

Dr. Tim Gombis, Galatians, Session 5, Galatians 3 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Gombis, Galatians, Session 5, Galatians 3, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This excerpt from a lecture series on Galatians focuses on **Galatians chapter 3**, which Dr. Gombis identifies as a complex and debated section of Pauline writing. He explains that Paul's central aim in this chapter is to **discourage the Galatian Christians from adopting Jewish practices**, refuting the pressure from Jewish missionaries. The lecture meticulously analyzes Paul's arguments, including the **contrast between faith and works of the law**, the significance of **Abraham's faith**, and the **purpose and temporary nature of the Mosaic Law** in relation to God's promise. Ultimately, Gombis emphasizes that **justification comes through faith in Christ**, uniting both Jews and Gentiles as Abraham's offspring and heirs to God's promise.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Gombis, Galatians, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Pauline Epistles → Galatians).**



**Gombis_Galatians_
Session05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Gombis, Galatians, Session 5, Galatians 3

Briefing Document: Dr. Tim Gombis on Galatians 3

Source: Excerpts from "Gombis_Galatians_EN_Session05.pdf" by Dr. Tim Gombis and Ted Hildebrandt (© 2024)

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Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Tim Gombis in his fifth session teaching on the book of Galatians, specifically focusing on Galatians chapter 3. Gombis highlights the complexity of this chapter, often considered one of the most difficult stretches of Pauline text, and emphasizes the crucial context of Paul's rhetorical aim: to dissuade the Galatian (primarily Gentile) Christians from Judaizing under the pressure of Jewish missionaries. He stresses that Paul's arguments are not abstract theological statements but highly charged rhetoric tailored to this specific situation.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Rhetorical Context: Anti-Judaizing Argument:

- Paul's primary goal in Galatians 3 is to convince the non-Jewish Christians in Galatia not to succumb to the pressure from Jewish missionaries to be circumcised, convert to Judaism, and follow the Law of Moses.
- Gombis emphasizes that Paul's statements are not abstract theological pronouncements but are strategically crafted arguments ("highly charged rhetorical material oriented toward convincing the Galatians to do something and not do something").
- He cautions against taking these arguments as a systematic theology without considering the specific context of the Galatian controversy.

2. Galatians 3:1-5: The Galatians' Initial Reception of the Spirit:

- Paul begins by questioning the "foolish Galatians" who seem to have been "bewitched" after having Jesus Christ "publicly portrayed as crucified" before their eyes.

- Gombis interprets this "public portrayal" as likely referring to Paul's own personal presentation during his initial preaching in Galatia, possibly referencing his physically scarred appearance after being stoned (as mentioned in previous lectures and alluded to in Galatians 4). He suggests Paul's very person embodied the crucified Christ ("in his very person, as he proclaimed the gospel to them, he himself was a demonstration of Jesus Christ crucified").
- Paul uses rhetorical questions contrasting "works of the law" and "hearing with faith" (or "faithful hearing" or "hearing that elicits faithfulness").
- "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?" (Galatians 3:2)
- He argues that their initial reception of the Spirit and any subsequent miracles were due to their faithful response to the gospel, not their adoption of Jewish identity and practices ("It did not happen by their adoption of a Jewish identity").
- Gombis clarifies that the contrast Paul is drawing is not simply between "doing and believing" but between two kinds of holistic human responses: one based on meeting social expectations (Judaizing) and the other based on a response to God's initiative through faith ("a kind of human action that is the embodiment of faith or faithfulness").

3. Galatians 3:6-9: Blessing Through Faith and Association with Abraham:

- Paul contrasts those who are "of faith" with those who are "of the works of the law." He states that those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham.
- He quotes Genesis 15:6 ("Even so Abraham believed in God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness") to establish Abraham as the exemplary faithful one.
- Gombis highlights that in the context of the Galatian controversy, the question was likely about who constitutes Abraham's true family. Paul argues it is "those who are of faith" (Galatians 3:7), regardless of their ethnicity.
- He emphasizes the inclusivity of the gospel preached beforehand to Abraham: "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying that all nations would be blessed in you" (Galatians 3:8). This undermines the exclusively Jewish focus of the missionaries' message.
- Paul concludes this section by stating, "So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful one" (Galatians 3:9). The desired

response to the gospel is faith and fidelity to Christ, manifested in acts of love and the fruit of the Spirit, not adherence to Jewish identity markers.

