

# Paul's Charge to Timothy Concerning Sound Doctrine and its Significance to the Contemporary Church

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to unravel the relevance of Paul's charge and instructions to his protégé (Timothy) concerning sound doctrine. The discourse is to assist the church today in examining and understanding the importance of sound doctrine. Also, the study sought to ascertain pastoral responsibilities in upholding sound doctrine in the church. Qualitative data was gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. Church members and pastors who were the main respondents of the study were sampled purposively. The study unveils that sound doctrine is a teaching that is in consonance and consistent with God's word, the teachings of Jesus Christ and that of the Early Church. The study also argues that sound teaching should focus on Christ and nothing else. The study recommends that teachings in the various churches should greatly reflect on the truth in God's word, elevate the person and works of Christ and throw more light on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers. The study contributes to the current research on sound doctrine in Ghana.

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## INTRODUCTION

As often said, "the words of a dying or departing man should be attended to with all alacrity". During his last days as a missionary par-excellence, Paul the apostle encouraged Timothy (a young zealous believer) with many crucial instructions necessary in salvaging the seemingly false invasion of "fables and endless genealogies" that was subtly peddled in the Ephesian church. Here, the fundamentals of the Christian faith were being sacrificed for doctrines estranged from the truth of which men such as Hymenaeus and Alexander were culprits (1 Tim. 1:3,20). Centuries have passed, yet it appears the Hymenaeuses' and Alexanders have resurfaced. The church today is gradually losing its place of authority and spirituality as many strange altars have emerged. The basic tenets of the Christian faith are gradually becoming outmoded practices among some congregants simply because those who have been entrusted as shepherds of their souls have succumbed to doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1) as prophesied by Paul the Apostle.

The church today is not living up to expectations. Although there is a prediction that the share of the world's Christians will increase from 24% (2010) to 38% (2050) in Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of churches closed down in Europe and America, for instance, is more than the new ones sprouting out.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eric O. Boateng, "The Relevance of Paul's Instructions to Timothy Concerning False Doctrine to the Church Today" (MPhil. Thesis unpublished, Central University, 2020). 3-4.

There is a global projection that by 2050, the Christian population is expected to decline within these countries: the United States will decline from 78.3% to 66.4%, Australia will decline from 67.3% to 47.0%, the United Kingdom will decline from 64.3% to 45.4% with France facing a decline 63.0% to 44.1%.<sup>2</sup> There are many factors attributing to the decline seen in these countries. For instance, between the years 2010 to 2050, about 40,060,000 people have joined the Christian faith, with about 106,110,000 Christians switching from the faith to other beliefs.

In the case of the United States, it is well known that many traditional denominations are seeing stagnating or shrinking membership, and more people are identifying as non-religious.<sup>3</sup> This steady decline perhaps would be a result of the infiltration of foreign religions such as Islam, and the over-familiarity with the norms and rituals of the Christian faith. Similarly, immigration has brought about massive increase in the Islamic population. The Netherlands, for the first time, in December 2014 had 25% rise in more atheists than theists (17%). The Dutch population are currently noted for being agnostic or spiritual (31%) but not religious (27%).<sup>4</sup>

A pilot study conducted by the researcher revealed that people are gradually leaving the church and losing interest in the church because some heads of churches and leaders are living below expectation; neglecting the foundational doctrines delivered to the church by the apostles of Jesus Christ as well as the inability to handle pastoral responsibilities as was done by the first-century church.<sup>5</sup>

The deviation from the tenets of biblical sound doctrine as laid down by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ to practices far from the elementary doctrines of Christianity is becoming alarming. In Ghana, some pastors are said to charge church members who go to them for counseling. Some even go to the extent of having affairs with women, giving reasons of spiritual direction for the victims to bear children or get a suitor. These seemingly absurd practices by pulpiteers could be attributed to the total neglect of the true definition of “the gospel” as captured in scripture and a better comprehension of sound bible doctrines as revealed in scripture.<sup>6</sup>

The question now is, are the instructions carefully laid to the young Ephesian Pastor (Timothy) in curtailing the absurd religious insurgence still relevant to this generation? What would become of the Church of Christ if there is a continuous abandonment of the truth as enshrined in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? What is the place of sound doctrine in this “Laodicean” church age?<sup>7</sup> Are the responsibilities of pastors guided by scripture? These growing concerns set the ball rolling to investigate how Paul’s charge and instructions to Timothy could be juxtaposed vis-à-vis the abrupt deviation from biblical truth and sound doctrine in today’s church.

