

引言 INTRODUCTION

We care more about the results than the process when we are in an urgent situation. We gobble instant noodle or whatever leftover in the fridge when in a hurry. Your kids have a school function that requires formal clothing. To your surprise, they have grown much and the clothes do not fit anymore. They have no choice but to put on parents' clothes. The sleeves are a few inches too long and the dress looks more like a huge shopping bag. Your kids feel much better when they see classmates in similar outfits. Years ago, there was a Christian movement with an acronym "WWJD." It stands for "What would Jesus Do." The idea is for believers to pause and think what decisions Jesus would make if He were in their situation. Jesus would obey God at all times. In our story today, king Ahaz trusted his instinct but did not trust God. His version of WWJD was "Whatever Works, Just Do!" Does that describe you too? There is always an urge to get a quick solution while compromising the truth. Why pass on this potential boyfriend/girlfriend even though the person is not Christian? I can use dating as an opportunity to spread the gospel. Or perhaps I can exaggerate a few things to make my resume look better. God's ways often contradict the world's ways. People will say that we are dumb and naive. But God wants us to trust Him and to wait on Him. He will work things out in the best timing and manner. There is a positive lesson we can learn from Ahaz's life: faith with faithfulness will not fail.

解釋 EXPLANATION

Ahaz got it all wrong right from the beginning. Let us get some background from **2 Kings 16:1-4**. Ahaz did not follow the godly model of David. Instead, he copied the northern kings to worship idols. Ahaz offered sacrifices on high mountains to get closer to those false gods. He also performed religious services under trees, possibly as a gesture of seeking protection from the idols or asking for prosperity like thriving trees. Ahaz was similar to many superstitious people who set up little shrines everywhere at home and pay tribute at various temples because they do not want to overlook any deity. This king even burned his own son as an offering. Any person with a sound mind will agree with the description in the passage. It is simply barbaric and evil. God clearly warned His people against such horrific custom in Canaan before they entered the Promised Land. It is shocking to imagine how low Ahaz could go in his spiritual life. He did not only forsake the true God. He also embraced all the false gods he could find. The Bible tells us that all four kings before Ahaz were faithful to God. That covers a span of over 130 years! All it takes was one wicked king to bring spiritual destruction to his country. It tells us that **faith in God must be a personal decision**. God of the parents will not automatically become God of their kids. Your kids may share your appearance or personality. But salvation cannot be inherited! Those of you who grow up in a Christian family have a huge advantage.

Your parents pray for you, read Bible stories to you and bring you to the church. But sooner or later, you have to decide whether or not you want Jesus to be your Savior and Lord. If you are the first Christian in your family like me, then you have an important mission. Pray constantly for your family members that God will open their hearts. Seize opportunities to share the gospel with them too. Perhaps your kids or your siblings grew up in the church but now they have wandered away from the truth. Pray that God will bring them back. Our God is the Father of prodigal children. He always welcomes any wayward child to come home.

Ahaz committed grave sins. But God was not ready to give up on him yet. God disciplines those He loves. He treated Ahaz the same way. God sent multiple enemies to attack Judah. 2 Chronicles 28:5 tells us: **Therefore the Lord his God handed him over to the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his people as prisoners and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hands of the king of Israel, who inflicted heavy casualties on him.** Aram was to the northeast of Judah and Israel was to the direct north. Besides those two nations, Edom and the Philistines also invaded Judah. Edom was in the south and the Philistines were in the backyard of Judah. Ahaz were surrounded by enemies from different directions. God used those countries to judge Ahaz. The subsequent passage says Israel killed one-hundred-twenty-thousand people in Judah and took another two-hundred-thousand as slaves. But God showed mercy to Judah. He sent Oded the prophet to convey a message to the Israelite soldiers. Oded says in verses 9 and 10: **9 ... "Because the Lord, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand. But you have slaughtered them in a rage that reaches to heaven. 10 And now you intend to make the men and women of Judah and Jerusalem your slaves. But aren't you also guilty of sins against the Lord your God?"** The Israelite army was only a means to discipline Judah. They should not overdo their assignment, lest they might sin against God and bring judgment to themselves. After all, the people of Judah were their kinsmen. Some leaders heeded the warning and ordered the soldiers to show grace to the prisoners. They gave the Judah people food, water and clothes. They treated those who were wounded and even put the weaker ones on donkeys. The troop then sent the Judah people home. God also showed mercy to Judah through another prophet. He assured Ahaz that Judah would not be destroyed in this crisis. Let us look at Isaiah 7:4-7 – **4 "Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood – because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. 5 Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, 6 "Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it." 7 Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "It will not take place, it will not happen."** Isaiah was one of the most important prophets in the Old Testament. Aram and Israel tried to conquer Judah, then set up a puppet king. But God said: "Fear not! They would not succeed." In the same message, Isaiah also gave the well-known prophecy about Immanuel. We often read the passage during Christmas. God gave Ahaz a sign to strengthen his faith. A child would be born. Aram and Israel would be defeated by Assyria before this toddler could discern between right from wrong. A second

