

Contribution of God's Servants In Upholding Sound Doctrine In The Church Community Based on Titus 1:5 - 2:10

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Received: 25 August 2023/Accepted: 20 October 2023/Published: 31 October 2023

Citation (APA Styles): Panggarra, Robi, Camerling, Yosua Feliciano. (2023). Contribution of God's Servants in Upholding Sound Doctrine in The Church Community Based on Titus 1:5 - 2:10. *Jurnal Jaffray*, 21(2), 209-231. <http://doi.org/10.25278/jj.v21i2.885>

Abstract

In the current reality of the development of faith and the church, there are challenges in the form of unhealthy teachings that can hinder the growth of true religion. That is why this research aims to analyze and reveal the concept of God's servants based on Titus 1:5-2:10. Then, show and describe the steps to become a servant of God who contributes to the development of the church and society through sound teachings based on Titus 1:5-2:10. The results of this research are that four factors challenge the church in dealing with heresy. However, this challenge is paradoxical because, on the other hand, within this challenge, there are opportunities for the church, especially for community development. The four factors include, First, Religious Pluralism and Moral Relativism. It is essential to properly understand the moral values taught by the religious scriptures so that they can be the primary key to opening the way for evangelization missions. Second, the influence of media and technology. The presence of social media will become an increasingly important service object for maintaining connections among its people—third, heretical teachings. The church needs to act firmly to fight the practices of heretics who try to distort the truth to suit their wishes. Fourth, materialism and worldly pleasures. No human wealth can buy life or health. Therefore, this “empty space” can provide an opportunity for God's servants, equipped with sound doctrine, to bring people to the needs of eternity rather than mortal.

Keywords: Church, Community, God's Servants, Sound Doctrine, Titus

Abstrak

Dalam realitas perkembangan iman dan gereja saat ini, terdapat tantangan dalam bentuk ajaran-ajaran yang tidak sehat yang dapat menghambat pertumbuhan iman yang sejati. Itu sebabnya tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menganalisis dan mengungkapkan konsep pelayan Tuhan berdasarkan Titus 1:5-2:10. Kemudian mengungkapkan dan menjabarkan langkah-langkah menjadi



pelayan Tuhan yang berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan gereja dan masyarakat melalui ajaran yang sehat berdasarkan Titus 1:5-2:10. Adapun hasil dari penelitian ini yaitu terdapat empat faktor yang menjadi tantangan gereja dalam menghadapi ajaran yang tidak sehat. Namun tantangan ini bersifat paradoks karena di sisi lain, dalam tantangan itu justru terdapat peluang bagi gereja khususnya bagi pengembangan masyarakat. Keempat faktor itu antara lain: Pertama, Pluralisme Agama dan Relativisme Moral. Sangat perlu untuk memahami dengan benar nilai-nilai moral yang diajarkan oleh kitab suci agama yang dianut sehingga itu dapat menjadi kunci utama terbukanya jalan bagi misi penginjilan. Kedua, Pengaruh Media dan Teknologi. Kehadiran media sosial akan menjadi obyek pelayanan yang semakin penting untuk memelihara koneksi umatnya. Ketiga, Ajaran Sesat. Gereja perlu bertindak tegas untuk melawan praktik bidat yang berusaha memutarbalikkan kebenaran sesuai dengan keinginan mereka. Keempat, Materialisme dan Kesenangan Duniawi. Tidak ada kekayaan manusia yang dapat membeli kehidupan ataupun kesehatan. Oleh sebab itu, adanya “ruang kosong” ini dapat memberikan kesempatan untuk para pelayan Tuhan yang sudah dibekali dengan ajaran yang sehat untuk membawa orang terhadap kebutuhan akan kekekalan dibandingkan kebutuhan yang bersifat fana.

Kata-kata Kunci: Gereja, Komunitas, Hamba Tuhan, Doktrin Sehat, Titus

Introduction

In this ever-evolving era, the church and society play an important role in shaping individual character and morals. The church is not only a place of worship but also an institution that has the responsibility to provide spiritual guidance and sound teachings to its people. That is why Christopher Candland, in his research, revealed that religion is an essential social capital in community development.¹ Service in a religious context has a vital role in directing the development of the church and society in a positive direction. This sound teaching becomes a foundation for strong and sustainable growth in faith.

Apart from that, in the current reality of our spiritual life, we also cannot ignore the fact that various unhealthy teachings can hinder the growth of our faith and positive contributions to the church and society. Several factors that can be the background for the emergence of unhealthy teachings include advances in technology and information that enable the rapid spread of teachings, moral and ethical challenges in

¹ Christopher Candland, “Faith as Social Capital: Religion and Community Development in Southern Asia,” *Social Capital as a Policy Resource* 33 (2001): 131, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-6531-1_8

modern society, and social changes that can trigger a search for the meaning of life and spirituality. Research conducted by Juanda and Zevania Venda stated that the heretical teachings circulating today, including the historical discovery of the grave of Jesus, better known as the Jesus Tomb or the historical search for the descendants of Jesus, or the Jesus Dynasty and others, are teachings that do not recognize of the divinity of Jesus Christ.²