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research approach seeks to tell the story of a particular group’s experiences in their own words and is therefore focused on narrative.<sup>8</sup> This study being qualitative gathered primary data through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, and explored the thoughts of twenty-seven

<sup>2</sup> Conrad Hackett, A. Cooperman, & K. Ritchey, “*The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projection, 2010-2050.*” Pew Research Centre, April 2, 2015. Accessed October 15, 2020. 59. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

<sup>3</sup> Robert Herguth, “*Researcher finds a dramatic decline of Christianity in Europe.*” Chicago Star Times, 2018. Accessed October 15, 2020. 1. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2018/4/15/18393037/researcher-finds-a-dramatic-decline-of-christianity-in-europe>

<sup>4</sup> Pim Fortuyn, “*Fortuyn: grens dicht voor islamiet.*” De Volkskrant, February 9, 2002. Accessed October 15, 2020 <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/fortuyn-grens-dicht-voor-islamiet~b1867f23/>

<sup>5</sup> Boateng, “*The Relevance of Paul’s Instructions of Timothy Concerning False Doctrine to the Church Today*” 4.

<sup>6</sup> Boateng, “*The Relevance of Paul’s Instructions to Timothy Concerning False Doctrine to the Church Today*” 4

<sup>7</sup> The church of today is referred to as Laodicea Church age because her members are lukewarm, hypocrites professing to know Christ, but not genuinely belonging to Him.

<sup>8</sup> James Lani, “*What is qualitative research approach?*” Statistics Solutions, 2019 Accessed April 24, 2020, 1. <https://www.statisticssolutions.com/qualitative-research-approach/>

respondents from two Pentecostal churches and one Charismatic church (ICGC, Santa Maria Assembly; Family Life Assemblies of God Church, Avenor; and the Church of Pentecost, Santa Maria Central) located in Accra, Ghana. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. Other related works of literature were reviewed as secondary sources in the discussion of the study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section showcases and discusses outcomes from data gathered on sound doctrine and its relevance to church growth. It also reveals respondents' perceptions of the phenomenon under study and pastoral responsibilities in curtailing the absurd religious insurgency.

### ***Sound Doctrine***

A key objective of this study was to find out the opinion of respondents on what sound doctrine is. In view of that, it was imperative to examine the views on sound doctrine. The findings revealed that sound doctrine is truth as well as a set of beliefs and practices. These revelations from the respondents have been captured, presented and discussed under various subheadings below vis-à-vis the stands of theological scholars.

### ***Sound Doctrine is the Truth***

Respondents' perception of sound doctrine was explored and it was prevalent that the word "truth" runs through their submissions. According to one of the interviewees; "Sound doctrine is correct teaching in the church, undiluted, unadulterated, that which is correct and true."<sup>9</sup> Another respondent added that, "Sound doctrine talks about the truth in God's word that is accepted as the fundamental truth in our Christian faith."<sup>10</sup> Another interviewee defined Sound doctrine as scriptural teaching on theological truths, knowing the truth about salvation in order to be saved, knowing the truth about holiness to break free from sin, being informed about the instructions the Word teaches us not only on salvation but marriage, parenting, use of finances, service, order in the church, order in the home, purity and much more as referenced in 1 Timothy 6:3-5."<sup>11</sup> Truth in this context connotes the gospel of Jesus Christ or any teaching that agrees with Scripture and has zero contradictions with other portions of the canonized scripture. The findings showed that, sound doctrine in the biblical context is the truth from the word of God. In Malachi 2:6 (NASB), it says that "True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity."

