



JOHN WESLEY FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ministers' Retreat

Date: 08 November 2024

Time: 10h00

Venue: Matha Retreat Centre – King Williamstown

Bible Study presented by Rev. M.M. Dladla

Bantu Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Greetings:

President of the John Wesley Federation of South Africa,
Deputy President,
Secretary General,
Deputy Secretary,
Treasurer,
Members of the Exco
And all the Members of the Federation.

I greet you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

Introduction:

Firstly, allow me to thank the President of the John Wesley Federation for the privilege of leading this Bible Study.

I am Mark Mzwamandla Dladla, who is currently the Presiding Bishop of the Bantu Methodist Church of Southern Africa. My home is in Hammarsdale, Georgedale to be exact in KwaZulu Natal.

Theme:

The theme for the Retreat says, **“To be in connection with the Lord at all times under circular system and trust our Saviour will be with us at all times.”**

To me this theme can be broken down into two (2) the first (1st) part being **“to be in connection with the Lord at all times.”** This part tells me that as much as we need oxygen to keep us alive, we also need to be connected to the Lord all the time. As much as the fish need water to keep it alive, we need that connection to the Lord all the time to be spiritually alive. My home is not far from the railway line from Durban to Johannesburg (mainline). What I noticed is that before a train departs from Durban a device called a pantograph, which is attached to the roof of the train touches the power lines. This touch

makes a connection between the train and the power lines. This connection needs to be maintained throughout the trip. Even if the train stops at a station but the connection must be there. It's only when the train goes to the yard after the completion of the trip that the pantograph will come down to the roof and the connection gets lost. As we journey through this life we need to be connected to the power line that is Jesus, the Christ.

The second (2nd) part being **“trust our Saviour will be with us at all times.”** This part tells us that we have to trust that our Saviour will be with us throughout the journey of our life. It is this trust that David had when he was alone in the wilderness as a Shepard where he faced all sorts of wild animals. That is why we find him saying **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” Psalm 23v4.** He knew that he was connected to the Lord all the time so he trusted Him all the time.

It is this trust that Shadrack, Abednego and Meshack had. They knew that their God is omnipresent, wherever they are, He is with them. They knew that the fact that they were captured from Jerusalem to Babylon did not break the connection between them and their living God. They feared no situation because they knew and trusted that God as with them all the time. Daniel 3v8-30.

Scripture reading:

I would like us to read from the book of Isaiah chapter 41v10-20.

Isa 41:10 Don't be afraid, because I'm with you; don't be anxious, because I am your God. I keep on strengthening you; I'm truly helping you. I'm surely upholding you with my victorious right hand."

Isa 41:11 "Look! All who are enraged at you will be put to shame and disgraced; those who contend with you will all die.

Isa 41:12 Those who quarrel with you will be as nothing; those who fight you like nothing at all!"

Isa 41:13 "For I am the LORD your God, who takes hold of your right hand, who says to you, 'Don't be afraid. I'll help you.

Isa 41:14 Don't be afraid, you little worm Jacob, and you insects of Israel! I myself will help you,' declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

Isa 41:15 "See, I'm making you into a new, sharp, and multi-tooth threshing sledge. You'll thresh and crush the mountains, and make the hills like chaff.

Isa 41:16 You'll winnow them, and the wind will lift them up, and a tempest will blow them away. Then you'll rejoice in the LORD, and you'll make your boast in the Holy One of Israel."

Isa 41:17 "As for the poor, the needy, those seeking water—when there is none and their tongues are parched from thirst—I, the LORD, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, won't abandon them.

Isa 41:18 I'll open up rivers on the barren heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I'll turn the desert into a pool of water, and the parched land into springs of water.

Isa 41:19 I'll put cedar trees in the wilderness, along with acacia, myrtle, and olive trees. I'll plant cypresses in the desert—box trees, and pine trees together—

Isa 41:20 all so that people may see and recognize, perceive, consider, and comprehend at the same time, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and that the Holy One of Israel has created it."

I will however stick to Isaiah 41v10 *"Don't be afraid, because I'm with you; don't be anxious, because I am your God. I keep on strengthening you; I'm truly helping you. I'm surely upholding you with my victorious right hand."*

Background:

Author: The question is who is the author of the book Isaiah? According to my research there are three (3) schools of thought.

1. Many Jewish and Christian traditions hold that Isaiah wrote the whole book from Chapter 1 to 66.
2. Other groups and traditions ascribe the first 39 chapters to Isaiah and chapters 40-66 to Isaiah's disciples, who built upon Isaiah's visions.
3. The third school of thought breaks down the book of Isaiah into three as follows:
 - 3.1 Proto-Isaiah / First Isaiah (Chapters 1–39):
 - ❖ 1–12: Oracles against Judah mostly from Isaiah's early years;
 - ❖ 13–23: Oracles against foreign nations from his middle years;
 - ❖ 24–27: The "Isaiah Apocalypse", added at a much later date;
 - ❖ 28–33: Oracles from Isaiah's later ministry
 - ❖ 34–35: A vision of Zion, perhaps a later addition;
 - ❖ 36–39: Stories of Isaiah's life, some from the Book of Kings
 - 3.2 Deutero-Isaiah / Second Isaiah (Chapters 40–54), with two major divisions, 40–48 and 49–54, the first emphasising Israel, the second Zion and Jerusalem:
 - ❖ An introduction and conclusion stressing the power of God's word over everything;
 - ❖ A second introduction and conclusion within these in which a herald announces salvation to Jerusalem;
 - ❖ Fragments of hymns dividing various sections;
 - ❖ The role of foreign nations, the fall of Babylon, and the rise of Cyrus as God's chosen one;
 - ❖ Four "[servant songs](#)" personalising the message of the prophet;
 - ❖ Several longer poems on topics such as God's power and invitations to Israel to trust in him;
 - 3.3 Trito-Isaiah / Third Isaiah (Chapters 55–66):

A collection of oracles by unknown prophets in the years immediately after the return from Babylon.

