

### CHALLENGES BRING STEADINESS IN THE MINISTRY

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Shalom,

Our church is occupied with many activities within these weeks such as the graduation of the GPT Synod Workshop participants and the Salem students (Monday, August 19, 2019) continued with priesthood workshop (Monday - Wednesday, August 19 - 21) and then the graduation of the bachelors from STTIA (Saturday, August 24, 2019). All of these activities are related to many kinds of church ministries.

Do the ministries of God's work always run well? It turned out that there are challenges and obstacles in the work of God, but they should not hinder our ministries or turn us down. There is a verse of a song with the lyrics *"although challenges come and the cross of the world is heavy"* and also a lyric from the hymnal song of STTIA, saying, *"though I am persecuted, I'll still be Yours, lifting up His banner of the cross to all the world"*.

It needs to be known that challenges and ministries go hand in hand. But if we earnestly serve the Lord, any challenges and hindrances may come, but we will be victorious because the sacrifice of Christ already overcomes for our lives, tearing down all the walls of challenges and hindrances. The outcome is, the challenges in our ministries will give positive impacts on our lives.

What steadiness was gained by Apostle Paul as the result of responding toward challenges in ministries worth knowing by the Philippians, that we also need to know?

- Challenges **make ministries move even forward.**

*"Now I want **you to know**, brothers and sisters, that **what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel**. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ."* (Philippians 1:12-13)

Paul faced the challenge of being imprisoned not because of guilt toward his nation or breaking the traditions of his ancestors (Acts 28:17-18) but for the matter more than just about the law of the nation/country, and also far more than about customs, that is because of the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ to enter the Kingdom of God and to live in the law of His love. It is obvious that he is

imprisoned because of the hope in Christ (Philippians 1:13).

But the Israelites failed to understand about Christ who was actually the hope long awaited all these times in the entire time of the Old Testament. Actually, in the book of Genesis chapter 3, it was already prophesied about Christ, though not obvious → the offspring of the woman (who had violated the command of God) would crush the head of the serpent (v. 15)

Time after time, the prophets spoke about the long-awaited Messiah, but the Israelites were having trouble in understanding the matter of this Messiah. The Jewish wanted to enlarge the kingdom (religiously) for generations from their ancestors. When Jesus rose, the disciples of Jesus were still longing for the Messiah to rule the kingdom of the world (Acts 1:6-8). The disciples almost failed to understand, but Jesus gave the appropriate understanding. They were given the power to be His witnesses, with the risk of death challenge. Paul experienced that, and he didn't give up or quit serving God, instead, he continued and kept moving on. It was different from the Jewish who didn't understand the Messiah, for they kept rejecting the tidings Paul delivered, and they even imprisoned him.

In fact, Christians often misunderstand/misuse the power God for their own interest, to develop their buildings and church denominations, and so on, while in fact the power of His Name has the purpose to save men from sins. Those who believe in the Name of Jesus Christ (awaited Messiah) will be brought to enter the eternal kingdom of God.

Application: For the priests who have served for long or those who just joined the ministry, we shouldn't be weak because of challenges, hindrances and obstacles in our ministries. On the contrary, we must solve every problem without breaking the law of the country. The fact is, in facing the sayings in social media that attack and challenge us, we are often unable to control ourselves that cause conflicts because we are not careful in positioning everything in the absolute truth portion - the Word of God - above the law of the country or the customs of our ancestors on earth. We need to have the right attitude according to the Word of God because our Vision and Mission is not about worldly/religious kingdom only, but it is about the eternal Kingdom of God. However, while we live in our nation or country in this world, we shall live wisely in any social activities. External challenges often caused internal conflicts for there was no agreement between one another because of different perception/perspective in facing them. The Colossians taught us how to live in the midst of the society that is to live with wisdom, using the remaining time and able to answer with love-filled words (Colossians 4:5-6) not to speak without thinking or emotionally speaking. We should examine ourselves,

## Challenges Bring Steadiness in the Ministry

Ditayangkan: Minggu, 01 September 2019 08:00

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if we are guilty, we shall ask forgiveness to the Lord and to others; the Lord will give us His supernatural power and also His wisdom to solve the problem and our lives are sanctified more.

Apostle Paul face great challenges that people were talking against him everywhere (Acts 28:22) but the Lord always gave him an opportunity; the proof is that his ministry was known even more by the government and also in the palace (Philippians 1:13).

What about us facing the challenges in social media these days? The Lord helps us that this challenge will not weaken us, but will motivate us to keep moving forward to see the opportunity of serving God in the government or in the society. May the Lord touch their hearts that they will receive salvation through our ministries.

- Challenges **increase courage** to serve.

*“And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and **dare all the more to proclaim the gospel** without fear.”* (Philippians 1:14).

