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Psalms 119:37 "Turned and Revived" August 26, 2018

Shall we open Bibles to Psalm 119 this morning, verse 37.

The poetic books, of which Psalms is one, it runs from the book of Job through the Song of Solomon, are unique for a couple of different reasons. Hebrew poetry is very expressive, and so through words we get a lot communicated to us about our walk with the Lord. They are all written in the present tense, which means they're fit to be applied immediately when you read them and study them. They also make one presumption: That you're reading them means that you have a desire to get closer to the Lord. So that's really what these books are all about, and you see that certainly in the book of Psalms.

Psalms 119, as you might guess, is the longest chapter in the Bible. In fact, there are 13 Old Testament books and I think 16 New Testament books that are shorter than this chapter. Psalm 117, a couple of Psalms back, is the shortest chapter in the Bible. Interestingly enough, by the time you get to Psalm 117, you've read through 594 chapters of the Bible. If you start at 119, where we're starting this morning, and go forward, you'll, to the end of book of Revelation, run into 594 more chapters. So Psalm 118 is the middle of your Bible, so if the Bible is feeling balanced in your lap right now, that's why. The middle verse in the Bible is Psalm 118 verse 8, which says "It is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in man." So good verse right in the middle.

But this morning we turn to this Psalm. I think we'll be in it for four or five weeks, maybe six. We don't know who wrote it. There are plenty of commentators who will tell you who they think wrote it, and some will say David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Malachi, Daniel. I took a poll of all the books I have. I have no idea. All of the internal components to the Psalm, you could make arguments I guess for any one of them. We do know for sure the Holy Spirit wrote it for us. And at least internally, the evidence from the Psalm would say that the man who wrote this was a suffering saint. He was

suffering at the hands of others who are in power. He was suffering for his devotion to the Lord. It left him fearful of his physical well-being. He talks a lot about the laxity in the culture that he faces, the apostasy and all. Makes no reference at all to the temple or to the sacrifices. Very interested in the inward aspects of your faith. But no doubt, the central theme is the Bible, the word of God.

And you should know that the Psalmist who wrote this does not view the scriptures as some kind of harsh edict to follow or some kind of difficulty, hard word that we have to deal with or regulation that we have to embrace. He loves what he reads. He's thankful that he has it. He as a poet passionately loves the Lord and His ways and wants to know it better. What attracts him to God's word is not duty, but love. A real hunger and a privilege to draw near to the Lord.

The Psalm, this one, is written as an acrostic. There are others; Psalm 111, 112, and others. Acrostics are written in a way to help you with memorization. It literally means that although you don't see it in English, in Hebrew you would, that every verse maybe starts with a different letter, and so you can kind of memorize that way. In this case, every eight verses start with the corresponding letter, and they're headlined in your Bible, so you'll read Aleph and Beth and Gimel and Daleth. Those are Hebrew letters starting at A, if you will, to Z. There are 22 Hebrew alphabet letters, times eight, so there's 176 verses. But like I said, they are there to help you to remember them or memorize them. Obviously it's lost to us in English.

If you read the whole Psalm and just sit down and just say I just want to read this, aside from the first three verses, which are an introduction, and I think verse 115, every one of the verses is addressed to the Lord Himself. It is the Psalmist speaking directly to the Lord. In fact, there is a word for the word of God, nine different Hebrew synonyms, that are translated about 12 different words to reference God's word. Sometimes it just says word, sometimes it is translated sayings, or statute or ordinances or judgments or law. Or commandments or instruction or precepts, or testimony, or the way I think. Nine different words, but they're all synonymous with God's word. And they are repeated often. In fact, those words are found in all of these verses except for

four. Verse 90, 91, 121, 122, and 132, I think, do not have it. Every verse mentioned God by name, the Lord or You or Your. The Psalmist mentions himself 300 times. In light of saying, Lord, teach me to know You. So the lesson is pretty clear. He has a great view of the scriptures. Loves them, wants to know them, prays that God would teach him more.

Paul would write to Timothy, his last letter from prison before they killed him, that the word of God was suitable, was sufficient to make us wise and to train us in righteousness and to equip us for every good work, and I guess the challenge of this Psalm is to ask you, how do you feel about God's word? How do you treat it? How do you see it? How do you handle it? How do you respond to it?