Since the first century, the church has been disturbed by several heresies that circulated among the early congregation.³ There are at least three groups of heretics who try to distort the truth according to their wishes, namely the Nomianism group (Titus 1:10-16; Acts 15:1-31), adherents of Gnostic teachings (three people left the faith to embrace the heretical teachings circulating in the Ephesian congregation: Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus in 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18), and the Nicolaitans (the Apostle John focused on the more extreme Gnosticism that was rampant throughout the first-century church (1 and 2 John; Rev. 2:6, 14, 15)). Therefore, the early church acted firmly against people who deviated from the glorious truth of Christ.⁴

That is why, in a world that continues to develop, the role of the church and Christians in society is crucial. In this context, Titus 2:1 emphasizes the importance of being a service of God that contributes to the development of the church and society through conveying sound teachings. Therefore, God's servants must be guardians and givers of good teaching by focusing on sound teachings by God's word. Based on the background described above, the objectives of this research are as follows: First, analyze and reveal the concept of God's servants based on Titus 1:5-2:10. Second, reveal and describe the steps to become a servant of God who contributes to the development of the church and society through sound teachings based on Titus 1:5-2:10.

Method

In conducting the study of this paper, the author used qualitative research. This type of research suits situations where the researcher wants to focus on a particular phenomenon from a global and holistic

² Juanda, Zevania Venda A., "Menghadapi Ajaran Sesat Studi Jemaat Efesus Menurut 1 Timotius 4:6-16," *Kerusso* 4, no. 1 (March 2019): 4, <https://doi.org/10.33856/kerusso.v4i1.80>

³ Karen D. Bolser, "Developing Values and Ethics—Preparing Leaders: A Social and Cultural Texture Analysis of Titus 1-3," *Journal of Biblical Perspective in Leadership* 4, no. 1 (2012): 63, <https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/vol4no1/5bolser.pdf>

⁴ Daniel Tumbel, "Tema Utama Teologi Titus," *Kerusso* 2, no. 1 (March 2017): 28-29. <https://doi.org/10.33856/kerusso.v2i1.36>

perspective. Therefore, this type of research can improve the researcher's ability to study events that arise naturally.⁵

The author will interpret the biblical text using hermeneutic principles. Hermeneutics is essential in biblical interpretation because it is a discipline that considers the concepts, principles and laws that are used universally to understand and interpret the Bible.⁶ That is why the author uses an exposition approach to the text of Titus 1:5-2:10. Exposition pays more attention to the application and relationship of the Bible part to the interpreter.⁷

For this reason, to facilitate the preparation of this research, the author used data collection techniques through literature study by using the Bible as primary literature and dictionaries, commentaries, books and various writings both in print and online media as secondary literature so that it can help the author to formulate various conclusions regarding the concept of Servants of God Who Contribute to the Development of Church and Society Through Teachings The Healthy (Titus 1:5 - 2:10).

Result and Discussion

Driving Factors for the Emergence of Heresy

When we refer to Titus 2:1, there is a call for God's servants to convey sound teachings. The importance of sound doctrine, also referred to as "healthy teaching," is emphasized throughout the letter. Titus' responsibility is to teach this sound doctrine, which includes ethical solid overtones. The desired outcome is that the believers in Crete would not only understand this healthy teaching but that it would have an impact on their character. It becomes clear that the instruction for both Titus and the other believers on Crete is that they would know the healthy teaching of the gospel and have lives that exemplify its truth. All believers are to have sound speech. The apostles' healthy teaching must be validated and confirmed by the believers' sound speech. The following

⁵ Clifford J. Drew, Michael L. Hardman, John L. Hosp, *Penelitian Pendidikan: Merancang dan Melaksanakannya Penelitian pada Bidang Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Indeks, 2017), 262-263.

⁶ Hasan Sutanto, *Hermeneutik: Prinsip dan Metode Penafsiran Alkitab* (Malang: Literatur Saat, 2007), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

phrases illustrate how this theme appears dominant in much of the letter.⁸

However, it needs to be acknowledged that we are currently faced with various forms of unhealthy teachings that can damage the foundations of our faith and hinder spiritual growth. Several factors that encourage unhealthy teachings are:

First, religious pluralism and moral relativism. Modern society often believes that all religions have their truth and that there are no absolute moral standards. This can obscure exclusively Christian teachings and the moral principles established by the Bible. This also aligns with Stevri I. Lumintang's statement, "Pluralism is a very serious challenge and danger for Christianity. Because pluralism is not just a sociological, anthropological concept, but a concept of religious philosophy which does not originate from the Bible, but rather originates from the fact of pluralism which is followed by demands for tolerance, and is inspired by socio-political conditions which are supported by ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism; and sponsored by the spirit of globalization and the philosophy of relativism that accompanies it."⁹

Second, the influence of media and technology. Technological advances provide easy and fast access to various views and information. However, not all of this information is by Christian teachings. Social media and online platforms can be a means of spreading unhealthy teachings that confuse many people. Jonathan Leobisa et al., in their research, revealed that: "On the one hand, the existence of social media has a beneficial impact because it can make it easier for users to get information quickly, simply and affordably. On the other hand, when everyone talks more through social media than in direct face-to-face conversations, it may have a detrimental effect on low social skills, such as not being able to empathize with others and not knowing how to speak properly."¹⁰ That is why people can more easily and quickly obtain news and information on social media so that it is straightforward to generate new thoughts, both positive and negative.

