可能幫助每個人？」神並沒有要求你賣掉房子並將錢分給所有窮人。但是你願意分享你的東西給那些神讓你碰到的人嗎？除了捐錢以外，還有其他的事情可以做。例如接送別人往返機場，或是幫忙照顧小孩，讓他們的父母可以去辦事。另外，你可以把專家介紹給別人。也許是你認識的維修工人或修車師傅。你也可以把找工作的人的履歷轉發給同行的人。幫助別人確實會帶給你不方便。你需要花時間、心思甚至金錢。你所幫助的人可能不會感激你，他們可能會忘記你的愛心。但神一定會記念你的恩惠。因此，當你讓神使用你向別人傳達愛的時候，你一定會感到喜樂。沒有人欠別人甚麼人情，因為我們都欠那位給我們一切的主。

2. 虛假的信心 Deceptive Faith

有些人的信心不足。他們只是說說而已，沒有行動。然後還有一種虛假的信心。這樣的信心是不真實的。雅各在第 18 節中與一個假設的對手進行辯論：**必有人說：「你有信心，我有行為；你將你沒有行為的信心指給我看，我便藉著我的行為，將我的信心指給你看。」**那個人認為信心和行為是可以單獨存在的。雅各便挑戰對方不用做任何事來證明他的信心。那是不可能的。如此的信心是虛假的，而且是空洞的。雅各在第 19 節用一個極端的例子來說明：**你信神只有一位，你信的不錯；鬼魔也信，卻是戰驚。**邪靈當然知道只有一位真神。他們甚至不需要相信，因為那是真理。神是真實存在的，並不是因為基督徒如此相信。無論人們是否相信神，祂都是存在的。就像曾經有一位來自孟菲斯名叫貓王的歌星。就算你否認，他也曾經活在歷史中。關於神的知識對魔鬼有任何幫助嗎？沒有。當他們想到神之時只會發抖。關於神的客觀知識並不能產生真正的信心。我們必須採取行動並接受耶穌才能得救。許多非信徒聽過有關耶穌的故事。他們知道耶穌是以嬰兒的身分來到世界。祂行神蹟來幫助人們，並教導了一些偉大的道理。祂死在十字架上，但之後又復活了。所有這些信息都是根據聖經。然而，除非人們接受耶穌進入他們的內心，否則

便無法得救。真正的信心需要用行動來證明。很多年前有一個關於走鋼索的人的真實故事。他在報紙上登廣告說他計劃在連接兩座高樓的鋼纜上行走。表演當天吸引了大批觀眾。他走了幾步熱身，然後返回安全地帶。觀眾紛紛鼓掌表示鼓勵。然後，他問觀眾：「你相信我能走到對面嗎？」全部人一致回答：「可以的！」於是他建議說：「如果你們真的相信我，我可以背著一個人，一起走過去。有哪位願意？」全場馬上鴉雀無聲。相信別人能夠做到是一回事，冒生命危險去證明你的信心卻是另一回事！但正如雅各一直強調，真正的信心必須伴隨著行動。許多基督徒都知道以弗所書 2:8-9，其中保羅說，我們是因信而得救的。我們無法靠做任何事情而得救，因此沒有人能自誇。保羅在第 10 節繼續說：**我們原是他的工作，在基督耶穌裡造成的，為要叫我們行善，就是神所預備叫我們行的。**信徒是神手中的傑作。雖然我們不是因善行而得救，但我們得救是為了行善。真正的信徒是那些在基督裡獲得新生命的人。耶穌從內心改變了我們。因此，我們的行為也必須有明顯的改變。耶穌形容我們與祂的關係就像將樹枝連接到葡萄樹上。當樹枝長出新葉子時，就表示連接成功了。樹枝從樹上得到水分和養分，逐漸也會結果子。同樣，我們唯有與耶穌連接，才能做到神喜悅的事。如果耶穌住在你心裡，神的美德就會自然地從你的生命中流露出來。那些特質就會成為你的本能。你甚至不用提醒自己在壓力之下要保持耐心，對沒有禮貌的人要顯出溫柔，對犯錯的人表示寬容。你不需要裝出來像個基督徒，因為人們能看出你就是個基督徒。

