

證道：死路一條 (創世記 32:1-29)

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English script of this sermon can be found later in this document

引言

我想大家在人生當中皆有被卡住的感覺。前幾天我姐姐寄給我一個 Ric Elias 短講的影片。他是誰呢？他乃是在 2009 年一架客機因著一群鳥被打進引擎，導致引擎失靈而迫降於 Hudson River 飛機上的乘客。Ric Elias 分享說，當他察覺飛機上鴉雀無聲，引擎已被機長關閉時，他知道不對勁了。當機長報告說請大家準備迫降時，他突然覺得死亡就離他那麼的近。在短短的幾分鐘內，他突然認知了三件事，

1. 世界上的事，不論你付出了多少，都可以在一瞬間改變，化為烏有
2. 過去因著驕傲，自以為是，帶給周遭的親友痛苦，破壞了人與人的關係，實在不值得，沒有意義，也是愚蠢的
3. 他希望如果他還有餘生的話，他一定要做個好爸爸。

是的，如果我們被卡在生死關頭，別無選擇時，我們會用智慧去思想人生，重新調整我們的人生觀。剛剛舉的例子是小事，而我們日常生活中也經常被卡在小事上。像是在 Super Market 排錯隊，前面的店員或顧客因有不同的問題，隊伍卡在那，但是，我們至少可以選擇離開。有時我們開車，卡在高速公路上，動彈不得，那就不一定走得了了。我記得有一次我在晚上開車，被堵在紐約市的 LIE 高速公路上，足足一個小時，結果不少車居然從進高速公路的入口倒車出去。但更誇張的是有兩部架高的 Jeep 跟 SUV，直接開過高速公路旁的欄杆和鐵絲網進到旁邊的公路。我不知大家被卡住有什麼反應，是憤怒？是急於逃脫？還是會在其中學到功課？聖經裡也有不少被卡住進退兩難的故事，今天我們來看看雅各被卡死的故事，以及他怎麼去面對這個人生關卡。

雅各的關卡

我們如果還記得雅各前面的故事，我們知道雅各曾經欺騙的他哥哥和爸爸，當他哥哥知道被雅各騙了以後，憤怒得想殺他。因此雅各逃到舅舅家，請舅舅收留並為他做事。沒想到他一留便是二十年。這二十年他為舅舅賺得了不少財富，自己也結婚生子，兩個妻，兩個妾，並有十一個兒子，至少有一個女兒。但他的能力卻帶來他表哥們的嫉妒，舅舅的算計。開始雅各在他們臉色底下過活。就在這時候，神對雅各說你要回到你祖，你父之地，我必與你同在。我想這時候雅各聽到神這樣說一定挺歡喜的。因為在這兒舅舅想盡辦法要佔他便宜。雅各聽了神的應許，他舉家偷偷搬走，沒有跟舅舅講。當舅舅一發現後，便憤怒得帶領家裡的男丁追趕，追了七日終於追上。幸而神介入，在夢中警示舅舅拉班，以致拉班最後放行讓雅各離去，並彼此簽訂和平協議，立約劃界，以後井水不犯河水。雅各有驚無險的保留了產業，得以往前，但舅舅那邊他也回不去了。但沒想到就在離這立約之地不遠的地方，雅各又遇到了一個更大的關卡。原來雅各得到消息，當他哥哥以掃知道他他要回來時，馬上帶上四百“男丁”啟程迎向他來。雅各本想帶著許多禮物獻給哥哥，想要與他和好。現在哥哥卻光光只帶男丁前來，並有四百人之多，雅各想起二十年前以掃曾下定決心要殺他雪恨，現在必是要來大開殺戮。他今天不再是像二十年前單身一

