

Dr. Tim Gombis, Galatians, Session 7, Galatians 5:2-26

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This is Dr. Tim Gombis in his teaching on the book of Galatians. This is session 7 on Galatians 5:2-26.

This is the seventh lecture on Galatians, and in this lecture we're going to cover Galatians 5:2 to verse 26, basically all of Galatians 5, but you'll note that the previous section of Galatians ends at 5.1, where Paul makes that closing exhortation, then moves to a new section where he says, Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, so there are times in our Bibles when the versification, which was added much later, is not part of the original text.

The verification doesn't really match up with sort of how we break up the text to explain it but don't be thrown by that. But in verses 2 to 12 of chapter 5, Paul brings to bear a number of exhortations to the non-Jewish Christians there in Galatia to resist Judaizing. He says in verse 2, Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

So, what's the nature of Paul's argument here in verses 2 to 4, where he says if they receive circumcision, they are no longer going to really have anything to do with Christ? In fact, he gets more explicit in verse 4: You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace. Well, one view of these exhortations or the logic of Paul's argument is that Paul is saying if you Galatian non-Jewish Christians who have come to Christ by faith if you now turn away from that and go the route of trying to earn salvation through legalistic strivings, then you have fallen from grace and you are now under obligation to begin the attempt to perfectly obey God.

That's sort of based on that traditional interpretation that there's that possibility of perfect obedience earning salvation, whereas inevitably, people will fall short. I think that Paul, again, is simply working with the same logic that he's been working with this whole time, and that is that there's that exclusive dynamic that he wants them to avoid, that is, they could be within the law. However, outside of that exclusive dimension is where Christ really is among Jews and Gentiles.

Where Jewish Christians still remain fully Jewish, but they sit alongside their non-Jewish siblings in Christ, their sisters and brothers in the faith, participating fully together. What Paul is saying is if these Galatian Gentiles who are out here become circumcised, that is, that's the symbol of conversion to Judaism. If they are circumcised, converting to the full observance of the Mosaic law, Paul is telling them

that is their reversion to this exclusive mode of existence where they only fellowship with fellow Jews and cut themselves off from Gentiles.

Well, in Paul's scenario, Christ is out here. He is where God is currently building this multi-ethnic, single family of God. So if the Galatian Christians receive circumcision, then they are obligated to keep the entire Mosaic law, and Paul is working with that understanding that is up and running in Galatia that keeping the law cuts them off from Gentile fellowship. So, it's kind of understood in that confining sense, the marking off sense, and of course, doing that cuts them off from Christ.

So, they are falling from grace because grace is out here. They are going back to a place where grace is not. Moving on to verses 5 and 6, Paul says, there's another appearance of we, and here I don't think that Paul is simply talking about we Jewish Christians, but he's speaking about all those who are in Christ by faith.

And he sort of, this is an alternative to this scenario. So, he's basically talking about everybody in this situation. For we, by faith, through the Spirit, are waiting for the hope of righteousness, and that term is really the same term as justification, the hope of justification.

So, again, if you configure the situation here up and running in Galatia as what group of people are going to receive justification on that final day, or what group of people currently enjoy justification, and over what group of people has God rendered that verdict that nobody really hears, but is heard in heaven, we kind of embrace it by faith. What group of people are marked out as God's justified people? Well, Paul says it is us. It is those of us who are out here.

We, through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for that future day to come where we will be justified by faith. People who are of this reality simply are not going to be participating in justification. That's a false way.

Fourth, verse six, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything but faith working itself out in love. So, driving all this logic is the reality that in Christ, ethnic differentiation does not matter. It doesn't matter if you are Brazilian, Russian, Canadian, Venezuelan, Jewish, or non-Jewish.

All those distinctions are now, and they are no longer the thing that marks out the family of God. It is not that ethnic distinctions are unimportant. In fact, we might want to say it this way.

Each ethnic particularity is fully dignified in Christ because people are still who they are. Jews are still Jews, and that's a wonderful thing. Turks are still Turks.

Egyptians are still Egyptians. In our day, men are still men. Women are still women.

Americans are still American. Michiganders are still Michiganders. It's just that we are who we are in Christ, and that fundamental identity, being in Christ, is what actually really matters.

But with regard to people's values, Paul says in verse six that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. And that is radical in a Jewish conception of things because for Jews like Paul, their inherited worldview would have associated that distinction as the fundamental distinction really in reality. There are God's people, and then there's everybody else.

