# THE DISCIPLING CHURCHE IM M M

# The Church That Will

# UNTIL JESUS COMES

DAVID W. CLOUD

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The very best church is a deeply imperfect body of sinners saved by grace who still have the "old man" and who live in a fallen world filled with temptations. But I believe that a church that is very careful about appointing leaders and is extra careful about salvation and church membership, that is serious about discipleship and discipline, that aims to be very strong in the Word of God, etc., is a better church than one that isn't. I believe that a church that is striving to maintain a first love for Christ is far superior to a church that barely has an idea about a first love. I believe that a church that is learning from its mistakes and aiming to be ever stronger in Christ is superior to a church that is content with lukewarm as the status quo.

## The Collapse of Independent Baptist Churches

#### Outline

A Fundamental Reason for the Collapse Looking to the Future The Role of Technology in the Collapse We Don't Have to Erode A Passionate Subject with Me My Teaching Is Not Theory No Boasting and No Perfection The Church That Will Be Standing until Christ Comes

In the last twenty years, we have witnessed the capitulation of hundreds of Bible-believing churches to a contemporary philosophy of Christian life and ministry.

When I was saved in 1973, a major thing that distinguished fundamental Baptists from Southern Baptists was biblical separation, but that distinction is disappearing and there is a merging of philosophy. We live in a day of blending.

As soon as I was saved, I began to search for a biblical church. I had grown up in Southern Baptist churches but I had not seen the zealous biblical Christianity there that I now saw in Scripture. I studied the Bible intently and considered several churches, including Pentecostal and Seventh-day Adventist, finally visiting a little Independent Baptist church one Sunday morning at the invitation of the sister of a former unsaved friend.

If I remember correctly, the church was a couple of years old and was meeting in a storefront. It was founded by a family that had come out of the Southern Baptist Convention because of the liberalism, spiritual lukewarmness, and worldliness. They wanted to take the Bible seriously. They weren't afraid of being different. They wanted a church that was biblical. They were careful about salvation. A large percentage of the members were young single adults. There was a zeal for separation. There was open, plain rejection of error. For example, we distributed books by John Rice warning about liberalism in the Southern Baptist Convention and pamphlets warning about the Today's English Version (*Good News for Modern Man*) that the Southern Baptists were publishing. The little church was looked upon by the established churches in the area as fanatical, but I was convinced that this type of "fanaticism" is biblical, and I loved it!

That type of Independent Baptist church is rare today.

A large number of the fundamental Baptist churches that existed in the 1970s and 1980s have either ceased to exist, have capitulated to the contemporary philosophy, or they are well on the way to capitulation.

Consider the following testimony that describes what is happening in multitudes of Independent Baptist churches:

"Recently, there was a large photo in the newspaper of one of the NFL football team cheerleaders dressed in her cheerleading uniform which was equivalent to a bikini. Since watching NFL football is talked about so positively from the IFB [Independent Fundamental Baptist] pulpit, the Sunday School teacher's lectern, and amongst the deacons and other men of the church, I decided to take a closer look. An internet search provided endless links--and just visiting the team's website provided many photos and videos of the cheerleaders wearing even less than the team uniform bikini, posing in sexy poses, etc. I just do not understand how something like this is promoted by the church. One can only imagine that their 'cheers' are not wholesome things to watch, but I have not seen a 'performance' to be able to evaluate that. Then there is also the advertising and other 'entertainment' that is shown, not to mention values promoted. It would seem that this 'entertainment' clearly violates separation, purity, etc., yet it is embraced by the church leadership. What am I missing here? How is this justified?

"On another note, some of your recent articles have been about the decline of the IFB churches. I have just a few comments. ... it seems that pastors don't want to step on anybody's toes (and possibly lose any donors?), yet they still want to say they are IFB. So a few times a year some generalities are pronounced from the pulpit--just one or two lines--not a sermon mind you--and it sounds something like this: People ought to listen to good music (but what 'good' is,

is never defined). People ought to dress right (but what that means is never defined). People should be careful what they watch (but no examples or details are given). And so on. So it is easy to imagine each person thinking their 80s rock music, or country music, or CCM, or latest Hollywood movie, or newest TV shows are the 'good' ones, and they continue right on in their worldly behaviors, passing them to their children. But maybe this approach is considered effective because none of them are 'offended' and guit the church or reduce their donations? CCM is very, very quietly ushered in via specials, visiting evangelist singers, Christmas programs, etc. It seems that if anyone questions anything, a sermon soon follows to warn about those 'not operating in love.' I could go on, and I'm sure you have heard much more from others. It is truly a sad thing to watch the decline. Please do keep sounding the warning--maybe some will wake up before it's too late."