⁸ Corey Keating, "Discourse Analysis of the Book of Titus," 13, <http://ntgreek.org/SeminaryPapers/Discourse%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Book%20of%20Titus.pdf>

⁹ Suriawan, "Misi Gereja Menghadapi Pluralisme Agama: Antara Tantangan dan Peluang," *Magenang: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 4, no. 1 (April 2023): 6, <https://doi.org/10.51667/mjtpk.v4i1.1304>; Stevri Lumintang, *Theologia Abu-abu: Pluralisme Agama* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2004), 15.

¹⁰ Jonathan Leobisa dkk, "Tantangan Penggunaan Media Sosial di Era Disrupsi dan Peran Pendidikan Etika Kristen," *Altheia: Christian Educator Journal* 4, no. 1 (April 2023): 40, <https://doi.org/10.9744/aletheia.4.1.38-48>

Third, heretical teachings. In the opinion of Morris Phillips Takaliuang, “False teachings or heresies that emerge among God’s people are a challenge for the church to be willing to correct itself regarding the correct understanding of faith and provide balanced spiritual teaching for the congregation because of the emergence of heretical teachings or Heresy can also be the result of the church’s negligence in paying attention to the spiritual needs of its congregation.”¹¹ That is why it can be said that some heresies or false teachings can be mixed in the church environment. False teaching about crucial aspects of the Christian faith, such as the nature of God, redemption, and salvation, can harm the growth of a congregation’s faith.

Fourth, materialism and worldly pleasures. Excessive focus on material wealth and worldly pleasures can divert attention from spiritual and eternal matters. That is why Jake Barnet describes materialism and worldly pleasures as having the power to enslave humans, making them no longer believe in God’s provision.¹² Even extreme welfare teachings can replace teachings about sacrifice and service to others.

Therefore, in Paul’s letter to Titus, there is a command to be a servant of God who contributes to the development of the church and society through sound teachings (Titus 2:1). Sound teachings are the basis for the formation of spiritual character and the growth of solid faith. However, the reality shows that the current era is also characterized by the emergence of various unhealthy teachings that can damage the proper foundations of faith.

The Impact of the Ministry of God’s Servants on the Church and Society

A servant or minister of God who teaches sound doctrine can build a strong foundation of faith for his congregation. By teaching the principles of truth, God’s ministers help the congregation to grow in knowledge and understanding of God’s Word. Frank Damazio stated that a servant of God is a leader of the congregation and an example that

¹¹ Prananto, Joseph Christ Santo, “Kewaspadaan terhadap Guru-guru Palsu Berdasarkan 2 Petrus 2 Sebagai Antisipasi terhadap Penyesatan pada Masa Kini,” *Miktab: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 2, no. 2 (December 2022): 204-205, <http://doi.org/10.33991/miktab.v2i2.435>; Morris Phillips Takaliuang, “Ancaman Ajaran Sesat di Lingkungan Kekristenan: Suatu Pelajaran Bagi Gereja-gereja di Indonesia,” *Missio Ecclesiae* 9, no. 1 (2020): 132-156, <https://doi.org/10.52157/me.v9i1.115>

¹² Bakhoh Jatmiko, Desi Erlina Zega, “Etika Keuangan Hamba Tuhan: Kajian Eksegetikal Terhadap 1 Timotius 6:3-10,” *Integritas: Jurnal Teologi* 3, no. 2 (December 2021): 134, <https://doi.org/10.47628/ijt.v3i2.79>; Jake Barnet, *Harta dan Hikmat: Pandangan Alkitab Tentang Kekayaan* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup, 1987), 110-120.

the congregation must emulate.¹³ This helps the church face the challenges of modern times with unwavering confidence.

If God's servants have a high status when the word servant is attributed to God, then God's servants should contribute value through their service to the church and society.¹⁴ That is why, as people who have the privilege to speak on behalf of their master, God's servants have the opportunity to have a positive impact on the church and society in general through: advice, teachings, values, and life examples.¹⁵

As people who often have the stage to speak to convey religious teachings, God's servants have a golden opportunity to preach theological truths, both theoretically and practically. The opportunity to preach is a golden opportunity that can be used as a forum for teaching God's word (containing the things that God wants from the lives of His people), so that they can understand and begin to practice and implement these teachings in their daily lives.

The Contribution of the Church in the Christian Context

Church development is undoubtedly a critical issue related to the existence of the church itself. As the church is an institution built based on Jesus Christ and has been administered by the state, even in Indonesia, Christianity is one of the six religions recognized by law, so efforts are needed to maintain its preservation. However, it is not only limited to preserving the church; of course, there are three church vocations that need always to be remembered and practised, which are stated in Koinonia, Diakonia, and Marturia. These three things are essential things to pay attention to in order to preserve the existence of the church in the future.¹⁶

The church is an official place of worship for followers of the Christian religion, where people are taught how they engage in fellowship (koinonia) with other people. Apart from that, the church community is also taught to be involved in service and social services, which can be realized in diaconal service, where the church is called to

¹³ Waharma, "Karakteristik Seorang Pelayan Tuhan Berdasarkan 1 Timotius 3:1-7," *Manna Rafflesia* 4, no. 1 (October 2017): 38, https://doi.org/10.38091/man_raf.v4i1.80; Frank Damazio, *Memimpin dengan Roh* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2004), 123.