人，可以自由往來。他現在要為妻子兒女，僕人負責。怎麼辦？才經過箭拔弩張的險境，與舅舅劃清界限。現在後退不能，往前死路一條。雅各被卡住了。

雅各現在在急困當中，想了一個的辦法：在他哥哥未到以前，他想把牲畜分批，互相間隔，想一批一批的迎向哥哥送給他，不但想討他歡喜，並延長時間，使他息怒，也使他因要照顧各批的牲畜而分散了力量。在这一切安排中，雅各深知時間緊迫，他緊張不已。晚上睡到一半，無法入眠，把妻子兒女叫醒親自送他們一一過河。當他所有的一切，包括妻子，兒子都過去之後，雅各只剩獨自一人思想著面對死亡的威脅時，他深知他做什麼可能都沒有用了。這時候在雅博渡口，突然莫名其妙的出現一位男子與他角力不讓他走，實際上你仔細讀上下文的話，是他們彼此都不讓對方走，彼此都在角力掙扎。雅各後來說這一位與他角力的就是神啊！我們必須要稀奇，神為何要跟人角力，神怎麼會贏不過人呢，而在同時雅各分明好像角力得勝可以走了，他卻又不走，徹夜掙扎，直等到得到祝福，卻又因此跛了腳，這是祝福嗎？在角力之後神問雅各叫什麼名字。如果是神，怎麼會不知道雅各的名字呢！在思想這些問題之前，我們必須再問，雅各今天為什麼會卡在這生死關口。你會很訝異的看到，雅各之所以今天卡在這兒做生命垂死的掙扎，完全是因為雅各在前一章裡聽了神的話。是神叫他回父親的地方。多麼奇怪？不是聽從神的話就應該帶來平安喜樂並且自由嗎？現在居然因為順命進入死路，像卡死一般！我不知你有沒有這樣的經歷，聽神的話反而把自己帶到更可怕的難處。好痛苦啊。我們大聲問神，為什麼？為什麼？這就是人與神的掙扎。另外讓我們奇怪的是，這次的相遇又似乎是神預定的，計劃好與他特有單獨的約會（one on one meeting）。神定意把雅各帶到此地。這也是神與人的掙扎。

雅各雖有伯特利的經歷，知道了神存在的真實，有觀念上的改變，甚至異象中看見通天的梯子，受到神應許上的鼓舞，這些實在是不得了的經歷。他開始有屬靈的眼界了。但雅各老我依然存在也依然掌權，他依然精明的為地上的事計算。頭三節這裡說到，當他看見神的軍隊在他旁邊時，他就有了信心，告訴僕人去通知以掃，他要謙卑回來並帶禮物獻給以掃，因他看到有主軍隊的同在。但一聽以掃帶四百男丁前來時，又馬上憂愁喪膽。一面知道有神，一面又專注世界，心情被環境掌控，不停的計劃謀算。這是一個混雜的人。他的肉體是自己的老闆，他決定何時聽神的話，何時選擇以喜好來做決定。他是憑著自我中心的觀點去要求神來滿足他肉體的需求。多少時候我們不也是如此？我們信有神，甚至經歷了神的作為，好像打了屬靈強心針，我們大聲宣告 God is Good all the time，但一下有環境誘惑時便自我掌權、自我謀算、滿有驕傲，一下遇到難處，信心又幾乎垮台。

可是雅各現在感到自己再有辦法，再過幾個小時，他可能二十年所有的奮鬥，並他全家的性命皆會毀於一旦。此時他在渡口遇到神了，他不單要頭腦知道神與他同在，他要緊抓神著不放。只有神靠得住了！不管神要幹什麼！情願在神面前喪命，也不要赤裸的去面對敵人。

雅各徹夜與神摔跤，要抓住神，通常摔跤 30 分鐘就可使人精疲力盡，雅各卻堅持打到黎明。終於神傷了雅各最有力的大腿，雅各才停止。神在這裡與他摔跤後，問他說“你名叫甚麼”，這絕對不是神不知道他叫什麼名字。而是神要在此時讓他自己認識自己。非要把他帶到生死關頭，他才反省自己是何等人。雅各的意思是抓。

