

# The Background, Subject & Introduction to the Epistle to the Galatians<sup>1</sup>

## THE BACKGROUND

1. Galatia was a Roman province. The churches there (**Gal.1:2**) were raised up during the early part of Paul's ministry and they included the churches in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Paul wrote his epistle before A.D. 60 from Corinth
2. The churches were distracted from Christ by the law (**Gal.1:6-7**) as evidenced by Paul's word in:
  - Being bewitched of the churches by the Judaizers (**Gal.3:1**)
  - Desiring to be perfected by the flesh (**Gal.3:3**)
  - Brought to naught, severed, discharged, reduced to inactivity, or of none effect from Christ (**Gal.5:4**)
  - Fallen from grace (**Gal.5:4**)
  - Justified by the Law (**Gal.5:4**)
  - To Practice Circumcision (**Gal.6:12, 15; Deut.10:16**)

## THE SUBJECT

1. Christ replacing the law and being versus religion and tradition
2. Paul wrote this epistle to rescue the distracted believers out of the present evil age (**Gal.1:4**) An age is part of the world, as a satanic system designed to distract humanity from God. (see note 2<sup>1</sup> in Eph.2 of RecV). The present evil age according to the context of Galatians and specifically, **Gal.6:14-15**, is the religious course of the world. Christ gave Himself for our sins in order to rescue us out of the (Jewish) religion, i.e. the present evil age. He was the good Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep, Who brought them out of the Jewish *fold* and into the green pasture and made them one with all His other sheep (**John 10:1; Gal.3:23-26, 19; John 10:11, 2, 7-9, 14-16; Eph.2:11-16**)

## SIX PRINCIPLES RELATED TO CHRIST AND THE LAW

1. The spirit of the Bible is to exalt Christ, not the law. The law was given as a dispensational parenthetical solution to expose man's sin, to keep and constrain sinful man and to conduct man to Christ. (**John 1:17-18, Phil.3:7-10**)
2. Christ has come to replace the law with Himself. (**Matt.17:5**) On the mount of transfiguration, the Law was fully represented by Moses and Elijah and Peter wanted to exalt it along with Christ. The Father, however, would not stand for having His Son share the glory with the Law. Christ must be our unique center, the preeminent One in all things and should have all the ground in us.
3. We need to distinguish between law and the Law. Law is broader than the Law of Moses. It includes all man-made attempts to regulate, control and modify behavior. In our experience it comprises all self-made attempts, based on methods, routines, techniques, do's and don'ts, practices, ethical principles, unwritten rules, traditions, conventions, to improve ourselves and/or to judge others. It even includes "self-imposed spirituality." We are free from all these "laws," however, this doesn't mean that we can act like savages and abandon ourselves to our lusts and indulgences. We are free to enjoy Christ and to let His life operate in us to produce the fruit of the Spirit.
4. There is no substitute for Christ, as our all, in God's economy. Sometimes we try to substitute good behavior, self-improvement, self-imposed efforts at holiness, positive mental attitude, and psychology for Christ. We must stop all our trying, our work and our efforts. Don't be like the prodigal son. Don't try to come up with some way to approach the Father by self-deprecation, by self-accusation, by groveling, by trying to take a position of humiliation. Let the Father pour Himself out on you; let Him be gracious to you. The other son, outwardly not as bad as the prodigal, was self-contented and afforded the Father no opportunity to shed His mercy and grace on him. (**Luke 15:11-24**)
5. According to Gal.3:9, we blessed with believing Abraham. We are not blessed by the Law-giver, Moses. If we are under the law, then we are not blessed, we are cursed. (**Gal.3:10**) So then Christ became a curse to redeem from the curse. (**v.13**) If we go back to the Law, we are nullifying, in our experience, the work Christ did on the cross.

## THE INTRODUCTION

1. Paul became an apostle (**Gal.1:1-2**) not from men nor through men (traditions, natural concepts, human effort, etc.), but according to his regenerated man in the new creation, through the resurrection of Christ. The brothers who were with him bore testimony and a confirmation to his apostleship.
2. Grace and Peace to the Churches From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (**Gal.1:3; John 1:17, 1Cor.15:10, Gal.2:20**) **Grace is God as our enjoyment and peace is the condition which results from grace.** It is from God our Father (**Gal.1:3, John 20:17c**) Jesus Christ is our brother (**John 20:17b**)

<sup>1</sup> Outline and materials based on the *Life-Study of Galatians* by Witness Lee, *Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, California, May, 1984*. Any inaccuracies or errors, in the outline above, are the sole responsibility of the adopter of these materials. - D.M.