This church is very typical, and it will be *completely* and *unequivocally* contemporary and "non-judgmental" within a decade.

Observe that when a church first begins to go down the slippery slope of spiritual decline, the pastor usually wants to straddle the fence for some time. He wants to pretend that nothing has changed and that he still stands for things the church once stood for, but his actions and inactions speak much louder than his words.

Consider **Emmanuel Baptist Church** of Pontiac, Michigan. In the 1970s and 1980s, this was one of America's largest churches, running as high as 5,000 in attendance. It operated 80 buses and hosted the Midwestern Baptist College. The founder, Tom Malone, was one of the influential names in the Sword of the Lord circles, and the Sword still publishes several of his books, including *The Sunday School: Reaching Multitudes*. Even before Malone died in 2007, Emmanuel had shuttered its doors. The tiny remnant of Emmanuel's remaining members merged with New Beginning Baptist Church, formerly Silvercrest Baptist Church, another church once pastored by Tom Malone. New Beginning carries on as the second generation of these formerly thriving churches. It is still basically the same in character as in Malone's day (e.g., same Bible, doctrine, music, church philosophy), but it is a small work. It is pastored by Jerry Boritzki, retired Navy, a 1981 graduate of Midwestern, a brother in Christ who is bravely trying to carry on the traditions he was taught.

Consider **Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga**, **Tennessee**, home of Tennessee Temple where I was trained for the ministry. These institutions moved in a contemporary direction, renounced separatism, and died.

When I was a student at Temple in the mid-1970s and pastored one of the chapels, Highland Park was very conservative.

The music was sacred and glorious. I have never heard more thrilling congregational singing than I heard at Highland Park Baptist Church in those days. Dr. J.R. Faulkner was not a particularly dynamic song leader, but he was cheerful, enthusiastic, and effective, and he brought out the best from the choir, orchestra, and congregation. There was absolutely nothing contemporary about the style. Everything was built on a solid sacred foundation that sounded nothing like the world's pop music. The rejection of CCM in those days was not just lip service. The special music groups sang sacred music in a sacred manner. There was plenty of talent, but as I recall the groups did not put on "performances." The presentation was not showy or fleshly or even flashy, and this was purposeful.

One of the fundamental themes at "the old" Highland Park was the imminent return of Christ, and this is very biblical and very important. Every Sunday the choir led the congregation in singing "Behold He Comes" in harmony, and what a joy it was!

"Behold, He comes; behold, He comes; behold, He comes, and every eye shall see Him; friend, will you be ready when Jesus comes?"

Dr. Roberson was a man of real Christian character. J.R. Faulkner, who knew Dr. Roberson as well as any man knew him, said: "He was a man of his word--great character, great integrity. He lived what he preached" (James Wigton, *Lee Roberson: Always about His Father's Business*, 2010, p. 117).

Dr. Roberson believed in dying to self, in being filled with the Spirit. He had a love for God and an unquenchable burden for souls. He was a man of prayer, a man who depended upon the Lord rather than on the arm of flesh. He lived frugally, didn't take a large salary, and refused to take his pay check until the missionary support was all paid.

There was never a hint of moral or financial scandal in Dr. Roberson's life and ministry. He was exceedingly careful about his relationship with women. There was a large glass window between his office and his secretary's office, and he refused ever to be alone with a woman other than his wife. He didn't give personal gifts to his female secretaries. He said that even if he saw his secretary walking in a driving rainstorm he would not have stopped to pick her up lest someone see it and get the wrong idea.

I am convinced that this is the reason why Tennessee Temple graduates from Dr. Roberson's era have not been known for moral scandals as the graduates of some other Independent Baptist schools have. It has happened, but it has been rare.

The daily chapels and annual Bible conferences featured some of the best preachers from across America, and there was real lifechanging power in the services.