The findings corroborate Arnold W. Weckeman's assertion that sound doctrine refers to the fundamental truth of God's word, and is the standard which defines our convictions; the hallmark of a true "New Testament Body of Believers." Because Christian doctrinal beliefs are the basis of their convictions, these beliefs form the Christian worldview, which in turn should determine how Christians live their lives.<sup>12</sup> Also, Meredith Hodge reiterates that sound doctrine is scriptural teaching on theological truth which reflects God's intent for his Word.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Sound Doctrine is a set of Beliefs and Practices***

This section discusses the results from data gathered on sound doctrine that was revealed during the interview and focus group discussions. The respondents posited that sound doctrine is "a set of beliefs and practices". A set of beliefs and practices in this context refers to a collection of teachings and ideas that are formulated

<sup>9</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted by the Author with Rev. Eugene Anim on May 16, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>10</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted with Abigail Abena Obeng Yeboah on May 10, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>11</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted with Elder Peter Antwi Darkwa on May 10, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>12</sup> Arnold. W. Weckeman, "False Doctrine in The End Times – Perfecting of The Saints". Perfecting the Saints, 2014. Accessed January 25, 2020, 1-2  
<https://www.perfectingofthesaints.com/articles/articles-false-doctrine-in-the-end-times/>

<sup>13</sup> Meredith Hodge, "Why Is Sound Doctrine So Important?" Unlocking the Bible, 2016. Accessed June 8, 2020, 1-2. <https://unlockingthebible.org/2016/09/why-is-sound-doctrine-so-important/>

from the Scripture for a sect or religious body to adhere to. One respondent made it clear that “Sound doctrine is a belief from a religious body that is taught and practiced”.<sup>14</sup> Matthew 23:23 (NKJV), says that “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone”. Another respondent suggested that “Sound doctrine is a set of beliefs or teachings based on the fundamental truth that Christ taught while he was here on earth. Anything outside that may not be considered sound, but more of a societal moral code.”<sup>15</sup> There was another response that brought more illumination to this section: “Sound doctrine, I think, is a set of genuine theological beliefs and tenets that are held and taught by a church - what a church actually believes in and teaches its members to adhere to.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***Sound Doctrine taught in Churches today***

The perceptions of respondents on examples of sound doctrine they had heard pastors teach were further probed into, to ascertain whether the respondents indeed had an in-depth understanding of sound doctrine. Over 74% of the research respondents mentioned the doctrine of salvation, faith, tithing, giving, holiness, sin, communion, water baptism, eschatology, the doctrine of God, doctrine of Christ, and doctrine of the Holy Spirit as examples of sound doctrine and they believed these teachings they had heard from their pastors were sound because they did not only have their roots and foundation from the scripture as well as practiced by Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the early church, but they had also had inner witness and personal experiences to confirm their perceptions. During the interview and the focus group discussions, some participants said: “I knew it was a sound doctrine because it was theologically right and practical. It was scriptural so I could refer to my Bible any time to do further studies on the text. It’s a sound doctrine because it’s scripturally based.”<sup>17</sup> Another opinion from one interviewee states that “According to my personal studies from the Bible, I can tell it is sound because they are backed by scripture(s) and make complete sense in applying the word of God to my daily life. Aside the fact that it has to be exegetically intact, you also have to have an inward witness that it is intact – Romans 8:16.”<sup>18</sup>