所有的利益和祝福都要抓。他欺瞞爸爸。他用欺騙的手段搶奪了哥哥的祝福。後來他舅舅也騙他，佔他便宜二十年。他也用計謀抗衡。雅各過的是“騙人”和“被騙”的人生。這是雅各。雅各在此時為何那麼害怕他哥哥？已經二十年了？因為現在自己親身經歷了被騙的痛苦和憤怒。舅舅騙他工資十次，騙了他婚姻。雅各看到了他的舅舅就像看到了自己。他終於了解罪的可惡和其後的憤怒。這個心中的罪惡感和對哥哥恐懼，除了他自己和神以外，沒有任何人可以分擔，也無法了解。神問他“你叫什麼名字”時，當他一答“我是”雅各，頓時他了解到，他真正掙扎的對象和該害怕的人不是以掃，而是自己的老我，肉體的掌權，和自己的罪。是他自己用自己的能力和辦法，把自己陷入該死的地步。而神在這裡要他面對自己的罪，也讓他知道他在地上憑著老我所抓的一切，一瞬間都可能化為烏有。神要他降伏放下老我，奮起抓住神，成為“以色列”。

就像對雅各，神要對付我們的，不是我們的軟弱，因為我們對自己軟弱的地方，態度是謙卑的，是懂得要依靠神和弟兄姐妹的。我們需要被對付的是我們的隱藏的罪，驕傲，和我們引以為傲的能力。我們愛為自己的罪化妝，解釋，或刻意不理會它。我希望我們不要對罪遲鈍，非要神放一面鏡子在我們生命中，我們才痛悔，就好像雅各要看到舅舅才知道自己一樣。我們也常為自己的智慧，工作的能力，生活的安排，學歷，甚至各項服侍的能力會驕傲。我們千萬不要以為，我們知道有神，讀過聖經，我們就能放下自我和驕傲，能丟棄我們的罪。太多時候，甚至神來親自遇見，我們都做不到。很多時候非得罪惡重擔逼我們到一個生死關頭，神開始問我們，你叫什麼名字。我們才知道我的名字叫“自以為是”，我名字叫“驕傲”，我的名字是“我懂”，“我能”，“我的時間”，“我的名譽”，“我不要被傷害”。我的名字是“我騙得了人(I can out smart you)”。直到要命時，我們才知我們本來什麼都不是，也什麼都不能持有。完了完了，神哪，我太羞愧了，我要丟棄我原來的名字，我現在只要你。

當雅各與神摔跤完時，他單單要神的祝福，單單仰望神，奇妙的是祝福的內容已經不重要了，他只要確定這祝福是從神而來。雅各已經變了，他不再注視地上的祝福。他知道贏得與神的關係，他就贏得一切。神已接納了他的委身。我們不得不納悶，神給他的祝福到底是什麼？我們看見結果，神對他最大的祝福就是使他殘廢！使他全身最有力的地方脫臼。甚麼！那是祝福嗎？那他不是永遠需要依靠了嗎？不應該是咒詛嗎？卻不知全然依靠是祝福的開始。因為殘廢了之後，他完全不能再靠自己逃脫以掃的追殺了。他也沒有條件與人爭鬥了！他沒有計算和自由往來的能力。他的好爭變成了依賴。每走一步的痛楚，告訴他，他不能再用力了，他也沒有辦法再用力了。每走一步的痛楚提醒雅各，他乃是被神對付過的人。這時雅各改變了，三十三章告訴我們，他癱著腿，跑到隊伍前，向他哥哥俯伏下拜，為他過去的罪尋求饒恕。他沒有能力再逃跑。他不再用過去的計謀，要妻兒在前，行拖延戰術。他選擇快快面對罪的結果，正面的去尋求原諒。因為他什麼能力都沒有了，只有神的記號在他身上。大家可以想像當以掃帶著四百人人馬，所看到的是自己學生的弟弟已被打的鼻青臉腫，衣服破爛，一跛一跛搶在家人前頭，俯伏下拜的情景嗎？以掃看到雅各真誠的求饒恕，他也接納了雅各。

雅各因遵行了神的話，神反而把他帶到雅博渡口的生死關卡。雅各被神破碎了，也只有等雅各被破碎了，神才讓雅各的進入迦南。只有經歷被破碎的人他才能體會一切所有的乃是恩典，才會甘心樂意的把恩典傳給他人。當雅各願意捨去，願意祝福他人，他才能承受神的基業。弟兄姊妹，我們如果有一天，因為聽神的話，反而被陷在一個要命的或過不去的關卡，請不要訝異，不要躲避。我們要在神面前被破碎，神才能用我們。這是必經之路。直等到我們懂得凡事我們都需要依靠神，己是不行的，敗壞的，需要死去時，神才能真實的一次又一次的煉淨我們。我們才能承受神兒子的豐富。

