

引言 INTRODUCTION

In this letter, James keeps emphasizing the relationship between faith and works. Our faith in God is not some abstract doctrine to study in church. It must be lived out in daily life too. So far James tells us how our faith helps us navigate trials, overcome temptations and remove bias. He focuses on speech in our passage today. He first brings up the topic in 1:26 – **If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.** Language is a basic way for communication. James begins chapter 3 by cautioning his readers not to aspire to become teachers. People set a high expectation for them. At that time, Jewish rabbis were well-respected in the society. Before printing was invented, teachers used spoken words to convey knowledge. The Old Testament was a major teaching material. It was expensive and sacred, and most people could not afford nor access it. Those who could read and teach were seen as wise guys. People followed their advice. Words carry meanings. You do not need to be a teacher to realize that. The things you say reveal what is in your heart. Strangers get a first impression of you from your appearance. They can know you more by the way you talk. They will come to some initial conclusions about you. For example, whether you are a sincere and trustworthy person. The question is, what shapes your character? James tells us that our faith in God should control our speech. To put it in another way, our words must be consistent with God's Word.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 決定方向 Decide Our Path

Our speech is important because it can decide our path. James uses two examples to illustrate that. The first object is the bit of a horse. A bit is a metal ring put across a horse's mouth. It is connected to a strap. When a rider pulls the strap to one side, the bit will be steered to the same direction. When the bit turns, so will the head of the horse. Then the animal will know where its master wants to go. The second illustration is the rudder of a boat. At that time, a boat was either powered by rowing the oars or by the wind caught on a sail. A boatman can control the direction of the vessel by adjusting a rudder at the tail. A bit weighs less than half a pound. That is very light compared to a 1,000-pound horse. A common aircraft-carrier has two rudders. Each of them is over 100,000 pounds. You may think that is a lot. It is actually a very small fraction when you consider that the whole ship is above 200 million pounds! Turning a small device will decide the path of a bigger object. You may not ride a horse or cruise on a boat. Most people drive cars. You can change the path of your vehicle by rotating the steering-wheel. A tongue is less than three ounces. But this small organ can decide our path too. James brings up a negative effect of our speech in verse 5: **So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things...** To boast is to brag about yourself. For example, sometimes we exaggerate personal accomplishment. You tell people that you invented a product for your company but you omit the fact that that it was a team effort. People will conclude that you are either good at making things or good at making things up. It may fool others for a season. Before long, they will find out that you are not telling the whole truth. It happens all the time in the political arena, especially during the election

season. Candidates will announce big plans, hoping that voters will support them. In the end, people get disappointed if those officials do not fulfill their promises. Politicians make excuses that they do not have the right resources or manpower, or they may blame others for their mistakes. Boasting is a common tactic in marketing too. A glass-cleaner says it is the world's best on the can. I wonder if the manufacturer really tests all the brands in the world. A disinfectant claims that it can kill 99.9% of all the germs. It does not say what the remaining 0.1% it cannot get rid of. Manufacturers boast about their products to attract customers. Words convey more than information. They build trust between people. We all heard the expression "honesty is the best policy" before. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 5:37 – **"Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil."** The context is about making oaths. At that time, people swore by God's name to affirm what they said. Jesus cut to the chase by saying that we do not even need to make a vow if we tell the truth. Sometimes, we try to protect ourselves by telling half-truths. We are afraid to lose face or even our job. We do not want to hurt people's feelings. But are we not concerned about hurting God's heart? Honest talk should be a signature of God's children. Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 4:25 – **Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.** It is part of Paul's old-self versus new-self lesson. Those who are in Christ have taken off their former sinful nature, and they have put on God's righteousness. As a result, they must reflect God's nature in their actions. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth. He lives in believers. Therefore, they must speak the truth. We should seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit before opening our mouths. For example, we ask God for courage to admit our mistakes and make apologies. We ask Him for boldness to speak against sins. If we care more about God's glory then we will have less concern about personal gain or loss. Truthful speech will lead us to the right path God desires.