fulfillment of this prophecy came some 700 years after Isaiah at the birth of Jesus Christ. The first Immanuel was a sign to show that God would save Judah. Whereas, the second Immanuel, Jesus, would be the Savior of the world. Judah faced some strong enemies and the threat was imminent. God will deliver His people. **No human scheme will prevail without God's approval.** Aren't you grateful that we are in God's protecting hands? He is our constant help in times of needs. The apostle Paul reminds us that we are more than conquerors over all things in Jesus. We may face all kinds of difficulties: sickness, layoff, death of loved ones, anxiety and all the rest. But Paul says no hardship and no authority can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Problems may harm us. But do not let them weaken our faith. Brothers and sisters: run to our Lord and take cover in Him. He will give you peace.

Ahaz should rejoice that God had not given up on him yet. He should seize the opportunity to confess his sins and return to Jehovah. Ahaz did not take any of those actions. Instead, he sought help from Assyria. At the end, this rising superpower brought more trouble than help to Judah. Ancient history helps us understand the background. Assyria was located in the area around the nowadays Iraq. The country was ambitious to expand its territory. 2 Kings 15 tells us that Assyria successfully took some land from Israel. In reaction, Israel and Aram wanted to form an alliance with Judah to combat Assyria. But Ahaz refused. That explains why Israel and Aram attacked Judah. Those two kings were mad at Ahaz! 2 Kings 16:7-8 states Ahaz's plan to deal with the coalition: **7 Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, "I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." 8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria.** The Assyrians had planned to swallow up those countries one by one anyway. Now Ahaz even paid them to go to war. Why not? The passage says Assyria completely eradicated Aram. The nation thus vanished in history. About ten years later, Israel also fell to Assyria. Paying some gangsters to remove smaller bullies is never a good idea. If those bad guys can harass others, they will do the same thing to you. Judah did not seek help from the almighty God. Fear not when an emergency comes. **Before we look around for a solution we should look up.** Cry out to God for help. Problems will humble us. We realize that all the money, experts and technology are useless. God is way above and beyond all the resources we can gather. Ahaz, however, put his trust in a foreign nation instead of God. Ahaz collected treasures from the temple, palace and homes of leaders to please Assyria. Tiglath-Pileser was like going on a shopping spree at a mall using Ahaz's credit card. The more stuff the better! Ahaz did not want to serve Jehovah. He now became a servant of Assyria.

Ahaz relied on Assyria to overcome his enemies. His spiritual life, however, drifted further away from Jehovah. Ahaz went up to Damascus, which used to be the capital of Aram, to meet with his new boss Tiglath-Pileser. Ahaz saw an altar there. He then drew a sketch of the altar and jotted down its detailed dimensions. He ordered a priest in Judah to build one just like that. The workmen were so efficient that a new altar

was made before Ahaz returned home. We pick up the story from 2 Kings 16:12-14 – 12 When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it. 13 He offered up his burnt offering and grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his fellowship offerings on the altar. 14 The bronze altar that stood before the Lord he brought from the front of the temple – from between the new altar and the temple of the Lord – and put it on the north side of the new altar. Ahaz followed his WWJD mentality. Now he had a new way to worship his idols. He did at least four wrong things. First, he imported a pagan’s altar. Second, he offered sacrifices. That was strictly the priests’ duties. Third, Ahaz offered sacrifices to the gods of Assyria. The sacrifices listed here were all designated for Jehovah according to the Law. It is like building a mini-Walmart in the parking lot of a Target, or offering your tithes to a Buddhist temple. To God, it was not only offensive. It was a blasphemy. 2 Chronicles 28 tells us that Ahaz gave credit to those deities for saving his country. He even shut down the temple and installed altars in every town to compel his people to burn offerings to idols. Ahaz replaced the worship of Jehovah with idol worship, just like all the northern kings did. Fourth, Ahaz banished the original bronze altar in the temple. From then on, sacrifices could only be offered on the new altar. However, Ahaz kept the bronze altar at a corner and made offerings to Jehovah to seek His advice when needed. Ahaz treated Jehovah like a spare-tire. He kept a backup in case all the other false gods did not work. But **God is not our assistant or consultant. He is our Lord.** The Bible gives us instructions for life. Those are not second opinions or alternatives. They are God’s commands. God will bless us if we obey Him wholeheartedly. There is only one way to verify it: just do it according to what God says. God understands that our faith can be weak at times. He invites us to pray to Him for wisdom when we need it. Then we can see things from God’s perspective. Faith will replace our fear, knowing that God is always with us. By God’s grace, He allowed Ahaz to rest in peace. Judah was now in a spiritual mess. The international scene was a turmoil. But God was still in full control. He had not finished His work with His people yet.

