

Psalm 119 – Session 3

Week 3, v. 37

Ps 119:37 Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, And revive me in Thy ways.

We have two contrasting subjects again just as in the preceding verse. First, let's look at what is meant by vanity.

Vanity <shav> n the sense of desolating; evil (as destructive), literally (ruin) or morally (especially guile); figuratively idolatry (as false, subjective), uselessness (as deceptive, objective; also adverbially, in vain):--false(-ly), lie, lying, vain, vanity.

When we think of vanity in our English language it's being conceited or having excessive pride. It's loving self above all else, having false pride of oneself.

The vain things of the world would be putting anything above that which is absolutely true – God. Having our affections be towards pleasures, honor and wealth would be vanity. The things that turn our eyes away from God rather than towards Him are vanity.

What does God's word say about vanity?

Job 35:13 "Surely God will not listen to an empty [cry,] nor will the Almighty regard it.

Ps 12:2 They speak falsehood to one another; with flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.

Ps 31:6 I hate those who regard vain idols; but I trust in the LORD.

Ps 41:6 And when he comes to see [me], he speaks falsehood; His heart gathers wickedness to itself; When he goes outside, he tells it.

Ps 127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.

Jon 2:8 "Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness,

Psalm 119:37 says, "turn away my eyes from looking at vanity".

Have you ever covered your eyes during an especially gruesome scene in a movie or during a scene that may be too explicit? Why do we cover our eyes or the eyes of our children?

We turn our eyes from things we don't want to see because those things affect us in some way. Think of someone who may have an addiction. They are drawn towards the object of their addiction to extent of being powerless against it. If you are an alcoholic, the goal is to stay away from alcohol. **What does it mean to "play with fire"?** The phrase "playing with fire" means you are doing something risky or dangerous; something that could cause you trouble.

Proverbs 6:27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

"The adage, 'You can't play with fire without being burnt', holds a great eliminate of truth. Sin, like fire, will burn you. It is foolish to play with either. Neither can be satisfied. Fire burns and sin corrupts. As fire, sin spreads; it is contagious. It should never be embraced. The Apostle Paul says to the Corinthians, 'Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'. Sin, like fire, has an enticing beauty. Both can be warm, charming, and colorful. Yet, neither can be touched. As we teach our children not to play with fire, we must teach them not to play with sin. We are to do so by word and example. The difference between fire and sin, is that fire has a place; there is no place for sin. Don't tease it, trifle with it, protect it, and of course, never take sin to your bosom." Discover the Bible – Daily Devotions

It would be like playing with fire to just have a taste of alcohol when you know your weakness. Since we know our weakness to sin is great, the best solution is to stay far away from the enticement of sin. To cover our eyes so that the temptation is removed. **Will covering our eyes alone remove temptation?** If that were the case, someone who has no sight would never sin. Turning my eyes must also speak to my heart: removing the desires and affections for the vanities of this world. God can change the desires of my heart!

The prayer of David is that God would keep his eyes from focusing on worthless things and turn his eyes towards that which has value -- God's ways.

To "quicken or revive" is an action meaning to give new life or energy to or move faster or make more accurate. This is a continuous action in our lives dependent on God's grace to move us forward in our desire for Him.

"Quicken thou me in thy way; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit." Beholding vanity deadens us and slackens our pace; a traveler that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view will not rid ground; but, if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible

Matthew Poole, in his commentary, says it this way: "Quicken thou me in thy way; as I desire that I may be dull and dead in afflictions to worldly vanities; so, Lord, make me lively, and vigorous, and fervent in thy work and service."

Are we seeking "empty honors and fading beauties"? Do we gaze at the things of this world with too much admiration? Is our energy being spent on things which hold temporary happiness or do we pursue the way God has set before us looking towards lasting heavenly treasure?

Pr 4:25 Let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

Pr 23:4-5 Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration [of it.] When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For [wealth] certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies [toward] the heavens.

Isa 33:15-16 He who walks righteously, and speaks with sincerity, he who rejects unjust gain, and shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe; he who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil; he will dwell on the heights; his refuge will be the impregnable rock; his bread will be given [him;] his water will be sure.

1Jo 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Thomas Scott says, "The eyes ... are the inlets of temptation to the heart ... through which every kind of concupiscence [physical attraction] is excited".

Ge 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make [one] wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Jos 7:21 when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it."

2Sa 11:2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.

Think of the progression of sin. So often it begins with our eyes, then moves to our heart then is fulfilled in our actions.

Give me so much life that dead vanity may have no power over me. Enable me to travel so swiftly in the road to heaven that I may not stop long enough within sight of vanity to be fascinated thereby. Treasury of David

An ugly object loses much of its deformity when we look often upon it. Sin follows the general law, and is to be avoided altogether, even in its contemplation, we would be safe. A man should be thankful in this world that he eyelids; and as he can close his eyes, so he should often do it. Albert Barnes.

To what lengths do we avoid things that are unpleasant? Think about being near someone who is sick, even recently, the Ebola plague in Africa. What steps were taken for protection? Why? How can we relate that extreme avoidance with the avoidance of sin? Is sin as dangerous?

The eyes of a Christian should be like sunflowers, which are opened to no blaze but that of the sun. William Seeker, 1660.

How does the truth of Psalm 119:37 cause you to react to the temptation of sin in your life?