TITLE: Maintaining Your Hard Drive

TEXT: Ps. 55:1-8; Ephe. 6:10-18; 1 Jn. 1:9; Ja. 4:7-10

INTRODUCTION: I am one of those guys who love technology. Show me a new technological gadget and I want one. As most of you may know I am kind of a computer geek, so this morning I want to talk about how to keep our Hard Drives clean.

 First I may need to update you on some computer terms: One is “Motherboard”. This may be described as the soul of your computer. To the motherboard all other components are attached.

 Another term is “Hard Drive”. This is the mind and heart of the computer. This is where all the information is sorted and stored.

 Two other terms are “Clean Disk” and “Disk Defragment”. These are what are called applications or system service programs on your computer.

 In some respects computers can be a lot like people.

 They can have their own distinct personalities (a dell computer has a whole different personality from an Apple computer).

Each computer seems to have its own quirks-- They can be very efficient or they can be very sloppy.

 Some are sleek and some bulky (PC vs. Laptop).

 But there at least two things that all computers have in common. They all have a motherboard (the soul of the computer) and a Hard Drive (the mind and heart of a computer).

 It is the hard drive that I want to talk about today.

 I know just enough about computers to be dangerous.

 I have helped several people over the years with their computers often trying to get a “sick” computer back to a state of health.

 There can be many causes for computer problems, but one I have found a lot more than any other is a cluttered Hard Drive.

What often happens over a long period of time is that the Hard Drive can become cluttered and the computers information scattered throughout it in no particular order.

 So what happens is the computer becomes less and less efficient, it slows down because it has to search so hard to find the information stored on it that you may be trying to access from it.

 Think of a library where all the books have been put back in the wrong sections and then trying to find a particular book and end up having to search each shelf in the entire library to find it.

 This is what can happen over time to a computer’s Hard drive.

 So, there are a couple applications, programs that come on the computer to fix that problem.

One is Disk Clean—which removes all unnecessary files to free up more room in the computer’s memory or (brain), and then there is Disk Defragmentation—which basically put everything back in alphabetical order so the computer can find specific information you may want more quickly and efficiently.

 If you have a messed up or junked up Hard Drive on your computer then this is the simplest fix.

 We can become a lot like a messed up computer sometimes can’t we?

**Psalms 55:1-8(NIV)**  **1Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea;**  **2hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught**  **3at the voice of the enemy, at the stares of the wicked; for they bring down suffering upon me      and revile me in their anger.**  **4My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me.**  **5Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.**  **6I said, “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest—**  **7I would flee far away and stay in the desert; *Selah***  **8I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.”**

In “Our Daily Bread” one time one of their writers, Julie Akerman Link, used this analogy of computer defragmentation.

 She said: “*Like my computer, my life gets fragmented. One situation tugs at my emotions while I am trying to concentrate on something else. Demands from every direction bombard me. I want to accomplish everything that needs to be done buy my mind won’t stop and my body won’t start. Soon I start to feel useless.”*

Have you ever found yourself to be is this place?

Even men such asKing David went through such times!

**Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught at the voice of the enemy, at the stares of the wicked; for they bring down suffering upon me and revile me in their anger.
My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me.
Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.**

 Have you ever found yourself in this place?

Where your thoughts trouble you and cause you to be distressed? Times when your heart is in anguish within you, possibly making you feel like you are facing the terrors of death itself?

 If so, is it possible that our hard drive, our heart and mind, have become fragmented?

 Those times when it seems as if we are being pulled in 20 different directions all at the same time.

 There are two situations I find myself in where this seems to be the most prevalent, where often I find the hard drive of my mind needing to be defragmented.

 One time is when I am trying to study or in sermon preparation.

 It drives me crazy when I try to prepare a sermon and my thoughts just seem to run amuck and my concentration is limited to short segments of time and then other thoughts start to crowd in on me.

 There are times when that happen that I simply will give it up and try again later.

 One solution that I have found that works for me is making sure I study and do my sermon prep first thing in the morning before I get distracted by the events of the day.

 Another time when I seem to find this happen is when trying to pray after a day filled with problems of one sort or another.

 I want to sincerely communicate with God, but as I am trying there are random thoughts that just seem to run through my mind and crowd out my prayers.

 It is like my mind has become fragmented by clutter making it hard to organize my thoughts.

 In those times there is an old African proverb that I often pray—“Lord Jesus, make my heart sit down.”

 Lord still and quiet my mind, help me defragment my mind, my heart, so that I can be still in your presence.

 I don’t believe I am the only Christian that struggles with a fragmented mind when it comes to prayer and I even know a big part of the reason why we do.

In speaking about the struggle of prayer Mark Link once used this story.

One day a boy was watching a holy man praying on the banks of a river in India. When the holy man completed his prayer the boy went over and asked him, “Will you teach me to pray?” The holy man studied the boy’s face carefully. Then he gripped the boy’s head in his hands and plunged it forcefully into the water! The boy struggled frantically, trying to free himself in order to breathe.

Finally, the holy man released his hold. When the boy was able to get his breath, he gasped, “What did you do that for?” The holy man said, “I just gave you your first lesson.” “What do you mean?” asked the astonished boy. “Well,” said the holy man, “when you long to pray as much as you longed to breathe when your head was underwater—only then will I be able to teach you to pray.”