結論 CONCLUSION

Faith with faithfulness will not fail. Ahaz did the complete opposite. He did not trust God. Instead, he put his faith in idols and a foreign nation. God does not only want to rescue us from troubles. He wants our hearts. Psalm 16:4 says: **The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.** “Libation” is the pouring of wine as a way of offering. God will not share His glory with other people, idols or things. God will honor those who honor Him. Verse 8 of the psalm reads: **I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.** We may suffer a defeat. But God will never fail.

引言 INTRODUCTION

在緊急的情況下，我們會關心結果而不是過程。我們在趕時間的時候會狼吞虎咽地吃方便麵或冰箱裡找到的剩飯剩菜。你的孩子需要穿正式的衣服參加學校活動。你忽然發現，他們已經長大了很多，衣服也不再合身了。他們別無選擇，只好穿上父母的衣服。於是袖子長了幾英寸，裙子看起來像個巨型的購物袋。當你的孩子看到別同學也落在同樣情況時，他們會感覺好多了。多年前，有一個縮寫為“WWJD”的基督徒運動。那個簡稱代表「耶穌會怎樣做」。那個概念是讓信徒停下來思考如果耶穌在他們的處境，祂會做出什麼決定。耶穌在任何時候都會順服神。在我們今天的故事中，亞哈斯王相信自己的直覺，而不相信神。他的 WWJD 是「只要行得通就去做！」你也是那樣子嗎？我們常常想要趕快解決問題，但是在過程中卻妥協了真理。例如，錯過那麼好的一個男孩或女孩太可惜了，雖然他不是個基督徒。我可以利用約會作為傳福音的機會。或者是我可以把事情誇大一點使我的簡歷看起來更棒。神的方式常常與世界的方式相矛盾。人們會取笑我們愚蠢和幼稚。但神要我們信靠祂並等候祂。祂會以最好的時機和方式解決問題。我們可以從亞哈斯的生平中學到一個正面的教訓：對神忠誠的信心不會讓我們失敗。

解釋 EXPLANATION

亞哈斯從一開始就選擇錯誤的路。讓我們從列王紀下 16:1-4 中了解一些背景。亞哈斯沒有效法大衛敬虔的榜樣。相反，他跟隨了北國的王來敬拜偶像。亞哈斯在高山上獻祭，以接近那些假神。他還在樹下進行宗教儀式，其中的含義可能是尋求偶像的保護或是祈求像樹木一樣繁盛。亞哈斯與許多迷信的人相似，他們在家中到處設立神壇，並在所有廟宇上香，因為他們不想忽略任何神明。亞哈斯甚至焚燒了自己的兒子作為祭物。任何頭腦清醒的人都會同意經文的描述。那簡直是野蠻和邪惡的行為。在以色列人進入應許之地之前，神清楚地警告他們不要學習迦南人可怕的習俗。亞哈斯的屬靈生命一直在走下坡，真是令人震驚。他不僅離棄真神。他還接納所有他能找到的假神。聖經告訴我們，亞哈斯之前的四位君王都忠於神。他們在位的時期一共超過了 130 年！只需要一位邪惡的君王就可以摧毀國家的靈命。這裡告訴我們，對神的信仰必須是個人的決定。父母的神不會自動成為兒女的神。你的孩子的外表或個性可能和你相似。但是救恩

是不能遺傳的！如果你是在信徒的家庭長大，那麼你就大有優勢。你的父母為你禱告，給你讀聖經故事，帶你去教堂。但是早晚，你必須決定你是否接受耶穌成為你的救主和生命的主。如果你和我一樣是家裡第一個基督徒，那麼你就有一個重要的使命。你要不斷地為你的家人禱告，求神打開他們的心。你也要抓住機會與他們分享福音。也許你的孩子或你的兄弟姐妹在教會長大，但現在他們已經偏離了真理。祈求神把他們帶回來。我們的神是浪子之父親。他總是歡迎任背逆的孩子回家。