¹⁴ Jefri Andri Saputra dkk, "Penghormatan Pelayan Gereja dalam Konstruksi Teologi

Lokal Tradisi Masso'ba' dan Teks 1 Timotius 5:17-18," *Danum Pabelum: Jurnal Teologi dan Musik Gereja* 3, no. 1 (May 2023): 11, <https://doi.org/10.54170/dp.v3i1.130>

¹⁵ Loren Goa, "Pelayanan Pastoral Bagi Sesama yang Membutuhkan," *Sapa: Jurnal Katakateik dan Pastoral* 3, no. 1 (2018): 121.

¹⁶ Yessy Kenny Jacob, Christopher Pangalila, "Pemaknaan Panggilan Koster dalam Pelayanan Gereja," *Jurnal Psikologi Humanlight* 1, no. 2 (2020): 15, <https://doi.org/10.51667/jph.v1i2.378>

help poor, suffering, underdeveloped, disadvantaged groups of people, where the church is encouraged to help each other together with all its brothers and sisters requiring. Likewise, the church is called to carry out the task of *marturia* (witnessing), which is an important role in declaring Christ and His love to the world. This task of witnessing can be carried out in various ways and methods, but the main focus is how to continue and convey the message about Christ as Lord and Savior.

Church Contribution in the Community Environment

As mentioned above, when the church consistently carries out its three callings, then, of course, this will have an impact first on the church itself but also outside the church where the church grows and develops. Therefore, the church should be – go – and do (Matthew 28:19-20). Through the example of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, the community of faith is called to spread God's work of salvation (*shalom*) through words and deeds because the church is a community of love and service. Jacob and Pangalila stated that service of love is manifested in various forms, namely: service (sharing blessings with the poor, widows, widowers, orphans, sick people and so on) and transformative service (empowering congregation members to change and utilize their environment in terms of resources. Human resources, as well as natural resources, for the continuity of human life.¹⁷

In this way, the author can conclude that if healthy teachings are implemented well in life, they will produce actions that will attract the attention of other people. In the case of the church practising good things, other people can easily differentiate between the lives/behaviour of people who are taught and learn positive things and people who do not learn good/healthy things.

The Importance of Healthy Teachings (Sound doctrine) for Community Development

A servant of God who focuses on sound teachings also plays a vital role in shaping the character of individuals and society. This is in line with what Fredik and Martha expressed that the church is a community of people who are chosen and placed in this world to have a good and correct quality of life according to Christian teaching standards and serve God to proclaim His wondrous deeds.¹⁸ Teachings that teach love,

¹⁷ Yessy Kenny Jacob, Christopher Pangalila, "Pemaknaan Panggilan Kostor dalam Pelayanan Gereja," *Jurnal Psikologi Humanlight* 1, no. 2 (2020): 15-16, <https://doi.org/10.51667/jph.v1i2.378>

¹⁸ Ayub Rusmanto, Bambang Dewandaru, "Pemberdayaan Kaum Awam dalam Pengembangan Pelayanan Gereja untuk Mewartakan Kabar Keselamatan," *Didasko: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 2 (October 2022): 143,

humility and truth are the basis for a harmonious and civilized society. God's service, which provides sound teachings, also plays a role in overcoming various social problems society faces, such as poverty, inequality and conflict.

In addition, servants of God who contribute to the development of the church and society through sound teachings have a deep commitment to building a better world. Believers who have been redeemed are here to present the grace of Christ in social life, both in the school environment, at work, and in their behavioural endeavours that reflect and represent Christian character.¹⁹ Therefore, it can be said that through sound teachings, God's servants can change human hearts and minds, form a better generation, and direct society towards a life entirely of meaning.

Case Study of Healthy Teachings in Church Services for Community Development

Norman E. Thomas quoted Dietrich Bonhoeffer's view in 1944 that "The Church is the church only when it exists for others."²⁰ In other words, the church was to seek the welfare of the city to which it was exiled (Jeremiah 29:7). One figure that is worth emulating is the life story of Mother Teresa, a charity missionary in India. Many people admire his work of love and follow in his footsteps to develop humanitarian works. However, perhaps not many people realize that Mother Teresa's great works were driven by her acts of love for God.²¹ Thus, it can be said that sound teachings in the church should not only stop within the scope of the church itself but should have a positive impact on the surrounding community.

One of the concrete evidence that is a case study in this research as well as a relevant previous study can be seen from the pattern of community empowerment carried out by the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM) through the Technical Education Training Center (BLPT) Kaaten, Tomohon based on coconut wood processing

<https://doi.org/10.52879/didasko.v2i2.50>; Fredik Melkias Boiliu, Martha Megawati Pasaribu, "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen di Gereja Terhadap Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Kreatif Jemaat di Era Digital," *Jurnal Pengabdian Tri Bhakti* 2, no. 2 (2020): 118-132, <http://journal.unla.ac.id/index.php/tribhakti/article/view/1518>

¹⁹ Ayub Rusmanto, Bambang Dewandaru, "Pemberdayaan Kaum Awam dalam Pengembangan Pelayanan Gereja untuk Mewartakan Kabar Keselamatan," *Didasko: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 2 (October 2022): 145, <https://doi.org/10.52879/didasko.v2i2.50>

²⁰ Norman E. Thomas, *Teks-teks Klasik tentang Misi dan Kekristenan Sedunia* (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 2001), 124.