The scriptures are certainly the reflection of God's nature, His character, His plans, His purposes. "Blessed is the man who delights himself in the law of the Lord" is how the book of Psalms begins. "In His law does he meditate day and night."

Well, I wanted to just take you to one verse, and like I said, we'll look at different topics in this chapter in the weeks that follow, but we wanted to look at verse 39 where here is a prayer from a Psalmist that he might die to certain things and be made alive to others. Living as a Christian in a lost world, having a spiritual eye as you live it, is harder to do than to talk about, and yet that's what God has called us to; this ongoing battle that we have to fight between the real life that God has given to us and the fake life that the flesh has to offer.

So the Psalmist prays for an eye for heaven to be restored. Verse 37 says this: "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in your way." The word in Hebrew for worthless things is the Hebrew word "shav," s-h-a-v, "shav." It is translated in the Bible sometimes empty, sometimes false, sometimes vain, sometimes lying, sometimes worthless. It always speaks about something that has no lasting value. It is something that if you knew that clearly, you wouldn't invest five minutes of your time with it. This is not going to last. Who wants to buy -- I'd like to buy a new refrigerator, but I'd like it to only last eight months. I'd like to pay a lot for it and have it break down as

soon as possible. No, we all look for things that last, and yet these are things that don't. As the Psalmist was a child of God, he was well aware of the fact that in his old nature, in his fleshly life, there was still quite an attraction to the things of the world; that the battle he fought in many ways was between the spirit and the "shav," that which the world has to offer. The promises of the world that it can't deliver on, that don't last, that appeals to your eye, that deceives your heart, that blinds the world and seeks to blind you as well. It dangles that carrot. Look at this. If you have this, this will make you happy. This will satisfy your life.

And I hope that you know, and how could you not, that even as God's people, we can be drawn to very many things that have no substance really in them at all, that won't last. They charm us, they draw us -- we'll sacrifice our spiritual well-being for them. We think that somehow they will profit us in the long run. And at least from God's understanding, which is what we should adopt, they are absolutely worthless in terms of any spiritual benefit to our lives. In fact, they can be very harmful to your spiritual well-being, because the flesh to the lust of the eye attracts us and draws us away from the things that God has for us.

Adam and Eve were certainly a good example, since sin started with them, of being blessed by God. They were placed in the most beautiful garden, they were given virtually carte blanche. They could buy what they want and get what they want and have what they want. There was only one restriction. There was one tree standing in the middle of the garden. Stay away from that fruit, and the day you eat, you shall surely die. But it was a mandate that love requires. If you're going to love someone, you got to make choices. So Adam and Eve were given a choice. God gave a choice, which means He also gave them the capacity or at least the probability or at least the chance that they could decide otherwise. But their choices would be their own. And so I don't know how long they lasted in the garden, but I know that eventually they were drawn to this tree. The sole forbidden fruit. Satan met Eve there. His intention, as always, is to set up things that God has given you so that you might love something else and be ripped off. "Shav," worthless things. And Eve looked at the fruit. She saw that it was good for food. She saw that it was pleasant for the eye. She was told by the enemy really

that it would make her wise, and so she ate it. And sin and death came flooding in. She bought in to the lie.

The Psalmist understands all that. And his prayer I hope could be our prayer as well: That God would step in and turn His eyes away from things that are worthless, and at least the way that the words "turn away my eyes" are written, it suggests that God could be forceful about it. In other words, Lord, if you have to grab my head and wrench it in another direction, go ahead and do that. Just make sure I'm not focused in my life on these things that are worthless to me, to my spiritual well-being. Blind me to the things that take me away from you.

Paul would write the same thing to the Romans. He said to them, "You got to know that your old man has been crucified with Christ, and that the body of sin should be destroyed, and that you don't have to serve sin any longer." He said, "Though we should reckon ourselves." It's a word of faith. Consider yourself dead to sin. You're alive to God through Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord. So we have a lot in Christ as Christians today that we can realize there's a lot more to come that He has promised us, but there is this battle, isn't there, with living a Godly life in an ungodly world? And the pressure is all about making the right call, and turning away from the empty, and turning towards the eternal. That's the big battle.