 The Struggle of Prayer is not something new or just pertinent to our 21 century lifestyle.

 *From: ”The Sayings of the Desert Fathers”* (sixth century). “

*The brethren asked Abba Agathon, “Amongst all our different activities, Father, which is the virtue that requires the greatest effort?”*

*He answered, “Forgive me, but I think there is no labor greater than praying to God. For every time a man wants to pray, his enemies, the demons, try to prevent him; for they know that nothing obstructs them so much as prayer to God. In everything else that a man undertakes, if he perseveres, he will attain rest. But in order to pray, a man must struggle to his last breath.”*

Here is the thing; prayer is the application that God has provided within every Christian as that which will defragment the hard drive of our heart and mind!

 Prayer will put things back in their proper order and remove all the clutter that each day brings upon us.

Prayer can clean the hard drive of our heart so we can operate more effectively and more efficiently as a Christian.

And that is precisely why prayer can be so hard at times. The Devil knows this as well.

**Ephesians 6:10-18(NIV)
10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.
11Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.**

**12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.
14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,
15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.
16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**  **18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

 First important truth here: Our struggle is not against flesh and blood….

**12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

 Satan will use everything at his disposal to try to keep people from coming to Christ Jesus and to hinder our walk with God as a Christian.

Since he is the prince of the power of this world he has a lot within this world that he may try to use against us.

 But his biggest attack will often be the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

 There is a spiritual battle that rages around each and every one of us each and every day. It is a battle over the souls of men.

 For the non-Christian Satan will do everything at his disposal to keep them from coming to Christ.

For the Christian he will use everything in his power to try to naturalize us in our effectiveness as a Christian.

 For him the best strategy in doing that is try to cut the communication lines between us and God. To hinder our prayer life!

 We see an excellent example of this when coalition forces first went into Iraq to liberate the people from the tyranny of Sadam Hussein’s regime.

 The very first targets by coalition forces were the Iraqi communication facilities.

 They were very effectively taken out thus cutting off all communication from Bagdad and the units in the field.

 Iraqi soldiers were hunkered down with no directions from the high command and the army, for the most part, just collapsed.

 The US and Coalition forces marched right into Bagdad with surprisingly little resistance and took the city, sending Sadam hiding in a root cellar until he was caught, tried by the Iraqi people and finally hung for his crimes.

 Satan will try to use this very same strategy with the Christian! Try to cut our communication lines with our commanding officer by striving to hinder our prayers.

 But God has outlined how we activate our defragmentation program to clean and organize the hard drive of our heart and mind so that we can more effectively communicate with Him to get the needed direction from Him to fight and win our spiritual battles and help advance His Kingdom.

**13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.
14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,
15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**

 **16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

We are to put on or cloth ourselves with:

The belt of truth

The breastplate of righteousness
Readiness that comes from the gospel

The shield of faith,.

The helmet of salvation

The sword of the Spirit-- the word of God.

And Prayer

I think that there is a purpose to this order of the putting on of our armor and that is so that we will be able to bear the last, but most powerful piece of our armor---And that is prayer!

**18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

 A computer defragmentation program has functions that it does to clean a hard drive and they are done in a particular order. The last thing that the defragmentation program does is optimize the hard drive!

This is the definition of optimize

Enhance effectiveness of something: **to make something function at its best or most effective, or use something to its best advantage**

Isn’t this the ultimate purpose of prayer in the life of a Christian?

To Enhance our effectiveness: **to make us function at our best and be most effective as a Christian, to be used to His best advantage?**

 When my computer starts to run a little sluggish there is actually two steps I take.

 I always run the defragmentation program to straighten out the clutter on my hard drive to optimize its performance, but there is another program that I always run first to prepare my hard drive for defragmentation, and that is a program called “Clean Disk”.

 “Clean disk” will remove all the unnecessary files from my computer to free up more memory, more space.

 As Christians we need to Clean up our hard drive, our heart and mind, from time to time don’t we?

 Those times when we may be living in disobedience. Those times when our heart and mind have the junk files of sin taking up unnecessary space and slowing us down in our walk with the Lord.

 Just like on a computer it is wise to make sure the hard drive of our heart has removed all the unnecessary files of disobedience and sin from it before we defragment or reorganize the hard drive of our heart.

 If not then we just reorganize our heart with the sin still there.

Gods “clean disk” program for our lives as a Christian we find in:

**1 John 1:9 (NIV)
9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Confession and repentance of sin cleans the disk of our heart and prayer reorganizes it to optimize us to be the best that we can be as a Christian.

This morning what is the condition of the hard drive of your heart?

Do you find it difficult to pray at times? Do you find that your walk with the Lord is not what you want it to be, what it should be?

 Then maybe you need to run a disk clean and defragmentation of your heart…

 Confess any un-repented of sin and disobedience in your life to the Lord.

 Put on the full armor that God has provided:

The belt of truth

The breastplate of righteousness
Readiness that comes from the gospel

The shield of faith,.

The helmet of salvation

The sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God.

And then: **pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

We do this and the computer of our life will be optimized to run at its best, run as God intends for it to run...

**James 4:7-10(NIV)**
**7Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
8Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**  **9Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.**  **10Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**

 Are we ready to do a clean disk and defragmentation of our hearts and minds today so that the program of our life will run at its full capacity efficiently for God?