2. 毀滅能力 Destroy with Power

Speech can decide our path. Secondly, it can also destroy with power. James describes our words as fire. A small spark can burn up a forest if it is out of control. Many people in the Los Angeles area lost everything due to the recent wild fires. In 2019, a fire also broke out at the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. Some workmen were doing restoration projects. A spark was generated in a machine. In turn, a small fire grew bigger. People watched helplessly as priceless artifacts and architecture were consumed by the flame. Our words can destroy like a fire too. The author explains in verse 6: **And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.** Our tongue can do many wicked things. The phrase "the entire course of life" was borrowed from pagan religions. It depicts an unending cycle of reincarnation. The general idea here is about the ups and downs of life. Our speech can lead to positive and negative outcomes depending on how we say it. A fire has the power to destroy. But it can also bring us benefits if we control it properly. A furnace burns gas to warm your home and a water-heater also uses gas to boil water. Likewise, our speech can help or hurt people. Let us think for a moment the bad use of words. We mentioned lying and boasting before. What else comes to your mind? The following items are on my list: gossip, slander, flattery, rebuke, humiliation, ridicule, criticism and judgment. Our tongue can really cause a lot of harm. It can destroy trust and reputation. It can break friendships and marriages. It can end a business deal and a career. How can we minimize and even avoid all those damages? A fire will keep burning when there are flammable

materials. Proverbs 26:20 gives a good suggestion: **For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.** A fire will eventually extinguish when there is no more wood to burn. Similarly, rumor will stop when mouths are shut. People often love to play detectives. They see, hear or know part of the story. Then they use imagination to complete the picture. More than likely, they assume bad things and they guess it wrong. All they have to do is to clarify the matter with the person in question. A senior lady said to her friend who does not have good hearing: “Someone told me the pastor has cataracts.” The second person responded: “What? Our pastor has a Cadillac? That is flashy!” You cannot predict what will happen if the information is not corrected on the spot. Before long, the message may become: the pastor owns a private jet! You can be the person who starts, spreads or stops a rumor. You can be a fire-fighter or a fire-lighter. Which role would you rather play? A common problem in communication is miscommunication. We should avoid jumping to a conclusion before fact-checking. A simple question to ask is: “Is that based on facts, a trusted source or is it only your personal opinion?” James concentrates on the destructive sides of speech. Of course, there are constructive uses of words too. We can speak positive things to encourage, comfort, praise and affirm people. One powerful statement I learned many years ago is: “I’m so proud of you.” Who would not like to hear that if you say it with sincerity? We can also open our mouths to pray for people and share the gospel to non-believers. Moreover, a genuine apology can dissolve conflicts and heal wounds. May the Lord help us use kind words to build others up.

3. 表明目的 Define Our Purpose

Our speech can decide our path. It can also destroy with power. Thirdly, our speech also defines the purpose in our hearts. James describes an unfortunate but common situation. We use the same tongue to praise God and poke others. We do that due to our human sinfulness. But James explains that it is inconceivable by using two analogies in verses 11-12: **11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.** The answer to both questions is of course a no. A spring can only produce one kind of water, and a tree can only bear one type of fruit. But why do our mouths give glorious talk and slanderous speech at the same time? It is because we are good at putting on a disguise. We look professional and confident at work. We appear as nice and godly in church. We return to our wild nature when we are home. Your family members know which version is the real you. A family was eating at a restaurant. The father led everyone in saying grace. Moments later, the man began to complain. He said the meat was over-cooked and the carrots were too hard to chew. His little daughter raised a question: “Daddy, did God hear you when you gave thanks to Him?” “Absolutely!” The father replied. “Did God hear you when you complained about the food?” The daughter continued. Feeling embarrassed, the dad responded: “I think He did too.” The little girl then asked: “So which part does God believe?” The answer is both. It is not a tongue issue. It is a heart problem. Jesus points it out in Luke 6:45 – **“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”** Our tongue is connected to our heart. The question is: what fills your heart? Is it self-centeredness? Do you only love to talk about yourself all day? Do you cannot wait to prove that you are right and others are wrong? Is there even a time-bomb inside? Do you get mad quickly when people give you suggestions? Do you get defensive when people bring up your mistakes? Is there any gentleness? Are you willing to accept others’