I think one of the problems that we have with the "shav" is the mistaken idea that somehow we can be happier if we had it. Go back to Eve. She considered that the fruit would be helpful to make her wise. This is what I want. I want to be smart. I'll know good from evil. I'll be like God. And so she bought in to the idea that somehow this was going to make her life better. And yet Jesus would say of the worthless things, you're going to thirst again. This will not satisfy you. This will not help you. If we live with the disillusioned idea that contentment is found in an experience or in a pursuit or in a power or position, a possession, a person, if we think that somehow I'll be more contented if I get there, then I'm bound to be doomed to failure, because those are worthless things in comparison to my relationship with God. All fairy tales end with the words "and they lived happily ever after," but that's why you call it a fairy tale, because there are a lot of ways to live that won't end well at all. The dream of the world. Once I can

afford one of those and move up the ladder and win the girl's affection and -- fill in the blank -- then my life will be worthwhile.

I remember, and maybe you do as well -- that whole system of belief is developed early on in life. I remember as a kid -- I'll use some old examples, so if you're not old enough, don't worry. But I remember watching on television in black and white an advertisement for Rock'em Sock'em Robots. Oh, I needed to have me one of those. Dad, you got to get it. And it was more expensive than he was used to spending at Christmas. Oh, if you get me one of those, I'll be the happiest kid on the block. And I got one. And it broke in about two weeks. And then I saw an ad for a Carrom Board. I got to have me a Carrom Board. If I had a Carrom -- I will be so -- and then I needed a surfboard, because I could -- and then I needed a driver's license. And then I need to buy a Mercedes, and a house, and then a bigger house. And at some point you have to go, what in the world am I doing? This all is going to die with me. It takes so long to learn how the grace of God can satisfy if you have your eyes on eternal things. But let's face it, most of us are sidelined because we don't have our eyes on eternal things. It's this life that consumes us.

Paul, when he wrote to the Philippians, because they were constantly sending him support, even though they were poor and could ill afford to send it, but they loved him. And he wrote back to them and he said, "Thank you for your gift to me that is flourished again. I know that you'd have helped me before if you'd had the opportunity. But I want you to know I'm not speaking to you in regards to want, because I've learned in whatever state I find myself, to be content. I know how to be abased, and have nothing. I know how to abound and seem to have everything. I know how to be full, I know how to be hungry, I know how to abound and suffer need. But I know I can do all of these things through Christ. He strengthens me." And Paul's understanding of contentment in his life was that it had nothing to do with what you had or didn't have, but it depended completely upon Who you knew. And somehow as Christians we started there. We find Jesus. We love Him. And then we start to turn right or left, and the world gets its grip on us and our relationship with God that has so much to offer kind of languishes on the sidelines, because we're disillusioned. We believe somehow it is not like that at all.

Notice what the Psalmist wrote in the verse before this: "Incline my heart to hear Your testimony, and not turn to covetousness." In fact, turn my heart away, my eyes away from the "shav." And revive in me Your way. Jesus said to the disciples in Luke 12, I think, verse 15, be careful about being covetous, because your life does not consist in the things that you possess. In other words, from God's perspective, that's not you. Nor is that a satisfying place. When Jesus spoke to that woman at the well, He said the same thing: "You drink of this water, you're going to thirst again. You drink the water that I give, you'll never thirst again. In fact, this water will spring up like a well of living water in your heart to eternal life."

How much of an argument would it take for you to invest more of your time and effort in the spiritual things, in the eternal things? How often do you find yourself bound to chasing after things that won't last? He prays for that. He realizes there's a conflict, a dilemma. He wants God to forcibly get involved. "Incline my heart to Your testimony, away from covetousness." It's a one verse cry for victory over the flesh.

Solomon was a man who was interesting in the Bible because he was the wisest man that ever lived, and at least in his days, the richest man that ever lived. At some point in his life he decided that he would try to surrender to the gamut of world eye candy, and try to find life apart from God and His ways. I'm going to throw myself wholeheartedly into the world. There's got to be something out there that will satisfy. He would find out over several years there was no pot of gold at the end of rainbow. He would use the words empty and vain a lot, as he ran down one road after the other. Being the wealthiest man that ever lived, being the wisest -- and by the way, his wisdom was a gift from God, but even God's wisdom doesn't serve you very well if you don't pay attention to it. So he possessed the wisdom, he just didn't apply it. So Solomon set out to prove what could be found in the world. If you've never read the book of Ecclesiastes, you'd do well to read it, and to read his --, he kept notes as he went. He tried everything; more wives than anyone would really want, more money than he could ever spend, more possessions than he could ever enjoy, celebration of his intellect, his power. His self-indulgence knew no bounds. Imagine

if you could do that. Go buy what you want, have what you want, have it the way that you want, and then find yourself going, this isn't what I want. Amazing.