Dress standards and dating standards and such were high, and it wasn't "legalism" or "Phariseeism." It was an attempt to take God's Word seriously. The cry of "legalism" is usually a slanderous accusation made by the contemporary crowd who are lovers of the world. Even Christian rockers and emergents have standards. I don't know of one contemporary church that would allow a woman in a bikini or a man in lipstick, high heels, and a dress to sing in the praise team. No, they draw lines, too, and for them to call our lines legalism is blatant hypocrisy. It is not legalism for blood-washed, grace-saved churches to prayerfully apply the principles of God's Word (e.g. 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:11; Titus 2:11-12; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17) to issues of practical Christian living, and in my experience that's what Highland Park tried to do in those days.

It was not a matter of an emphasis on mere externals. The emphasis was on a heart for God and seeking after true godliness. The general atmosphere at the church and school was happy and spiritual.

Above all, there was a godly vision to be caught. It was a place where multitudes of lives were changed to the glory of Jesus Christ, and great masses of people heard the gospel and hundreds of Bible-believing churches were planted as a result of what was "caught" at Highland Park Baptist Church in those days. One graduate said, "During my tenure at TTU, I believe that it was truly a Biblically conservative, separated institution of higher learning, that strove to pass along godly principles for life and ministry."

Lee Roberson said:

"In my first year at the Highland Park Baptist Church, we had one missionary. The blessings of God came down upon us, and many were saved. As we kept on preaching the Gospel at home, we were driven to a deeper concern for the rest of the world. So we began putting on missionaries with support of them through the regular offerings of the church and by special offerings on Sunday evening and Wednesday evening. We saw scores of our young people volunteer for missionary work. During my fortieth year at Highland Park [1982], we were giving support to 565 missionaries in all parts of the world. Fifty percent of the church's offerings went to home and foreign missions. Every need of the church was met, and every building was paid for. At home we were seeing the salvation of hundreds. People were happy and the blessings of God were upon us. Obey God! Don't question. Don't procrastinate! Don't quibble! Obey God! Obedience brings manifold blessings."

But by the late 1980s, Highland Park and Tennessee Temple were experiencing dramatic changes. There was a great influence from Liberty University and Word of Life, both of which had long been in the New Evangelical orbit, and it was a terrible lack of wisdom on the part of Highland Park's leaders to build bridges to these institutions.

By 1989, Tennessee Temple music groups used "soft rock" at the annual Southwide Baptist Fellowship meeting (*Calvary Contender*, Oct. 15, 1989). In 2005, Highland Park hosted a Christian rock concert in its main auditorium featuring Bebo Norman, Fernando Ortega, and Sara Groves. In April 2006, the school's College Days featured Toddiefunk and the Electric Church.

In 2008, Highland Park Baptist Church joined the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 2012, Highland Park Baptist Church ceased to exist. The name was changed to Church of the Highlands to reflect a location

change as well as its new generic, contemporary flavor. Jeremy Roberts, Highland Park's 28-year-old Southern Baptist pastor, said, "It'll be the funnest church around" ("Chattanooga's Iconic Highland Park," *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, Sept. 10, 2012).

In March 2015, Tennessee Temple announced that it was closing its doors.

In the book *The Collapse of Separatism*, we have documented the shocking collapse of Highland Park Baptist Church in greater detail, together with other churches associated with Southwide Baptist Fellowship, Baptist Bible Fellowship International, etc.

We need to ponder the reasons for these great changes. It has been said that those who do not learn from the failures of the past are doomed to repeat them. It has also been said that trying the same experiment repeatedly, expecting different results, is a mark of insanity!

God's commandment to "prove all things" (I Th. 5:21) is a commandment to test everything continually by God's Word. The mature Christian is characterized by a never-ending process of discerning good and evil (Heb. 5:14). Testing is not something that is to be done once in a while; it must be a way of life.

Continual testing is an essential part of a biblical lifestyle and a fruitful church ministry.

I learned a lot from John R. Rice and Lee Roberson and other men of God when I was a young Christian, and I have been helped by the type of churches they founded, but God's people should follow their leaders *as their leaders follow Christ and His Word*, but not wherein they veer from God's Word or fall short of the whole counsel of God.

#### A Fundamental Reason for the Collapse

I have come to the conclusion that the downfall of so many Baptist churches is not the product merely of a failure in this or that area of ministry (e.g., carelessness about music). Rather the downfall is the product of a wrong philosophy of the church that has produced congregations that are too weak to stand against the hurricane force winds of end-time compromise and apostasy. In 2011, we published *Why Most Independent Baptists Will Be Emerging within 20 Years*, and in that and subsequent editions we identified twelve reasons: (1) lukewarmness, unholiness, and worldliness, (2) biblical shallowness, (3) lack of prayer, (4) maligning warning and reproof, (5) unquestioning loyalty to man, (6) following the crowd, (7) pragmatism and big-mindedness, (8) ignorance about important issues, (9) soft separatism, (10) lack of serious discipleship, (11) carelessness about music, (12) quick prayerism.

