It's God alone who can save us and give us a new identity in life (1-5)

Paul's introduction to the churches of Galatia points to some important truths that Paul will address in this letter. Paul had been a big part of the birth of the churches in Galatia. He had preached the Gospel there, and God had use him to lead many of the members of these churches to faith in Jesus Christ. Although Paul was no longer physically with them, he was concerned about them. False teachers were preaching a different Gospel in Galatia. They were saying that Jesus wasn’t enough, but that in addition to Jesus, the believers needed to be circumcised in order to be accepted by God. Paul was writing this letter to set the record straight on what the Gospel really is, and to do that, he needed to establish his authority with the Galatian believers. Paul reminded these believers that he was who he was not because of or by the decision of man. Paul was an apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father! Paul's identify came from the only one who has the real authority to really give us a new identity in life. In addition to reminding the Galatian believers that his identity and authority came from God, Paul also reminded them that their salvation came from God. He reminded them that it was Jesus’ death for their sins that was sufficient to deliver them from sin in this life. These were important reminders to churches that were beginning to question their salvation and their identity in Jesus Christ.

1. Read Gal. 1:1. What is the significance for Paul of knowing that his identity comes from God and not from man? Why was this important in his life? How did this impact his actions in his life as evidenced in chapter 1.
2. Read Gal. 1:3-4. In hoping for the grace and peace of God in the lives of the Galatian believers, Paul reminds them of the essence of the Gospel. Discuss the following questions in your group:
   A. What did Jesus give for us, and what did this gift accomplish for us?
   B. Did Jesus do this for us because of something we did to earn it? If not, then why?
   C. What should these truths remind the Galatian believers of — and us today — when it comes to their salvation?
3. How does knowing that God planned and initiated salvation impact our understanding of grace?

It's the Gospel alone that can lead us to God's grace in our lives (6-10)

Paul quickly moves to the real reason for his letter. There’s no long greeting and prayer for the Galatian believers. There’s no opening words of acclamation or encouragement for the Galatians. Instead, Paul gives them a sharp and direct rebuke. Basically, he tells that he can’t believe how quickly they have abandoned him and the Gospel that he had preached to them! Apparently, some in the church were preaching a different Gospel — a Gospel of works and not of grace — and some in
the church were accepting it and abandoning Paul and the true Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ. Paul tells them that if the message being preached doesn’t line up with the Gospel that was first preached to them, then that message must be rejected! In fact, he tells them that his desire is that the messenger preaching the different Gospel be accursed...even if that messenger is himself! Why? Because Paul says that there is no other Gospel other than the Gospel of grace through faith in Jesus Christ. There’s only one true Gospel that leads to true forgiveness and eternal life, and this true Gospel of faith alone in Jesus is the only thing that leads to God’s true grace in life.

1. **Why do you think that the Gospel of grace is so hard for people to accept?**
2. **In what ways do people still add to the Gospel today? Try to think of some specific ways that we add requirements to God’s grace, thinking that these things must be done in order to please God.**
3. **The true Gospel is a message that redefines what the world says is necessary to make things right with God. This is why Paul says that he’s not trying to please man. Have you ever struggled with the issue of pleasing man at the expense of truly trusting and obeying God?**
4. **If you heard someone talking about or sharing a Gospel that wasn’t the true Gospel, what would you do or say?**

**It's God's grace alone that can radically redefine us for His glory in the world (11-24)**

Paul's greatest evidence for the reality of the power of the Gospel of grace was the evidence of God’s grace in his life. All of the church knew who Paul was before his conversion. Paul was a persecutor of the followers of Jesus. Paul was a persecutor of the followers of Jesus. Paul hated “the way,” which was what the group of original Jewish believers were called. He had hated Jesus, and he had worked hard to punish and to remove all those who believed in Him. Of all Jews, Paul deserved God's judgment and punishment for his judgment and punishment against the body of Christ; however, that wasn’t God's plan for Paul. Instead, before Paul was even born, God had set him apart for the work of the Gospel. What an incredible picture of grace! Paul’s call and God’s purpose for his life was completely undeserved and totally unearned. It was total grace! Paul’s life was a testimony to God’s grace that can radically redefine a person's life. Paul went from an enemy of God to a obedient servant of God. Paul went from bringing God dishonor by his actions against Jesus to bringing God glory by his faithfulness to preach Jesus. Paul could not have done any of this on his own. No effort could have undone the seriousness of what he had done against God. God’s grace was the only thing that could radically redefine Paul, and Paul reminds the believers in Galatia of this fact to help see that God’s grace is the only thing that can radically redefine their lives for God’s glory in the world.

1. **Read Gal. 1:11. Where did the Gospel come from? How does this impact the importance of protecting the true Gospel?**
2. **Read Gal. 1:13-15. Discuss the following questions:**
   A. After considering all that Paul had done against God, what is your reaction to what Paul says about what God did for him in verse 15?
   B. What does verse 15 teach us about the nature of grace? Why is this important?
3. **Read Gal. 1:23-24. Discuss how God’s grace radically redefined Paul’s life. If what ways has God’s grace radically redefined your life?**
4. **Spend time praying for protection of the true Gospel in our faith family. Pray for a growing understanding of the depth and riches of God’s grace. Pray that God would continue to redefine us by His glorious grace for His glory in this world.**