In Chapter 2 of Ecclesiastes he talks about giving himself over to self and to pleasure, and he was frustrated. Tried to buy things, it didn't satisfy. Tried to build things, wasn't happy. In Chapter 2 verse 13 or so, he turns from those pursuits to saying, well, maybe if I was smart, and wisdom was the key. And so he gave himself to madness and he said, even that's crazy, because whether I'm smart or not, guess what? We both die. And then the fool is as equal to the -- as to the smart guy as he'd ever be. That doesn't give me an advantage at all, unless I'm not ready to stand before God. He talked about accomplishments as being frustrating. He said I could build everything and buy everything, and I could have everything, but I can't find any joy in that either. Because the minute I die, I got to give it to somebody that might waste away everything I've worked so hard for. I got to leave it to the fool. Even that then is short-lived for me. They're going to mismanage everything I worked so hard for. So he found no satisfaction in that.

You've probably seen in the news people that come from old money. They have plenty, but they've never worked a day in their life. These little Hollywood starlets whose claim to fame is falling down drunk or exposing themselves in public. And they have 10 million followers on Twitter. Idiots is what they are. Ridiculous, fooled by the world. Unbelievable. And yet Solomon writes, well, I'm just going to have to leave it to someone who will waste it away. He spends Chapter 4 and at least the first part of Chapter 6 talking about riches seem to be a motivating factor in lots of people's lives. He said in Chapter 5 verse 12, "The more you have, the more you have to worry about it. With riches come a lack of sleep. I've lost my sleep over worrying about what I have." He said in Chapter 4, "The more you have, the more your neighbors will envy you." First you lose sleep. Now you lose friends. "To have less and be able to enjoy it with peace is far better than having my hands full and my heart filled with turmoil," he writes in chapter four verse 6. He writes later on in that same chapter, "It is of greater benefit to be poor but teachable, than foolish and settled in and uncorrectable." He writes in Chapter 5 verse 10, "He that loves riches will never be satisfied

with them. He that devotes full time to satisfying his flesh will not be satisfied with what he finds. His eyes will not be satisfied." He goes on and on, so that he says to you, I've been down this road. I've spent my time here. I've invested in the flesh. I've run after the glories of the world.

The Psalmist gets to this point and says, "Lord, let me die to the things which my eyes have seen and are worthless and empty and lying promises of good, and my soul remains unfulfilled. And Lord, revive me. Turn my eyes away and then revive me in your way." Great first step, realize the things you long for are the things that will leave you empty. Good to pray, Lord, help me to overcome.

But then we get to the end here, verse 37, he prays for revival. The word means to restore or to quicken or to make alive or to recover. It's a prayer of somebody who wants the superiorly of the eternal into his life again. But it's somebody that used to be in that position and is not there any longer. The word "revive" would suggest he once lived that kind of life, but he'd fallen kind of away from it.

Paul when he wrote to the 2 Corinthians in Chapter 4, I think it was, said to them, "We want to look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal; we want to live our lives looking at the things which are not seen, which are eternal." Our eyes upon the Lord. Look, the flesh always wants more. The newness of anything that you get will eventually wear off, no matter what it is. The only thing that will satisfy is your spiritual well-being. Get a new car, get a new pair of shoes, get a new suit, get whatever you want -- Rock'Em Sock'Em Robots -- and eventually you're going to go, oh, I don't like that thing anymore. That's why we have garage sales, and storage units, and used car lots, and secondhand clothing stores. It isn't because we're satisfied, it's because we're not satisfied. We were; now we're not. There's a new thing now. I remember my neighbor spending 700 dollars to buy a Cabbage Patch Doll for his daughter. And I thought, are you out of your mind? And I honest -- I think she played with it for three weeks and then you'd see it hanging at the garage, getting sprinkled on by the -- yeah, it's ridiculous.

