

Examining the Militancy of the Apostle Paul in Fulfilling God's Calling as a Preacher of the Gospel

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Abstract

This article explores the Apostle Paul's commitment to fulfilling God's calling as a preacher of the gospel. It emphasizes his loyalty to God and examines how his understanding of God's call shaped his militant approach to evangelism. This study also seeks to understand how Paul's model of mission work may still be relevant today. The article aims to examine the meaning of God's call to the Apostle Paul, how he interpreted it, and how this impacted his militancy in preaching the gospel. Additionally, it evaluates whether Paul's approach to evangelism can be applied in current missionary work. The study uses a descriptive-qualitative research method, with a hermeneutical approach to interpret Paul's experiences and mission as recorded in the New Testament. The study concludes that the Apostle Paul's commitment and interpretation of God's call led him to carry out his ministry with exceptional militancy. His personal sacrifices and his ability to face hardships in preaching the gospel exemplify his dedication. Furthermore, Paul's model of evangelism, based on humility, love, and sacrifice, is still relevant today. This article contributes by offering a deeper understanding of Paul's evangelistic zeal and providing a model of commitment and perseverance that modern evangelists can adopt. It demonstrates how Paul's ministry continues to inspire and guide contemporary Christian mission work.

Keywords: militancy; apostle Paul; evangelist; preacher; Gospel

INTRODUCTION

There is no nobler calling than that of God to every person whom He has predestined to carry out God's will as an instrument for His kingdom. History tells us that in the end it is not man who determines all things, but God. The universe points to the one person whom man must serve, as the one who made all things. The human heart warns of the one who gives the highest norm.¹ God who calls means God who appoints each person to be used to preach the gospel to everyone who has not yet heard about

¹ Soedarmo, *Ikhtisar Dogmatika* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2015), 199.

the gospel of salvation, which is the word of God made flesh in Christ Jesus John 1:1; John 1:14. The apostle Paul was used by God wonderfully in preaching the gospel to the nations, kings and all the people of Israel Acts 9:15. So that all people may receive the gift of salvation that God gives to everyone who accepts and believes in Him.

A servant of God will not be able to understand his calling, if he is still living in sin (Rom 8:7). Therefore, as a servant of God, he must realize his weakness and realize God's call in him with humility, full of love and full of loyalty and seriousness to serve God completely. Jesus demanded obedience to His followers radically and wholeheartedly when they first met Him. Jesus' last commission to His disciples was more challenging; "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19) and "You will be My witnesses in and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). These two verses provide a solid foundation for all universal Christians to enter the mission field of preaching the gospel. The task of preaching the gospel is a call to service for all believers. This task must be carried out earnestly and with patience. As a follower of Jesus, he must dare to declare the truth to anyone, including the rulers. But before carrying out this task he must first equip himself with the Word of God and always give the Holy Spirit a place to dwell in him because it is by the Holy Spirit that a person is able to control himself, patiently suffer and be able to fulfill the heavy and noble task of service to completion.²

The reality on the ground is that there are many who are called for the sake of the gospel, but few are chosen to be instruments in the proclamation of the gospel. This is the problem, why should this be the case. Indeed, everyone's response to God's call should be to the stage of being ready to die for Christ, willing to give himself to preach the gospel until death. That is what the Apostle Paul has achieved throughout his life since experiencing repentance and receiving a mandate from Jesus Christ to be His witness. Apostle Paul is one of the millions of people who is evident in all aspects of his life that are pure until death. He became a model of a true servant of God who should be emulated from the attitude of his life; his holiness, courage, perseverance, etc.³

² Asih Rachmani Endang Sumiwi, "Peran Roh Kudus Dalam Kehidupan Orang Percaya Masa Kini. *Jurnal Teologi Gracia Deo*, 1, no. 1 (2018): 23-31.

³ Yan Suhendra, and Susanti Embong Bulan. "Kasih Allah Akan Dunia Ini: Panggilan Umat Kristen Untuk Mengasihi Indonesia (God's Love for this World: Christians Call to Love Indonesia)". *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 3, no. 1 (2021): 51-71.
<https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i1.34>.