These are important issues that must be addressed by any church that wants to be standing when Jesus comes, but there is something more foundational.

A church can have a strong Bible teaching ministry and try to maintain biblical standards for teachers and workers and be careful about its music, but if it has a mixed multitude philosophy instead of a discipling philosophy it is probably doomed to capitulate to the contemporary program.

The urgent need is to return to the New Testament pattern of a church as a discipling church.

A discipling philosophy might make the average church possibly smaller, but it will definitely make it stronger.

It is the "smaller" part of that equation that guarantees that, apart from genuine revival, many Baptist pastors will not give much attention to this exhortation, being steeped as they are in pragmatism and wanting something that "works" to build the largest church possible.

But even the "smaller" part of the equation isn't certain, because a discipling church has God's blessing and power.

"Greg Wills notes that from 1790 to 1860, when Baptist churches maintained high rates of discipline, they also maintained high rates of growth, growing at a rate twice that of the population. But in later years, as their discipline fell, so did their growth" (*Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, Kindle loc. 289).

#### Looking to the Future

At a recent Bible conference, I was invited to preach on "the future of Independent Baptists."

We don't have to be prophets to look to the future.

"A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3).

In this verse, which is repeated in Proverbs 27:12 by way of emphasis, we see "the prudent." Because he has God's Word and God's Spirit, the prudent can see the future and plan for it. He can see the end of present actions. He can protect himself, his family, and his church.

We also see "the simple." He doesn't observe warning signs. He is satisfied so long as there are no glaring problems *presently*. And he doesn't heed warnings given by others. He says, "Why are you criticizing good churches?" But if we wait until sin and error are full blown, it is too late to fix it.

The following communication represents the outlook of the prudent:

"My wife and I both grew up in churches that were second generation New Evangelical. By God's grace, shortly after we were married we realized we couldn't be part of NE churches. Since then we have grown through the teaching ministries of a number of IFB churches, but have found that though they have sound doctrinal statements, practical Christian living standards are **ERODING**. We greatly desire to be part of a church that is not just okay for now, but that will be there for our children in the next generation. For this reason when we visit a church we are looking not only at where it is at today, but for the direction it is moving. Is it withstanding the onslaught of our evil culture and compromising churches or does it get along with them?"

This man understands that many churches are eroding, and he understands that erosion will ultimately result in apostasy. He wants protection for himself and his family, so he looks at a church's "direction" in order to determine its future. He looks for a church that is standing against erosion and going in the opposite direction of it. This is a mark of biblical prudence.

## A Discipling Church or a Mixed Multitude?

#### Outline

A Believer is a Disciple The Mixed Multitude Philosophy Evidences of a Mixed Multitude The New Testament Church Is a Discipling Church Acts 2 Matthew 28 The Church at Antioch Paul's Greetings to the Churches 1 Corinthians 5 The Church at Thessalonica Pilgrim Passages Colossians 1:28 New Testament Epistles Revelation 3:6 Christ's Message to Ephesus

The church we see in the New Testament is a church of disciples. It is a disciplined, discipling environment. A New Testament church is not something to attend. It is a spiritual entity where disciples of Christ are trained, encouraged, and protected.

New Testament discipleship is not merely a course in Christian fundamentals; it is the essence of the true Christian life. The entire church should be geared to producing and training disciples of Jesus Christ.

#### A Believer Is a Disciple

A pastor friend said that at a youth camp some years ago, he asked the youth to list words that God uses to describe those who are saved. He said, "We came up with something like fifty in total, and then I pointed out to them that they had forgotten the most used word, which is 'disciple."" Indeed, the most common name for a New Testament believer is "disciple" or "methetes" in Greek. The term "believer" appears two times (Acts 5:14; 1 Ti. 4:12); "christian" appears three times (Acts 11:16; 26:28; 1 Pe. 4:16); "saint" appears 62 times; "brethren" appears about 135 times; but "disciple" (referring to a disciple of Christ) appears about 268 times.

Scripturally speaking, a New Testament believer and a disciple are one and the same.