3. 有效的信心 Effective Faith

不足的信心是有缺陷的。虛假的信心是不真實的。相比之下，只有有效的信心才是明顯的信心。雅各用兩個聖經人物作為例子。首先是亞伯拉罕獻上他兒子以撒的故事，記載在創世記第 22 章。神答應賜給亞伯拉罕無數的後代。如果他唯一的兒子死了，這個應許將如何實現呢？你知道故事的結局。當亞伯拉罕正要殺死他的兒子時，一位天使阻止了他。神提供一隻公羊作為替代。雖然神要求亞伯拉罕做一件非理性的事情，但他仍然表現出堅定不移的信心。雅各在第 22 節中得出結論：**可見信心是與他的行為並行，而且信心因著行為才得成全。**「並行」的意思是互相合作。許多公司都強調各部門要彼此協調，確保公司的成功。同樣，信心和行為也有密切的關係。雅各說，信心因著行為得到成全。他的意思是行為帶出信心的預期效果。然後我們跳到第 24 節：**這樣看來，人稱義是因著行為，不是單因著信。**「稱義」這個字有糾正的意思。用一般的話來說，我們說一個得救了。當亞伯拉罕聽從神的呼召離開家鄉的時候，他就已經被稱為義了。割禮、獻上以撒等事情都無法產生信心。那些行動是亞伯拉罕信心的結果和證明。另一個表現出有效信心的人是喇合。她的故事記載在約書亞記第 2 章。當時，以色列人即將進入迦南。耶利哥是第一個要被佔領的城市。兩名探子前往偵察該地區。他們躲在喇合的家裡。有人將事情告訴了耶利哥的王。他隨即派士兵去追捕兩名敵人。喇合向守衛撒謊說探子已經離開了。她為什麼要保護他們？喇合告訴探子們，人民聽說以色列人渡過了紅

海，並且打敗了強大的敵人。她在約書亞記 2:11 中得出結論：「我們一聽見這些事，心就消化了。因你們的緣故，並無一人有膽氣。耶和華你們的神本是上天下地的神。」她把所有這些成就歸功於希伯來人的神。喇合認為，與探子達成協議是明智的做法。你知道故事的發展。神使耶利哥城牆倒塌。以色列人勝利了。喇合和她的家人被保存。她不只是對兩個外族人有信心，她也把信心放在一個她不認識的神。喇合和亞伯拉罕表現出同樣的信心。雅各在第 21 節和第 25 節用類似的話來總結：亞伯拉罕或喇合做了_____事，豈不是因著行為稱義嗎？兩人都是在看到結果之前用行動證明自己的信心。既然有其他例子可以參考，為什麼雅各要引用喇合的故事呢？喇合是一名外邦女子，而且從事並不光彩的職業。但無論她的背景如何，神都稱她為義。神接受任何相信祂的人。我們永遠無法靠自己的努力得救，是神使我們成為義。我們唯一能夠向神懇求的是：「神啊，可憐我這個不配的罪人。」神用不同的方式啟動人的信心。亞伯拉罕透過經歷神而增加他的信心，特別是藉著以撒的出生。喇合的信心是從她聽到神如何幫助以色列人的時候開始的。今天，神也用類似的方式在你的生命工作。也許你碰到一些無法用邏輯解釋的事情。你懷疑地說：「這是不可能！難道這是來自神的嗎？」可能神正在告訴你祂是真實存在的。或者一位基督徒朋友和你分享他的見證。他遇到嚴重的車禍，但是毫無受傷地走出來。或者雖然他並不完全符合資格，但卻他得到了一份工作。你的反應是：「太不可思議了！這是神的作為嗎？」無論哪種情況，神把光照到你的內心。不要忽略祂的呼喚。祂邀請你來認識祂。耶穌向我們承諾，那些尋求祂的人必然會找到祂。

結論 CONCLUSION

我們的行為證明了我們對神的信心。行為顯示出你的信心。最近我和小兒子有一段有意思的對話。我們在家吃午餐。電視上一場美式足球比賽即將開始。與往常一樣，比賽前唱國歌。我兒子問我，如果有人拒絕站起來我會有什麼感覺。我說有些人太強調個人的自由。他們不希望別人強迫他們做他們不喜歡的事。事實上，如果他們真的愛自己的國家，那麼他們就會主動站出來。我補充說，基督徒應該以同樣的態度表達他們的信心。耶穌說，愛祂的人就會遵守祂的命令。讀聖經、參加聚會、傳福音等不只是責任。那些行為表達了我們對主的愛。如果你只在有空或方便的時候才遵從神的吩咐，那麼你到底最愛的是誰？實際行動表現出真正的信心。信心不足的人需要糾正它。那些有虛假信心的人需要接受耶穌，轉變為真正的信心。擁有有效信心的人應該繼續增長信心，並把它傳遞給別人。