Paul boldly invited believers to follow his example as he followed Christ's example. Paul clearly knew that his responsibility was not just to build new congregations (local churches), not just to urge people to get baptized. He had only one "task": to be a good example for the church to follow. Not only for the Philippians or for other churches, but for all believers throughout the ages (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul is not asking the believers to imitate him externally, this external imitation is meaningless. What Paul wanted was for them to imitate the quality of his life, his pursuit of spiritual things, things from within. Paul is asking the church to imitate his spiritual aspirations and pursuits. He was pursuing the goal ahead wholeheartedly, pursuing full maturity in Christ, imitating Christ in order to know Christ, to gain Christ. All believers should also have the same aspirations, have the same pursuits. Believers are challenged to imitate him (Paul). Paul encouraged the church to follow his example in this regard, just as he followed the example of Christ. Paul did not seek benefits for himself, but he sought the good of others by imitating Jesus' example of love, unity, acceptance, and self-sacrifice. Therefore, as servants of God, we need to understand that the call of the gospel is an offer of salvation in Christ Jesus for sinners, along with a sincere call to accept Christ through faith, in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life. ⁴

Understanding the meaning of God's call for every believer is very important because if every believer does not understand the meaning of God's call in his life then he will not want to take part in the preaching of the gospel. Paul realized that his calling was a noble calling and he had to carry it out with full responsibility to God. Paul's main struggle was to preach the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, both Jews and Gentiles. Servants of God should be able to learn from the exemplary⁵ life of the Apostle Paul in his loyalty and devotion as evidence of the purity of his motivation in carrying out the duties of his calling from God. Event after event that he experienced, in weakness, disrespect, hunger, thirst, nakedness, harsh treatment, toiling to make a living, being persecuted (1 Cor. 4: 3-13), until now Paul has

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Teologi Sitematika* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2004), 105.

⁵ In KBBI exemplary means things that can be imitated or exemplified: no doubt. Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*. 3 ed. (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2012), teladan.

become an example for the church in his loyalty to God, and an example as a responsible servant of God in carrying out his calling to preach the gospel of salvation.⁶

Of course, it needs to be carefully reviewed what God's call means for an apostle as great as the apostle Paul. It is suspected that there is a correlation between the story of God's call to the Apostle Paul so that he was able to interpret the call as very meaningful and had an impact on the implementation of his ministry, especially in his militancy to preach the Gospel. Therefore, the author titled this research.

The research focuses on the discussion of how God's call to the Apostle Paul and how Paul interpreted/responded to God's call. After that, it will be continued with research on the significant relationship between God's call and the Apostle Paul's militancy in the mission of preaching the gospel. Regarding the biblical foundation, the author has determined that all studies come from Paul's testimony in the New Testament books. From the exposure of the background of the problem above, the researcher formulates several questions of this study, namely: What is the meaning of God's call for the Apostle Paul, and how does Paul respond in interpreting God's call?

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is descriptive-qualitative research method. Qualitative research means the process of exploring and understanding all concepts around the path of safety from various perspectives. This wants to show that descriptive qualitative depiction is a depiction that is not in the form of a series of numbers, but in the form of language expression through precise and systematic interpretation. In qualitative methods, hermeneutics helps researchers place themselves in context and capture the true meaning of the text as understood by the people, community or society of that time.

Hermeneutics also helps researchers to actualize reality more clearly. With hermeneutics, researchers are expected to be able to provide answers to problems that become an object of the problem being discussed. Therefore, researchers who use descriptive-qualitative methods are required: have critical analytical power, be able to avoid bias (for example, not mixing hypotheses and problem formulation), have sharp

⁶ Winanto, Oey Natanael, Johnnie Manopo, and Iswahyudi Iswahyudi. "Relasi Gereja, Negara, Dan Masyarakat". *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural* 4, no. 1 (January 10, 2023): 1-25. Accessed April 26, 2025. <https://jurnal.widyaagape.ac.id/index.php/jrsc/article/view/108>.

instincts to obtain valid data (*trustworthiness*), and be able to think abstractly (thinking that does not yet exist) in order to build critical interaction skills through description. This is indeed needed by qualitative writing which emphasizes the importance of understanding how people interpret various events in their lives.

RESULTS

The Meaning of God's Call to the Chosen People

Paul's encounter with the Lord Jesus during his trip to Damascus was a turning point from his life as a scribe to a reliable evangelist, from a person who hated and even pursued followers of Christ to be killed. To one who did not spare his own life for the sake of the gospel. He gave himself to be a minister and witness of the gospel (Acts 26:16). Therefore, he also became a role model for the mission of preaching the gospel today.

