

DCF:

We all have phrases we use to help us do things. You know, short hand reminders for specific tasks. Golfers might say to themselves “Keep your arm straight” as they begin their swing. New drivers might say to themselves “10 and 2” as they start driving the car. I’ve got one that I use quite often when I’m working on a car. “Righty tighty, lefty loosy.” Sounds goofy, but it helps.

We have lots of phrases that we use to help us in different areas of life, don’t we? Did you know there’s a phrase that can help us when we are tempted by the devil? There is! In fact, I’m sure there are several. One is “What would Jesus do?” That’s a good one. Another is taken from today’s Scripture lesson. It’s **“LOOK OUT, LOOK IN, LOOK UP!”** Never heard this one before? OK, let’s take a look at this phrase which can help us when Satan unleashes another attack against our souls.

### ***Part One: Look out for the world***

Oh, how Paul loved this congregation! The same can be said of all the believers with whom Paul was acquainted, but here Paul puts it into writing. Notice what Paul said of them in the last verse of our text: **“you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown.”** These people were precious to Paul, and he wanted nothing but the best for them. Their joy was his joy. Their pain was his pain. ~~And these~~ people were experiencing pain. They were under attack by the devil, and Paul wanted them to remain firm in the faith that they had received from God.

They were being attacked on two fronts. The first battle front for their souls was the attack of pain. Society was marginalizing them. They were ridiculed for their beliefs. They were, I’m sure, cut out of business deals because of their faith. They were avoided by their unbelieving neighbors. I’m sure there were parties and other activities they were excluded from because they were “those Christians who are kind of strange.”

The second battle front was pleasure. Unbelievers seemed to have it much, much easier than they did. They could enjoy life to the full, at least the kind of life that appeals to our sinful nature. They could sleep in on worship days. They could spend all their time and money on themselves. They could make wonderful plans for vacations and house additions. They devoted all their time and energy to the things of this world, and in most cases, it seemed to pay off. What person wouldn’t be tempted to go back to this world’s way of living if it seems so easy and fun?

Two battle fronts. Paul reminds them to stand firm in their faith, even when the attacks seemed to come from every direction. You see, the enemies of Christ are not always angry enemies of Christ. Sometimes the enemies of Christ are those that like you, or even love you. They just don’t care about the Lord. All their time and energy is spent on themselves. They are enjoying life so much that they want you to share it with them.

It’s real easy for us to see who our enemies are in this world if they don’t like us. We see the attacks of the media on Christian thought, and it’s an easy thing to identify them. We see the attacks of the world against our beliefs in marriage and against abortion, and it’s easy to identify our enemies. But so often it’s difficult to see the attacks of Satan when they come through the battle front of pleasure. We sit down to plan our week and we’re tempted to skip Bible reading or church because it’s so much more enjoyable to sleep in or go up north. We sit down to plan our social calendar and it’s so much more enjoyable to date that unbeliever because he’s a hunk than wait for another person who believes in Christ.

We have friends whose main goal in life is “how do I make this life better?” Questions about weight, money, plastic surgery, houses, cars and clothes dominate their every waking thought.

Look out for the world! Look out for Satan’s attack of pleasure and selfishness! Even though it seems as if it’s a pleasurable way of going through life, listen to these words from our God: **“For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.”** Whoever loves the world more than God will lose their precious gift of eternal life.

But it’s so hard to ignore! Stuff is so much fun to have! How do we battle that temptation to focus on ourselves rather than on God? How do we stand firm in the faith that the Holy Spirit has given to us?

## **Part Two: Look in the Word**

Well, just as there are two battle fronts that the devil throws at us from the world, there are two ways that we can combat those attacks. The first one is finding a good role model. It's not the most important, but it may be the first defense that many of us have. Paul encourages his listeners to follow his example in life. **"Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."** Why does Paul encourage his listeners to follow his example? Because it's based on the Word of God and it proves that it can be done. "I did it," Paul is telling them "and you can, too. Look at the others who have done the same. You can do it!"

We need good role models, too! We can get so wrapped up in a temptation that we don't think clearly. We can get so wrapped up in the idea that "everybody's doing it" that we fail to resist the sin that is pulling at us. We need good role models. We have some wonderful ones here at Messiah. We have young adults who have never used drugs, or abused alcohol, or run away from home. We have young married couples who haven't lived together before marriage. We have older couples who cherish their children and raise them to know their Savior. We have people who have successfully reached 40, 50, even 60 years of marriage. We have good role models right here! Who's your Christian role model?

But don't just imitate their Christian life. Go to the source of their motivation and strength! That's the second way, and the most important way, that we are to use to combat the devil's attacks. Study the Word! Not only does it increase our knowledge of what God has done, it also refocuses our minds on things that really matter. As we study the Word, we can also think of times that it could help us in our battle against temptation. For instance, as you read the passage "Keep yourselves pure" and "your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit" you can think of the date you're going on next weekend. As you read "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind" you can think of how that applies when you set your monthly budget.

Plus, it refocuses us on eternal destination and how we're getting there. That is one of the most powerful defenses that we can apply against the devil. Look up to the Lord!

## **Part Three: Look up to the Lord**

When we're under attack by Satan, the first thing we should do is not to focus on the temptation, but on the Lord. Think of Him! Think about our Savior who suffered, died and rose again. Think of how He saved us from our sins by His life and death. Think about the fact that He is coming back to take us home to heaven. Think about Paul's encouraging words: **"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."** Paradise is waiting for us, and we can't wait to get there! We are eagerly awaiting our Savior to return.

If you have a dog, you know what being eager is like. When you grab that leash and clip it on him, he runs around, wagging his tail and whining if you're not hurrying like he wants you to. That's eager! And that's how we feel towards our Lord's return. We can't wait until we're in heaven. We can't wait until we receive our glorified bodies. We can't wait to be reunited with loved ones who have died in the faith. We can't wait to see the throne of God and meet the angels who have protected us. We can't wait to meet Moses and David and the apostles and ask them questions. We can't wait to meet our Lord face to face and thank Him for His wonderful sacrifice for our sins. Look up to the Lord! That's the perfect defense against Satan's attacks.

Look up to the Lord. Stand firm. We don't want to lose Him, and He doesn't want to lose us. That's why He continually comes to us in His Word and strengthens us.

We have a lot of different phrases that we use as shorthand to remind us how to do things, don't we? Maybe you've used "righty tighty, lefty loosy" as you worked on your car. I pray that after today, you'll have a phrase that will be most helpful when Satan comes a knockin'. **"LOOK OUT, LOOK IN, LOOK UP!"** Look out for the world. Look in His Word and look up to the Lord. Keep that in mind the next time you are tempted, and I pray that the Lord will help you to stand firm.

AMEN