

Prayer - the monitor of your spiritual life

- the heartbeat of your spiritual growth
- the circulatory system that feeds the life of Christ in you today

How is your prayer life? Or better yet, how is the bloodstream or river of life to your Christian life? Is it running well? Are you healthy?

The blood in your body does two things: 1) nourishes, and 2) cleanses -- can't survive without it!

A¹ person can live a day or two without water and several weeks without food, but only a few minutes without oxygen, the main fuel for our hundred trillion cells. Heavy exercise may increase the demand for oxygen from the non-nal four gallons up to seventy-five gallons an hour, prompting the heart to double or even triple its rate to speed red cells to the heaving lungs. If the lungs alone cannot overcome the oxygen shortage, the red cells call up reinforcements. Instead of five million red cells in a speck of blood, seven or eight million will gradually appear. After a few months in the rarified atmosphere of Colorado's mountains, for example, up to ten million red cells wil fill each drop of blood, compensating for the thinner air.

The pellmell journey, even to the extremity of the big toe, lasts a mere twenty seconds. An average red cell endures the cycle of loading, unloading, and jostling through the body for a half million round trips over four months. In one final journey, to the spleen, the battered cell is stripped bare by scavenger cells and recycled into new cells. Three hundred billion such red **cells die and are replaced every** day, leaving behind various parts to reincarnate in a hair follicle or a taste bud'.

What a complex system...

The body provides the energy for the red cells travels by employing the heart, an open organ that deserves a book exclusively devoted to it. Primitive artificial hearts are now available, but I would like to see a government design specification sheet for a truly adequate replacement.

BIDS ACCEPTED FOR:

-Fluid pump with 75-year life expectancy (2,500,000,000 cycles). -No maintenance or lubrication required.

-Output: must vary between .025 horsepower at rest and short bursts of I horse power determined by such factors as stress and exercise.

¹ Brandt, p.

- Weight: not to exceed 10.5 ounces (300 grams).
- Capacity: 2,000 gallons per day.
- Valves: each to operate 4,000-5,000 times per hour.

Prayer links us to God by way of the wondrous Holy Spirit. Every need and spiritual requirement has its supply in prayer. Are you praying?

Your body has 60,000 miles of blood vessels, 100,000,000 cells and every 20 seconds everyone of them is renewed... Listen to Dr. Paul Brandt:

"...perhaps a technological metaphor would serve best today. Imagine an enormous tube snaking southward from Canada through the Amazon delta, plunging into oceans only to surface at every inhabited island, shooting out eastward through every jungles, plain, and desert in Africa, forking near Egypt to join all of Europe and Russia as well as the entire Middle East and Asia--a pipeline so global and pervasive that it links every person worldwide. Inside that tube an endless plenitude of treasures floats along on rafts: mangoes, coconuts, asparagus, and produce from every continent; watches, calculators, and cameras; gems and minerals; forty-nine brands of cereals; all styles and sizes of clothing; the contents of entire shopping centers. Four billion people have access: at a moment of need or want, they simply reach into the tube and seize whatever product suits them. Somewhere far down the pipeline a replacement is manufactured and inserted.

"Such a pipeline exists inside each one of us, servicing not four billion but one hundred trillion cells in the human body. An endless supply of oxygen, amino acids, nitrogen, sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sugars, lipids, cholesterols, and hormones surges past our cells, carried on blood cell rafts or suspended in the fluid. Each cell has special withdrawal privileges to gather the resources needed to fuel a tiny engine for its complex chemical reactions.

"In addition, that same pipeline ferries away refuse, exhaust gases, and worn-out chemicals. In the interest of economical transport, the body dissolves its vital substances into a liquid (much as coal is shipped more efficiently through a slurry pipeline than by truck or train). Five or six quarts of this all-purpose fluid suffice for the body's hundred trillion cells."

Now let me ask you, have you been aware and using the incredible spiritual support system God gave you? Are you praying? If only we appropriated all God has for us!

So, we are considering our vital life-giving link to God prayer.

Open to Mk. II: 19-26.

In this passage Christ gives us the laws of prayer (positively) or the roadblocks to prayer (negatively). Note three divisions as we read the text.