Again, all the research respondents were not only of the view that teachings on godliness should not be left out when talking about sound doctrine but also, that all sound doctrines should have it focus on the relevance of believing in Jesus Christ. With respect to teachings on godliness, they believed that it conveys the idea of a personal attitude toward God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) that results in actions that are pleasing to him. This personal attitude toward God is what is called devotion to God. It can be focused on the fear of God, the love of God and the desire for God. They were also of the opinion that godliness had a bearing on teachings on holiness, salvation, righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit, just as it was mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV); “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Dennis Antwi, a leader of one of the sampled churches, when asked why he thinks Jesus Christ is the object of sound doctrine, responded that “Greater emphasis must be placed on belief in Jesus Christ as a relevant part of sound doctrine because, one could not claim he or she is a Christian and not follow Christ footsteps. For one to follow the steps of Christ means they believe in him. Believing in Christ is the only way one can follow clearly the examples of Christ and be in the perfect shape of the body of Christ.” In John 1:12 (NKJV), it says that “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted with Grace Oppong on May 10, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>15</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted with Josephine Akosua Serwaa on May 11, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>16</sup> An interview conducted by the Author with Rev. George Amankwah on May 15, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>17</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted with Collins Opoku Agyemang on May 12, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>18</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted with Philip Amoah on May 12, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>19</sup> Excerpts of an interview conducted with Dennis Antwi on May 12, 2020 at Accra.

### ***The Sources and Object of Sound Doctrine***

Paul's focus, in the latter days of his life and ministry, was to ensure that Timothy begins and ends his ministry also on sound doctrine. Paul saw sound doctrine as one of the basic foundations for every Christian, such that, it defines the Christian's walk with God and also defines the Christian faith in the generation to come. A typical example of Christian doctrine; faith and love, is seen in the Holy trinity.<sup>20</sup>

As the triune God is the source of doctrine, he has extended this same doctrine to all His followers through the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures entails all the sound doctrine a believer needs to know. A believer draws doctrine from the Holy Scripture as a fountain. The Holy Scripture also measures every doctrine and finally, it leads the believer back to the Holy Scriptures to become better followers. Indeed, those believers who are "untaught and untrained" in sound doctrine are most prone to rambling and meandering the Scriptures "to their own devastation" 2 Peter 3:16.<sup>21</sup>

### ***The Relevance of Sound Doctrine***

Regarding the relevance of sound doctrine, Paul commissions Timothy "You must teach what is in agreement with sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). Such a command makes it obvious that sound doctrine is important. But why is it important? Does it really make a difference what Christians believe?

Sound doctrine is relevant because the faith of Christians is built on a specific message. The overall teaching of the church encompasses numerous elements. Nevertheless, the primary message is explicitly defined: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and ..... he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This is the unmistakable good news, and it is "of primary importance." Deviate from that message and the basis of faith shifts from Christ to something else. The eternal destiny of Christians depends upon hearing "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13; see also 2 Thess. 2:13-14).<sup>22</sup>

The subsequent reason sound doctrine is imperative is that the gospel is a holy trust. The gospel is God's inerrant communiqué to the dying world and Christians as couriers dare not tamper with the message. Christians are the couriers of the message, not its editors. Jude was vociferous and insistent that the church defend sound doctrine: "Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3; see also Phil. 1:27). To "contend" means to energetically fight for something and to hold nothing back in the struggle. Christians should neither add to nor subtract from God's Word (Rev. 22:18-19). Christians must receive what has been entrusted by God and uphold it "as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus" 2 Timothy 1:13.<sup>23,24</sup>

Thirdly, sound doctrine is vital because what Christians believe has a reflection in their practices. Believers' conduct is a result of their theological orientation, and there is a direct connection between how believers think and act. For example, when two people within a religious organization are having different opinions about miracles (one believing in miracles as something still existing and the other believing miracles as past events), their actions will be different. In the same way, the behavior of a man can be defined by his belief in moral standards. In 1 Timothy 1:9-10, after various sins like rebellion, murder, lying and slave trading were mentioned, the Bible conclude with "whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine". In other words, the right teachings of sound doctrine encourage right living; sin succeeds where "the sound doctrine" is trampled underfoot.<sup>25,26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Michael Bentley, *Passing on the Truth: 1 & 2 Timothy Simply Explained*. (Durham England; Evangelical Press). 217-222

<sup>21</sup> Boateng, "The Relevance of Paul's Instructions to Timothy Concerning False Doctrine to the Church Today" 36-37.

<sup>22</sup> Boateng, "The Relevance of Paul's Instructions to Timothy Concerning False Doctrine to the Church Today" 37.