Deliver me, Lord, from the worthless, and make me more

sensitive to Your ways. How can I do that? How can you do that? Certainly all of that starts by being born again. Until you come to Jesus, you are left to yourself. You have no power over the flesh. In fact, you don't know there's a battle going on. You just follow along as if getting dragged by the nose. Wherever the culture goes, you go. Everybody's got to have one of these now, everybody's going there, that's what everybody's doing. That's you. And then you come to Jesus and He forgives your sins and He gives you His Spirit, and all of a sudden, your eyes are open. You see sin for what it is and yourself for who you are, and you want better than that for yourself. Now the battle starts. But now you have God's spirit living in you to enable you to say no to sin. Once you are born of God's spirit, you get now to have a decision made. You get to choose now. You have the capacity for yourself to say no and to say yes, to resist the flesh, to mortify it. The word "mortify" means to put to death or to starve. You don't have to feed your flesh. You can feed your spiritual life. But that's going to mean getting up and reading your Bible rather than getting up and getting food. "I got to eat." You do. What are you going to do first? What drives you first? You can submit to the spirit. And as long as you live in this body and in this fallen world, that battle is going to rage; the flesh against the spirit, the temporal against the eternal, the "shav" versus the things that last.

And the flesh will do what it has always done. It will promise you much and deliver nothing. And God will do what He's always done. He'll bring you peace and joy and satisfaction and rest and purpose as you surrender to Him. But it's your choice. If your choice is to be in church 30 minutes a week and put your Bible in the trunk, that's your choice. But then don't look for joy and peace and rest. You won't find it there. Lord, turn my eyes away from the worthless things. Revive me in the ways of the Lord. Revive me in Your ways.

This pull that happens in both directions. Paul said to the Romans Chapter 8, I think verse 13, "If you live in the flesh, then you're going to die in the flesh. If you through the spirit will mortify: Put to death, set aside, look the other way, "the deeds of the flesh, you can live." He said the same thing to the Colossians in Chapter 3. Mortify on the earth these things in your life.

The Psalmist asked God to help him in the daily battle. You can take control. You can turn away from your fleshly demands. God, help me. And he uses the word "revive." Bring me back, because this battle is oftentimes won and lost, and you got to go back and go Lord, I want to start over.

I've watched new believers over the years, and to me they're the most exciting people to be around, because they love everything about the Lord. If you want to get your Bible out, they got 100 questions. They're like vacuum cleaners. "What did you say again? Say it again." Teaching a new believer class is not hard. You could all do it. And you'll go home saying "I'm the best teacher in the world," because they love hearing God's word. But catch them two years later and so often that edge, that joy, that thrill has been set aside. What they used to do in chasing after the Lord they no longer do.

So make me more alive again. But you see, if you know the Lord, the choice this morning is yours. It's not mine to make for you, it's yours to make for you. Wise men and wise women will follow the Psalmist, asking God for His strength to view the world and its goods, not as objects of desire, but objects of scorn. Set them aside. The Lord's ways will satisfy. And the constant battle is this ongoing struggle for attention.

Solomon, after years of wasting his money, his time, and his efforts, and his life, wrote at the end of Chapter 12, "Here is the summing or the conclusion of the matter: You should just fear God and keep His commandments, for that is man's all." That's your entire job in life, fear God and follow His ways. That's where life is found. And then he ends by saying, "The Lord will bring every work into judgment, every secret thing, good or evil."

The Psalmist had it right. Solomon learned to have it right. You and I better get it right. Because the world -- and we live in the west, man. Everything's about consumerism here anyway. Everything's always on sale, you know that. It's on sale. It is always on sale.

God, revive us. It's all about "shav" or spirit; right? Get your Bible out, start reading it. Go to church more often, not less. Get yourself involved in serving the

Lord. Share your faith. Pray. Get your eyes off the world. Look up. Your redemption is drawing near. It isn't that God doesn't have available to us life. It's that unfortunately, so often in the midst of our worldly life, we've chosen other ways, other things, and there's no way of getting the time back. Redeem the time now.

It's a good prayer. Maybe this could be your memory verse for the week. Write it out. Stick it on your dash. Get in in the morning and go, oh, yeah. Put it everywhere you sit; at lunch, on your job, at your desk. Remind yourself this week. There's a lot of worthless stuff out there competing for your time. Or you can do those eternal things, because that's what God wants, His Word to be your joy.