

Light that helps illuminate the paths

by **Paulo César Pereira**

Sisters and brothers of the Alliance of Baptists, we live in a time of injustice and great uncertainty here in Brazil. It is a difficult and complex time, and we can only discern the best paths to follow with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The Brazilian church is going through a period of great change. We perceive a numerical growth of neo-Pentecostal denominations that make use of the devices of the "Theology of Prosperity." There are pastors who are specialists in digital and television media, and thus reach a large number of people.

However, we also observe that even with the constant increase in the number of evangelicals, social injustices and poverty continue to grow every day on a bigger scale. There also are a growing number of fundamentalist Christians that only engage in debates on the issues they call moral and always take positions that do not consider the rights of minorities.

In politics we see the return and emergence of new leaders with a discourse where fundamental rights are denied or forgotten. The achievements the excluded have gained in recent years are being withdrawn or threatened.

People are criminalized for their choices of sexuality. We, black people, continue to suffer the consequences of racism rooted in our culture. Women are murdered and become victims of the lack of protection by state policies, and the current government acts as if everything within the democracy is normal.

Poverty that had declined in recent years has grown again. We will have elections for president this year, but former president Lula is barred from participating. We consider this political persecution. Even though he is in jail, he continues to get the highest approval ratings in public-opinion polls.

At last, the days are bad, but we are not discouraged. We live in the hope that better days will come. It is in darkness that the light must shine. We want, as the Aliança de Batistas do Brasil, to be a light that helps to illuminate the paths in these difficult times.

We want to continue to count on the help and prayers of all of you. We are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same God. Together we will always be stronger, and we will continue this way because we believe our struggles are your struggles and our pains are also your pains.

This is what we believe in and will continue until "righteousness shall flow like the waters of a perennial river" (Amos 5:24).

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