



Portrait of Humanity in the End Times: An Expository Study Based on 2 Timothy 3:1–9 and Its Implications for the Congregation of the Gospel Tabernacle Church of Indonesia Solafide Arogolik Tulem

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Abstract

This study presents an expository analysis of 2 Timothy 3:1-9 which describes the characteristics of human behavior in the so - called "difficult times" or the end times. Employing a qualitative – theological approach and biblical exposition methodology, the research aims to uncover the original meaning of the text and reflect its relevance within the context of local church ministry, particularly in the congregation of GKII Solafide Arogolic Tulem, Papua. The exposition reveals that the traits of end-time humanity – such as selfishness, love of pleasure, and a form of godliness devoid of power – are not limited to the secular world but have infiltrated Christian communities as well. Field observations and informal interviews indicate signs of moral and spiritual decline within the congregation, especially among the youth. This study recommends continuous character formation, the importance of exemplary spiritual leadership, and contextually relevant pastoral approaches as the church's response to contemporary challenges. Consequently, the church is called to be a community that lives by the truth and power of God's word in a morally decaying world.



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INTRODUCTION

The era we are currently living in is filled with moral turbulence, spiritual crises, and concerning character decadence. In various aspects of life – both in society at large and within religious communities – signs of value degradation are emerging, indicating that humanity is caught in the whirlpool of a corrupt age. This condition aligns with the prophecy of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-9, which explicitly describes the characteristics of people during the "difficult times." In this pastoral letter, Paul not only warns his spiritual son Timothy about the dangers of moral decay and health in the church, but he also delivers a prophetic message that remains relevant for the church throughout the ages.

These verses provide a lengthy list of the traits of people in the last days: lovers of themselves, greedy, boastful, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving,

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slandorous, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, and many others. These traits are not only indicators of moral decay but also present a real challenge in the formation of today's local churches. Specifically, churches in Papua, including the GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem congregation, are not exempt from these challenges.

Amidst the spirit of service and the growth of the congregation's faith, the infiltration of corrupt values cannot be avoided. Teenagers and young people in the church are beginning to be exposed to the influences of a hedonistic, individualistic lifestyle, and a shallow spirituality. The firmness in living according to God's truth is often eroded by the current popular culture and social pressures. Therefore, a deep understanding of the expository message of 2 Timothy 3:1-9 becomes crucial to analyze the condition of the congregation and design a relevant pastoral approach.

This study aims to expositively uncover the content of 2 Timothy 3:1-9, while also relating it to the real context experienced by the GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem congregation. Through expository and pastoral reflection approaches, this paper seeks to answer the fundamental question: what is the depiction of humanity in the last days according to Paul, and what are the implications for the life and formation of the local congregation in this contemporary era?

It is hoped that this research will provide theological and pastoral contributions to local churches, particularly in strengthening contextual teaching of the Word and shaping a congregation's character to be resilient in the midst of difficult times. Additionally, this study encourages the church to not only be a place of worship but also a center for forming Christian character that remains faithful to the truth and steadfast against the temptations of the world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Expository Study of 2 Timothy 3:1-9 in Theological Literature

The book of 2 Timothy is generally understood as part of the pastoral epistles written by the Apostle Paul to equip church leaders in facing various challenges in ministry. Specifically, 2 Timothy 3:1-9 serves as a prophetic warning about the moral and spiritual condition of humanity in the days leading up to the second coming of Christ. According to John Stott (2006), this passage not only describes the behavior of non-believers but, tragically, also depicts individuals within the church community who deny the power of godliness.

Furthermore, Barclay (1973) emphasizes that the list of negative traits in this text reflects the total degradation of values such as love, self-discipline, and social responsibility. This list is not just symbolic but represents a recurring reality throughout church history. In other words, the "End Times" does not only point to an eschatological period far in the future but has already begun since the time of the apostles.

Within the framework of historical hermeneutics, N.T. Wright (2011) suggests that readers should not separate the context in which Paul wrote from the contemporary implications of the text. He states that the warning about people "having a form of godliness but denying its power" (verse 5) is a critique of religion that is devoid of genuine transformation. This is highly relevant to today's church, including congregations in local cultural contexts, such as the GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem.