Sermon: Way to Death (Genesis 32:1-29)

by Brother George Chou

I believe that we all have had the feeling of being trapped before. A few days ago, my sister sent me a youtube video of a short talk by Ric Elias. Now who is he? He was a passenger of the airplane that crashed into the Hudson River in 2009 because of a flock of birds that flew into its engines. Ric Elias shared that on the plane, when he realized that the engines have gone quiet because they have been turned off by the pilot, he knew something was wrong. When the pilot announced to the passengers that they should brace themselves in the emergency crash position, he suddenly felt that death was really near to him. Within a few minutes, he realized three important points. First, no matter how much you try to prepare or invest, the things of the world can all be taken away in an instant. Secondly, any self-pride that harms relationships is worthless, foolish, and has no meaning at all. Thirdly, if he could live through this incident, he vowed to dedicate himself to being a better father to his daughter. Indeed, if we are trapped in a moment between life and death, we would use our wisdom to rethink the meaning of life and readjust our priorities. The example I just gave is a more extreme case. Yet in our daily lives, we also get stuck in minor predicaments. For example, we might be standing in a line at the supermarket and the customer in front and the cashier have an issue and they hold up the line for a long time. However, we could always change lines if there is another one open. Yet there are times, when we are driving and hit traffic, there's no possible way out of it. I remember once I was driving at night and was stuck in traffic on the Long Island Expressway for about an hour. I noticed that some cars were so extreme that they backed out through the entering ramp to get off the highway. But even more extreme were the Jeeps and SUVs that drove over the barrier and fence onto the service road to get out of the highway. I don't know how you guys feel when you are trapped. Do you get angry, do you get really anxious to escape, or do you learn a lesson from it? The Bible has more than a few stories of people trapped between a rock and a hard place so to speak. Today let us look at the story of one of Jacob's predicaments and how he dealt with it. If we still remember what happened to Jacob before, we know that he deceived his brother and his father. After his brother realized that he had been cheated off of, he became furious to the point of wanting to kill Jacob. So Jacob fled to his uncle's house, asking his uncle to provide him shelter and a job. He never expected that he would end up staying 20 years. In these 20 years he produced a lot of income for his uncle. He himself got 2 wives, 2 concubines, 11 sons, and at least 1 daughter. Yet his productive abilities brought forth his cousin's jealousy and his

uncle's envy. And they started to have a different attitude toward Jacob, giving him a hard time. It was at this time that God told Jacob, go back to your father and relatives and I will be with you. I believe that Jacob was glad to hear this message from the Lord, because here, his uncle Laban had thought of so many ways to take advantage of him. Once Jacob heard God's direction, he took his whole family and ran off without telling his uncle. Once his uncle realized this, he took all his men and pursued Jacob. He finally caught up with him after 7 days. Fortunately, God had intervened and gave a warning to Laban. So when Laban finally found Jacob, he let him go. They made a covenant to set boundaries between the two men. Saying, from now on, you don't bother me, and I won't bother you. Jacob, in the end, even under threat, got to keep all his possessions and was able to move forward. Yet he could never return to his uncle's again. And little to his knowledge, he would face an even bigger problem not far from the place where he made the covenant with his uncle. Jacob was notified that when Esau found out about his coming, he brought 400 men and travelled to meet him. Jacob originally wanted to bring many gifts to Esau, wanting to reconcile with him. Now Esau was bringing 400 men to meet him and this reminded Jacob that 20 years ago, Esau had set his mind to kill Jacob. Now, Esau must have had a mindset of killing. He's no longer a single person as he was 20 years before, free to go wherever he can by himself. Now he has to look after his wives, children, and servants. What can he do? He already experienced a very tense moment, separating from his uncle. As he moves forward, he marches towards his doom, yet he can't return to his uncle's either. He is trapped. Under these circumstances, he comes up with a plan. Before his brother arrived, he divided his herds into different groups and sent them along as gifts to meet his brother at different times. Not only did Jacob want to appease Esau with gifts, he also wanted to stall him so that he might cool down his anger. Jacob also wanted to split up Esau's manpower by giving him animals to take care of. Throughout this whole arrangement, he realized the time was really pressing and he became very nervous. At night, he couldn't sleep, so he woke up his whole family and sent them across the river. After he sent off every last person, Jacob was all alone, nervously waiting upon his own demise. He realized he could do no more. At this time, at the ford of the Jabbok River, a man appeared out of nowhere and they started to wrestle he wouldn't let him go. As we read further neither man would let the other go. Later, Jacob realized that it was God who he was wrestling with. We must ask, why would God wrestle with ma?. And how could He not overcome a man? From the story, it seemed that Jacob overpowered the man yet he would not leave. They struggled the whole night until he received a blessing from God. For this reason, he eventually