viewpoints when God's truth is not compromised? Do you bear a teachable heart and eager to learn new information? Is your heart full of God's wisdom? Can you quote Bible verses when people ask you for advice? Do you explain things based on God's Word and not just from personal opinions? We must saturate our mind with the Scriptures before we can say godly things. It goes back to James' reminder that we should be both hearers and doers of God's Word. Then we will think the truth, walk the truth and talk the truth. Some of you know the THINK acronyms. We need to think about those five elements before we say anything. They are quite consistent with the Bible. T stands for true. Is the content based on facts, speculations or feelings? H is helpful. We should speak with the intent to bless others. The letter I refers to inspiring. One way to build others up is to contribute to new ideas. N represents necessary. There are situations where it is better to keep our mouth shut. For example, when a discussion is about to turn into an argument, when the other party is not ready to listen or when you are comforting someone who lost a loved-one. Lastly, K means kind. We must season our speech with love and patience. If we do not THINK before we speak, then the content may STINK. The five negative components are selfish, toxic, insensitive, negative and kill-joy. They are self-explanatory. Our speech defines our purpose. Let us be intentional to glorify God and edify one another with words. May our speech be full of God's wisdom.

結論 CONCLUSION

Our words must be consistent with God's Word. Positive words can motivate people to do beautiful things. The general manager of a large grocery store chain was conducting a training for employees. She stated that what people say can really make a difference in others' lives. A young man named Johnny kept that statement in his heart. He is a bagger at a store. He was born with disability. After talking to his father, they came up with an idea to put that advice into practice. They typed encouraging words on a computer and printed them out every evening. On the next day, Johnny put a slip of paper with the quote of the day into one bag. He told customers: "I left something very special for you in this sack. I hope it will brighten your day." A few weeks later, the store-manager noticed something amazing happened. Johnny's checkout line was always the longest. Employees persuaded people to go to other cashiers. They would reply: "That's OK. I'll wait because I want Johnny's encouraging word for the day." Some customers even shop more often just to get an encouraging word. There were some changes in the store's culture too. Associates at the floral department used to throw away broken flowers. Now they will walk to the checkout line and pin flowers onto senior ladies or young girls and make them smile. All the positive effects are results from the constructive words Johnny shared. You can be a Johnny at home, in the office, among your friends and in the church. Use words to build people up and not tearing them down. Be out-spoken to praise others in public for job well-done. Be patient and forgiving when someone made a mistake. Not just see problems but help fix them too. Be a team-player but not a judge and an outsider.

引言 INTRODUCTION

在這封書信中，雅各不斷強調信心和行為之間的關係。我們對神的信心並不是教會裡學習的抽象教義，那些道理也必須實踐在日常生活中。到目前為止，雅各告訴我們信心如何幫助我們克服試煉、抵擋試探和消除歧視。在今天的經文，雅各的重點是言語。他在 1:26 提過這個課題：**若有人自以為虔誠，卻不勒住他的舌頭，反欺哄自己的心，這人的虔誠是虛的。**語言是溝通的基本方式。雅各在第三章開頭提醒讀者不要羨慕成為老師。人們對老師有很高的期望。當時，猶太人的拉比在社會上受到尊敬。在印刷技術發明之前，老師透過說話來傳遞知識。舊約聖經是主要的教材。它既昂貴又神聖，大多數人買不起也接觸不到。那些能讀書、能教書的人被視為有智慧的人。人們聽從他們的建議。言語帶著意思。你不需要是老師也能明白這一點。你所講的話顯示出你心裡的想法。陌生人從你的外表對你產生第一個印象。他們可以透過你的講話進一步認識你。他們會得出一些初步結論。例如你是否是一個真誠、值得信賴的人。問題是，是什麼塑造你的品格？雅各告訴我們，我們對神的信心應該掌管我們的言語。換句話說，我們的言語必須與神的話語一致。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 決定方向 Decide Our Path

