

Like Summer Rain, Prayer Can Nourish, Refresh

When I look out my window or walk outside, I cannot help but notice the lush color of the grass and trees surrounding me.

The begonias in my window boxes, which weeks ago were in a heat-induced coma and grasping for life, are now full and thriving. Most of the other flowers in the boxes withered away under summer's scorching temperatures.

Then the rains came and came. For several days, it looked as if it would never stop raining.

The relentless downpours from Hurricane Irene and then Tropical Storm Lee caused us to be without lights for three days and eventually seeped into my basement and through my kitchen window sills.

Fortunately, we did not experience any great damage. My prayers go out to those who lost lives, homes and property because of severe winds and flooding and are still dealing with the aftermath of the storms.

I cannot stop thinking, however, about the other side of the rains that soaked the earth around me. It transformed my brown and brittle back yard into the green ground that invites me to sit and rest awhile, and that calls me to stop and see life with fresh gratitude.

The earth's thirstiness was satiated, albeit in some places terribly over saturated.

The good and bad of it all brings to my mind the power of prevailing prayer and what it can do, and has done, when my own soul has been parched and in need of a spiritual drenching or an urgent answer from God.

"Prevailing prayer is that which secures an answer," said Charles Finney, a 19th-century prayer leader and revivalist.

Each time I return to Finney's words on prayer, I am enlightened. In this selection, he offers several conditions for prayer to prevail.

I also am learning more about prevailing prayer from Rev. Dr. Cecilia Williams Bryant, a powerful praying woman of God who is leading a 30 Days of Prevailing Prayer journey via a nightly telephone conference.

So far, these calls and the Scripture readings from the book of Ephesians have blessed me tremendously.

As I have approached this year-long quest to grow deeper in my prayer life, I often find myself being doused by God's grace and being pulled back into the vibrancy of overcoming prayer just as dormancy is ready to settle in.

Prevailing prayer replenished the soul in the same way these summer rains have nourished my yards and my flowers.

There is no over-saturating with prevailing prayer, just a flood of joy in the heart as the words of James 5:16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 are brought to life.

Whatever comes, good weather or bad, hard times or easy sailing, I will pray and, by God's grace, prevail.

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