4. Galatians 3:10-14: The Curse of the Law and Redemption Through Christ:

- This section is described as the "most tangled stretch of Pauline text" due to the complexities surrounding the "curse of the law."
- Gombis critiques the traditional interpretation (primarily Lutheran and Reformed) which posits that the law demands perfect obedience, which no one can achieve, thus placing all humanity under a universal curse from which Christ redeems believers.
- He argues this view is based on an "implicit premise...that the law demands perfect obedience and that no human can render perfect obedience to God's law," which is not explicitly stated by Paul and misunderstands the Mosaic Law's provision for restoration and atonement.
- He points out that even Martin Luther recognized a potential contradiction between Paul's assertion in verse 10a and the Deuteronomy citation in verse 10b under this interpretation.
- Gombis also discusses and partly critiques the interpretation by Hayes and Wright, which sees the Deuteronomy 27:26 citation as referring to the covenantal curses on Israel for disobedience. While acknowledging the ongoing discussion about Israel's perception of exile, Gombis argues that the specific verses Paul quotes (Deuteronomy 27:15-26) actually focus on curses on individuals whose egregious sins would defile the covenant community. "These people are worthy of death, and if they are not removed from the covenantal people, God's people themselves will be cursed."
- Gombis presents his own interpretation: Paul's argument here is "specifically ad hoc," demonstrating the incoherence of the Jewish missionaries' position. They are Jewish Christians (part of God's inclusive people in Christ) who are simultaneously advocating for an exclusive people of God based on adherence to the Mosaic Law.
- He visualizes this as the missionaries being "out here where God is building this one new multi-national people of Jews and Gentiles in Christ" while also claiming that those outside the Mosaic Law are under a curse. This, according to Gombis, makes them lawbreakers by their own logic.

- He emphasizes that Christ has already redeemed them (Jewish Christians) from the curse of the law, evacuating its power to condemn them.
- Therefore, Paul's argument is that those in Galatia who promote the necessity of "works of the law" (adopting Jewish identity) are ironically placing themselves under the law's curse according to their own understanding.
- Gombis concludes that it's inappropriate to generalize the "curse of the law" to all humanity outside of Christ, as the Mosaic Law was specifically given to Israel ("Gentiles were not under the Mosaic Law"). This is an argument tailored to the Galatian situation.
- He interprets Galatians 3:14 as stating that Christ redeemed "us" (Jewish Christians) from the curse of the law so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles and so that both groups ("we," including Jewish Christians) might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith within the new multi-ethnic people of God.

5. Galatians 3:15-29: The Relationship Between the Promise to Abraham and the Mosaic Law:

- Paul shifts to explain how the Law relates to the promise made to Abraham, aiming to "widen the distance" between them, contrary to the agitators who connect being part of Abraham's family to proper adherence to the Mosaic Law.
- **The Law Serves the Promise:** Paul establishes the principle that an established covenant cannot be annulled (Galatians 3:15).
- He makes a controversial argument that God's promise to Abraham and "his seed" (singular) refers to Christ (Galatians 3:16). "God does not say, 'and to seeds,' referring to many, but rather to one and to your seed, which Paul interprets here as Christ."
- The Law came "430 years later" and cannot invalidate the prior Abrahamic covenant (Galatians 3:17). This emphasizes the priority and distinct nature of the promise.
- Inheritance comes through the promise, not the Law (Galatians 3:18).
- **Purpose of the Law (Galatians 3:19-20):** Paul provides four reasons for the Law:

- "It was added because of transgressions," which Gombis interprets not as provoking or identifying sins in an individualistic sense, but as maintaining a distinct people who would eventually produce the Messiah.
- It was "ordained by angels," highlighting its mediated nature (based on Jewish tradition).
- It involved a "mediator" (Moses).
- It was временное ("until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made"), indicating a temporary limitation.
- Gombis interprets the cryptic statement "Now a mediator is not for one, whereas God is one" (Galatians 3:20) as contrasting the mediated relationship with God through the Law (via Moses) with the immediate relationship with God through Christ ("If you are wrapped up in Christ, you are related to God immediately. There's no mediation").
- **The Law is Not Contrary to the Promises (Galatians 3:21-22):** Paul asserts, "Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Not at all!" (Galatians 3:21).
- He explains that the Law's purpose was never to impart life in the eschatological sense; that is the role of the promise (referencing Abraham's age and Sarah's barrenness and the new creation in Christ). "That was never the Mosaic Law's job. The Mosaic Law had a different job to play in the plan of God."
- Instead, "Scripture has shut up all men under sin so that the promise by faith in Christ Jesus may be given to all those who believe" (Galatians 3:22). The Law as Scripture testifies to the universal need for salvation, but it is not the means of achieving it.
- **The Law as a Temporary Tutor (Galatians 3:23-29):** "Before faith came" (before Christ), Jews were "kept in custody under the law" (Galatians 3:23), preserved as a distinct people until the arrival of Christ.
- "The law has become our tutor until Christ" (Galatians 3:24). Gombis notes that "until" is a more accurate translation than implying the Law's purpose was to drive people to Christ (Lutheran interpretation). It was a temporary measure to hold the Jewish people together.
- "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Galatians 3:25). Gombis clarifies this primarily applies to Jewish Christians regarding the Law's

confining function, as they are now part of the broader multi-ethnic family in Christ.

- In Christ, all believers ("you all") are children of God through faith (Galatians 3:26).
- Baptism into Christ signifies being clothed with Christ, erasing ethnic and social distinctions: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).
- Ultimately, "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29). This includes both Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ, united in the blessing of Abraham.

Conclusion:

Gombis concludes that Galatians 3 presents a complex, covenantal argument aimed at addressing a specific situation in Galatia. Paul strategically uses Old Testament texts and theological reasoning to demonstrate the superiority and priority of the promise to Abraham, fulfilled in Christ, over the Mosaic Law as a means of justification and inclusion in God's people. He argues against the necessity of Gentile Christians adopting Jewish identity and warns Jewish Christian missionaries against promoting such exclusivity, as it contradicts the inclusive nature of the gospel and their own participation in the new, multi-ethnic family of God in Christ. He cautions against abstracting these arguments without considering their original rhetorical context.