言語很重要，因為它可以決定我們人生的方向。雅各用兩個例子來說明。首先是馬的嚼環。嚼環是套在馬嘴上的一個金屬的圈。它連在一條繩子上。當騎馬的人把繩子拉向一邊時，嚼環也會轉到相同的方向。當嚼環轉動時，馬的頭也會跟著轉動。這樣動物就知道主人想要去的方向。第二個例子是船的舵。那時，船的動力是靠搖槳，或是靠風吹動帆。船夫用船尾的舵來控制方向。嚼環的重量不到半磅。與一匹 1,000 磅重的馬相比，那是非常的輕。一般的航空母艦有兩個舵。每個都超過 10 萬磅。你覺得那已經很重了。如果你考慮到整艘船超過 2 億磅，舵實際上是非常小的東西！轉動一個小的配件將決定一個更大物體的方向。你可能不騎馬也不開船。大多數人都開車。當你轉動方向盤便可以改變車子的路線。人的舌頭不到三盎司，但這個小的器官也可以決定我們的方向。雅各在第 5 節中提出言語的負面影響：**這樣，舌頭在百體裡也是最小的，卻能說大話...**說大話就是吹牛。例如，有時我們誇大個人成就。你告訴別人你為公司發明了一件新產品，但你卻沒有說那是團隊共同努力的成果。人們會下結論，你可能擅長製造東西，或是你擅長編故事。大話或許能暫時欺騙別人。不久之後，人們會發現你並沒有說出全部真相。這種事情經常在政治舞台上發生，特別是在選舉的時候。候選人會宣布一些偉大的計劃，希望得

到選民的支持。最終，如果那些官員沒有履行承諾，人們就會失望。政客可能會藉口說沒有足夠的資源或人力，或是將錯誤歸咎於別人。吹牛也是廣告慣用的手段。某一個清潔用品說，它是世界上最好的玻璃清潔劑。難道那家公司真的測試了世界上所有的牌子嗎？一種消毒劑聲稱可以殺死 99.9% 的細菌。但是它並沒有說不能除掉的剩下 0.1% 是什麼細菌。廠商誇大自己的產品來吸引顧客。文字不只是傳達信息，它能建立信任。英文有一語話說：「誠實是最好的策略」。耶穌在馬太福音 5:37 教導我們：「你們的話，是，就說是；不是，就說不是；若再多說，就是出於那惡者。」上下文是有關發誓的。當時，人們以神的名起誓，表明自己是說真話。耶穌直截了當地說，如果我們說誠實話，那麼就根本不需要發誓。有時，我們用白色謊言來保護自己。我們害怕沒面子，甚至害怕失去工作。我們也不想傷害別人的情感。但我們不擔心傷神的心嗎？誠實的談話應該是神兒女的標誌。保羅在以弗所書 4:25 說得很清楚：「所以你們要棄絕謊言，各人與鄰舍說實話，因為我們是互相為肢體。」這句經文是保羅關於老我與新我比較的一部分。那些在基督裡的人已經除掉過去的罪性，並且披上神的公義。因此，他們應該以行為活出神的性情。聖靈是真理的靈。祂活在信徒的心中。因此，他們必須說實話。我們在開口說話之前應該尋求聖靈的智慧。例如，我們祈求神給我們勇氣去承認錯誤並道歉。我們祈求祂給我們膽量去指出罪。如果我們關心神的榮耀，那麼我們就不會太在意個人的得與失。真實的言語將引導我們走在神的義路上。

