

16 SHUT IN

Genesis 7:16 ...and the LORD shut him in.

Isaiah 43:19 Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth...

Hebrews 6:18-19 ... we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

There is such a thing as being shut in by God, as He did to Noah and his family in the ark. It was for salvation from destruction, not punishment. God often shuts us in before He can do a new work with us. If only we recognised this, we would cease struggling so fretfully to extricate ourselves from our current constricting circumstances. Instead we would be able to abide quietly as Noah did within the ark of God while allowing Him to do the needed work of purging out all that is not right. Remember you are shut *in* to God, not shut *out*. That makes all the difference. It is not what the flood does to you, but what God does in you through the flood that matters most.

Noah and his family were shut in the ark with the animals for a whole year. They emerged in the 2nd month of his 601st year, just as they had entered on the 2nd month of his 600th year, according to God's word to him. It wasn't exactly a holiday cruise being shut up with all the stench and stuffiness of close quarter living in the world's biggest ever floating zoo while the biggest ever flood raged on relentlessly outside.

What does it feel like to be shut in like that? It must have been one long, unending night, as each day merged into the next with nothing to mark or separate them. Amidst the daily round of mundane chores of feeding and cleaning, the spirit struggles to rouse itself from lethargy, and muster enough strength to pull through yet another dreary day. The slick saying 'live a day at a time' rings hollow when all there is to see is dull monotony with no end in sight. It saps the energy and drains the enthusiasm out of life.

Days in the ark can be severely searching and stretching for faith. How many sleepless nights Noah must have endured? He would have often paced the creaking decks, wondering when it would all end, and trying to take in the staggering significance of this whole tragic thing that God was doing.

It must have been a time of tension mixed with anticipation. But the storm would surely subside, the rains recede, and the floodwaters abate. The dark night would turn into the welcome dawn of a new day. Yet there must have been the occasional good day. And then came the never-to-be-forgotten, on-top-of-the-world, 601st birthday celebration like no other! At long last they would be able to set foot on dry ground once more. How they must have watched and waited with yearning through the drab days with dreams and schemes of sunny days again. The sure and steadfast hope of better days and a brighter future would have made the waiting more bearable.

We are apt to forget the significance of such times of being hidden from the world and shut in to God. Yet these are the precious periods when His deep dealings produce gold and fortify us for new things to come.