When was it written:

The book of Isaiah was written sometime during the ministry of Isaiah (approximately 740–701 B.C.). Since Isaiah's ministry was centered in Jerusalem, this is the most likely location of the book's origin.

Connection with God:

When God created man, He breathed life into him. (Genesis 2v7). Which then made man to be different from all the other creation. This life was connecting man to God. That life is the sim card that creates connection between man and God as the sim card connects the device to the nearest tower. Man was

made to be like God, he had no fear. He didn't fear the animals that he was commissioned to rule upon. Because man and God had a connection, God visited man in the evening (breath of the day – ISV) on top of the fact that God is omnipresent. They had that father-child connection. Adam and Eve did not fear God because they were innocent and they had no fear and God was with them all the time.

Fear is the result of sin:

Adam and Eve started experiencing fear once they fell into sin. They feared even the voice of God who used to visit them and speak to them but once they fell into sin we find them concealing themselves. Adam says "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid from you." Sin disconnects us from God. Sin makes us naked, Sin makes us to have fear.

That is why God through Prophet Isaiah is saying to us " *Don't be afraid, because I'm with you*". That is why we find Gideon saying to Joshua: "I've commanded you, haven't I? Be strong and courageous. Don't be fearful or discouraged, because the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

Let me tell you a short story – Ngikhulele endaweni esemakhaya lapho sasikhanyisa khona iziphefu (paraffin handmade lamps). Bekuye kuthi uma uthunywa ebusuku usaba ukuya kwenye iroom within the house bese uhamba umemeza uthi "We Ma uyangibona?" Aphendule uMa athi "Ngibona indoda" and you could feel brave and you are called indoda. Njengoba uhamba ulokhu umemeza "WeMa uyangibona?" Aphendule "Ngibona indoda" Ngokuya uqhela nezwi liye ngokungezwakali kahle ukuthi lithini but ithemba libe sekutheni izwi ulokhu ulizwa nje. Kuthe sengimdala, ngelinye ilanga sizixoxela noMa bese esengihleka ukuthi kwakuthi uma sesikude ashintshe esikhundleni sokuthi "Ngibona indoda" athi "Ngikubona ngani" What kept us going and brave was the fact that we could still hear the voice. It is that voice that kept fear away from us.

This shows that the connection with the one you believe in takes away fear. Let us therefore keep that connection with the Lord and trust that He is with us all the time.

We see that connection and presence of God all the time when the Israelites were on the way to Canaan, he was a pillar in a cloud form during the day and pillar of fire at night. This was a sign that He was with them all the time, day and night.

I am your God:

Knowing the God is our God is what kept Job going even when he was having boils throughout his body. Even when his wife told him to insult God and die but Job says:

Job 19:25 "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

Job 19:26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

Job 19:27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

This was because Job knew that our God does not want us to be anxious no matter how bad the situation could be. Even if your loved ones forsake you, you lose everything that you had, going through sickness, friends doubt us but if we have the connection with God and trust that he is with us all the time we shall overcome all. Job knew that if the living God is our God then we shall conquer all. He knew and trusted that he was with the only redeemer who once said *“if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”* 2 Chronicles 7:14

I'm surely upholding you with my victorious right hand.

David knew this when he was fighting against Goliath.

1Sa 17:34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

1Sa 17:35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

1Sa 17:36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

1Sa 17:37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

David knew the victorious right hand of God that held him during these victories that is why they formed part of his curriculum vitae when he did his submissions to King Saul. He couldn't stand the fact that the uncircumcised Philistinian defying the armies of the living God. It is so unfortunate that the evil forces in our time are defying and insulting our living God and we the Christians keep quite and turn a blind eye. Is it because we are not connected or we don't know the upholding victorious hand of God. David knew this victorious hand, that is why when he was armed with the King's armour he said no ways he cannot go with that armour and he went with the victorious hand of God that upheld him.

The connecting sim card:

Faith is the connecting sim card. A cell phone without a sim card is useless no matter how beautiful and expensive it may be. So, for us Christians, we need faith in order to be connected to our service provider.

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists.*

Through faith we get connected to the Lord all the time. Through faith we believe that the Lord is with us all the time.

On the cross the thief / criminal reconnected. It is never too late to reconnect with the Lord. At times we have to be in a painful situation for our eyes to be opened. Through the pain of the cross the criminal / thief saw Jesus as the means of connecting with the Lord. It's like the criminal had this understanding that even though I am a sinner, but I can still get connected and if I get connected the Lord will walk with me through the valley of the shadow of death. It dawned to him that Jesus once said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me."* John 14v6

Conclusion:

In conclusion, as spiritual Leaders we must first go to the spiritual mirror and do self-introspection. We need to ask ourselves if we are still connected to the Lord. Do we still trust and believe that our Saviour to be with us at all times?

If so, why is the Church so divided? Why do we see Ministers doing all these things that we get on the news almost every day? Ministers of God brainwashing our people, telling them to drink petrol, spraying them with doom and so many other things.

If we are really connected, why do we see so many killings? So much Drug abuse? Are we doing our function of moral regeneration?

May we reconnect with our Saviour and trust Him to be with us all the time.

May God Bless you all.

Rev. M.M. Dladla