²¹ Yoachim Agus Tridiatno, "Mystical Way of Mother Teresa," *Jurnal Teologi* 1, no. 2 (November 2012): 149, <https://doi.org/10.24071/jt.v1i2.426>

which has been successful. Improve community welfare. In general, the empowerment pattern carried out by GMIM is economic empowerment. In its implementation, it absorbs much labour from out-of-school students, thereby increasing the income of the surrounding community, reducing the number of out-of-school children, increasing the development of creative businesses, reducing the amount of poverty and unemployment and increasing income for GMIM's treasury.²² Therefore, it can be said that sound teachings are an essential foundation in this effort because, through correct and appropriate teachings, God's servants can help encourage the growth of solid faith and build a strong church.

Healthy Teachings Based on Titus 1:5 – 2:10 and Their Application in Church Services for Community Development

In the text discussed, the Apostle Paul gave Titus the task of organizing and resolving several problems experienced by the congregation on the island of Crete. Paul assigned Titus to complete several unfinished businesses.²³ In addition to organizational problems that need to be arranged, the problem of unhealthy teachings in the Cretan church is also a problem that needs to be solved. This refers to Paul's expression: "I have left you in Crete with this intention so that you arrange what still needs to be arranged and so that you appoint elders in every city, as I have commanded you" (Titus 1:5).

Some false teachers give unhealthy teachings in the congregation. This is stated clearly in Titus 1:10; they are called disorderly people and adhere to the law of circumcision. They were Gnostic Jews who were often referred to as the circumcision party but still called themselves teachers of the law (1 Tim. 1:7).²⁴ This teaching has the effect of causing chaos. In addition, the Cretan church was very susceptible to false teachings, "Such people must have their mouths shut because they disturb many families by teaching nonsense to gain shameful gain" (Titus 1:11).

In chapter 2, Paul tells Titus what he needs to teach to face or respond to unhealthy teachings. The Apostle Paul's advice in Titus 2:1 emphasized that Titus should rebuke those who were disorganized

²² Grace Sumbung dkk, "Peran Gereja dalam Peningkatan Ekonomi Masyarakat di Tomohon Sulawesi Utara," *Wacana, Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora* 15, no. 4 (2012): 9, <https://wacana.ub.ac.id/index.php/wacana/article/view/264>

²³ Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (General Editors), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon* vol. 12, revised edition, (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 603.

²⁴ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid (edistors), *Dictionary of Paul And His Letters* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 663.

firmly. Next chapter 2:2-10 describes the practical teaching that is necessary for Parents, Young People, and Servants Who Please God, including Old Men (2:2), Old Women (2:3-4a), The Young Women (2:4b-5), Youth or Youth (2:6), and Servant (2:9-10).²⁵

In the context where Christianity or the church today cannot be separated from the existence of problems that need to be addressed and resolved well and wisely, the researcher compiled this research material to provide input for insight and consideration for God's servants in dealing with existing and future problems. Will appear in the field.

These unhealthy teachings appear in various forms, such as views that deviate from Biblical truth, theology that is outside orthodox lines, and spiritual trends that pursue sensation rather than true transformation. Apart from that, advances in technology and communication also provide a more expansive space for spreading these unhealthy teachings. As a result, many people can be influenced without having a solid foundation in the faith to discern and understand the sound teachings.

Sound Doctrine Based on Titus 1:5 – 2:10

At the beginning of chapter 1:5, Paul explained again to Titus his purpose in leaving Titus in Crete so that he could organize some things that still need to be organized in the congregation. One thing that was mentioned in his letter was placing elders in every city. This message indicates the condition of the congregation in Crete, which is not yet stable in structural matters. Next, Paul, in verses 6-9, describes the conditions that need to be considered in selecting the intended elders. This explains that the selection of elders has specific guidelines that every pastor or congregation leader needs to pay attention to. This should not be done without consideration so that it will impact ministry and church development.

Titus 1:6, i.e. blameless people who have only one wife, whose children live in faith and cannot be accused of immorality or disorderly living. Titus 1:7 Because as an administrator of God's house, a church overseer must be blameless, not arrogant, not a braggart, not a drunkard, not angry, not greedy, Titus 1:8 but likes to give a lift, likes the good, wise, just, pious, able to control himself, Titus 1:9 and adhere to the

²⁵ Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (General Editors), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon* vol. 12, revised edition, (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 613-617.

actual words, which are by sound teaching, so that he can advise people based on that teaching and can convince his opponents.