And so, to be a Jew, or not to be a Jew, was actually fundamental and crucial to a person's identity. We're going to see this showing up again. This is really Paul's fundamental confession when it comes to controversies involving Jewish identity because he repeats it in chapter six, verse 15, where he says, again, he's backing up an assertion with this fundamental argument, for neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation.

So that gets at that whole realm, that new creation realm. What matters is inhabiting that realm as a male, female, slave, free, Jew, or non-Jew. Those distinctions don't matter.

What matters is identity in Christ. Paul then turns to make an exhortation by way of a question here in verse seven. You were running well, you Galatians.

You had begun well. You began that race well toward the day of Christ in the future. What happened to you? Who hindered you from obeying the truth? One more little, subtle addition to what I've been saying here is that Paul is not contrasting simply believing with that dark term, obedience.

He imagines that inhabiting freedom in Christ is obedience. It's just obedience to the truth. So, who hindered you? Who kind of pushed you out of that lane of grace in your race to the final day of Christ? Verse eight, this persuasion is not from him who calls you.

That is to say, the teaching that has come to Galatia is that you Gentile Christians need to convert and become Jewish. That voice, that call is not from him who calls you. That does not come from God.

Notice that Paul does not say, Judaism is not from him who calls you because Judaism is just a reality that affects a number of people. He does not say the law does not come from him who calls you.

That's why I've said previously that in Galatians 3, that when he does talk about the law, he does not mean the law in itself. He means basically this persuasion. This persuasion is not of faith.

You are not justified by this persuasion. Because of this persuasion, that is the view that comes to Galatia from the Jewish missionaries, not from him who calls you. The problem is not, again, the Mosaic law in itself.

The problem is Gentiles adopting Judaism. The problem is anybody hearing the conviction or the teaching that you have to change ethnicities to fully enjoy God's salvation. That is the problem.

In verses 9 and 10, Paul again calls upon Deuteronomy 27, that passage that we made reference to before. In Galatians 3.10, Paul cites Deuteronomy 27:26. In Deuteronomy 27:15-26 is that stretch of Deuteronomy 27 where he issues those curses upon people who sin in perverted and just outrageously heinous ways that those people are specially cursed by God and need to be put out of the covenant people.

Well, in verses 9 and 10, Paul says, A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. That is if you've got a little bit of an infecting element that will eventually pervade the whole. Verse 10: I have confidence to you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

So, Paul is alluding to the reality that if a person is left in the covenant people who are purposely disobeying God, that purposeful disobedience and his curse, the curse that he bears, will affect the whole covenant people. So, he needs to be put out. In the same way that imagery from verse 9, A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

Paul wants that to be removed, by which he means get those Jewish missionaries out of the Galatian congregations because they're spreading a teaching that is putting the blessing of your community at risk. Get them out. In verse 11, Paul says something really fascinating here.

He says, but I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then, the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. What does he mean by his denial of preaching circumcision? Is it that Paul occasionally preaches circumcision? It may have been that this was a, I mean, some interpreters have proposed that this was an accusation on the part of the agitators there in Galatia, that Paul sometimes preaches circumcision, sometimes he doesn't, depending on the situation, he can't trust him. I'm not so sure that that's what he's getting at.

I think he's just indicating that at one time, Paul was part of that group that he calls Judaism in chapter 1. He was part of that group that was for the purity of God's historic people, the Jews, and was part of that group that was trying to push out and avoid any kind of foreign corrupting influence. That was his former pursuit, and now he's actually being persecuted because he's preaching something completely different. He's actually preaching that Jewish Christians need to fully embrace those people that he had formerly seen as sinners.

So, he's being persecuted because he is now doing something radically different. And if he was preaching circumcision, then the cross would not be a stumbling block to his people. But you can imagine if people who have this conviction that Jews have to remain cut off from Gentiles for the purity of God's people to avoid contamination with sin, it is a massive stumbling block to hear in order for these people to actually be saved by the God of Israel, they have to fellowship with sinners.

Well, that's a massive stumbling block. And Paul asserts that that stumbling block is actually kept in place by virtue of his preaching. The Gospel remains a scandal for God's historical people, the Jews because it calls them to actually set themselves alongside people they have historically regarded as sinners.

Again, if we think back to the previous visual that I've had up, the old creation, the present evil age, and the new creation, all of that is part of that present evil age mindset, and that is part and parcel of a reality that the cross has absolutely shattered. Again, the cosmic dimension is so important for Paul. The cross has put to death a realm of existence and has ushered us into what is truly life.

