

- **The Gospel - Accept No Substitutes (Part 9)**  
Rocklyn Clarke Sr. - Sunday July 14, 2013  
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<http://www.LifeChurchBoston.org/>
- **The Gospel - Accept No Substitutes (Part 9)**
  - **Preparation**
  - **Introduction**
    - Welcome to another church meeting at the Hampton Inn & Suites.
    - Welcome Cards -
      - “I want to call your attention to the Welcome Card that you were given on your way into the auditorium”
      - These cards do two things for us:
        - They help us get to know our new visitors better.
        - They also give anyone (visitors or members) a chance to express a need or to give us feedback.
        - By filling it out you will help us to better serve you.
      - We're going to provide time for you to complete the cards at the end of our service, but we encourage you to start filling them out now.
        - **Please use this card:**
          - if you're a **first time visitor** or if you've **never** filled one out before,
          - to tell us about a **decision you made** today,
          - to ask us for more information, or to give us **feedback**.
    - **Please include your contact information** unless we already have it. At the **end of service** we'll ask you to complete the card and then place it in the designated box or give it to someone from our staff on your way out.
  - Regularly Invite People To Join Life Church
- Transition
- Review what it means to be a Christian.
  - What does it mean to be a Christian?
    - "Christ" = "anointed one" - effectively "king".
    - The Disciples were first called "Christians" at Antioch - Acts 11:19-26  
Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to

Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. **The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.**

- "Christian" = "belonging to Christ".
- Christians follow Jesus
  - Jesus' people know his voice and follow him - John 10:22-30

Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."
  - Remind them of how we illustrated "following" with "Simon Says".
- As followers of Jesus, we gather on Sundays (The Lord's Day) to celebrate him.
- Review two-stage process of divine revelation.
  - Think about two-stage journeys:
    - Fly to Florida to take a cruise.
    - Taxi to airport to catch a flight.
    - Jesus' contemporaries were flying from LaGuardia.
    - We're flying from Logan.
  - The words "Father", "Kingdom", "good news", etc. are the first leg of the journey. We then use stories to take us to a more complete understanding.
  - Other people's stories will control you unless you establish the story that God wants you to tell.
- **Stepping Up Your Game**

- Naaman dipped 7 times in the Jordan (2Kings 5). Why can't we read a Bible passage 7 or more times for greater understanding?
- Reading passages multiple times causes them to linger in our minds.
- When passages stick in our minds we can more easily meditate on them.
- As we ponder passages throughout the day we come up with both questions and insights. This strengthens our understanding of the Word.
- **Paul's First Missionary Journey: Acts 13 - 14**
- **Read the Passage: Galatians 4:8-20**

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. **But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.**

I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you [from us], so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

- **Exegetical Idea**  
The Galatians are moving backwards into spiritual slavery by following people who just want to alienate them from Paul and add them to their own fan club.
- **What does this mean?**
  - The gentile experience under pagan gods parallels the Jewish experience under the law.
    - For the Jews the law was a schoolmaster leading them to Christ.
    - For the gentiles the idols were just false gods.
  - Once you're known by God it's time for you to receive the full rights of sons.
  - Become like me for I became like you.
    - The Galatians disregarded Paul's physical condition and welcomed his message of good news.

- This is in fact the way Paul treats believers - he disregards their physical condition in favor of their identity in Christ.
- Paul wants the Galatians to apply the same disregard for physical condition with believers that they initially demonstrated with Paul.
- Because of the people who want to alienate you and make you their fans, I feel like I'm going through labor pains to see you become mature in Christ.
  - The judaizers were trying to alienate the Galatians from Paul and set up a two-tiered system of salvation within the church.
  - The judaizers wanted the Galatians to become part of their fan club.
  - Paul has not problem with zeal as long as it's not centered on his (or any other) personality.
- **Homiletical Idea:**
  - Let's find our identity in Christ alone.
- **Purpose of the Sermon (what listeners should do)**
  - Recognize the one legitimate standard for our identity as God's people: faith in Christ.
  - Learn to recognize attempts to find our identity as God's people in anything else.
- **Recognize the one legitimate standard for our identity as God's people: faith in Christ.**
  - "But now that you know God or rather are known by God . . ."
- **Learn to recognize attempts to find our identity as God's people in anything else.**
  - Finding your identity as God's people in anything other than faith in Christ leads to bondage.
    - "holiness" rules
    - speaking in tongues as a sign of spiritual achievement.
    - race - e.g. Free African Society in Philadelphia
  - Beware of pressures within the church to earn "extra credit" with God.
    - "Deeper knowledge"
    - Jewish calendar
  - Power complicates things
    - When I have power to promote my faction I can do great harm.
    - When I have power to exclude people I can do great harm.

- How to excel if you must:
  - Serve others - especially the poor.
  - Reach beyond your comfort zone with the good news.
- **Discussion Questions**
  - What is the crisis that Paul is addressing in the Galatian churches?
  - How do ethnicity, culture, class, and gender affect you as a Christian?
  - Do you know people who base membership in God's family on anything other than faith in Christ? What does "faith in Christ" mean? Discuss.
  - Are you part of God's family yet? If so, on what basis?
  - How do you relate to Christians and non-Christians who are "other"? How do power dynamics affect this? What is God saying to you about this?
- **Conclusion**
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- **Scriptures / Life Group Material For 7/14/2013 Life Church Sermon**

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**Mark 1:14-15**

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. **“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”**

**Galatians 3:26 - 4:7**

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.**

What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

**Galatians 4:8-20**

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. **But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.**

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**Discussion Questions**

- What is the crisis that Paul is addressing in the Galatian churches?
- How do ethnicity, culture, class, and gender affect you as a Christian?

- Do you know people who base membership in God's family on anything other than faith in Christ? What does "faith in Christ" mean? Discuss.
- Are you part of God's family yet? If so, on what basis?
- How do you relate to Christians and non-Christians who are "other"? How do power dynamics affect this? What is God saying to you about this?

## **Life Church Mission Statement**

Our mission is to teach people:

to enjoy knowing Jesus without fear, inadequacy, guilt, or shame,  
 to follow him together as his family,  
 to function together as his body,  
 and to work together to expand his kingdom.

## **Understanding The Bible**

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Here, for your convenience, are the Bible passages for today's sermon at Life Church. We use mostly the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible so that you can read it in modern English. You may have been accustomed to reading or hearing the King James Version of the Bible, which uses older English (with words like "thee" , "thou", "thine", "believeth", etc.). Don't be alarmed - the passages are really from the Bible!

The Bible was originally written in three ancient languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. None of the people in the Bible, and none of the people who God used to write it spoke English. In fact, English did not even exist as a language when the Bible was written. The King James Version, first published in 1611, was a translation of the Bible from it's original languages into the every day English that people used back then - almost 400 years ago! They didn't just speak that way in church - they spoke that way with everyone. The King James Version was "modernized" in 1769, but, even so, English has certainly changed a lot since then! **We believe that if you're reading an English translation of the Bible it ought to be up to date - written in the English you speak every day. God wants you to understand his Word so that you can put it into practice!**