

Rev. John Kleinig on **Spiritual Warfare**

posted by Michael Larson 9-14-09

Yesterday evening I had the honor and privilege of attending a presentation by the Reverend Dr. John Kleinig on the much misunderstood topic "Spiritual Warfare." If you are not familiar with Kleinig, he is the author of *Leviticus (Concordia Commentary)*, as well as the more recent book, *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today*. Dr. Kleinig has served as lecturer and Dean of Chapel at Australian Lutheran College in North Adelaide, South Australia.

The presentation yesterday was at St. John's in Wheaton, Illinois. The following are notes that I scribbled down...

Christians by the very nature of baptism are enlisted on the front lines of spiritual battle. Though it is commonly thought spiritual warfare is waged outside the boundaries of the Christian community, it is more so within the Christian community. Spiritual affliction (tentatio) is not just for new converts coming to spiritual truths but is more so for those maturing in age and faith. Temptation and affliction gets worse.

Neglect of the elderly who are at forefront of spiritual battle is troubling. In the church we are often obsessed with meeting the desires of the youth at the expense of the elderly.

"Fighting the Good Fight," in reference to the words of St. Paul is not "out there" but is local – holding on to faith itself. The battleground takes place in the conscience of every Christian. Who rules the conscience – Satan or Christ? Satan hurls condemnation at us for a bad conscience.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus prays "Deliver us from the evil one." However, Jesus, has no sin, therefore he has no need for this petition in and of himself. Jesus, however, identifies himself with us, "Deliver us (in union with church)" from the evil one. Jesus condescends to do our bidding and fight and win the battle "for us."

In reference to Revelation 12: The woman (church) is unassailable by Satan. The man child born of the woman (Christ) "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (v. 10). The accuser is always Satan, who targets the church and always accuses.

The church however, is unassailable, and Satan goes after Christians – to isolate them – and separate them from their faith. He attacks those first who are faithful and confessing. "We are under enormous spiritual attack for being a faithful Christian congregation" – Dr. Kleinig.

Satan disorders all things – creates disunity – chaos – enmity – aims to deceive us. Satan knows Scriptures inside out and makes them a lie to us. Satan even uses the great Reformation breakthrough, "Justification by grace through faith in Christ alone," twisting it to mean, "Do not do good works!" "Satan" comes from the Hebrew word, meaning someone who prosecutes. Devil from Greek "Diabolos" means "slanderer." Satan slanders – lies – twists – Christ and the truth in order to destroy and separate us from faith.

For unbelievers Satan "excuses sin." For believers he condemns/accuses us of sin, "You are guilty, not saved, and you are a fraud." He gets us in our vocations, "You are awful sinning vicar (my modification from Kleinig's example), son, student, worker, etc."

Based upon Rev. 12 the two weapons by which the church "overcomes" Satan – by the Blood of the Lamb and holding to the testimony of Jesus (v. 11).

Satan uses guilt to attack the conscience and anger to destroy faith. Anger creates "collateral damage." We reply offenses in our heads – I think of offenses of another – and we makes enemies of one another – hate each other.

I sit in God's seat and pronounce judgment on others by slandering and condemning person – and I murder them in my heart – I execute with my tongue – condemn to death. When we hold to anger we cannot act lovingly but lash out indiscriminately. Satan is behind these reverberations and behind all fallout.

Satan loves isolating us from Christ and other Christians. We are easy to pick off. Dr. Kleinig makes observation from personal pastoral care that most Christians leaves church based upon what Pastor/or other Christian says or does – some sort of offense, however petty it may be. Therefore, we are capable of actually destroying people's faith (though Satan is behind this).

Saint Paul makes an allowance for anger, "Be angry and do not sin" (Eph. 4:26). We sin when we "hang on" to anger. "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" – do not carry anger day to day. Anger is the "root cause" of depression. Anger rots the inside. When we hold on to our anger we say "Come on in devil, make a home in my heart." Satan feeds on anger – don't let anger live and Satan has nothing to feed on.

Satan digs up the dirt on us, exposes it, magnifies it, and throws it at us. 10 Commandments serve as spiritual examination/diagnostic tool to confess sins I commit, also with an awareness of sins committed against me. Take that which is in the dark and bring it to light of Gospel.

Concerning spiritual warfare, "We are not involved in a search and destroy mission." We do not need to go out on a spiritual crusade but rather "man our post." We are to take up our post as "sentry guard." We guard our post, the holy plot of territory already won for us by Christ. We protect the place where God has "put us" (vicar, son, student, friend, member of congregation – my insert here). I do sentry duty here.

Satan tempts us to go out and fight elsewhere and neglect our post/station. We need to attend to our posts and stay awake spiritually in them – attending to spiritual concerns of those around us: guilt, shame, anger etc. And we attend not with Bible bashing but with prayer in daily life and prayer at the altar when we receive the Lord's Supper.

In reference to Ephesians 6, we "borrow" all weaponry from Christ. Spiritual warfare and sentry duty are done through prayer, praying for those around us. We are not called to battle the enemy – Jesus Christ does our fighting for us – we plead that Christians may be called to repentance and preserved in the Church.

Spiritual warfare is not "out there" in politics, society, etc but close. First enemy that Satan seeks are pastors, followed by teachers and leader in the church. With sentry duty we pray for family and friends and bring their names to the altar and communion rail – into holy space.

Four key points: 1) Satan keeps us away from church. 2) Satan aims to separate us from the Word and prayer. Prayer is supernatural power which routes satan – we cannot by our own faculties/cleverness outsmart satan. 3) Satan seeks us in the bed room – in marriage – by getting between spouses – thereby hampering faith. 4) Pastors often loose footing through Satan's attacks in and among their family.

Closing Luther idea/quote "The devil is the comforter of the faithful." Luther struggled with believing sins were forgiven. Temptation is comfort because it is proof that I am saved and brought into Christ. That is why Satan sets to work so hard on us.

*The devil is comforter of the faithful.
The worst temptation is no temptation.*