4. Study Guide: Gombis, Galatians, Session 5, Galatians 3

Galatians 3 Study Guide

Quiz

1. According to Dr. Gombis, why is Galatians 3 considered a particularly challenging section of Paul's writing? What is Paul's primary goal in this chapter?
2. What does Paul likely mean when he states that Jesus Christ was "publicly portrayed as crucified" before the Galatians? How does Paul connect his own physical appearance and ministry style to this portrayal?
3. In Galatians 3:2-5, what contrasting concepts does Paul repeatedly emphasize through his rhetorical questions? What point is he trying to make about how the Galatians initially received the Spirit?
4. Explain the contrast Paul draws between those "of faith" and those "of the works of the law" in Galatians 3:6-9. To whom specifically does Paul seem to be referring with these two groups in the context of the Galatian churches?
5. Describe the traditional interpretation of the "curse of the law" in Galatians 3:10 and 13. What are some of the issues Dr. Gombis raises with this interpretation?
6. Summarize Dr. Gombis' alternative interpretation of the "curse of the law" in Galatians 3:10 and 13. How does he connect this interpretation to the specific situation in Galatia and Paul's argument in Galatians 2:18?
7. How does Dr. Gombis interpret Galatians 3:11-12, particularly the phrase "the law is not of faith"? What does he believe Paul is referring to when he uses the term "the law" in this context?
8. According to Dr. Gombis, who is included in Paul's statement in Galatians 3:14 that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law"? How does this redemption relate to the blessing of Abraham coming to the Gentiles?
9. What is the main point of Paul's argument in Galatians 3:15-18 regarding the promise to Abraham and the Mosaic Law? How does Paul use the concept of "seed" in this section?
10. Explain the four reasons Paul gives for the purpose of the law in Galatians 3:19. What does Dr. Gombis suggest is the primary reason for the law's addition "because of transgressions"?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Galatians 3 is considered tangled due to its complex arguments and the passage involving the curse of the law (3:10-14). Paul's ultimate rhetorical aim in this chapter is to convince the non-Jewish Christians in Galatia not to Judaize and accept the pressure to be circumcised and follow the law of Moses.
2. When Paul says Jesus Christ was "publicly portrayed as crucified," he likely refers to his original preaching in Galatia, where his own physically marred appearance after being stoned served as a vivid demonstration of Christ's crucifixion. Paul believed his very person, in its brokenness, manifested the reality of the crucified Christ.
3. Paul repeatedly contrasts "works of the law" with "hearing with faith" (or faithful hearing) in Galatians 3:2 and 5. He emphasizes that the Galatians received the Holy Spirit through their response of faith to the gospel message, not by adopting a Jewish identity and adhering to the works of the law.
4. Those "of faith" are those who respond to God's initiative with belief and faithfulness, like Abraham, and are blessed. Those "of the works of the law" in this context specifically refer to the Jewish missionaries in Galatia who are teaching that Gentile Christians must adopt Jewish practices to be saved, and according to Paul, they are under a curse due to their incoherent position.
5. The traditional interpretation suggests that the law demands perfect obedience, which no one can achieve, thus placing everyone under a universal curse. Christ then redeems believers from this curse. Dr. Gombis finds issues with this because the Mosaic Law, rightly understood, didn't demand perfect obedience but provided for restoration, and Paul doesn't explicitly state the premise of impossible perfect obedience.
6. Dr. Gombis interprets the curse of the law in Galatians 3:10 and 13 as an ad hoc argument demonstrating the incoherence of the Jewish missionaries' position. They are Jewish Christians (part of God's inclusive people in Christ) who argue for an exclusive people based on the Mosaic Law, thus placing themselves under the law's curse for not fully remaining within it. Christ's redemption negates this problem for Jewish Christians.
7. Dr. Gombis interprets "the law is not of faith" (Galatians 3:12) not as a denigration of the Mosaic Law itself, but as Paul saying that for the Galatians, adopting the law (Judaizing) is not the faithful way. He believes "the law" here is shorthand for

the pressure to adopt Jewish identity, and the faithful response for the Galatians is to live by faith in Christ through acts of love.

8. According to Dr. Gombis, when Paul says "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law" in Galatians 3:14, he initially means Jewish Christians. This redemption allows them to join the multi-ethnic people of God, and through Christ, the blessing of Abraham comes to the Gentiles so that both groups might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
9. Paul argues that the promise to Abraham (and his "seed," interpreted as Christ) predates the Mosaic Law by 430 years, establishing a foundational covenant that cannot be annulled by the later law. The inheritance (blessing) comes through this promise based on faith, not through adherence to the law.
10. Paul gives four reasons for the law: it was added because of transgressions, it was ordained by angels, it involved a mediator (Moses), and it was in effect until the Seed (Christ) should come. Dr. Gombis suggests that "because of transgressions" means the law was given to maintain a distinct people who would ultimately produce the Messiah, preventing them from dissipating through disobedience.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the rhetorical context of Galatians 3, emphasizing Dr. Gombis' assertion that Paul's statements are not abstract theological pronouncements but strategically aimed at a specific situation. How does understanding this context affect the interpretation of key passages in the chapter?
2. Compare and contrast the traditional interpretation of the "curse of the law" in Galatians 3:10-13 with Dr. Gombis' alternative reading. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation, and how does each view impact one's understanding of the relationship between law and grace in Paul's theology?
3. Analyze Dr. Gombis' interpretation of Galatians 3:11-12, particularly his understanding of the phrase "the law is not of faith." How does his explanation, using the analogy of his relationship with his sons, illuminate Paul's strategic use of language in addressing the specific pressures faced by the Galatian churches?
4. Explain how Paul uses the figure of Abraham in Galatians 3 to support his argument against Judaizing. How does Paul connect the promise to Abraham, the role of faith, and the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's covenantal plan?

