

THE CHURCH AS THE PILLAR OF THE GOSPEL TRUTH (1TIM.3:15) AND ITS

IMPLICATIONS FOR EMMANUEL BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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## ABSTRACT

One of the images of the church in the Bible is "the pillar of the gospel truth". All the images of the church have one emphasis or more to give about the relationship that exists between the Godhead and the church. It is expected that the church should know the implications of these images but the reverse is the case. Emmanuel Baptist Conference, which is one of the conferences in the larger umbrella of Nigerian Baptist Convention is not immuned from the lack of the knowledge of the implications of these images especially the one under study "Church, the pillar of the gospel truth." This colossal lack of the understanding of this image that emphasizes the reason for the church's existence causes many anomalies in the church both from the clergy and the congregation. In the church, it seems that the truth of the gospel is not being desired, preferred, preached and upheld earnestly. People seem not to understand that the first reason for which the church exists is to know and uphold the gospel truth in the world. People keep moving from place to place, church to church and prophet to prophet in a bid to solve problems of life and never to know the truth that can actually set one free from bondage. This study actually set out to enable Emmanuel Baptist Conference to have a proper understanding of the true nature of the church that emphasizes her reason of existence and responsibilities. The above aim was achieved by the study of the imagery of the "church as the pillar of the gospel truth" which articulates the reason for the church's existence as being to stand, know, uphold and defend the truth. By the interview carried out on Emmanuel Baptist Conference, it was unveiled that many members and clergy do not know yet what the church exists for. Seeing this result, the significance of the study is x-rayed by the implications drawn from the study for Emmanuel Baptist Conference which include ministerial, ethical, missiological, apologetic and ecclesiastical implications.

## 5.2. CONCLUSION

At the inception of this work, it was established that a cursory look at the church reveals lack of a holistic understanding of her nature that x-rays her reason of existence and responsibilities. This lack of understanding breeds a lot of evils in the body of Christ.

On the part of ministers, it is reflected in their being unable and seemingly unwilling to discharge the whole truth that the church exists to promote. Some who could be said to possess inadequate knowledge of the truth or devoid of it completely are resorting to prophecy. They do this for two major reasons of material acquisitions and the bid to keep folks around them, their churches and ministries.

This research had it as its purpose to provide or enhance an understanding of the nature of the church that establishes her reason for existence and responsibility. This objective was achieved first by examining the works of other scholars on the church. That examination of scholars views was done in the section on the Review of Relevant Literatures and it appeared in three sections. The views of scholars in Biblical perspective were presented and all of them in their commentaries are of similar views as to the meaning of the church as the pillar of truth both in the ecclesiastical and secular circles.

The meaning of the image was discovered to express the responsibilities of the church. These responsibilities were highlighted by scholars to include the upholding, maintaining and defending the gospel truth in the world. This was established as the mission of the church on earth. The researcher quite agreed with the scholars at this point and further asserted in this work that these responsibilities are being neglected today by both the clergy and the congregation. The neglect of these responsibilities are reflected in the attitude of some ministers towards the church and ministry. This is viewed mainly in their unbridled quest for material acquisition, labouring for fame and the power in some ecclesiastical circles.

Church members, on the other hand seem to have lost total perspective of the essence of the church. This could be viewed from the core reason for which many attend church service today which is to get solutions to their many intractable problems. The

proclamation of the truth in some churches today is burdensome especially when it is not addressing people's peculiar problems. So, messages of miraculous intervention in people problematic situations attract audience more than messages of salvation from sin, and righteousness. People move from place to place or church to church in search of such messages and ministers are lured into offering such placative messages. This is the reason for which many ministers dabble into error as they compromise the truth of the gospel of salvation to provide the people with what they want.

The point is not that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be downplayed in life and in ministry. The truth is that a disparity has to be made by all and sundry in the church between the gift of the Holy Spirit and His fruits. The gifts could be a product of God's endowment for a particular assignment in time and consecration but fruits are developed by the Holy Spirit as the truth is imparted via the Word. This neglect of the truth produces half-baked Christians who are in the church for selfish reasons.

An aspect of the literature review that was tagged as the theological perspective presented the Roman Catholics understanding and Protestant view of church as the pillar of truth. The Roman Catholics are more interested in asserting the particular church which is the pillar and ground of the truth as Catholic Church. They emphasized that they are the church that Jesus established. The disciples of Jesus possessed the truth Jesus taught and Peter was their leader. Successors of Peter are the Popes. The Popes and the Bishop form the magisterium which is the teaching authority in Roman Catholicism. The magisterium's authority is derived from both the scriptures and apostolic tradition. To them, any church that does not have its bishopric from apostolic succession is not the pillar of truth.

The Protestants on the other hand does not assert the church as the pillar of truth to be the magisterium but the universal church. This was a sort of opposition against



Roman Catholic view of the church during the Reformation which was championed by three principal and prominent personalities – Martin Luther, John Calvin and Zwingli of Zurich. These reformers were of the view that the church is the pillar of the truth in so far as the scripture remains the truth it proclaims and not human made ecclesiastical traditions. This researcher actually agreed with this proposition.

The objective of this thesis was also realized by looking critically at the theological and Biblical foundations of the metaphor, “Church as the Pillar of the gospel Truth.” It was unveiled that Paul who was addressing the church through his colleague Timothy had it as his purpose to tell Timothy how he as a minister and the entire congregation should pattern their behaviour in the church because the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. This formed one of the bases for the ethical implication for Emmanuel Baptist Conference as presented by the researcher. This study on the biblical and theological bases which appeared in chapter three of the work actually brought to bear the basic functions or responsibilities of the church as the pillar of truth. These responsibilities were discovered to be less emphasized in the discussions on the nature of the church in ecclesiological study.

An interview was conducted which helped a long way in actualizing the purpose of this work. The interview was carried out on Emmanuel Baptist Conference and it was discovered that majority of church members do not understand the reason for the church’s existence and her peculiar responsibilities as the pillar of the truth. The lessons drawn from the studies in chapters two and three were applied to the Conference in chapter four. Generally, this researcher discovered that the ecclesiological model “Church, the Pillar of the gospel truth emphasizes three or four major aspects of the responsibilities of the church. They are the upholding, propagating and defending of the

truth. The church that is found to be devoid of this understanding of her responsibility was said to be unworthy of existing at all.

### 5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Having established that the thesis of this work was to help Emmanuel Baptist Conference to understand her reason of existence by examining the image “The Church as the Pillar of the Truth”, the following recommendations are proffered to both pastors and members of Emmanuel Baptist Conference.

1. It is the recommendation of this researcher that there should be an adequate and holistic training of pastors on the core values of the church in general and Baptist distinctive doctrinal beliefs in particular. This will enhance the understanding and upholding of the denomination’s distinctive ideals such as the authority of the scripture (truth) in matters of faith and practice. This goes far and implies that the curriculum of theological institutions has to lay more emphasis on the pastors’ understanding of ecclesiology. Also, apologetic aspect of this ecclesiology should be emphasized. This will indeed help pastors in upholding, maintaining and defending the gospel truth of the Christian faith among other things that are threatening to influence their message and ministry.

2. The training should not just stop at the four walls of the theological institutions. The Seminarians should be made to stay under older ministers under whom they would learn ministry by life. This form of discipleship will go a long way in helping Seminarians and fresh graduates in learning the principles and tenets of the church and the denomination in particular. It is the anomaly of Seminarians and fresh graduates of theological institutions thinking that they can just stand and pioneer their own work without assistance that causes most of the diversified view on some basic bible truths. As the saying goes and one has even written, *Every Pastor Needs a Pastor*, every pastor in