That means that my prejudices and old assumptions, though associated with that world, also have to be put to death, which means that a lot of Christians are made uncomfortable. The Gospel is often a scandalizing reality to Christian people because it calls us to put to death our inherited cultures or at least regard ourselves as dead to them in some sense. Paul then turns in verse 12 to make this highly provocative statement where he says, "...would that those who are troubling selves would even mutilate themselves." Basically, he is calling for these Jewish missionaries to not only be circumcised themselves but to castrate themselves.

Seriously, Paul is fired up in this letter. That passage in Paul really should be nobody's life verse. Certainly, this is a passage you need to be careful in teaching junior high boys.

So, Paul now talks about the law of freedom, turning in verses 13 to 15 to talk about freedom. "...for you were called to freedom, brothers, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh." So, again, Christian freedom is a very, very different kind of freedom than a sort of libertarian freedom to do whatever you want. And he says, "...do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh." I

mean, you are called to this realm of freedom, which is an unanticipated kind of reality, but don't use your existence there to now build a base of operations for the flesh to move into the community and do damage.

And here, Paul is not necessarily talking about an individual's flesh, you know, I have flesh or my own fleshly desires. He's really talking about this cosmic power of flesh that is kind of this anti-God impulse within humanity that transcends humans themselves and is at work to infect and affect community life and bring it into that enslaving mode of existence characterized within the present evil age. The aims of the cosmic power of flesh are basically the destruction of new creation communities.

And I'm not sure that Paul really has in mind here even what we would think about fleshly indulgence like you're called to freedom, but be careful that you don't indulge your flesh. I think that what Paul is actually getting at here is that you're called to freedom; that is, you need to inhabit this reality and resist the call to come back to this enslaving reality. But Paul knows that in the community there in Galatia, they are going to need to be sort of distancing themselves from these Jewish missionaries.

What he wants them to understand is the way that they go about resolving this conflict and healing the rifts that have developed in the community; the way they resolve all that is also precarious because there are ways of resolving community conflict that do damage to people. There are ways that we can perceive we should move ahead as a community that results in us maybe condemning people who have caused trouble. Or there are ways of confronting people who have been causing trouble in ways that we box them in and corner them and provoke angry reactions from them.

So, even in resolving conflict, Paul wants these people to be very, very careful. We make appeals to one another. We seek to make peace.

We seek to move ahead boldly as new creation communities, but not in ways that sort of marginalize any community members as being bad or need to be sort of put in places of condemnation, which I think, again, invites a lot of really interesting reflection on being church community in our day. There are ways that we can imagine inhabiting church life that oftentimes give opportunity for the flesh to do damage, ways that resolve conflict, ways that we think we can seize opportunities, or things that we see as obstacles. Christian vision needs to constantly revisit gospel priorities and gospel aims and the gospel logic so that it doesn't fall prey to worldly logic, which inevitably does damage to the Christian community.

So, don't use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but, at the end of verse 13, through love, serve one another. So, even in their recovery from this situation, it has to be characterized by love and service because that's love and service is the

heart and soul of Jesus. Remember, in Galatians 2:20, Paul says, I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me.

So, love and service are what the Christian community is characterized by because if the presence of Jesus by the Spirit pervades the community, that should result in love and service. For the whole law, in fact, Paul goes back to the Mosaic Law itself; this is, in fact, the whole point of the Mosaic Law stemming from Leviticus 19. The whole law is fulfilled in this one word.

This is the whole point all along. Love your neighbor as yourself. But, if you bite and devour one another, if you snap at each other and end up in these arguments with each other, watch out, lest you be consumed by one another.

So, situations that need to be redeemed and conflicts that need to be overcome can possibly be addressed in ways that actually further the conflict. They can actually be addressed in ways that do damage to people and destroy the Christian community. So, we have to be very watchful that even in our community renewal projects, we have our postures toward one another, our aims, our goals, our whole vision saturated by love and service, which the Gospel drives us to, and according to Paul, that's what the law drives us to.

Scripture, rightly read, fosters communities of self-giving love and faithfulness. Scripture, wrongly read, brings about people who are insiders and people who are outsiders, which, among God's people, and that's not a good thing. Okay, moving on to the rest of Galatians 5, verses 16-26, Paul depicts here, back to our apocalyptic scenario, Paul is going to be depicting two realms that are in conflict.

And he, again, just like I was mentioning a moment ago, depicts this realm as the realm over which flesh is ruling. And over here, he's going to call this the realm of the spirit. And here, just like in a number of other Pauline contexts, he sees these two realms as having dynamics.