Paul's imprisonment caused courage in many people's heart that God's Word would be spread further. What example had Paul shown in his imprisonment that triggered others to be courageous to speak about the Word of God? Paul was house arrest guarded by a soldier (Acts 28:16). His life was limited for all his movements were watched, but he didn't give up on that certain condition. On the contrary, he maximized his ministry by gathering the local Jewish leaders (Acts 28:17a). He explained about the kingdom of God and persuaded them about Jesus (v. 23). He did 'his portion' as maximum as possible naturally and the supernatural power of God works together for us (vv. 30-31).

We might be limited - our time is limited due to working, being exhausted, not healthy, traffic jam, etc. - but be cautious that the Devil always tries to provoke and 'sneak' if we ever give any chance. We don't need to ponder on our limitations, just pray to the Lord to help and give opportunity if we are serious to testify about the kingdom of God.

Introspection: what is our motivation in our godliness and ministry? When we are facing challenges, hindrances and obstacles, our motivation will determine how to obtain the wisdom of the Lord to see the opportunity He opens in breaking that challenges and obstacles. Whatever form of the ministry we do, both seen (preaching on the pulpit) or behind the scene (usher, multimedia operator, etc.), we must have the motivation: to enlarge the Kingdom of God and witness about Jesus. Paul did his ministry from morning until afternoon.

Notice this, challenges give opportunities for us to serve. For example: our friend knows that we are tired and not feeling well, but still attending church services by the strength of the Lord. This kind of attitude kindles the spirit of our fellow workers, not to be lazy to attend church services only because we are not feeling well. Seeing our expression in praising the Lord could also be 'contagious' for others who see it. So, whatever our limitations are, don't easily give up and desperate but maximize our strength, power, mind and all the grace of the Lord to burn the spirit of others to serve the Lord joyfully.

The word "become confident" (Philippians 1:14) with the verb "to persuade and were convinced" (Acts 28:23-24) has the same Greek root word, that is "Peito". Paul served with full confidence.

We shall be fully convinced that we are saved by Jesus Christ and will be together with Him in His eternal Kingdom. Also in the ministries (both seen or unseen) let's do it with "peito" - fully convinced that what we do for the kingdom of God is because we are the people of His kingdom, and also because Jesus has saved us. We are convinced in His ministry that the supernatural power of God will anoint and help us that people will be reached by His power and fiery in spirit to be convinced of the kingdom of God and the salvation in Jesus Christ.

- Challenge **arises love** in serving God.

*"It is true that some preach Christ out of **envy** and **rivalry**, but others out of goodwill. The latter **do so out of love**, knowing that **I am put here for the defense of the gospel**. The former preach Christ out of **selfish ambition, not sincerely**, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains."* (Philippians 1:15-17)

There are challenges externally coming from fellow servants of God because of some motivations such as envy, disputes, self-interest, insincere purpose, etc. This shouldn't happen in a ministry team after listening to the Word of teaching. If His Word rebukes us, we must not give up our ministries but come to the Lord for His love is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, that Christ died for us while we were sinners and His enemies (Romans 5:5, 8). God's love enables us to defeat envy and dispute. Gospel preaching with negative motivations didn't make Paul to be sorrowful or stressful, but his motivation was based on love (agape) that gave him strength to carry on in his ministry. The agape love becomes a great strength that enables the servant of God to sacrifice willingly to serve whole-heartedly though in limitations (time, health, freedom, etc.).

We must admit that frictions might happen among fellow servants of God

## Challenges Bring Steadiness in the Ministry

Ditayangkan: Minggu, 01 September 2019 08:00

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because of self-interest (looking for fame, passion to be dominant, unable to work together in a team, feeling more competent than others and insisting to be considered as the pioneer of the ideas, and so on). Togetherness shall be the one that unites our heart and mind, and through those frictions, agape love is brought up to settle disputes and motivations which are not in accordance with the Word of God.

Don't put out the love of God in our hearts. In our church services, we receive the loving ministry that is manifested in the Lord's Communion - the fellowship of His body and blood to remember His love. By doing so, we are able to practice the love in facing incorrect motivation in the ministry as Paul's attitude that was not disturbed by the Gospel preacher who was motivated by envy and insincerity. He didn't ask for reward in the ministry, but living purely for the Kingdom of God.

We shall live for Jesus Christ and do the ministries with full confident without any unrighteous motivations. Be courageous to face any challenges and obstacles, despite our limitations we have! Don't quit but keep moving forward in the ministry by focusing on the Kingdom of God and the salvation in Christ Jesus! Lighten up the courage and spirit in serving others and facing increasing hatred with love these days that the supernatural power of God helps us to be victorious. Agape love is poured through the Holy Spirit in our heart that we can control negative motivations in the ministry so that we will be strengthened in our ministry until the Millennium Kingdom and even until the New Jerusalem come. Amen.

Video ibadah ini dapat disimak di [Ibadah Umum - Tantangan Menghasilkan Kemantapan Pelayanan - Pdm. Jusak Pundiono.](#)