The "End Times" Humanity in Biblical Theology Perspective

The concept of "End Times humanity" in Biblical Theology refers to the inner and moral condition of humanity that has been distorted due to sin and rebellion against God. According to Grudem (2020), the character of people in the End Times reflects a systematic rejection of God's authority, replaced by self-centeredness. This forms the basis for attitudes of selfishness, greed, and lack of love, as outlined in 2 Timothy 3.

From an eschatological perspective, Bauckham (2012) states that the signs of humanity in the End Times are part of the dynamic between the "already and not yet" of God's kingdom. In other words, the signs of the End Times, as described in Timothy's letter, are not merely predictions, but a reality that has already occurred and continues to unfold. Therefore, the church is called to be proactive and vigilant.

Expository Approach to the Bible and Contextual Theology

Expository Bible interpretation is an approach that emphasizes fidelity to the original author's intent and the structure of the text. According to Fee and Stuart (2014), expository interpretation involves understanding the historical background, grammar, and literary context comprehensively. This method not only results in doctrinal understanding but also provides practical relevance for contemporary readers.

In the context of local ministry, the expository approach needs to be integrated with contextual theology. Bevans (2002) explains that contextual theology is the effort to communicate God's Word while considering the social, cultural, and experiential situations of God's people. Therefore, in delivering the exposition of 2 Timothy 3:1-9 at GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of the Arogolik Tulem community context, including the challenges of modernization, digital influences, and the social relational culture of the congregation.

Relevant Studies on Local Churches and Character Formation

Previous research on character formation in the congregation highlights the importance of integrating doctrinal teaching with relational development. According to Tanojo (2019), churches in the interior regions of Papua face a dual challenge: limited access to education and the rapid penetration of modern values without spiritual filters. In this context, church ministry must develop a holistic approach that emphasizes the transformation of the heart, not just external behavior.

This is further affirmed by Menalu (2021), who studied the character changes of Christian youth in a multicultural environment. He concluded that a contextual and participatory understanding of biblical texts is far more effective in building resilience of faith amidst the currents of modern society.

METHOD

Qualitative-Theological Approach

A qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on a deep understanding of the biblical text and the reality of the congregation's life, rather than numerical measurement. The theological approach is used to explore the content, message, and spiritual relevance of the biblical text. This study positions the Bible as the primary authority, which serves as the foundation for pastoral reflection and action.

Biblical Expository Method

The expository study is conducted by examining the structure of the text, analyzing key words in the original Greek language (Koine Greek), and considering the historical and socio-cultural context at the time 2 Timothy was written. The analysis is carried out through the following steps:

1. Text Observation: Identifying the structure of the verses, repetition of words, and the list of characteristics of people in the last days.
2. Interpretation: Delving into the meanings of important words in Greek such as *philautos* (self-loving), *blasphemoi* (blasphemers), *aspondoi* (unforgiving), and others.

3. Historical Context: Understanding the background of the Ephesian church and the ministry condition of Timothy.
4. Contextual Application: Relating the meaning of the text to the reality of the GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem congregation in Papua Pegunungan.

The primary references in this expository study include classical and contemporary commentaries, such as the works of John Stott, William Barclay, and the pastoral commentary from The New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT).

Contextual Data Collection Techniques

To link the expository results with the actual situation in the GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem congregation, the author also uses contextual data through:

1. Limited Field Observation: Directly observing the dynamics of the congregation's life, especially among the youth.
2. Informal Interviews: Discussions with the pastor, church leaders, and members about challenges related to character, morality, and lifestyle in contemporary times.
3. Internal Documentation: Reviewing church activity reports, pastoral notes, and character formation materials that have been implemented.