2. 毀滅能力 Destroy with Power

言語可以決定我們的方向。其次，言語還帶有毀滅的能力。雅各形容我們的言語像火。如果失去控制，一點火花就可能燒毀整個森林。最近洛杉磯地區的許多人因為山火失去了一切。在 2019 年，巴黎的聖母院教堂也發生火災。一些工人在進行維修工程。一部機器產生了火花。沒多久，小火越燒越大。人們只能眼巴巴地看著珍貴的文物和建築物被火燒毀。我們的言語也能夠像火一樣造成破壞。作者在第 6 節解釋：「舌頭就是火，在我們百體中，舌頭是個罪惡的世界，能污穢全身，也能把生命的輪子點起來，並且是從地獄裡點著的。」我們的舌頭能做出許多邪惡的事。「生命的輪子」這個詞語是從異教借用的。它描述不斷循環的輪迴。雅各所指的是生命的起起伏伏。我們的言語可能導致正面或反面的結果，取決於我們說話的方式。火具有毀滅的能力。但如果我們控制得恰當，火也能為我們帶來好處。火爐燒天然氣使你的家溫暖，熱水器也使用天然氣來燒水。同樣，我們的言語可以建立別人，也可以拆毀別人。讓我們思考一下一些傷害人的言語。我們之前提過撒謊和吹牛。你還想到了什麼？以下是我的清單：閒話、毀謗、拍馬屁、咒罵、羞辱、嘲笑、批評和論斷。我們的舌頭確實能夠造成很多傷害。它會拆毀信任和聲譽。它可以破壞友誼和婚姻。它可能結束一筆生意交易和一份工作。我們如何減低甚至避免這些損害？有易燃物品，火就會一直燃燒。箴言 26:20 給了很好的建議：「火缺了柴就必熄滅；無人傳舌，爭競便止息。」當沒有木頭可燒時，火最終會熄滅。同樣，只要閉上

嘴巴，謠言就會停止。人們常常喜歡扮演偵探。他們看到、聽到或知道事情的一部分，然後他們發揮想像力來完成故事。很可能他們會想到負面的情況並且猜錯。他們只需要向當事人澄清事實便能避免誤會。一位老太太對她聽力不好的朋友說：「聽說老張有痛風。」第二個人回答：「什麼？誰中風？」如果不馬上糾正信息，你無法預計事情會怎樣扭曲。不久之後，消息可能會變成：老張中了頭獎！你可以成為製造、傳播或阻止謠言的人。你可以成為滅火的人，或是點火的人。你希望扮演哪一個角色？溝通中常見的問題是誤會。我們在弄清楚真相之前不要妄下結論。一個簡單的問題是：「這是基於事實、可靠來源還是只是你的個人觀點？」雅各提到言語能造成的破壞。當然，言語也能夠帶來益處。我們可以說正面的話來鼓勵、安慰、讚賞和肯定別人。我多年前學到的一句有力的話就是：「我為你感到驕傲。」如果你真心地說這句話，誰會不喜歡聽呢？我們也可以開口為別人禱告，向非信徒傳福音。此外，真誠的道歉可以化解衝突、醫治傷口。願主幫助我們用良善的言語來建立別人。

