

Drip.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Drip. Drip.

Can *you* hear it? Pit a pat. Pit a patter. Umbrella up. Ah that's ok. The rain isn't going to affect me now.

More sounds! Get help? It becomes so severe that an umbrella can't withstand the deluge. What can I do?

Noah might have said this, but he didn't! He was prepared.

Perhaps 40-50 years before the flood came, Noah had already opened his heart to God. Noah was listening to God. Probably some of you regularly listen to Radio 4, Classic FM or you used to listen to the Light Programme. You get to know the presenters, the regular patter they have and the type of music they choose. This is what must have happened to Noah. He was a regular God listener. He was familiar with God's voice so when Noah heard something a bit out of the ordinary, it was still fine because Noah knew that God had told him to do something important.

Build a big boat. The dimensions were stipulated: 450' long, 75' wide and 45' high. Noah's heart was open to God and his task might sound simple, but it would have come at a cost to Noah and his family to start with. It would have taken many years to build, maybe even several decades. He was working on his own until his 3 sons got strong enough to help him. This project wasn't one that could be done secretly. He couldn't build a large boat and then fill it with animals without other people noticing! Did they mock Noah? How did that make him feel? How did his wife feel as her husband was taunted and ridiculed for doing what God said? Remember they lived in a very bad and immoral time. People wouldn't have thought twice about trying to make Noah feel stupid. They would have scoffed at him, "You've gone mad pal!" – and other such phrases!

When the drips of rain commenced Noah and his family had already opened their hearts up to God. *They* were ready for something that was totally unexpected to the rest of the population. No one else was ready. No one else cared about what God was saying. They were much more interested in *their own* activities, *their own* opinions and *their own* dreams. When the water continued, and it became a torrent and a flood Noah and his family were ready. No one else was ready. These other people were *still* much more interested in *their own* activities, *their own* opinions and *their own* dreams. What God said and was saying was of no value to them.

Noah and his family were safe. They were secure because they had opened their heart to God. They had listened to Him and had heeded His advice. No one else had cared tuppence about God. They were all too busy doing *their own* thing.

We regularly hear that God is our Shepherd if we allow Him to be. A couple of weeks ago there was a film on BBC Breakfast about the job of pilots on the River Humber and how they guide large ships into port. They help the vessels through very choppy seas, shifting sand banks and strong tides. I was thinking of Noah at the time and this made me think that God was Noah's Navigator and Pilot during the flood. God can also be our Navigator and Pilot if we let Him. He can guide and comfort us in all aspects of our lives – we just need to open our hearts to Him. "God, guide me today. You can steer me. Here's the wheel. I open my heart to You, God."

There's a great chapter about faith in God in the Bible. All kinds of people are mentioned there, together with their 'accomplishments' for God. Noah is one of those who is listed. It's Hebrews 11:7:

The Passion Translation:

Faith opened Noah's heart to receive revelation and warnings from God about what was coming, even things that had never been seen. But he stepped out in reverent obedience to God and built an ark that would save him and his family. By his faith the world was condemned, but Noah received God's gift of righteousness that comes by believing.

Amplified:

By faith [with confidence in God and His word] Noah, being warned *by God* about events not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his family. By this [act of obedience] he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

The Living Bible:

Noah was another who trusted God. When he heard God's warning about the future, Noah believed him even though there was then no sign of a flood, and wasting no time, he built the ark and saved his family. Noah's belief in God was in direct contrast to the sin and disbelief of the rest of the world—which refused to obey—and because of his faith he became one of those whom God has accepted.

If any of you asked me what my greatest hope for my life and for all of you in 2019, it would be really easy to give you an answer. That we spend longer with God every day. Spending time with God (both alone and with others) means that my confidence in God grows. It often then becomes easier to obey Him.

You might have a Bible at home that you haven't read for a while. Get it out tonight and tomorrow. Perhaps start off by reading a Psalm or a section from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Don't put it back on the shelf – keep it out and read it several more times this coming week. Before you read it, ask God that He will speak to you through what you're reading.

Reading the Bible and praying helps *us* to open our hearts to God. I want to encourage you to do both regularly.

William Temple was the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942-1944. It was obviously a dark time in British history. When he was asked why he prayed so much, he replied: "When I pray, coincidences happen, when I don't, they don't."

The United Kingdom is in a right mess at the moment. It seems that people of all political persuasions are unhappy. There doesn't seem to be an easy way forward. What's the solution? Only God can sort it out! Thousands of people are responding to God and are praying and seeking *His* will for *our* land. We can all be praying for that too.

“If I ever shut off the supply of rain from the skies or order the locusts to eat the crops or send a plague on my people, and my people, my God-defined people, respond by humbling themselves, praying, seeking my presence, and turning their backs on their wicked lives, I'll be there ready for you: I'll listen from heaven, forgive their sins, and restore their land to health.”

2 Chronicles 7:14 [*The Message*]

Noah opened his heart to God. Noah's love for God shone in a dark world. Let's open our hearts to God in the same way today and see how God will shine His love for others through us in both big and small ways.

Hymn: The day Thou gavest Lord is ended.