

Terrible things happen when the temperatures top 100 degrees for something like 40 days in one summer. Plants that otherwise would have little to no problem dealing with the hot Oklahoma summer start to wilt and brown and dry up. Entire fields become tinder for one wayward cigarette thrown carelessly out the car window. Front lawns all over the city look more winter brown than summer green.

We know what it takes to make a garden grow, grass green, and plants bloom; it takes sun which we have plenty of, and it takes water. Without rain residents of Oklahoma City are forced to water only on odd or even days. But any water is better than no water. What does it take to make a Christian grow spiritually? "I'd like to pray more often." "I'd really like to be more caring and compassionate." "I'd like to be able to answer my friend's questions." "I'd like a stronger faith." How do these things happen?

God answers with words from Isaiah in the first lesson. He uses the picture we're very familiar with, water for plants, and applies that picture to our lives and spiritual growth. We say...

**We are watered by the Word of God  
His words are divine, enduring, and dynamic**

When you go to the tap and turn on the water where does it come from? Some get your water from a well drilled deep. Some get it from Lake Hefner, some from other reservoirs. But no matter where it comes from to get to your faucet all of it comes down from the sky. Snow in winter and rain in spring, summer, and fall all water the earth. For the last 365 days or so the state has averaged just over 22 inches of rain. That's a record low. People are calling for rain. They should be calling out to God to provide rain. He created this world, ordered it, and now waters it. We know that without water there's no growth. Plants need water, and water comes from above.

There's a battle today over the Bible that wasn't there 150 years ago. Back then everyone believed the Bible was the Word of God. But about that time society began to look at the Bible with suspicion. It happened largely because science started to put forward answers for life's big questions, questions the Bible had exclusive rights to answer. Human beings put large weight on scientific explanations. There's nothing wrong with research, questioning, and searching for answers. But human reason can only go so far. Reason crosses a line when it conflicts with God's clear words.

Where we are today is far from solid on society simply believing the Bible is God's Word. The path that got us here is easy to see. Science couldn't explain the miracles of the Bible so scientists denied them. Instead they guessed at what happened. Great thinkers put forward the idea that the Bible was actually just a hodge podge of stories and traditions patched together over time. Those stories had become watered down and embellished. Bible stories could be viewed as nothing more than fairy tales and myths that really weren't true. People started not trusting the Bible. They disregarded Moses crossing the Red Sea with the Israelites on dry ground. They laughed at the idea that Jonah could survive three days in the belly of the big fish. They explained away as false Jesus turning water into wine. But they didn't stop there. Eventually they denied Jesus' resurrection.

But the Bible is real and it's from above. It's not pieced together or a bunch of made up fairy tales to make you feel good about God. In fact it's not a human being's perspective on God, but rather its God's take on himself and his love for us. God breathed into the writers the very words he wanted them to write; sixty six books written over a span of 1500 years by some thirty authors all in agreement with no contradictions or errors. The miracles recorded weren't done in secret, but witnessed by hundreds and thousands. Over seven hundred individual predictions all come true. A Savior in Bethlehem, true. Betrayed by a friend, true. Rose on the third day, true. What other book proclaims a message so powerful about our sin that we quiver and are cut to the heart? What other book then proclaims a sweet message that calms our hearts and eases our conscience because it proclaims forgiveness from sins. No other book presents the truth of a substitute in Jesus who so fully took our place that he suffered for our sins and died for us but then rose again.

We are watered by the Word of God. **"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven ... so is my word that goes out from my mouth."** God's Word in the Bible is divine. Since that's true and since he tells you that you're forgiven we stand confident before God.

Perhaps you remember June 2010 and the flooding that resulted from almost 10 inches of rain in 9 hours. Over one hundred people were injured and thousands of dollars in property was damaged. If you know your Bible then perhaps that flood called to mind the single most devastating flood of all time, the flood described in Genesis. Yes God sent it; yes it destroyed all living things save for eight human beings on the ark and the animals. But God's words after that flood are still true. **"As long as the earth endure, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."** God made a promise that holds true for us that until this world ends on Judgment Day God will always provide for us and that includes the rain we need. It's a promise we here in Oklahoma need reminding of more now than ever. Water from above is consistent and enduring.

You're interested in improving your life spiritually. Why else would you be here? The comfort for you today is that God doesn't just give us the water of his Word in a hit or miss fashion like rain showers. He isn't just sprinkling it over us saying 'I hope this works'. God pours out his power through his Word reliably and steadily. We are watered by the Word of God whose words are enduring.

Friday before we came home we were at my in-laws house in Green Bay. My niece, who is six, had one of those moments you feel bad about. She was picking something up off the kitchen table and knocked over a glass dish that was next to it. The dish fell and shattered on the floor. My mother in law yelled for no one to move, my niece to go outside, and for people with shoes to clean up the broken glass. After all was cleaned up my niece came in from outside crying. She was hurt at what she thought was yelling directed at her. My mother in law had to explain that no one was mad at her; she understood it was an accident. She had to reassure my niece that she was still loved even given what she had done.

When God's Word goes to work on your heart it is the work of stories that aren't stale old myths or legends. This is real history, a real play by play of God's love through the ages. It's a description of times when people really did mess up and deliberately disobeyed. It tells the story of times when sin was rampant among people. It clearly shows those times when God continually came to them with his love. And at just the right time the son was sent to show God's love up close. God should have been angry with us because sin is no accident. But instead he was angry at Jesus. That exchange, that great exchange between Christ Jesus and every sinner here this morning is what changes us from the inside out. That's the power of God's Word. **"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it".**

I know you want to improve your spiritual life. So do I. You want to grow spiritually and so do I. Hear the words of encouragement to use the only tool that works, the water of God's Word. We are watered by the Word of God and we will grow.