From the explanation above, you can understand that there are standards that need to be met to hold the position of elder in the church. The determination of standards or qualifications certainly has specific reasons and considerations. People are needed who live without blemish because this can help to convince other people who are served. The conditions discussed are an exemplary attitude to life, personally and as a family, if he is married. For personal qualifications, Paul explains that those who are blameless include not being haughty, not being grumpy, not drinking, not being angry, not being greedy, liking to give a lift, liking what is good, being wise, just, pious, being able to control oneself, and sticking to one's the truth word. and live according to sound teachings. As for family qualifications, this elder is the husband of one wife (in the current context, of course, including the wife of one husband) and has children who live in faith.

In the second part, Donald Guthrie calls this section "regulations for Christian behavior."²⁶ His is, of course, based on the following explanation where the advice that Paul conveyed to Titus was practical advice for managing relationships, as well as how people at that time needed to interact with each other. Donald Guthrie further said that the Apostle Paul's advice is more instructive for modern times as well as contemporary situations.²⁷ It is interesting that Robert W. Yarbrough mentions that there is only one formal command in Titus 1:13, namely, rebuke firmly; however, in total, there are 14 commandments, and 13 of them appear in chapters 2-3.²⁸ Paying attention to these commandments in the Letter of Titus will provide a clear picture of how sound teachings can be applied in ministry and lead to practical interpersonal relations behaviour. To properly understand the teaching that Paul commanded Titus to organize several different groups in the church, it is evident in chapter 2:1-10:²⁹

²⁶ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 203.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁸ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters To Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 504.

²⁹ Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (General Editors), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon vol. 12*, revised edition, (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 613-617.

- I. The old man (2:1-2)
- II. Old and young women (2:3-5)
- III. Young people (2:6-8)
- IV. Walk around (2:9-10)

The principle of sound teaching can be seen in Titus chapter 1, where Paul reminds Titus to dare to rebuke them harshly (Titus is to rebuke them loudly).³⁰

First, take a firm stand against false teachings and teachers. There is no room to hide from false teachers. Paul emphasized this to Titus as a young minister to be bold in facing this group. Anyone who lives a life that is not orderly in providing a living example and distorts the teachings in service needs to receive a firm reprimand. This can be seen in Titus 1:13: "The testimony is true, therefore rebuke them firmly so that they may become sound in the faith."

The health of the congregation's faith is the most important part of congregational stewardship. A healthy congregation's faith will result in the congregation growing in quality and quantity. On the other hand, a healthy congregation's faith becomes a strong foundation for facing various challenges—a test of faith. The word "healthy" in Greek is *hugiaino*, which in English means to be well and in good health. This is a verb in the subjunctive form, which means intent or purpose. From this description, it can be concluded that in order to achieve the aim or goal of ensuring that the congregation is healthy in faith, as a servant of God, it is necessary to admonish the congregation to continue to have a true testimony of life.³¹

Second, choose and appoint other people who can help. Readiness to involve other people is one of the essential things if a service wants to have a broad impact. The function of an elder based on Titus 1:5-9 is as an overseer or overseer in the house of God to exhort (edify) each congregation with sound doctrine, to point out errors, and to rebuke (correct) any opponents of the Gospel. Therefore, appointing a congregation overseer is a reasonably necessary task in helping to

³⁰ Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon* vol. 12, revised edition, 610.

³¹ Gustaf R. A. Kasse, "Studi Terhadap Penatalayanan Gereja Berdasarkan Kitab Titus 1:5-16 dan Implementasinya Bagi Gereja Masa Kini," *Jurnal Rumea* 2, no. 2 (2022): 26, <https://www.jurnal.stakam.ac.id/index.php/Rumea/article/view/101>.

maintain the growth of the congregation.³² Therefore, Paul reminded Titus to place elders in every city. This means that you need to be open to accepting the presence of other people in service.

Third, it shows peace of mind, both personal and family. In Titus 2:7, it says: “and set yourself an example in doing good.” Paul begins this section with a Greek word, an accusative preposition. Prepositions with a primary meaning around, on all sides, at the beginning of a sentence to indicate what is being discussed are related to the accusative: a place around, near or from an object surrounded by something around it. So it is clear that this is talking about Titus’ place of ministry and refers to himself, namely Titus as pastor of the Cretan congregation.³³ Titus must refer to an action as a whole to build the life of the congregation without regard to class or status in the congregation being pastored or the local community in the area of Crete.³⁴ Therefore, as a servant of God, it is necessary to show exemplary living not only personally but also in family life.

Fourth, be able to adapt to placing yourself in each different group. Paul set an example and delegated tasks to Titus. This means that Paul directly involved the people he would send. In Titus 2:1-10, it is explained that because of the many challenges that arose in the ministry, he instructed Titus to pay attention to the various groups in the congregation. For example, in the social structure, older men will be respected and respected. Older women have an essential role in the congregation. They must be role models for young women in loving their families and managing their households. The Apostle Paul gave general instructions to Titus to carry out his duties faithfully, specifically regarding several types of people and the obligations of every adult according to Titus 2:1-10.³⁵

³² Mariduk Tambun, “Pendidikan Kualifikasi Dan Fungsi Seorang Penatua: Sejauh Bagaimanakah Para Hamba Tuhan Melakukannya?” *Jurnal Excelsior Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (April 2021): 61, <https://doi.org/10.51730/jep.v2i1.10>

