

Adventuring with God

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Continuous Refreshing

Down where we live in Carolina, we enjoy a happy combination of a temperate climate and ample rainfall. For that reason, trees, grass, bushes and flowers really thrive. Garden centers can be found everywhere, and they sell flowers and shrubbery literally year round. Last year I bought a camellia bush that blooms in January! For someone who lived in the snowy and frigid north for years, to find something that blooms in the middle of winter is truly phenomenal.

So you can imagine how shocking the recent drought has been for all Carolinians. Our lakes are dangerously low – cutting into our love affair with boating and fishing in this area – and we are actually having to restrict the use of nonessential water – water we would use for cleaning decks, washing our cars, watering our lawns, and filling our swimming pools.

The inches of rainfall in our area began to drop in early May last year. We would get our hopes up as forecasters promised precipitation week after week, but for some reason all the rainstorms would pass us by. By the end of the summer the lack of rain had really taken a toll. Most everyone's grass had withered away to an ugly brown patch, and the flowers that were not hand watered dried up as well. Their beautiful blooms became hard black stumps atop a parched stem. The trees did better, with their deep roots that ferreted out any drop of moisture deep below the earth's surface. But after six months had gone by with only a sprinkle or two of rain, even they began to look parched, limp, and sickly.

In the suburbs where we live, almost everyone has an in-ground sprinkling system. Every two or three days irrigation water spurts forth from the many jets around the yard to bathe the bushes, trees, and grass for a short time span. There is no doubt that such regular watering really helps. But over time the effects of just this artificial means of moisture could be clearly seen. Things were still alive, but just barely. They definitely were not *thriving* like they usually do around here.

It was sad and frustrating to watch. Feeling helpless to fix the problem, we all became resigned to possibly losing the vegetation we'd worked so hard to establish and maintain. The precious commodity of rain – overlooked and underappreciated because we always had plenty of it – was suddenly something we thought about every day. We watched the weather channel much more than we ever had before, hoping to see a break in the weather pattern. But even now, some eight months later, we are fifteen inches below what we normally have in rainfall. Water restrictions continue. We have no idea when our drought will stop and we can enjoy the refreshing of abundant rain again.

Drought can come to our spiritual lives as well. And the reasons are pretty similar. We need the continuous replenishing of God's life-changing Word to be administered to us through His Spirit. Without that, taken in on a regular basis, we soon dry up.

A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. . . Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:6-8).

Grass, as I already mentioned, was the first thing to show the effects of our recent drought. The reason is its shallow root system. Unlike the trees and larger bushes, the blanket of grass must have an almost daily infusion of moisture to keep it supple, lush, and green. The sprinkler system kept up with the need for a while, but soon the lack of gentle, steady rain could be seen.

And so it is in our lives as Christians. We can keep ourselves going for a while with other, artificial means of quenching our thirst. We can look to other men for advice and counsel. We can seek out the world's wisdom to fix our problems or at least distract us from them. But soon the effects begin to show in our lives. We become impatient, fearful, anxious, distracted, lacking

in faith, and caught up in the cares of this life. In short, we lose perspective and forget all that we are and have in Christ Jesus.

Only by returning to our source of life and gratefully receiving what He offers us can we begin to perk up. Through seeking Him daily our droopy spirits start to plump up and gain strength. We become pliable and soft to walk on once again, and we shine with the brilliance of our "true colors" – deep, verdant green. The result? We become easy on the eye to those around us and useful in bringing them comfort and enjoyment. As we are ourselves renewed, we then have something to give out to others.

The refreshment of His spiritual rain is something we can find nowhere else. We need to avail ourselves of it often because, like the grass, our roots often don't run deep enough to find the water hidden deep beneath the earth. We are vulnerable and needy. We dare not try to live without the awesome resource of God's continuous refreshing offered freely at any time. The effects of our spiritual drought are just too obvious!

"Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take

of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). He promises that even in the most barren and desolate place we can be refreshed: "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert ... to give drink to my people, my chosen" (Isaiah 43:19-20).

Maybe one day we will become like the tree planted by the rivers of water in Psalm 1. We'll bring forth fruit in season, our leaf will not wither, and whatever we do will prosper. But that is not something that will happen overnight; it is the result of years of abiding in Him and not trusting in our own resources.

The devotional writer L.B. Cowman reminds us: "The Lord is to be our Source of supply. In Him are springs, fountains, and streams that will never be cut off or run dry. No heat or drought can dry the 'river whose streams make glad the city of God' (Psalm 46:4)." (From *Streams in the Desert*, page 13). That's welcome news for those of us who are prone to spiritual drought. Let's come before Him daily to be replenished, rejuvenated, and refreshed. The lesson that droughts teach us is clear: There's nothing like the real rain from heaven!

All who are thirsty
All who are weak
Come to the fountain
Dip your heart in the stream of life
Let the pain and the sorrow
Be washed away
In the waves of His mercy
As deep cries out to deep

(We sing)
Come Lord Jesus come (x3)
Holy Spirit come (x3)
As deep cries out to deep (x2)

Lyrics by Brenton Brown / Glenn Robertson