These are not just two neutral, static locations. There's stuff happening here. There are generative dynamics here in the realm of the spirit, and there are generative dynamics here in the realm of the flesh.

What Paul's going to be saying here is those generative dynamics here are destructive, and the generative dynamics here are life-giving and fruitful. And what Paul is going to basically be indicating in this passage is the Galatian community will be able to tell what kind of community it is. Is it a spirit, fruit-producing community? Or is it a flesh, a works of the flesh-producing community? This passage in Galatians 5, 16 and following, which I mentioned in our first lecture, which seems to offer so much promise for the Christian life, it's often read in terms of an individual kind of a spirituality.

That is to say, if you walk by the spirit, as an individual, if I am kind of filled by the spirit and I can walk in the spirit, that is often seen as this kind of individualized spiritual mode of existence whereby fruit will inevitably and naturally be produced from me. So, I can get myself to this kind of spiritual place where the spirit produces fruit from myself. Alternatively, you can tell if I am sort of walking in the flesh because I will be behaving badly.

And in order to avoid behaving badly, as an individual, I don't need to just maybe avoid certain things and put on other kind of practices. The key is to get myself to the place where I am empowered by the spirit. And the spirit will naturally produce these things from me.

Well, I think there are some problems with that individual and individualized view of being spiritual. In my opinion, that's based on a number of texts not interpreted all that well, but Paul here is not talking about an individual, and he's not conceiving of an individual being spiritual. He's talking about the kinds of cosmic dynamics that animate communities.

In fact, if anything, Paul wants to grant his audiences the lenses of discernment. You can tell when a certain cosmic animating dynamic is overtaking your community, and you can tell when another cosmic animating dynamic is sort of at work in your community. You can physically see things at work.

On one hand, you can see the fruits of the spirit being born when people are loving and serving each other, where there's hope being produced, etc. You know the spirit is at work. That's something to be on the lookout for.

When you see these other dynamics at work, the works of the flesh, where you have idolatry at work, where there is strife and jealousy and factions and dissensions, you know that you have a community being animated by the flesh, by the cosmic power of flesh that is trying to destroy communities. What Paul wants to do is to indicate you have a situation here where there are teachers that have brought about new teaching that I didn't teach you, and you have a community dynamic of division, discouragement, factions, fighting, and sniping at each other. Realize where this teaching comes from.

It comes from a cosmic realm whose intention is to destroy your community. Work on cultivating these alternative behaviors of mutual service and love, and you will find that you will be active in stirring up the presence of the spirit in your community. So, Paul is granting to the Galatians lenses for discernment so that they can understand what kind of cosmic dynamics are up and running in their community.

Well, in verse 16, Paul gives this initiating exhortation. I say, walk by the spirit as a community. This is not an individualized command.

That is, live in this realm of the spirit. Walk in the spirit. And, if you live over here, you will not be carrying out the desire of the flesh, which is to destroy community life.

4. The flesh sets its desire against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. These two are in opposition. Now, this is not to say that within myself as an individual, I have a flesh dynamic and a spirit dynamic that are at war with each other.

It is saying, however, that these two realms are realms in conflict. You are situated at the crossover of the ages, you Christian community, you Galatians. And you have to realize that these two cosmic realms are at war with each other, trying to produce different effects.

Now, it is the case that an individual might feel both of those. Certainly, that's the case, but also communities feel both of those. There are community dynamics that you can feel coming from the spirit.

A community wants to rejoice together. They want to enjoy fellowship with one another. They want to be involved in community patterns of self-sacrifice and mutual love.

Also, communities can experience these dynamics. There's inevitably destructive competition. There are inevitably resentments that develop.

And you can see in any community, any Christian community, the two cosmic forces at work. And that is what Paul is aiming for. And he says here, which is very, very interesting, so that you may not do the things that you please at the end of verse 17.

These two are at war with one another, so you may not do the things that you want. I have to say I am sort of between two interpretations of that final phrase. Paul may be saying that because you are living at the crossover of the ages and you are sort of feeling the effects of both of these cosmic realms in conflict in your community, you can't just do whatever you want.

I think John Barclay takes this interpretation, which makes some good sense. Because you are sort of in the middle of a war zone, you can't just do whatever you want. So careful discernment about ways for this community are necessary.

But I've also entertained this alternative understanding of this where Paul may be saying these are in opposition so that you won't be able to bring about the kind of community that you all want if you try to get there by fighting. That is to say, you are

currently, you Galatians, a community over here. I want you to get back to living in this realm of the Spirit.