亞哈斯犯了嚴重的罪。但神還沒有準備要放棄他。神管教祂所愛的人。祂以同樣的方式對待亞哈斯。神派了不同的敵人來攻擊猶大。歷代志下 28:5 告訴我們：所以，耶和華他的神將他交在亞蘭王手裡。亞蘭王打敗他，擄了他許多的民，帶到大馬色去。神又將他交在以色列王手裡，以色列王向他大行殺戮。亞蘭是在猶大的東北部，以色列是在北方。除了這兩個國家之外，以東和非利士人也攻擊猶大。以東是在南面，非利士人就在猶大的附近。亞哈斯被來自不同方向的敵人包圍。神使用那些國家來審判亞哈斯。隨後的經文說，以色列在猶大殺害了 12 萬人，並擄了另外 20 萬人為奴隸。但神憐憫猶大。祂差派先知俄德向以色列士兵傳達信息。俄德在第 9 節和第 10 節中說：9 …「因為耶和華你們列祖的神惱怒猶大人，所以將他們交在你們手裡，你們竟怒氣沖天，大行殺戮。10 如今你們又有意強逼猶大人和耶路撒冷人作你們的奴婢，你們豈不也有得罪耶和華你們神的事嗎？」以色列軍隊只是神懲戒猶大的一種手段。他們不應該做得太過份，以免他們得罪神並給自己帶來審判。畢竟，猶大人是他們的同胞。一些首領聽從了警告，命令士兵向囚犯顯出恩慈。他們給猶大人食物、水和衣服。他們治療那些受傷的人，甚至把身體較弱的人放在驢子上。軍隊隨後將猶大人送回家。神也通過另一位先知向猶大施憐憫。他向亞哈斯保證，猶大不會在這場危機中被毀滅。讓我們看看以賽亞書 7:4-7：4「對他說：『你要謹慎安靜，不要因亞蘭王利汛和利瑪利的兒子這兩個冒煙的火把頭所發的烈怒害怕，也不要心裡膽怯。5 因為亞蘭和以法蓮，並利瑪利的兒子，設惡謀害你，6 說：我們可上去攻擊猶大，擾亂他，攻破他，在其中立他比勒的兒子為王。7 所以主耶和華如此說：這所謀的必立不住，也不得成就。』」以賽亞是舊約中最重要先知之一。亞蘭和以色列試圖征服猶大，然後設立一個傀儡王。但神說：「不用怕，他們不會成功的。」在同一段信息中，以賽亞也給出了關於以馬內利的預言。我們經常在聖誕節期間閱讀這段經文。神給亞哈斯一個預兆，以堅固他的信心。將會有一個孩子出生。在這個小孩仍未學會分辨是非之前，亞蘭和以色列將被亞述擊敗。這個預言的第二次應驗是發生在耶穌基督的誕生，那是在以賽亞之後大約 700 年。第一個以馬內利是表明神會拯救猶

大。而第二個以馬內利，耶穌，是全地的救主。猶大面臨一些強大的敵人，威脅迫在眉睫。但是神會拯救祂的子民。**沒有神的允許，任何人的計劃都不會得逞。**我們應該常常感謝神的保護。祂是我們隨時的幫助。使徒保羅提醒我們，神使我們在耶穌裡勝過一切。我們可能會面臨各樣的困難：生病、被解雇、親人去世、焦慮等等。但保羅說，沒有任何困難和權柄可以使我們與神在耶穌基督裡的愛隔絕。問題可能會影響我們。但不要讓它們削弱我們的信心。弟兄姊妹：奔向我們的主，在祂裡面藏身。祂能賜給你平安。