Jesus Christ defined discipleship in very serious terms. Consider John 8 and John 15.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

In John 8:31, Christ said the "disciple indeed" is one who continues in His Word. The Lord was addressing Jews who believed on Him but not in a saving way. See John 2:23-24. They were believing in Jesus as a miracle worker, as a great prophet, as a political messiah, but they were not acknowledging their personal sinfulness and owning Him as their Lord and Saviour.

A believing in God's Word, a love for God's Word, a continuing in God's Word, a passion for God's Word is the clearest evidence of salvation and true discipleship.

"He that is of God **heareth God's words**: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47).

"My sheep **hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

A disciple's heart burns within him at God's Word (Lu. 24:31).

Later, the crowds that had "believed" on Jesus turned away from Him (John 6:66). They turned away because they did not receive His Word (Joh. 6:64), in contrast to Christ's true disciples.

"From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:66-69). In John 15, Christ again identified the true believer as a disciple. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (Joh. 15:8). Christ likens the believer to a branch in the vine. Christ is the vine and the believer is a branch. Fruit bearing is the evidence of the true believer. It is not possible for a branch to be attached to the vine and not share in the life of the vine. If someone seems to be a branch of Christ but does not bear fruit, he is taken away (Joh. 15:2, 6). This refers to the professor who is not a possessor (Titus 1:16). The true believer bears fruit and is pruned to bring forth more fruit (Joh. 15:2). This describes God's sanctifying and chastening work in the believer's life. This describes the true believer and the true disciple as one and the same.

Salvation and discipleship are two different things, but they are closely associated and not so sharply divided as is commonly taught today. Saving faith *produces* discipleship. Discipleship is the *evidence* of saving faith. The New Testament associates saving faith with following and obeying Christ in an intimate way.

Charles Wesley got this right in the beautiful hymn "And Can It Be," which was probably his personal testimony of salvation:

Long my imprison'd spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night: Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke; the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I ROSE, WENT FORTH, AND FOLLOW'D THEE.

To follow Christ is intimately connected with salvation. Following is not salvation, but it is the sure product of salvation.

This is crystal clear in Christ's words in John 10:27: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

This is clear in Ephesians, 2:8-10. It is common to quote verses 8-9 when sharing the gospel, but those verses cannot be divorced from verse 10. Verses 8-9 is salvation, and verse 10 is the evidence and product of salvation. The individual who has the reality of verses 8-9 will have the reality of verse 10, as well. This is true salvation as taught in the Bible.

There is no example in the New Testament of a true believer who is not also a disciple of Christ. In every case of the true believer, there is a dramatic change so that the individual becomes a follower and disciple of Christ.

#### The Lordship Salvation Issue

The issue of repentance and discipleship and receiving Jesus as Lord has been confused and muddled by the fathers of Quick Prayerism.

Jack Hyles included "Lordship salvation" in his book *Enemies of Soulwinning*. Here he used the bait and switch method, changing "disciple" to "100% disciple." He listed the failings of men such as Peter and concluded that Peter was not "100% a disciple." Hyles did the same thing with lordship. He said that no one makes Jesus "100% Lord" of his life.

This is a straw man. It is a deceitful way of handling the issue. I don't know anyone who has taught that the true believer makes Jesus 100% Lord or that the believer is a 100% disciple in all things.

Discipleship, as with every aspect of the Christian life, is a matter of growing. The true believer doesn't have perfection in anything, including his level of discipleship. But every true believer is a disciple *at some very real and discernible level*. And every true believer surrenders to Jesus as Lord (Ro. 10:9).

Consider Peter. When he answered Christ's call and left his nets, he was a disciple of Christ. That was evident to everyone who knew him. But he learned many things along the way and made many hard decisions. He even rebuked Jesus (Mt. 16:21-23) and momentarily denied Jesus (Mt. 26:69-75). But through it all he grew and became a stronger, more devoted disciple. He was a disciple from the beginning, but he grew in discipleship. Jesus was Peter's Lord from the beginning, but he grew in the matter of Lordship. Peter was not someone who merely prayed a sinner's prayer and never showed any further evidence of salvation, like a great many of Hyles' converts and like a lot of worldly teenagers in Independent Baptist churches.

#### How Much Evidence?

There is a teaching about salvation evidence that goes too far and looks too deeply.