And because you are sort of at the crossover of the ages, you have in mind, some of you, the kind of community that you want to produce. Well, if you try to get there by coercion and making other people like you, you are not going to be able to bring that about. Living in this realm and focusing not on goals for your community but on immediate acts of self-sacrificial love that are going to produce the kind of community that God wants for you.

And it may not fit your preconceived templates. Anyway, just to say, I've not come across a completely satisfactory interpretation of that final expression in verse 17, but it seems to me clear that this cosmic power of the flesh is at battle, is in battle with the cosmic power of the Spirit, this new realm that God has created by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, and that He oversees, that the Lord Christ oversees, and that the Lord Christ pervades by His Spirit. Those two realms are in competition.

The least we could say is that being in the middle of that cosmic war requires careful discernment about community ways forward. Moving on to verse 18, but if you, that's a plural you, if you all as a community are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. That is to say, not that they have no relation to the Mosaic law, but that kind of community, led by the Spirit, does not need to go back to the old world from whence this persuasion comes to you in Galatia.

You are not under obligation to adopt a Jewish identity. The Galatian community, however, ought to have an ongoing and intense relationship with the Mosaic law, but because the Galatians are Gentiles, they need to be reading and rehearsing and hearing the Mosaic law because that is where they get to know the God of Israel. So, they read and regard the Mosaic law as scripture without adopting the sort of Israel-specific aspects of the Mosaic law.

To be related to the Mosaic law as a Gentile is somewhat complicated because it's not the national charter for us, the way it is for Israel, but because in the pages of the law we get to know the God of Israel, Gentiles need to get to know the law, get to know Torah, get to know the wisdom literature and the prophets. Verses 19 to 23 are really the heart of this section, where Paul is giving the Galatians counsel on how to recognize when the dynamics of these competing realms are up and running. On one hand, the deeds of the flesh are evident.

That is to say, the dynamics that this realm produces in a community are evident, or community dynamics that any community will sort of experience are evident and make manifest that a community is deeply embedded in that realm. What are they? Well, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, that is, people set against each other, strife,

jealousy, destructive competition, all that kind of stuff that can be very alive in churches, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these. These are, in many instances, corporate behaviors that can develop in this realm.

And Paul is saying you can tell when a community is living there when you see these kinds of behaviors. Take them all with utmost seriousness. I think it's interesting, I always sort of stop a bit short here when I read these vice lists in the New Testament because it seems inevitable that Christians want to rank sins.

There are certain ones that seem more outrageous than others, like sorcery, drunkenness, carousing, idolatry, impurity, and sensuality. Those seem bad.

We would sort of want to initiate church discipline if we saw people behaving this way. But factions or cliques, we might say that's just normal church life. Jealousy, envying.

I found it interesting when I was on a ministry staff, I found it fascinating to see how professional jealousies that I thought only sort of existed in the business world were actually alive and well on the church staff that I was on. The reason why these apparently not-so-big a-deal sins and sinful behaviors are on the same level as those other ones that seem outrageous is that they are all together, and all of them are destructive to community life. And if God sent the Son to die and raise Him from the dead, to produce a new community, and to bring the community together under the Lordship of Christ, anything and everything that breaks up the community is condemnable.

So, let's not get into the temptation; don't give into the temptation to rank sins or behaviors that are more sinful than others. And this list is not exhaustive, by the way. Paul means for it to be provocative of all kinds to provoke the imagination to think about all kinds of behaviors, relational dynamics, and group patterns that are destructive of community life.

Anything that breaks relationships up and ruins church life is the work of the flesh. And Paul indicates that in verse 21. And things like these of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

So again, not only do these two dimensions have dynamics, I mean this dimension has a dynamic. It has the dynamic of destruction. Because as things move forward in time and toward the eschatological day of the Lord, this realm will not be transformed into the kingdom of God.

And communities that have embedded their lives in this realm are going to share the end of this realm, which is destruction. So, this is a warning against the Galatian community, who are ever developing those habits of life, watching out for them, and putting them off. But, on the other hand, in verse 22, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Or just, I think what Paul means to say is the law is not against these things. The law is sort of exhorting toward these things.

But notice these are all corporate behaviors that if you see these in community, you know that that community is overwhelmed by, underwritten by, pervaded by God's Spirit. Because God is at work to produce those in a community. So, Paul is saying, you Galatians, if you see these developing, you are a community sort of overseen and animated by the cosmic power of the flesh, which is anti-God and community destroying.