In interpreting God's call to be His servant, perseverance, patience and leaning on God with a firm and humble attitude are needed, because in carrying out the ministry, we will experience various challenges and sufferings. When we are willing to take a stand to be committed in serving, God will give us the strength to overcome various obstacles as long as we want to remain faithful to Him.⁷

The act of serving God means having a constant mindset of God, focusing the mind on God (Rom 11:36). There are so many people who acknowledge God's existence, but rarely think about Him. Their lives are not influenced by the knowledge of God (Tit 1:16) and some are so preoccupied with worldly things that it is no longer possible to think about God as they should. John Owen said:

There are two signs of a spiritual mindset about God: the first is the joy of thinking about God's existence to declare that "This is God, our God, forever and ever. He is the one who leads us" (Ps 48:15) and the second characteristic is a sense of fear and reverence for God.⁸

The Apostle Paul understood the meaning of God's call in his life, with humility and commitment to serve God regardless of himself, because of his love for the Lord's service (Acts 20:19). By shedding many tears with many trials and even being killed, but Paul remained faithful to carry out the duties of his calling. Paul understood God's call

⁷ Yan Suhendra, and Susanti Embong Bulan. "Kasih Allah Akan Dunia Ini: Panggilan Umat Kristen Untuk Mengasihi Indonesia (God's Love for this World: Christians Call to Love Indonesia)": 51-71.

⁸ John Owen, *Berpola Pikir Rohani* (Surabaya: Momentum,1998), 32.

on his life to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15) and was ready to suffer for Christ (Phil 1:21).

Acts 20:24 writes "But I do not value my life in the least, provided I reach the finish line and complete the ministry which the Lord Jesus commissioned me to testify to the gospel of God's grace. Paul was not defending his life, what mattered to him was that he could complete the ministry that God had entrusted to him.

While some people consider challenges as unwanted distractions and worse, something to be avoided as much as possible, challenges are not only truly powerful, but also contain hidden secrets. The Apostle Paul, in his missionary journeys, often encountered challenges and complaints while ministering in the midst of the congregation. There are indications that the members of the first Church insulted each other and abandoned their faith. Paul complained that the Church in Galatia had become "enchanted" with the pleasures of the world (Gal 4:11). Paul was concerned for his Philippian friends that some were looking out for their own interests rather than those of Jesus Christ (Phil 2:21) and that many were living as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Apostle Paul realized God's call on his life and had to be ready to face various obstacles as a consequence of the commitment he took for the sake of preaching the gospel of Christ. Like a runner, he had confidence that he would win with one goal, he must first get to the finish line in order to win. To get to the finish line Paul says that we too must have confidence "For I have confidence in the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it is manifested the righteousness of God, which proceeds from faith and leads to faith (Romans 1:16-17). For Paul, the essence of the gospel is that we are made righteous in relation to God by Grace.⁹

In interpreting God's call to the Apostle Paul, he first had a commitment, because without commitment in his ministry, all obstacles, sufferings and trials would not be able to be overcome. There is no successful work or business or even service without commitment. Commitment is the secret ingredient in every recipe for success, once we commit to something, it will happen no matter how long it takes, no matter what happens, that is the power of commitment. So it was with Paul in making a commitment

⁹ Marcus J. Borg, *Kali Pertama Jumpa Yesus Kembali* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 119.

to serve God, as a proof of his love for God who had saved him and called him as an instrument of God's kingdom to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

God's Call to the Apostle Paul

God's call to the Apostle Paul on his way to Damascus is proof that God by His initiative and decree chose Paul. Paul was not looking for Christ, he was a man with a strong conviction of his righteousness. He knew that he was a godly man and must be pleasing to God. He also did not feel guilty about his actions because he was defending the religion of God. In his condition God revealed himself to him, so that Paul had no part in his conversion (Acts 9:1-9).

God called Paul gently, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" and with His mighty power shone a light that blinded Paul for three days. Paul recognized that the God of gentleness was loving but also a God who revealed the severity of His judgment, the greatness of His power to forgive and to call him. It was the love of Christ that he felt that drove him to obey the Lord (2 Cor 5:14), so that what was an advantage for Paul was considered a disadvantage after knowing Christ (Phil 3:7).