was crippled by the angel of the Lord. Is this a blessing? After wrestling Jacob, God asked Jacob what his name was. If the man was God, how would he not know Jacob's name? Before answering all these questions, we must ask again for what reason was Jacob trapped in this life-threatening situation. You will be surprised to see that the reason that Jacob is stuck in this predicament is because he followed God's instruction in the previous chapter. It was God who asked him to return to his brother and father. How strange. Shouldn't following God's direction bring peace and joy? Now, because of Jacob's submission, he is facing death with nowhere to turn. I do not know if you have had the experience of following God into a difficult and trying situation. What suffering, we cry out to God, why, why. This is a struggle between God and man. Another thing, this situation seems to be planned and predestined by God. It's like a scheduled, private, one on one meeting. God set his mind to bring Jacob to this place. This is God's desire to struggle with man. Although Jacob had the experience of meeting God at Bethel and knew the existence of God, and Jacob had a conceptual change of God, in his vision he's seen the ladder to heaven, he was also encouraged by God's promise, this experience is exceptional, he began to have a spiritual eyesight, yet the carnal self of Jacob still rules over him. He still constantly takes into account all the gains and losses of the world. The first three verses mention that when he saw that the camp of the Lord right next to him, he became confident. He tells his servants to inform Esau that he's coming in humility, presenting gifts. Because he realized that there is the presence of the Lord's army. Yet when he heard that Esau was bringing 400 men, his heart sunk. On one side, he knows there's a God, on the other, he acts by what he sees. His state of mind is controlled by the environment. He is constantly calculating, he is a divided person. His carnal desires are the boss of him. He decides for himself when to listen to God and when to do his own likings. He demands that God satisfies his desires out of self-centeredness. Isn't that just like us? We believe in God and even experience his workings, bringing us to a spiritual high. Then we shout aloud God is good all the time. Yet when temptations come, the circumstances lead us to make decisions for ourselves. When difficulty comes, our faith crumbles. Now Jacob realizes he can't do anything to help that in a few hours, all that he has worked for in twenty years including his family could be taken away in an instant. And now he meets God at the ford. His head-knowledge that God exists isn't enough for him, he grabs onto God and doesn't let him go. Now the only thing he can rely on is God. No matter what God plans, Jacob would rather die in God's hands than face the enemy alone. Jacob wrestled with God throughout the night to hold onto God. Usually thirty minutes of wrestling would make any average person exhausted. Jacob persists to fight until