Data Validity and Research Ethics

Data validation is maintained through triangulation of information from the biblical text, academic literature, and field realities. Ethical principles are upheld throughout the research process. All information gathered from the congregation is done with consent, ensuring that personal identities are not disclosed in the writing of the journal.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Moral and Spiritual Decay

2 Timothy 3:1-9 describes the significant moral and spiritual decay that will occur in the last days. People will be characterized by self-love, love of money, pride, deceitfulness, ingratitude, and disregard for religion. Events such as wars, famines, earthquakes, and deception will also occur as signs of the End Times.

According to an interview with A.O., a local pastor, he confirmed that such issues are indeed true, noting that people today have lost their fear of God. Many are chasing after worldly desires and ignoring spiritual matters. He also pointed out that even among church leaders, greed and sin related to money are prevalent. He hopes that the congregation at GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem will not fall into such behaviors in the future.

Signs of the End Times

The Bible mentions various events that will serve as signs of the End Times, including wars, famines, earthquakes, and deception. Matthew 24 also speaks of wars and the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom to the entire world as signs leading to the End Times.

In an interview with Y.M., a member of the congregation, he commented that tribal wars, particularly in Papua Pegunungan, are fulfilling God's Word. He observed that many people today are turning away from God's Word but are easily drawn into worldly issues. These events are happening because God's Word about the End Times is being fulfilled.

The Return of Christ

The Bible also speaks of the second coming of Christ, which will bring the end of world history and judgment of the living and the dead. The second coming of Christ will be a definitive sign of the end of the times.

Regarding the second coming of Christ, an interview with B.E., a church leader, revealed: "We do not know what will happen when Christ returns to this world... but we observe that the signs of Christ's return are near, as it is clear that people are focused solely on worldly matters rather than heavenly ones. This is a sign of the End Times. However, at GKII Solafide Arogolik, not everyone is affected by this. Some youth do not participate in worship and other church activities."

The Judgment Event

The final judgment will occur with the glorious return of Christ, where all of history will be judged definitively, and humanity will understand the deepest meaning of creation and the plan of salvation.

Regarding the Judgment event, L.E., a local church council member, shared: "The judgment of Christ will come, and people will suddenly become aware of it. However, no one truly knows when the judgment of God will happen. For now, people live happily without concern. I hope no one in our congregation is living in this way." (L. Elosak, GKII Solafide Tulem, April 9, 2025)

Message of Repentance

The message of the final judgment encourages people to repent and practice the justice of God's Kingdom, as God still offers grace and time for people to turn to Him.

From the previous discussions, an interview with Y.O., a local pastor, highlighted that: "We are witnessing many global changes, especially social changes that destroy and harm, such as the increase in alcohol consumption among the youth. This is leading to the moral destruction of this generation." (Pastor Y. Oagay, GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem, April 10, 2025)

Based on these interviews, the conclusion is drawn that the influence of global changes is affecting not only the youth but also the adults, with many factors from the social environment contributing to this shift.

Exposition of 2 Timothy 3:1-9

2 Timothy 3:1-9 contains a list of characteristics of people in the "difficult times" (en eschatais homerais) described by Paul as a period of significant moral and spiritual decline. The goal of this verse-by-verse exposition is to uncover the original meaning of the text and identify the prophetic message for today's generation.

Verse 1 – "Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come."

The word "perilous" in Greek is chlepoi, which means "dangerous, full of pressure, or harsh." This shows that Paul is warning not only about physical hardship but about a crisis of values and spirituality that will erode the community from within. This period will not be marked solely by natural disasters, but by the breakdown of moral order.

Verses 2-4 – List of 18 Characteristics of People in the Last Days

Paul details the characteristics of people far from the truth:

1. Philautos (lovers of themselves): Extreme selfishness that replaces love for God and others.
2. Philargyros (lovers of money): A materialistic mindset that has become a modern idol.
3. Alazon, hyperephanos (boastful and proud): Spiritual pride that rejects God's authority.
4. Blasphemoi (blasphemers): Showing hostility towards values.
5. Apeithes (disobedient to parents): Reflecting the breakdown of family relationships.
6. Akarastos, anosios, astorgos (ungrateful, unholy, unloving): Signs of a dead conscience.