It is a remarkable admission that a figure who is famous for his fanatical Judaism can be transformed one hundred and eighty degrees into a person who serves God. Henk Venema said that, a Christian who truly believes will definitely glorify God, because he has been saved from sin and the devil.¹⁰ Everyone who experiences repentance will have a firm and committed attitude to serve God earnestly. Gerald R Mc Dermot said,

We see Jesus' ministry, thousands moved by His preaching and rejoicing in His miracles. But only a few actually became disciples. The many who were called were few who were chosen, in general they were like the illustration of the stony or thorny ground mentioned in the parable of the sower and the seed (Mt 13:20-22). They receive the gospel with joy but fall away when faced with persecution or the allurements of the world.¹¹

Unlike the apostle Paul who repented and became a militant servant of Christ and was untouched by the news of his fall.

¹⁰ Henk Venema, *Hidup Baru Orang Kristen Dalam Konteks Kebudayaan Setempat* (Jakarta: YKBK, 2006), 55.

¹¹ Gerald R. Mc Dermott, *Mengenal 12 Tanda Kerohanian Sejati*, (Yogyakarta: ANDI, 2001), 26.

DISCUSSION

Apostle Paul's Motivation for Ministry

There is no single best theory of motivation, let alone a single definition, but what we mean by motivation is something within a person that makes him continue his activities as a human being.¹² In 1 Cor 9:19-23 Paul reveals the uniqueness of his ministry, what his deepest purpose and motivation was in preaching the gospel. This can be seen in his situation, his orientation is solely for the sake of the gospel, all his behaviors and strategies are directed towards achieving this main goal, namely the preaching of the gospel and bringing people to salvation.

In conveying the good news, Paul used various strategies, including preaching in Jewish synagogues (Acts 13:4-5) with questions and answers, preaching in lecture halls, traveling from one place to another, and even in prison he preached the news of salvation (Acts 16:28) and baptized the jailer and his household. In his missionary journeys Paul also established churches and appointed elders, grooming leaders like Timothy. Roy Robertson states:

Timothy was not just a spiritual son to Paul, he was a very special son. Not every physical child becomes a believer and not every spiritual person receives the vision of his spiritual parents. A true Christian worker can multiply many new converts in his lifetime. And Timothy continued the work of his parents, not only was he a spiritual son, a son who shared the vision of his spiritual parents, one who could take over the ministry under the guidance of his spiritual parents.¹³

Apostle Paul instructs his readers to follow his example and of course the perfect example of Jesus Christ. Paul urged them to do everything for the glory of God, not to be a stumbling block and to put the interests of others first so that many would be saved. Paul defended his apostolic authority and freedom (1 Cor. 9:1-7). The gospel he preached was a free gospel, so his style of ministry became a living example of the gospel itself. The purpose of his ministry in winning as many Jews and gentiles as possible, in 1 Cor. 9:23, Paul made it clear that his ministry was for the sake of the gospel and encouraged them to participate in the dynamic power and strength of the gospel. It is clear that Paul's behavioral changes in various social religious situations all served the one purpose of saving others.

¹² Tedw Engstrom, *Seni Manajemen Bagi Pemimpin Kristen* (Bandung: YKH, 1998), 104.

¹³ Roy Robertson, *Murid Sejati* (Bandung: YKH, 1994), 40-42.

The basis of Paul's ministry emphasized that he was free and did not live under the law, but under the law of Christ, the Apostle Paul was not only obliged to carry out all that Jesus commanded, but also all that Jesus had done and modeled. Paul calls on his readers to follow his example, for freedom is in Christ, but it must be practiced according to the local situation, so that it does not become a stumbling block to the goal of salvation for those who believe.

The characteristic of Paul's ministry was to follow the example of the Lord Jesus where in his ministry he became a servant of all people, for the salvation of as many people as possible (Philippians 2: 7-8) What is interesting here is that the Apostle Paul became a servant of the gospel in the widest context, the scope of service of Jews, pagans and weak Christians and he was willing to be a servant of all people.

In building a motivation, sanctification is necessary. Because a "holy" life demands a tremendous struggle and fortitude, against sin and the flesh and the devil.¹⁴ That holiness can only be received as a gift from God, Paul says that Christians experience deliverance from sin through Jesus Christ (Romans 7:18-25). Holiness can only be found for those who first seek to know Christ. The apostle Paul pointed out to the Philippians (Phil 3:8b-10) that he obtained Christ and is in Him not by righteousness but by the righteousness of believing in Christ, which is the righteousness that God has bestowed upon him.

