



Week One:  
GRACE THAT TRANSFORMS  
*Bible Study*

APRIL 22-28, 2019

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## KEY VERSE

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*They only heard a report about me: "The man who used to harass us now preaches the faith that he once tried to destroy." (CEB) — Galatians 1:23*

## BIBLE STUDY

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*Galatians Chapter 1*

## GATHERING PRAYER

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Consider using one of the Opening Prayers, the Prayer for Illumination, and/or the Statement of Faith from the Week 1 Worship Helps for this series.

## OVERVIEW

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In the first section, *Galatians 1:1-5*, Paul sets the tone and theology of his message of grace to the Galatia Christians in his salutation to the churches in Galatia. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (vs. 3-4). This word grace is not a greeting, but a calling to the churches in Galatia to remember that Paul has taught them through his authority and experience of God's grace in Jesus Christ that the gospel is a gospel of grace.

In the second section, *Galatians 1:6-10*, Paul is addressing a grave concern he has about what is happening to the faith of those in the churches in Galatia. Early into the letter, he expresses his astonishment "that you (Gentile Christians in Galatia) are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel" (1:6). The key word in this verse is "grace." Paul is emphatic that any gospel other than the one we "proclaimed to you is a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!" (1:9). The people coming with a different gospel, are missionaries (Jewish Christians) who are teaching and preaching that the Galatians have only part of the gospel. As Jewish Christians, these missionaries are teaching that they, Gentile Christians, must be circumcised. Paul preached a gospel of God's grace, but they, the Jewish Christians, feel that the Galatians have only part of the gospel and are telling the Galatians that they must be circumcised. This is creating great confusion amongst those to whom Paul shared the gospel. Paul's anger explodes because he has preached a gospel of transforming grace, new life in Jesus Christ, and these missionaries are confusing grace by tossing in Law (the need for circumcision). This denigrates the understanding of a grace that transforms. Paul does not want them to walk their faith backwards into a belief that they must be circumcised.

The third section, *Galatians 1:11-24*, continues to emphasize that central to Paul's letter is the power of the gospel of God's transforming grace. For Paul, God's revealed and transforming grace is central to the claiming and reshaping of his identity. He is emphatically clear that nothing of the Law has such transforming power (vs. 12-16). The gospel message is not something we do that puts us in right relationship with God, some rule, practice or custom such as circumcision. The gospel message is

grace, what God has already done for us in Christ Jesus (vs. 15-16). By the end of the first chapter, we see evidence in Paul's life of sanctifying grace: "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy" (vs. 23). Bishop Carder reflects, "Wesley affirmed that God's grace seeks nothing less than a new creation in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Sanctifying grace is God's freely given presence and power to restore the fullness of God's image in which we are created" (<http://www.interpretermagazine.org/topics/a-wesleyan-understanding-of-grace>).

### *Discussion Questions:*

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1. What stories do we have of people we know whose lives have been dramatically changed by the "grace that transforms?"
2. Define the meaning of grace. Discuss the different kinds of grace and their meanings.
3. In the Interpreter Magazine, <http://www.interpretermagazine.org/topics/a-wesleyan-understanding-of-grace>, Bishop Kenneth Carder writes, "Grace is not a gift that God packages and bestows on us and creation. Grace is God's presence to create, heal, forgive, reconcile and transform human hearts, communities and the entire creation. Wherever God is present, there is grace!" Discuss what the phrase, "Wherever God is present, there is grace!" means to you.
4. When in our lives have we regressed, walking our faith back into following rules hoping to find ourselves in right relationship with God? What was going on in our lives that caused us to believe that we needed to do something to re-establish our relationship with God?
5. Where do we see prevenient grace moving in Paul's life in Galatians 1:13-16?
6. How has God's prevenient grace been a part of God's relationship with you?
7. Where do we see the need for God's transforming grace in our world?
8. How do you see yourself as one who has received grace being one sent out to share God's grace? What would that look like and where might you see God sending you?

## SENDING FORTH

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### *Close with Prayer*

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