V. 19-21 Lesson from the fig tree
A. Fruitlessness invites cursing
-Christians bear fruit of righteousness
-Lost bear fruit of sinfulness

God expects fruit from you and me!

V. 22-24 Lesson on faith = trust God, count on Him, believe Him, lay hold on His word. Faith is imperative.

Hendrickson once said...

But what is faith?

(1) First scripture says: *Faith is:* The soul's window through which God's love comes pouring in. The open hand whereby man reaches out to God, the Giver. The coupling that links man's train to God's engine.

The trunk of salvation's tree, whose root is grace, and whose fruit is good works.

(2) Secondly, scriptures portray: *Faith was:* The means of Abraham's justification. The magnet that drew Moses away from the pleasures of Egypt, so that he threw in his lot with God's sorely afflicted people. The force that overthrew Jericho's wall. The secret that enabled Ruth to make her stirring confession. The weapon that killed Goliath and destroyed Sennacherib's host. The deciding factor in Carmel's contest.

The shield that protected Job in the midst of his trials. The muzzle that closed the mouths of Daniel's lions. The remedy that cured the centurion's servant and many others.

See the following passages: (respectively Gen. 15:6; Ex. 2: 10, 11 ff. (cf. Heb. 11:24-26); Josh. 6:20 (cf. Heb. 11:30); Ruth 1: 16, 17; 1 Sam. 17:45-47 and 11 Kings 19:14-37; 1 Kings 18:30-40; Job 19:23-27; Dan. 6:19-23; Matt. 8:10, 13.

(3) Finally: *Scripture also describes faith as:*

Leaning on the everlasting arms. (Deut. 33:27)

Committing one's way to the Lord, trusting in him, knowing that he will do whatever is best. (Ps. 37:8)

Receiving the kingdom (or rule) of God as a little child. (Mk. 10: 15)

Being sure of what we hope for, and being convinced of what we do not see. (Heb. 11: 1)

The victory that overcomes the world. (1 Jn. 5:4)

But you ask, how do I get that kind of faith?

(1) It's a gift, so you have it if saved... Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 26:18

(2) Only need God to increase it! Lk. 17:5

(3) Only by faith do we please God. Heb. 11:6

- He is (Word of God)
- rewards seekers (Christian life)

So, Law #1 - faith is imperative and Roadblock #1 - without faith prayer stops.

Now, to the big and final point:

V. 25-26 Lesson on forgiveness.

May I ask you a very personal question? This is truly from the bottom of my heart.

In your spiritual life this morning do you see:

-A lack of power?

-A lack of hunger for Word of God?

-A lack of love for the secret place of prayer and communion with God?

Have you started to experience:

-A loss of the richness you once had with God? Yes?

Listen - these last two verses teach that it may be that there is a barrier of unforgiveness that you have built up - and it's preventing the Lord from giving you the forgiveness that sustains a sweet relationship with Him.

The second law of prayer is: forgiveness is imperative, and if not heeded, a lack of a Godly forgiving spirit is a spiritual roadblock!

Let me close with the most powerful illustration of this in the Bible - Mt. 18, Jesus commanding we forgive.

Mt. 18:22 10 thousand talents

1 talent = 5,500 days pay on 30 years work whole career

10 thousand talents = 10,000 lifetimes work in \$5 1/2 billion

Actually, it is an impossible amount

100 denaria = 100 days pay or the cost of a cheap car!

Listen - portrait of salvation:

(1) impossible debt God forgives

(2) fellow Christian hurts us - that's a tiny debt we must forgive!

But why must we forgive Lord Jesus?

V. 34-35 Because of the penalty to our spiritual life if we don't.

Do You Wonder Why There Is Trouble In Your Life?

Do² you wonder why things aren't going well and you feel as if inquisitors and tormentors are in your life? Do you feel pressure and chastening being applied and do you sense a lack of joy and freedom that you think you ought to have as a child of God? Then maybe you ought to look around in your life and see if you have an unforgiving spirit, because if you're not forgiving the way you were forgiven by God-- magnanimously and compassionately and totally--then you are not going to experience relief from these inquisitors.

Is there someone who hurt you? Are you still holding that? Or have you released the torment of God's chastening your sin of unforgiveness by forgiving them?

Faith and forgiveness -- you can't pray and live the Christian life without them!

² Mac, Mt 18