亞哈斯應該慶幸神還沒有放棄他。他應該抓住機會認罪，歸向耶和華。亞哈斯沒有那樣做。他卻尋求亞述的幫助。最終，這個崛起的超級大國給猶大帶來的麻煩多於幫助。古代的歷史有助於我們了解背景。亞述位於今天伊拉克周圍的地區。它雄心勃勃地擴大領土。列王紀下 15 章告訴我們亞述成功地從以色列奪取了一些土地。於是以色列和亞蘭想要與猶大聯合來對抗亞述。但亞哈斯拒絕了。這就解釋為何以色列和亞蘭攻擊猶大。那兩個王對亞哈斯很生氣！列王紀下 16:7-8 指出亞哈斯對付盟軍的計劃：**7 亞哈斯差遣使者去見亞述王提革拉毗列色，說：「我是你的僕人、你的兒子。現在亞蘭王和以色列王攻擊我，求你來救我脫離他們的手。」8 亞哈斯將耶和華殿裡和王宮府庫裡所有的金銀都送給亞述王為禮物。**反正亞述已經計劃將這些國家一一吞沒。現在亞哈斯願意付錢讓他們去打仗。何樂而不為？經文說亞述徹底消滅了亞蘭。這個國家從此在歷史上消失了。大約十年後，以色列也被亞述攻佔。付錢給一些黑幫來對付小的惡霸從來都不是一個好主意。如果那些壞旦可以欺負別人，他們也會傷害你。猶大沒有尋求全能神的幫助。緊急情況來臨時不要膽怯。**四處尋找解決方案之前，別忘記抬頭仰望神。**向神呼求幫助。問題會使我們謙卑下來。我們意識到所有的錢、專家和科技都靠不住。神遠超過我們所能收集的所有資源。然而，亞哈斯寧願信靠外國而不是神。亞哈斯從聖殿、皇宮和領袖的家中收集財寶來進貢亞述。亞述王提革拉毗列色就像拿亞哈斯的信用卡在商場瘋狂購物。東西越多越好！亞哈斯不想要服事耶和華。他現在成了亞述的僕人。

亞哈斯倚靠亞述來克服他的敵人。然而，他的屬靈生命卻離神越來越遠。亞哈斯上去大馬士革，那裡曾經是亞蘭的首都，會見他的新上司提革拉毗列色。亞哈斯看見那裡的一座祭壇。然後他畫出祭壇的草圖，並記下它的詳細尺寸。然後吩咐猶大的一位祭司照樣建造一座。工人們效率很高，他們在亞哈斯回來之前就造好了新祭壇。我們繼續看列王紀下 16:12-14：**12 王從大馬色回來看見壇，就近前來，在壇上獻祭；13 燒燔祭、素祭、澆**

奠祭，將平安祭牲的血灑在壇上，14 又將耶和華面前的銅壇從耶和華殿和新壇的中間搬到新壇的北邊。亞哈斯遵循了他的 WWJD 心態。現在他用新的方式來敬拜他的偶像。他至少做了四件錯事。首先，他引進了一個異教徒的祭壇。第二，他獻祭。那是祭司的職責。第三，亞哈斯把獻物祭給亞述的神明。經文列出的祭物都是按照律法指定給耶和華的。這就像在 Target 的停車場建造一個迷你沃爾瑪，或者將你的什一奉獻給佛教寺廟。在神看來，這不僅是冒犯。那是一種褻瀆。歷代志下 28 章告訴我們亞哈斯感謝那些拯救他國家的假神。他甚至關閉聖殿，在每一個城鎮設置祭壇，強迫他的人民向偶像獻祭。亞哈斯用偶像崇拜取代了對耶和華的敬拜，就像北國所有的王一樣。第四，亞哈斯廢棄聖殿中原有的銅壇。從此之後，人們只能在新祭壇上獻祭。然而，亞哈斯把銅壇移到聖殿的角落裡，並在需要時向耶和華獻祭，尋求祂的心意。亞哈斯視耶和華為備胎。他為自己留一條後路，萬一其他假神都不靈光。但神不是我們的助手或顧問。祂是我們的主。聖經給我們人生的指示。那些不是建議或後備方案。它們是神的命令。如果我們全心全意地順服神，神就會祝福我們。驗證的方法只有一種：照著神的話去做。神明白我們的信心有時會很軟弱。祂邀請我們在需要時向祂祈求智慧。然後我們就可以從神的角度來看事情。信心會取代我們的恐懼，因為我們知道神永遠與我們同在。因著神的恩典，祂讓亞哈斯安然離世。猶大現在處於屬靈破產之中。國際舞台也一片混亂。但神仍然掌權。祂還沒有完成對祂子民的計劃。

結論 CONCLUSION

對神忠誠的信心不會讓我們失敗。亞哈斯的做法完全相反。他不相信神。他只相信偶像和外邦。神不只要拯救我們脫離困境。祂要我們的心。詩篇 16:4 說：以別神代替耶和華的，他們的愁苦必加增；他們所澆奠的血我不獻上；我嘴唇也不提別神的名號。「澆奠」是以酒作為供奉的方式。神不會與其他人、偶像或事物分享祂的榮耀。神會尊重那些尊重祂的人。這篇詩第 8 節說：我將耶和華常擺在我面前，因他在我右邊，我便不至搖動。我們可能會遇到挫敗。但神永遠不會失敗。