³³ Sonny Herens Umboh, “Model Pembinaan Karakter Pemimpin Menurut Kitab Titus bagi Kaum Muda Gereja Allah Baik Agape Nirwana Surabaya,” *Euangelion* 3, no. 1 (2022): 8, <https://e-journal.staklb-manado.ac.id/index.php/euangelion/article/view/37>

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁵ Rostiani Dewi, “Ajaran Pendewasaan Berdasarkan Titus 2:1-10,” *Anoteros: Jurnal Teologi* 1, no. 1 (2023): 22, <https://ojs.stt-pontianak.ac.id/index.php/anoteros/article/view/3>

In general, so that he performs his duties faithfully. However, you preach what is by sound teachings. Specifically, for some categories of adults, the Apostle Paul told Titus to use this sound teaching to teach and convey the teaching to each person according to age, place or life situation. Moreover, this is the consideration that Titus should use to uphold those obligations: "so that in this way they as adults in all respects glorify the teachings of God and the Savior."³⁶ These are the four principles of sound teaching that can be seen in the letter of the Apostle Paul to his student Titus.

Challenges versus Opportunities

Below, the researcher explains several factors that challenge the church in dealing with unhealthy teachings. However, on the other hand, this challenge can become an opportunity for the church, especially for community development. The explanation is as follows.

Religious Pluralism and Moral Relativism

We live in a country constitutionally recognising several religions as legally adhered to by its people.³⁷ This is because society often believes that all religions have their truth. Apart from that, there are no moral standards that can be called absolute to regulate everyone's lives because there are also differences in religious and moral teachings. However, respecting diversity must undoubtedly be the breath of national and state life to prevent the nation from conflict and division. Such absences often invite intolerance, even bullying and persecution.

Apart from that, there is a shift in moral values, which are based on different religious teachings. For example, some religions allow a person to have more than one wife, while in other religions, this is not permitted. Examples like this show the opportunity for moral relativism, and this is based on the teachings and beliefs of each religious adherent who have differences. The existence of differences like this, but on the other hand, the need for tolerance, can obscure exclusive Christian teachings and firm moral principles in the Bible.

³⁶ Rostiani Dewi, "Ajaran Pendewasaan Berdasarkan Titus 2:1-10," 22.

³⁷ Y. Hariprabowo, "Misi Gereja Di Tengah Pluralitas Agama dan Budaya," *Jurnal Orientasi Baru* 18, no. 1 (April 2009): 45'

This matter has also been discussed by Asian bishops since the continental assembly in Manila in 1970, which stated that the situation of religious and cultural plurality was a significant challenge for the Church's mission, especially in the Asian regions.³⁸ In fact, the attitude of accepting religious pluralism is an attitude of respect for the laws and regulations of the Republic of Indonesia which regulate matters of religion, while belief is a personal attitude towards something that is believed in the religion held by an individual.

However, related to moral relativism, it is necessary to properly understand the moral values taught by the holy books of the religion one adheres to. Belief in religion and the values of its teachings will lead a person to take action as a form of implementing the teachings received from the religion. Thus, there should be no doubts or ambiguous decisions regarding the actions that arise because everything is based on the teachings of religious values and morals, which are believed to be a form of God's will for us as followers of that religion.

Therefore, the living testimony of a church that already knows and understands sound teachings is the primary key to opening the way for evangelical missions. This was also expressed by Y. Hariprabowo: "The Church occupies a critical position, namely through the quality of Christian life, as well as works of love. Ecclesia in Asia emphasizes the importance of witness as a modality that enables missionary activity in the modern world. Realizing the special conditions in Indonesia, silent witnessing of life is often the only way to proclaim the Kingdom of God."³⁹ Through a way of life that is by Healthy Teachings, God's servants can become the Gospel itself, which can have a positive impact on society and society.

Influence of Media and Technology

It must be acknowledged that technological advances have made a significant contribution to disseminating various views and information. In this case, information about religious teachings cannot be excluded. On the one hand, of course, this can also be seen as a great opportunity, but it also needs to be acknowledged that not all of this information is by Christian teachings. This was also expressed by Helen Farida Latif et al.

³⁸ Y. Hariprabowo, "Misi Gereja Di Tengah Pluralitas Agama dan Budaya," *Jurnal Orientasi Baru* 18, no. 1 (April 2009): 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

that developing digital technology, besides providing many positive benefits that can be used as a facility in church services, can also be a big challenge for the church. These challenges can come from internal factors.⁴⁰ Christianity's internal challenge, where social media and online platforms can become a means of spreading unhealthy teachings and confusing many people, is a challenge that still needs to be answered.

In this year alone, there have been several teaching expressions that have gone viral in Christian churches because they were rejected and opposed by other parties. Media, in this case, is only a neutral tool or container that all users can use to send and disseminate the information they want. One of the negative impacts of digital media and the internet that has spread recently is hate speech that spreads on social media. Even social media and other means of online communication are starting to play a more significant role in hate crimes.⁴¹

However, it is interesting what Yahya Afandi said: "If the church is a real manifestation of God's hand for those who are marginalized and a defender for those who are treated unfairly, then the church will also use its presence in this digital era as an opportunity to complete its mission."⁴² The presence of social media will become an increasingly important service object for maintaining connections among its people. Therefore, even though the church in this century faces so many unique challenges, including in how to communicate, disseminate information and build new relationships, if the church realizes its presence as an open letter of Christ then it will be wise in facing the influence of the media and technology in this digital era.

