

Wednesdays in the Word
Digging Deeper
July 1, 202 James 1:12-18
"Who Do I Turn To?"

I have a story to tell but I'm not going to tell it. Then it would be all about me. Suffice it to say I've had a rough couple of days which have sought to prevent me from putting our lesson together. I came to my senses at one point and the Lord clearly said to me, "You cannot teach a lesson until you have first learned it." I soon realized I must ask myself, "What false gods are setting themselves up to usurp the worship of the one True God?" "What Commandments am I breaking while I am supposedly worshiping the God of the Commandments?" Let's turn briefly to John 8:12. Perhaps we can gain an understanding of what Jesus said there about where we turn when things are not going according to plan. Where do we turn? What or who do we follow during temptation? John writes much about darkness and light. Confer with 1 John 1:5,7,2:8,9 and 10. He says this not only because men love darkness and we seek it out but it seems the darkness desires us and seeks us out. Sometimes our emotions, as we noticed last week, can be the first false god we turn to in times of testing. As Christians we are in the light but we close our eyes to it. We shield our eyes to it. His brightness ought to consume us but we allow the things of the world to block the Light of the Lord. God stepped in at just the right time these past few days to point out to me that He was teaching me a lesson. I wondered if I understood it a bit too late. Especially when my wife quipped "It would have been nice if He showed you a little sooner." It's possible He did but as usual I wasn't paying attention. However, now with a clear mind and the 20/20 hindsight that we often hear about I am able to look at our text in James with a broader view of what he speaks of. We learned last week that wisdom is a broad, deep knowledge. God slowly reveals himself to us day-by-day. Our knowledge gets broader and deeper day by day. My grandmother had a sign in her kitchen that said "We grow too soon old and too late smart." That's true isn't it? Let's read through James to follow the passage that Pastor covered this past Sunday. James has spoken about both riches and poverty as being a trial, a test or a temptation for us to turn from God and trust in other things. Riches and poverty, I suppose can be false gods. We can think of many others that we've often spoken of. Here are a few that we may not have considered. The false god of emotion. The Lord who created us gave us emotion as part of His image that He formed in us and yet it has become for many a replacement for the quick and true guidance that He provides. How quickly we turn to the god of emotion without even considering the God of the Universe. What about the god of wisdom? You could say "I've been there and done that. I already know how to handle this problem." And then jump right in realizing later that maybe we should have turned to the Lord first and saved ourselves a lot of trouble. We may even think "This is a simple trivial matter. It doesn't concern God." Take that thought out to its logical conclusion and you'll see how ridiculous it is to think that anything could be outside of God's domain. Here's one. Consider the god of frustration. Now I know we're hitting a nerve. How dare we think, when something is not going our way that we can allow our frustration to build without even considering that Jesus wants to walk through this with us but we insist that we can walk it alone. Ecclesiastes 4:12, Matthew 11:28-30. Then there is the god of intellect. He's a brother to the god of wisdom. We may not dig deep to

expand our wisdom on a subject but we do desire to acquire knowledge. To apply our minds to the many facets of life. As enjoyable as these endeavors may be, they may take us away from the simple childlike trust that we know we ought to have in our Creator. You may have other suggestions of small gods that you may often turn to. Let's be reminded of this fact. In the Hindu religion there are tens of thousands of gods all controlled by Satan. The Hindu Faith allows any and all gods and they may even include Jesus. But they will not allow anyone to worship Jesus Christ Alone. Amazing how that opposes the direct teaching of our Lord in John 14:6, Acts 4:12. Imagine the number of gods that need to be mentally created or satanically imposed so that people could have someone to look to for every small concern in life. How sad that we overlook the Great Creator who handles any and all situations we face with love and perfection.