<sup>23</sup> Boateng, "The Relevance of Paul's Instructions to Timothy Concerning False Doctrine to the Church Today" 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> Kevin J. Conner. "The Foundations of Christian Doctrine: A practical guide to Christian belief". (Vermont Australia; KJC Publications, 1980) 9-11.

<sup>25</sup> Boateng, "The Relevance of Paul's Instructions to Timothy Concerning False Doctrine to the Church Today" 38.

<sup>26</sup> Conner, "The Foundations of Christian Doctrine: A practical guide to Christian belief". 9-11.

## **Pastoral Responsibilities in the Church Today**

Another objective of this study was to find out the opinion of pastors on the pastoral responsibilities in the church today. In view of that, it was urgent to ascertain their views on pastoral responsibilities. The responsibilities assigned to pastors in the church were reviewed to ascertain either differences or similarities. The findings show that all the three pastors interviewed have similar responsibilities in their church, which include preaching the gospel, blessing marriages, administering the Lord's Supper, counseling, baptizing new converts by immersion, the dedication of children, officiating burials and providing administrative leadership. Reverend Emmanuel Frempong in his interview argued that "pastors are responsible for ensuring that no false teachings and practices take place in the church, coordinate the spiritual and physical activities, plant and nurture churches, organize seminars, retreats, crusades, conferences and other types of evangelistic activities."<sup>27</sup> God promised to preserve His word (Ps. 12:6-7, Matt. 24:35) but not sound doctrine; He entrusted the pastors, teachers, and elders with that responsibility, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they that labor in the word and doctrine." (1 Tim. 5:17). Also consider, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among yourselves." (1 Thess. 5:12-13).<sup>28</sup> The study again argues that "Pastors are also to ensure that all the ministries in the church are functioning optimally in the church and all directives from the head office (in cases where a pastor is an associate to the General Overseer) are fully followed and implemented" an interviewee purported.<sup>29</sup>

In relation to the same objective, Respondents were further probed to expatiate on who decides their responsibilities. Respondents (pastors) did indicate that their responsibilities as pastors are formulated by the highest decision body of the church. In the words of some pastors: "The responsibilities are the decisions that are taken by the general council of the church. The general council is the final decision-making body of the church. It comprises the apostles, the prophets, the executive council and some ministers. They assign the responsibilities for various roles."<sup>30</sup> Although all three interviewees (pastors) claim that it is the church's highest decision body that decides on the responsibilities of the pastors, one respondent argues that God is the ultimate decider, so every pastor must always align him or herself with God. It is when they are aligned with God that the instructions of the presbytery would not be a challenge to follow. Upon knowing the authority in charge of assigning pastoral responsibilities, it was also of essence to know what these authorities rely on as their guide to outline pastoral responsibilities. The findings revealed that the church's ministers' handbook, constitution and the word of God serve as a guide in deciding on responsibilities.

## **Perception of the Church on how she can grow in Unity and Faith in Christ Jesus**

The final objective of this study was to examine the perception of the church on how she can grow in unity and faith in Christ Jesus. Hence, respondents (pastors) were asked if it was best to have different Christian denominations. The findings show that all the interviewed respondents had different understandings concerning this question. Emmanuel Frempong, the Lead Pastor for ICGC Victory Temple, when asked whether it is good to have different denominations springing up responded, "Yes, it is good that we have various denominations, various churches coming up, we are looking at bringing so many people to the kingdom. We want the kingdom of God to spread across the globe and across boundaries. It is good if we have different denominations coming up"<sup>31</sup> According to another interviewee, it is not good to have different Christian denominations because "Some of the new churches springing up teach so many doctrines that are not biblical and exhibit bad practices."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Personal interview conducted by the author with Rev. Emmanuel Frempong on May 17, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>28</sup> Weckeman, "False Doctrine in The End Times – Perfecting of the Saints", 3-4.