Some don't believe in a carnal Christian, claiming that a carnal Christian is unsaved, but the Bible plainly describes carnal believers as true saints (1 Co. 3:1-4). Paul did not exhort the Corinthians to be saved; he exhorted them to put away their carnality and grow. He did conclude his second epistle to Corinth with a challenge to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Co. 13:5), but in general Paul did not question their salvation. He did not equate carnality with unregeneracy.

Some don't believe that a true Christian can backslide. But the true Christian life is not a matter of 100% anything. It is a matter of knowing Christ in a saving manner and then walking with Him and daily putting off the old man and putting on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). Romans 12:1-2 teaches that surrender is a continual thing, not a once-for-all thing.

A mark of such a ministry (those who have gone too far in identifying a true believer with full surrender) is that people tend to "get saved again" under that ministry. Many people who were counted as true believers and showed evidence of salvation come to see themselves as lost and make a new profession of faith.

I recall an American missionary in Singapore who had that type of ministry. A large percentage of people who sat under his preaching "got saved" again. If an individual had struggles with some sin or had doubts about his salvation, he was considered lost and was encouraged to seek a fuller, plainer repentance. Several short-term missionaries that I knew from Nepal visited this ministry and "got saved again." Some of the people from this ministry visited my wife when she was in the hospital in Bangkok having our third child, and they tried to make her doubt her salvation because she was physically stressed and mentally depressed.

But there is no such thing as Lordship perfectionism in this present life. The true believer confesses Christ as Lord (Ro. 10:9) and is converted and changed and becomes a follower of Christ, but his discipleship will not be 100%. Any saint who is honest before God knows that there are areas of his life that are not 100% under Christ's Lordship and there are plenty of times when his discipleship is weak.

Spirit-taught wisdom is required to understand these things and to deal with people properly about salvation and sanctification.

Believer's baptism signifies the biblical concept of discipleship. It depicts dying with Christ, being buried with Christ, and rising to new life with Christ. Paul uses baptism in this way at the very beginning of his teaching about sanctification in Romans 6-8.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Ro. 6:1-4).

A disciple is one who has died to the old life and risen to new life. This is the true Christian.

The apostle Paul described the Christian life as being dead to the world.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Ga. 6:14-16).

This is the evidence of "a new creature." Paul emphasized that this is such a fundamental principle of Christianity that only those who walk according to this rule are the true Israel of God. This is true Christianity and true salvation and true discipleship.

At some point in recent history, it became popular to distinguish between a believer and a disciple, but the Bible makes no such distinction. Every believer described in the New Testament was a disciple, beginning with Christ's original twelve. Every one of the salvations described in the New Testament were clear conversion experiences that produced disciples of Christ (e.g., the woman at the well in John 4, the 3,000 on the day at Pentecost in Acts 2, the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, Saul in Acts 9, Cornelius in Acts 10, the converts at Antioch in Acts 11, Sergius Paulus of Acts 13, Lydia and the Philippian jailer in Acts 16).

The believers we see in the New Testament Scripture were sinners saved by grace and they still had the "old man" and had to put off the old man and put on the new as a daily practice, but all of them were true disciples of Christ.

#### The Mixed Multitude Philosophy

But in many traditional Baptist churches today, disciples are rare, and it has become acceptable to have a mixed multitude membership filled with people who are half-hearted followers of Christ, at best.

Decades ago, Evangelist Fred Brown said that he feared that a high percentage of members of Independent Baptist churches were not born again. And Lee Roberson, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church, said that he thought that not even 50% were saved.

There are many different types of mixed multitude churches, some much stronger than others. The percentage of the members who are true disciples of Christ as defined by Christ Himself (John 8:31; 10:27), might be 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, even 60%. But no mixed multitude church requires that a person give evidence of being a true disciple of Christ before baptism and membership.

The mixed multitude philosophy is like fishing with a net. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind" (Mt. 13:47). As net fishing is non-discriminatory, dragging in everything that is caught, so the mixed multitude church accepts pretty much anyone who professes Christ and expresses interest in membership.

The discipling church is like fishing with a single rod under strict regulations. Each catch is examined for species, sex, size, weight, and quality. Again, we're not talking about some kind of sinless perfection or 100% lordship or any such thing. We are simply talking about new life in Christ that results in New Testament discipleship. We're talking about those who hear Christ's voice and follow Him (Joh. 10:27).

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., observed: "No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other. ... Consumed with pragmatic methods of church growth and congregational engineering, most churches leave