Let us look into our passage for today and fully consider what James would have us know about life when things turn difficult. Read James 1:12-18. We start with a reminder from last week that we are to be happy indeed if we stand up under temptation, trial and testing because the reward is the Crown of Eternal Life given to us through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. We can't earn it. It is a gift simply for loving Him and that love compels us to stand up under temptation. In verse 13 we see that our moral strength is being tempted to fail by the evil one. Remember the testing our Saviour endured in Matthew 4. Satan first attempted to cause Him to doubt Who He was and to then use His gifts for selfish gain. He then tried to test His faith in the Father's Providence. Finally, the evil one dared to try to lure Jesus into worshipping him. The false god desired the worship of the True and Living God. This was even more bold than his sin that got him cast out of heaven. Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14:12-15. These same temptations come our way but we mostly fail at resisting where Jesus succeeded. Today you will hear many people, Christians included asking "Why is God doing this to me. Why is He sending so much trouble my way?" God does not tempt but He will test us. Our false gods, our mini gods will tempt us constantly to fail because they all come from the evil one. If you feel insulted at the claim that we worship false gods consider your life. How much stress do you have? What sin do you struggle with? Do you stress over finances or housing or vehicles? Do you stress over family or friends or social media? I daresay all of these things can take our focus off of the Lord and thereby can be considered miniature gods, false idols. Verse 14 begins to explain what we deal with when temptations come our way. It clearly implies that what can tempt me will not tempt you. We are not all put together the same way. Satan and his cohorts attack us in ways that are uniquely designed for their compatibility with our own evil hearts. Jeremiah 17:9. Isaiah 2:20. Pastor noted that the word 'lust' used in this verse is the Greek word 'epithumia'. It is a 'longing for' or a craving. That clearly shows us that these evil desires are in us before the baited hook is dangled in front of us. Jump ahead briefly to James chapter 4:1-5. Consider the extreme consequences of the lust that is in our hearts. The word 'enticed' is an even more convincing word. It is 'deleadzo' which is to be entrapped. As a boy I used to put a dog biscuit under a box supported by a stick and tied to a string. I caught my dog in it repeatedly. Sometimes we are that weak. Verse 15 describes the futility of life itself. We are conceived, born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and in the end, we die. It is a sad description of our sin life because lust conceives giving birth to sin bringing forth death. This word for death, 'thanatos' speaks of mortal death but it has the connotation of the separation of the soul from the body. We can understand death as separation. Adam was told if he touched the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil

he would die. Satan was able to trick him and Eve into believing that they would not die. They did not die. Physically. But they did experience the death of separation. The death of the relationship between themselves and Almighty God who walked with them in the garden. Mankind has experienced this death ever since and only in Christ do we gain new life, eternal life and reconciliation with our God. Back to James chapter 1. Verse 17 is quite interesting. God gives us only good. God gives us only perfection and you have to love this one of the many names of God in that He is called the Father of Lights. A brilliant bright light shining into our lives that cannot vary nor be obscured in a shadow. This light overpowers all darkness around it and brings us back to the earlier statement in John 8:12. Read it again. Jesus Perfect Light is our one and only refuge when temptations, trials and testings come our way. We turn to so many false and worthless things and then only run to Him when those things fail. Take some time to read through chapter 3 and 4 of The Book of Jonah. The story ends with God giving Jonah a loving gift and then removing it to teach him a lesson. God clearly shows His depth of love for the people of Nineveh while Jonah, in his anger and selfishness grieves the loss of the gourd that God grew over his head. The Father of Lights, does give good gifts which come from pure love. However, God always has a motive. He always has a lesson. His lesson for us this week, His gift for us, is to show us how quickly we turn from the Perfect One to all the weak and worthless things that the world has to offer and the many that come from within. Self pity, frustration, anger, hurt feelings. Put the little gods aside next time trials come. Turn to the One True God, the Holy One Of Heaven. Turn quickly, instantly. Instead of acting out in our emotional idolatry, let us truly learn to turn to Him moment by moment through our day so that when things turn sour, our next moment will be to look to Him for true help. Hebrews 12:2-8.