<sup>29</sup> Personal interview conducted by the author with Rev. Eugene Anim on May 16, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>30</sup> An interview conducted by the Author with Rev. George Amankwah on May 15, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>31</sup> Personal interview conducted by the author with Rev. Emmanuel Frempong on May 17, 2020 at Accra.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview conducted by the author with Rev. Kwaku Antwi on May 16, 2020 at Accra.

In the researcher's bid to achieve the last objective of the study, the respondents (pastors) were further asked to share their views on what could be done to bring about uniformity in the teachings that go on in the various churches. The findings show that most of the respondents interviewed are of the same opinion that all churches should be charged to be under one Christian umbrella like the Christian Council of Ghana, Ghana Pentecostal or Charismatic Churches so that they could be well coordinated and regulated. They added that these religious bodies can coordinate and bring out some measures that would ensure checks and balances on churches that are under them, and any church that refuses to come under them will not be allowed to operate by the government. Also, these religious bodies can organize retreats, seminars and conferences for pastors and ministers to ensure the right doctrines are preached in their churches. One respondent who holds a diverse view also lamented "For me, I think that it will be very difficult to regulate what is being preached in the churches."<sup>33</sup> He added that even in the Charismatic fraternity, every denomination has its focus and what they want to achieve at the end of every service which makes it difficult to arrive at one goal as members in one body. He added that, doctrines that would help the spiritual growth of the congregants should be encouraged, reiterating his doubt about uniformity in practice amongst all denominations.

In view of these responses from the respondents during the interview, the researcher sums up with Ephesians 4:13-16 that although there are several Christian associations in the country to play a supervisory role in regulating and mitigating that no false teachings go on in the churches that are under them, that supervisory role does not reach all pulpits. Therefore, it is very difficult to regulate what is being preached in churches which in turn will affect how the church can grow in unity and faith in Jesus Christ.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Based on the findings from the data concerning participants' opinions on sound doctrine, the researcher recommends that teachings that go on in the various churches should greatly reflect on the truth in God's word, elevate the person and works of Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives. Members are to be taught that although there are several Bible characters to learn from, Christ is the perfect example and focal point.
- ii. Pastors are also to encourage their members to seek a proper understanding of all Christian doctrines in order not to fall prey to false teachers. This is because during the study some church members were of the view that they know false doctrine but further discussion was showing otherwise. For example, some members were asked to mention some false doctrines they have heard pastors preach and the members responded; lateness to church, the welfare of church members, immoral practices among church leaders, and pastors showing off their properties, just to mention a few.
- iii. Again, the researcher recommends that the fact that pastors in the church today have similar responsibilities assigned to them, the already existing religious governing bodies in the country should take the "bull by the horn" and ensure that its members act in consonance with their laid-down tenets. On the other hand, all free rangers in the Christian fraternity whose activities lack supervision should be made to at least belong to a Christian association accepted by the state. Though the belongingness to these Christian associations would not totally nip the bizarre practices of some religious folks in the bud, at least an appreciable percentage of sanity would prevail in the Christian landscape.

## CONCLUSION

From the study, it can be concluded that Paul's charge on sound doctrine was urgent to deal with obnoxious teachings and practices that were going on in his absence. Sound doctrine plays a major role in worship experience as far as Christianity is concerned because it brings sanity, righteousness, peace and togetherness if they are well understood and taught. Again, sound doctrine is crucial because the Christian faith is based on a specific message. The primary message of the church is Christ died for the sins of mankind according to the Scriptures and ...he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This is the

<sup>33</sup> An interview conducted by the Author with Rev. George Amankwah on May 15, 2020 at Accra.

unequivocal truth; change that message and the basis of faith shifts from Christ to something else. Christians' eternal destiny depends upon hearing the word of truth, the gospel of salvation (Eph. 1:13; see also 2 Thess. 2:13-14). Sound doctrine is a catalyst for the church of Jesus Christ to grow in unity and faith. Aside the fact that pastors in the church today have similar responsibilities assigned to them by the highest authorities in the church, these responsibility assigning-bodies in performing their duties, should be guided by the church's ministers' handbook, church constitution and the word of God.

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