If your community is pervaded by these kinds of behaviors, you know that God's Spirit is up and running in your community and is giving you life. So, this is, again, this is sort of Paul saying, you can tell what is happening in your community. The concrete relational behaviors indicate what kind of cosmic reality is actually happening behind the scenes.

Now, those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. That is to say, those who belong to Christ Jesus have been brought out of that realm. The cross has been their death knell to this era.

They are now in this cosmic space, and they've crucified the flesh. They are on the lookout for those passions and desires that are ever-erupting and generating destructive community dynamics. So, in verse 25, since we have our life by the Spirit because we've been made alive by the Spirit in this new realm, let's live there! That's what Paul is saying. Let us not become boastful, challenge each other, envying one another.

Let us not become divisive communities where we compete with one another. What I think is interesting to do as a really corporate body of Jesus' followers, what I think is interesting is to take this passage in verses 19-23 and just write out the fruits of the Spirit here is not a great amount of space, and write out those works of the flesh over here. And then think through in Galatians, and make these circles bigger, and think through in Galatians what behaviors, attitudes, actions, identity markers, speech patterns, what are the ones that make up behavior over here in Galatians, and then what are the identity markers, the postures, the speech patterns, the behaviors that make up life over here in this realm, in Galatians.

Then, take a further step and begin to discern the various dynamics. Well, first of all, it's actually easier to be over here, I think, because we're always, we tend to be negative. We notice when people bug us.

We don't notice, and we don't think creatively over here all that often, I don't think. But then move into our day, and ask yourself this question with a group. What are contemporary identity markers? What are contemporary relational dynamics? Speech patterns? Community behaviors? I feel drawn towards it, and I notice other people do that, which drives me nuts.

What are some things that we think we see in our culture that affect our church communities? And just write those down. Manipulative behaviors. Slander.

Gossip. Power games. Intimidation.

Whatever. Just be creative and list those out. It's fun to do with a group, and I think that you actually will need to create some extra space because there are a lot of them that we can notice.

But Paul means that these lists actually provoke our imaginations to look around us and see the kinds of destructive behaviors that ruin good community life. But then do the opposite over here, and actually, as I said, I think this is more difficult to do because I think that one far too under-exercised muscle is the Christian imagination when it comes to imagining possible Christian ways of life. But if we think about the kinds of things that Paul talks about when he talks about Christian identity, what are some possible realistic, achievable actions, attitudes, identity markers, community behaviors, social patterns, and relational dynamics? What are some of those that we can maybe cultivate that would transform our Christian communities? Things like adopting postures of imitation where we imagine solving a conflict situation by approaching someone with humility, saying something like we have this misunderstanding, here's where I'm at, can you help me understand where you're at? Instead of approaching a conflict situation from this realm, putting someone back into a corner, shoving their back up against the wall, and provoking them to respond self-defensively.

That's going to usually end up in a destructive situation. How do we resolve conflict in this realm, where we approach a situation by giving up all the leverage from the start? One of the things that I think can be put over here is relating to one another from postures of leverage, power accumulation, leverage surrender, and power surrender. What does that look like in parenting? What does it look like if I'm on church staff with someone and things are thriving in their ministry? How do I regard other people I work with or minister with? There are loads of identity markers in the New Testament and loads of ways we can bring this into our modern world if we just think creatively.

One great word here that I've not really mentioned is if the cross is what has brought about our death to this world and has initiated the creation of this whole cosmic realm, the cross is how we actually inhabit this new realm and how we stir up the resurrection dynamics inherent in that realm. I think what is actually helpful is to look for cruciform attitudes, look for cruciform behaviors, and look for cruciform speech patterns. That is to say, what kind of speech patterns can I adopt that are in the shape of the cross? What kind of relational dynamics can I adopt that are in the shape of the cross? Because what I can be assured of is my relational approaches, our community dynamics that are in the shape of the cross are generative of resurrection dynamics if it's the case that the cross brought about the realm of resurrection.

That is the hope of cruciformity. That's the wonderful hope that's found in the new creation space, this new creation cosmic space, because God has brought it about through the cross; whenever I'm in the shape of the cross, I'm enjoying resurrection dynamics. So, once again, some of the underlying theological impulses that make their way through Galatians are far more applicable in the contemporary setting than some of the things that we see on the surface of the text.

Those are the things that I think are far more in need of explanation.

This is Dr. Tim Gombis in his teaching on the book of Galatians. This is session 7 on Galatians 5:2-26.