daybreak. Only until God touched Jacob's socket so that it was wrenched did Jacob stop. At this point, God asks him what his name was. This does not mean that God does not know his name but that God wants to use this moment to let Jacob discover himself. God brings Jacob to this life-threatening situation so that he may finally reflect on who he is. The name Jacob means grasp. Any benefits or blessings, Jacob will try to grasp it. He lied to his father, and he deceived his brother to take the birthright. Yet later his uncle deceives him, taking advantage of Jacob for twenty years. Jacob counters this with his own schemes. Jacob lived a life of deceiving and being deceived. This is Jacob. Why was Jacob so afraid of his brother? It's already been 20 years. Because he himself experienced the pain of being cheated. His uncle cheated him of his wages ten times, he cheated him of his marriage. When Jacob sees his uncle, he sees himself. He finally understands how detestable a sin could be and how an anger could arise from it. The guilt of his heart and fear of his brother could not be felt or understood by anyone else except for him and God. So when God asks him what his name was, he replied, "I'm Jacob." He understood his struggle was not with Esau but with his own carnal self. His self-ruling and his own sin. It was his own scheming that brought him to the face of death. It was God's desire for Jacob to face his own sins at this time. God also wanted to let him know that everything he held on to could be taken away at any instant. God wanted him to surrender his old self, grab onto God and become Israel. Just as to Jacob, God does not want to deal with our weaknesses. Because we are already humble in regard to our weaknesses. We know we need to rely on God and our brothers and sisters in our weakness. What we need to be dealt with is our hidden sin, pride, and the talents that we take pride on. We like to mask our sins away, explain our sins away, or even just ignore them. I hope we are not insensitive to our sins. Don't wait until God puts a mirror in front of our lives for us to repent. Just like when Jacob met his uncle Laban, he saw a bit of himself. We often are proud of our intelligence, working ability, life arrangements, education, and even our service. Let us not dare to assume that as long as we love God and read the Bible, we can lay our pride down and get rid of our sins. Oftentimes, even when we have a personal encounter with God, we cannot seem to lay ourselves down completely. Many times, only until the burdens of our sins push us to our breaking point will God ask us what our name is. Only then will we realize that my name is "my way is the highway," my name is "pride," my name is "I know," my name is "I can." The next name is "it's my time," "my reputation," "I don't want to be hurt," the last name is "I can outsmart you," only until that moment between life and death do we realize that we are none of those, we could not hold onto anything. It's over, it's over, God, I'm so ashamed, I want to throw

away my name, right now all I want is you. After Jacob and God wrestled, all he wanted was a blessing from God. He only wanted God. Strangely, the content of the blessing wasn't very important. He only cared about the source of the blessing, God. Jacob already changed. He no longer focused on the worldly blessings. He knows that as long as he gains a relationship with God, he gains everything. God already accepted his commitment. We can't help but wonder what the blessing that God gave to Jacob was. We see eventually that God's greatest blessing to Jacob was his rendering Jacob cripple. God took Jacob's strongest part of his body and disabled it. What? Is that a blessing? Doesn't he forever now need something or someone to lean on? Isn't this a curse? We didn't know that the full dependence is the start of a blessing. Because after he was crippled, Jacob could no longer use his own strength to escape the hands of Esau. He also did not have the resources to struggle with anyone. He no longer has the ability to keep records of wrongs or move from place to place. His original tendency to reach out and grasp has changed and became a full reliance and dependence. Every painful step he took told him that he could not rely on his own strength. He can no longer use his strength. Every step he takes reminds him that he has been dealt with by God. At this time, Jacob has changed. Chapter 33 says, Jacob ran ahead of the group, all the while limping and fell prostrate before his brother. Seeking for forgiveness for his past sins. He has no strength to escape anymore. He no longer tried to use his schemes to appease and stall his brother. He chose to swiftly face the consequences of his sin, directly dealing with it, asking for forgiveness. Because he doesn't have any other ability left. The only thing he has left is the mark of God on his body. Can we imagine, Esau leading 400 men on horses, and all he sees is his own brother alone with bruises all over and clothes all torn limping ahead of his family, falling prostrate on the ground. Esau saw a genuine desire for forgiveness from Jacob, and Esau accepted Jacob. Because Jacob followed God's direction, God in turn brought him to a life-threatening situation at the ford of Jabbok. Jacob was broken by God. Only until Jacob was broken did God allow Jacob to enter Canaan. Only people who have been broken by God will realize that all they have has been given by grace, and will willingly pass on the grace to others. Only until Jacob was willing to bless others did he receive the inheritance of God. Brothers and sisters, if there comes a day when we listen to God and become trapped in a tough situation, please do not be surprised, don't run away. We need to be broken by God in order for him to use us. This is a path we have to take. Only until we realize that we need to rely on God for everything, realizing that our self is corrupt and needs to die, will God start to purify us one step at a time. Then we could inherit the abundance from God's son.