7. Aspondoi (unforgiving), diaboloi (slanderers), akrates (without self-control), anemeroi (brutal), aphilagathoi (despisers of good).
8. Prodotali, propeteis, turuphotheoi (traitors, headstrong, haughty).
9. Philedonoi mallon e philotheoi (lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God).

The important point here is that this list is not just a description of the world outside the church, but also of behaviors that have infiltrated the community of believers.

Verse 5 – "Having a form of godliness but denying its power."

This verse is a sharp critique against a ritualistic form of Christianity that lacks genuine transformative power. It criticizes a faith that only appears outwardly godly but is empty inside.

Verses 6-7 – "For of this sort are those who creep into households..."

Paul warns about false teachers who manipulate the weak and distort the truth. He highlights the danger of a Christianity that is not grounded and not filtered through spiritual wisdom.

Verses 8-9 – Comparison with Jannes and Jambres

Jannes and Jambres were Egyptian magicians who mimicked Moses' miracles before Pharaoh (see Exodus 7:11-12). Paul reminds the church that, like these magicians, false teachers in the last days may seem "spiritual," but they will oppose the truth. However, they will not endure for long.

The Reality of GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem Congregation

The author's observations of the GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem congregation reveal that the challenges described by Paul are becoming visible. Among the youth, there is a noticeable increase in egocentrism, dependence on digital entertainment, and a weakening enthusiasm for worship and service. The tendency to "love pleasure more than loving God" is becoming increasingly apparent.

In pastoral ministry, several church leaders have expressed concerns about the deteriorating quality of relationships between members, prolonged relational conflicts, and a decreasing trust in spiritual leadership. This phenomenon mirrors the behaviors Paul describes in the list of the last days' characteristics.

Regarding the reality at GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem, an interview with M.E., one of the church leaders, stated: "Currently, the reality in our church is that from Sunday school to adults, all are under our supervision. However, some youths have never participated in worship or any other church activities. It is our responsibility as church leaders to embrace them and guide them back to the right path, which is to return to God for their salvation. If we remain silent, this will continue indefinitely." (Pastor M. Elosak, GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem, April 12, 2025)

Pastoral Implications

From the exposition and confirmation of the reality above, several important pastoral implications emerge:

1. **Need for Continuous Character Formation**
The church must not only provide doctrinal teaching but also actively form the character of the congregation, especially the youth, through small groups, mentoring, and spiritual discipline training.
2. **Importance of Spiritual Exemplary Leadership**
Church leaders must live with integrity. The church will not endure the evil times if its leaders are merely "outwardly religious" but empty of the power of truth.
3. **Spiritual Discipline as a Defense of the Times**
The church must encourage the congregation to return to the discipline of reading the Word, regular prayer, and active service. This is the true strength to reject the various deceptions of the times.

4. Contextual and Relevant Ministry

The church must respond to the challenges of the times with applicable programs: character retreats, spiritual digital literacy, love campaigns, and strengthening Christian family relationships.

CONCLUSION

Expository Study of 2 Timothy 3:1-9 reveals that end-time humans show serious moral degradation, characterized by selfishness, love of repetition, rejection of authority, loss of love, and forms of false error that deny the power of God. These characteristics do not only occur outside the church, but tragically infiltrate the community of believers.

The reality that occurred in the GKII Solafide Arogolik Tulem Congregation shows that the Apostle Paul's warning in his letter to Timothy remains relevant to this day. Symptoms of a character crisis, weak spiritual spirit, and increasing destructive cultural influences on young people are real challenges that need to be responded to immediately pastorally.

The implications of these findings emphasize that the church must take a proactive role as a guardian of the values of living truth. Character building should not only be an additional program, but the core of the shepherding mission. The exemplary leadership, consistency in teaching the Word, and contextual ministry that answers the needs of the times are the keys for the church to remain strong in the midst of difficult times.

Thus, a correct understanding of God's Word and a contextual response will make the church not just a place of worship, but a center of life transformation that presents the kingdom of God in the midst of a world that is experiencing decline.

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