The Apostle Paul did not seek to have some wonderful experience, but rather he sought Jesus Christ, to know Him and be in Him and even to share in His sufferings.¹⁵ The second seeks to glorify Christ and the third seeks to glory only in Christ. Christians who sincerely desire to know Christ, glorify Him and truly hunger and thirst for the truth must have the right motivation in service.

Apostle Paul's Militancy in Preaching the Gospel

Paul was a Christian figure who carried out the mission of preaching the gospel diligently and faithfully until death. He was very militant or high spirited in carrying out his duties and responsibilities as a person who served God in preaching the good news or the gospel of salvation, without thinking about his position or position or wealth. He

¹⁴ Bob Hostetler, *Hidup Kudus Siapa Takut* (Bandung: YKh, 2002), 85.

¹⁵ August B. Guusj Rattu and Joseph Patalala. "Melihat Penganiayaan Dan Penderitaan Secara Teologis". *CHEVRA: Research Journal of Social and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (March 24, 2025): 35-47. <https://jurnal.widyaagape.ac.id/index.php/chevra/article/view/295>.

was willing to leave it all behind, so he dared to say, "What I once counted as gain I now count as loss because of my knowledge of Christ" (Phil 3:8-9). Paul was also a humble, loving and patient man. In his letter to the Ephesians he emphasized that every believer should be humble, gentle, patient in love, and helpful to one another (Eph 4:2).

The Apostle Paul in carrying out the mission of preaching the gospel, he was very militant as evidenced when he was in prison he testified to the Philippians that what had happened to him caused the progress of the gospel and many believers grew bolder in speaking the word of God (Phil 1: 12-24). In his task of preaching the gospel Paul traveled a path full of risks, experienced a lot of suffering, he was stoned (Acts 14:19), in and out of prison (Acts 16:24) he was tried, but all these sufferings did not make him retreat but on the contrary he was increasingly brave and willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel.¹⁶

Apostle Paul had a firm faith, he said that the God in whom he trusted was sovereign over all things, He gave Paul assurance for the future, therefore he was not afraid or ashamed (1 Tim 1:12). Paul emphasized that a soldier will not concern himself with things that hinder him in his service to his superior. Paul Loth, states "A Christian's faith must be more than just believing in God. His faith in Christ is active and living, an aggressive and growing faith."¹⁷

If a servant of God's spirituality does not know and grow in Christ, then he does not have the zeal to preach the gospel to others. Paul in his missionary journeys faced various enemies and challenges, even the occult, sorcerers in Ephesus, if his knowledge of Christ was not correct, he would not have been able to face them like the sons of Skewa (Acts 19:13-16).

CONCLUSION

A servant of God who serves should also have militancy like the Apostle Paul. This militancy can be done well if you have a humble nature, are willing to sacrifice, give time, are not busy with personal interests, and prioritize service like Paul did. Indeed, to be a worker for Christ is not an easy thing, but it demands devotion as the price to be paid for a noble calling. God's command is absolute, God commands each of His servants

¹⁶ Antonius Missa, "Visitasi Gembala Kepada Anggota Gereja". *SERVIRE: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2022): 89-102. <https://doi.org/10.46362/servire.v2i1.107>.

¹⁷ Paul Loth, *Teknik Pelayanan Untuk Mengajar di Gereja* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2003), 5.

to seek out sheep and shepherd them. Seeking sheep and shepherding them must be centered on love for others and leading them to the way of God. When God's love is placed in the heart of a servant of God through the Holy Spirit, that love actually comes before loving others.¹⁸ Jesus said "I have other sheep not of this fold, to whom I must lead also, and they will hear my voice, and they will be one flock with one shepherd" (Jn 10:16).

After the author observes and studies the evangelism strategy carried out by the Apostle Paul, the author provides the following premise to draw conclusions, namely:

(1) Through the evangelistic strategies carried out by the Apostle Paul during his ministry, the strategies used are still relevant and can be applied by evangelists today without reducing the value of the truth of God's Word. (2) Evangelism is a means of preaching the gospel to people who do not yet know Jesus so that they accept the Lord as Savior and is also a means of restoring the relationship between God and humans that has been cut off as well as today. (3) Evangelization efforts in practice in order to achieve good means need an evangelization strategy, in this case the measure of success can be seen from the Apostle Paul's evangelization strategy. (4) The success in practice carried out by evangelists is the implementation of the evangelistic strategy carried out by the Apostle Paul recorded in the New Testament.

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