3. 表明目的 Define Our Purpose

我們的言語可以決定人生的方向，也帶有毀滅的能力。第三，我們的言語也表明心裡的目的。雅各描述一個不幸但常見的情況。我們用舌頭來讚美神並咒罵人。我們這樣做是由於人性的敗壞。但雅各在第 11-12 節中使用兩個例子來解釋這是不應該的：**11 泉源從一個眼裡能發出甜苦兩樣的水嗎？12 我的弟兄們，無花果樹能生橄欖嗎？葡萄樹能結無花果嗎？鹹水裡也不能發出甜水來。**兩個問題的答案當然是否定的。一個泉源只能流出一種水，一棵樹只能結出一種果子。但為什麼我們的口中會同時說出讚美和咒罵的言辭呢？因為我們善於偽裝。我們在工作場所看起來很專業且充滿自信。我們在教會裡表現得友善而虔誠。當我們回到家時，我們就會歸回原來的樣子。你的家人最清楚哪個版本才是真正的你。有一家人在餐館吃飯。父親帶領大家做謝飯禱告。過了一會兒，他開始抱怨。他說肉煮得太熟了，紅蘿蔔太硬，咬不動。小女兒問他：「爸爸，你向神感謝的時候，祂聽到了嗎？」父親回答：「神當然聽到！」女兒繼續問：「當你埋怨食物的時候，神聽到嗎？」父親覺得尷尬，並回答說：「我想祂也一定聽到的。」小女孩又問：「那麼神相信哪一部分的話呢？」答案是兩部分都相信。那不是舌頭的問題，而是心靈的問題。耶穌在路加福音 6:45 中指出：**「善人從他心裡所存的善就發出善來；惡人從他心裡所存的惡就發出惡來；因為心裡所充滿的，口裡就說出來。」**我們的舌頭與心靈相連。問題是：什麼東西充滿你的心？你是一個自我中心的人嗎？你是否整天只愛談論自己？你是否迫不及待地想證明自己是對的、別人是錯的？你的內心是否裝有一個定時炸彈？當別人給你建議時你會很容易生氣嗎？當人們指出你的錯誤時，你會馬上為自己辯護嗎？你的內心是否懷著溫柔？如果跟真理沒有衝突的話，你願意接受別人的觀點嗎？你有沒有一顆受教的心並渴望學習新的事物？你的心裡是否充滿神的智慧？當人們向你徵求意見時，你能引用聖經來回答嗎？你是否根據神的話語而不只

是憑著個人的立場來解釋事情？我們必須記住神的話語，然後才能說出敬虔的話。就像雅各之前的提醒，我們必須聽道而且行道。這樣，我們就自然會思考真理、實行真理、並談論真理。有些人知道 THINK (思考) 這個簡寫。在說話之前，我們需要先想到這五個要點。這五方面和聖經一致。T 代表真實。我們說話的內容是基於事實、推測還是感覺？H 是指益處。我們講話的目的是要造就別人。I 表示啟發。一個建立別人的方法就是提出新的想法。N 代表必要。在某些情況下，我們最好保持沉默。例如，當討論快要變成爭論時，當對方不願意聆聽時，或當你在安慰失去親人的人時。最後，K 代表良善。我們必須用愛心和耐心來調和我們的言語。如果我們說話前不思考，那麼說話的內容可能會發臭。那五種負面因素是自私、有害、遲鈍、消極和掃興。我想不需要進一步解釋，我們都能夠明白。我們的言語表明了我們的目的。讓我們留心用言語來榮耀神並互相建立。願我們的言語充滿神的智慧。

結論 CONCLUSION

我們的言語必須與神的話語一致。正面的言語可以激勵人們去做美好的事情。一家連鎖超市的總經理在培訓員工。她表示言語能夠影響別人的生命。一位名叫強尼 (Johnny) 的年輕人把這句話記在心中。他在商店負責把顧客買的東西裝在袋子裡。他天生有殘疾。回到家後，他和父親討論如何把總經理的建議付諸行動。他們決定每天晚上在電腦上打一些鼓勵的話，然後把它們印出來。第二天，強尼將紙條放進袋子裡。他告訴客人：「我在這個袋子裡留下一些特別的東西給你。我希望它能使你心情愉快。」幾週後，經理注意到發生了一件令人驚訝的事。強尼的收銀台排隊總是最長的。員工勸人們去其他收銀處。他們會回答：「沒關係。我會等待，因為我想要強尼今天鼓勵的話。」有些顧客甚至會更頻繁地去店子購物，只為了得到一句鼓勵的話。商店也發生了其他變化。賣花部門的員工過去會把破損的花丟掉。現在，他們會走到收銀台前，將鮮花放在年長的婦人或小女孩的身上，讓她們感到高興。這些改變都是由於強尼分享鼓勵的話。你也可以在家裡、在辦公室、在朋友中間以及在教會裡成為另一個強尼。用言語來建立別人，而不是拆毀別人。在公開場合讚賞別人優秀的表現。當有人犯錯時，以耐心和寬容來接納。不只是發現問題，也要幫助解決問題。成為團隊的成員，而不是評判和局外人。