Heresy

It must be acknowledged that heresy does not only exist in the context of the time when the Bible was written or the early days of the

⁴⁰ Helen Farida Latif dkk., "Digitalisasi sebagai Fasilitas dan Tantangan Modernisasi Pelayanan Penggembalaan di Era Pasca-Pandemi: Refleksi Teologi Kisah Para Rasul 20:28," *Kharismata: Jurnal Teologi Pantekosta* 4, no. 2 (Januari 2022): 307, <https://doi.org/10.47167/kharis.v4i2.132>

⁴¹ Yosua Feliciano Camerling, Mershy Ch. Lauled, Sarah Citra Eunike, "Gereja Bermisi Melalui Media Digital di Era Revolusi Industri 4.0," *VISIO DEI Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 2, No. 1 (Juni 2020): 3, <https://doi.org/10.35909/visiodei.v2i1.68>

⁴² Yahya Afandi, "Gereja dan Pengaruh Teknologi Informasi 'Digital Ecclesiology'," *Jurnal Fidei Jurnal Teologi Sistematika dan Praktika* 1, no. 2 (Desember 2018): 281, <https://doi.org/10.34081/fidei.v1i2.12>

church. Until now, some teachings have also become the subject of debate among Christian church denominations themselves. There is a claim to feel more righteous than other organizations, and because of that, only being able to survive through specific organizations is not an example of teachings that are misleading and, at the same time, very disturbing.⁴³ It is sad to say that some heretical or false teachings are also mixed into the church environment, and this is facilitated by open access to communication and information due to technology and internet networks.

What needs to be remembered and realized is that wrong teaching about critical aspects of the Christian faith, including the teaching of salvation, can endanger the growth of the congregation's faith. Therefore, the Church must not remain silent and be satisfied with itself. The Church needs to act firmly to fight the practices of heretics who try to twist the truth to suit their wishes. That is why there is an interesting statement which reads: "one good deed means much more than a thousand kind words." Alternatively, in the context of being a servant of God, it can be said that a sermon that is "loud" is the act of the preacher himself rather than the words spoken behind the pulpit.

Materialism and Worldly Pleasures

One of the great enemies of Christian groups (as well as other groups) is an excessive focus on material wealth and worldly pleasures. However, this can shift attention from spiritual matters and turn a person's attention only to material achievements or collections and focus on a hedonistic lifestyle. People in this trap do not find it easy to pull themselves out. Their hearts are dominated by greed, and as a result, there is much corruption due to unlimited material demands and worldly pleasures, which always eat away at a person's soul. There is no limit to satisfaction for the consumerist and hedonistic soul. This is like a drug that anaesthetizes and provides endless comfort and pleasure for the soul it controls.

To become a servant of God, ideally, they should not run away from their calling and should not hide their potential, but instead, they

⁴³ Morris Phillips Takaliuang, "Ancaman Ajaran Sesat di Lingkungan Kekristenan: Suatu Pelajaran Bagi Gereja-gereja di Indonesia," *Missio Ecclesiae* 9, no. 1 (2020): 133, <https://doi.org/10.52157/me.v9i1.i15>

need to develop it so that it does not burden the congregation. That is why some servants of God are also involved in business. However, through the business they are involved in, they can fulfil their lives and help others. Not the opposite, enriching yourself and forgetting your primary identity, namely as a servant of God.⁴⁴ Therefore, quoting the words of the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ, in Matthew 6:19-20 which reads: "Do not lay up treasures on earth; on earth moth and rust destroy it and thieves break in and steal it. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; in heaven moth and rust do not destroy it and thieves do not break in and steal it. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." No human wealth can buy life or health. Therefore, the existence of this "empty space" can provide an opportunity for God's servants who are equipped with sound teachings to bring people to the needs of eternity rather than mortal needs.

Conclusion

In the spiritual journey and development of the church, the role of a servant of God has a significant impact on the formation of individual faith and the development of the community around him. That is why, in a world that continues to develop, the role of the church and Christians in society is vital. In his letter, the Apostle Paul advised his spiritual son, Titus – of course still relevant today – to become a service of God who contributes to the development of the church and society through preaching sound teachings. Therefore, today's servants of God need to be guardians and givers of good teaching by always focusing on sound teachings by God's word.

In this article, it has been explained that four factors challenge the church in dealing with unhealthy teachings. However, this challenge is paradoxical because, on the other hand, within this challenge, there are opportunities for the church, especially for community development. The four factors include, First, Religious Pluralism and Moral Relativism. Second, the influence of media and technology. Third, heretical teachings. Fourth, Materialism and Worldly Pleasures. Through these four factors, it is hoped that God's servants can be wise

⁴⁴ Berniaty Palabirin, Daniel Ronda, "Pandangan Alkitab Tentang Praktik Bisnis di Kalangan Hamba Tuhan Penuh Waktu," *Jurnal Jaffray* 8, no. 2 (2010): 40, <http://doi.org/10.25278/jj71.v8i2.45>

by seeing existing challenges not as threats but as opportunities to contribute to the development of the church and society through sound teachings.

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