5. Discuss Paul's argument in Galatians 3:15-29 regarding the relationship between the promise to Abraham and the Mosaic Law. How does Paul emphasize the priority and nature of the promise, and what does this imply about the purpose and temporary nature of the law in God's salvific plan?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Judaize:** To conform to Jewish customs, practices, and beliefs. In the context of Galatians, it specifically refers to the pressure on Gentile Christians to adopt practices like circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic Law.
- **Works of the Law:** Actions performed in obedience to the Mosaic Law, often understood by Paul's opponents as necessary for justification and inclusion in God's people. Paul argues against this view, emphasizing that justification comes through faith in Christ.
- **Hearing with Faith (or Faithful Hearing):** The receptive and trusting response to the proclamation of the gospel. Paul contrasts this with the performance of "works of the law" as the means by which the Galatians received the Holy Spirit and experienced God's grace.
- **Curse of the Law:** The condemnation that the law brings upon those who fail to keep all of its commands. Interpretations vary, with some seeing it as a universal condemnation of human sinfulness and others, like Dr. Gombis, understanding it in the specific context of the Galatian controversy.
- **Promise to Abraham:** God's covenant with Abraham, promising him numerous descendants, blessing, and a land. Paul argues that this promise, received by faith, is the primary basis for God's relationship with humanity and is fulfilled in Christ, extending the blessing to the Gentiles.
- **Seed (of Abraham):** In Galatians 3:16, Paul makes a somewhat unusual interpretation of Genesis, arguing that the singular "seed" refers to Christ. Through union with Christ, believers become Abraham's true offspring and heirs of the promise.
- **Mediator:** One who stands between two parties to reconcile them or facilitate a covenant. In Galatians 3:19-20, Paul mentions Moses as the mediator of the Mosaic Law and contrasts this mediated relationship with the direct relationship believers have with the one God through Christ.

- **Tutor (Paidagōgos):** In Galatians 3:24-25, Paul describes the law as a temporary "tutor" or guardian that kept the Jewish people under its supervision until the coming of Christ. Once faith in Christ has arrived, believers are no longer under this tutelage.
- **Justification:** The act by which God declares a person righteous in his sight. Paul argues throughout Galatians that justification is received through faith in Jesus Christ, not through obedience to the Mosaic Law.
- **Ad Hoc:** A Latin phrase meaning "for this purpose" or "for this situation." Dr. Gombis uses this to describe some of Paul's arguments in Galatians as being specifically tailored to the particular controversy in the Galatian churches rather than being universally applicable theological statements.

5. FAQs on Gombis, Galatians, Session 5, Galatians 3, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Galatians 3 Based on Dr. Gombis's Session 5

1. **Why does Dr. Gombis describe Galatians 3 as a particularly "tangled" section of Pauline text?** Dr. Gombis notes that Galatians 3 is considered complex due to the dense arguments Paul presents, especially concerning the curse of the law (verses 10-14). Many Pauline debates and theological difficulties converge in this chapter. Furthermore, Paul's writing here is highly rhetorical and situation-specific, aimed at convincing the Galatians not to Judaize, rather than presenting abstract systematic theology.
2. **What does Paul mean when he says the Galatians had Jesus Christ "publicly portrayed as crucified" before their eyes (Galatians 3:1)?** This likely refers to Paul's initial preaching and personal presentation in Galatia. Gombis suggests it wasn't just the content of his message but the manner in which he delivered it. Given his possible disfigured appearance after being stoned (as mentioned in Acts) and his own acknowledgment in Galatians 4 about his appearance being a test for them, Paul himself embodied the image of Christ crucified through his suffering and vulnerability in proclaiming the gospel.
3. **What is the central contrast Paul draws in Galatians 3:2-5 through his rhetorical questions?** Paul contrasts "works of the law" with "hearing with faith" (or faithful hearing). He reminds the Galatians that they received the Holy Spirit and experienced God's miracles not by adopting a Jewish identity and adhering to the Mosaic Law, but through their initial faithful response to the gospel message Paul proclaimed. This highlights that their relationship with God was established through faith, not legalistic adherence to Jewish customs.
4. **How does Paul use the example of Abraham in Galatians 3:6-9 to support his argument?** Paul presents Abraham as the exemplary figure of faith, citing Genesis 15:6 where Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." He argues that those who share Abraham's faith, regardless of their ethnicity, are the true children of Abraham and are blessed along with him. This directly counters the idea promoted by the Jewish missionaries that belonging to Abraham's lineage is primarily defined by Jewish identity and adherence to the law.

5. **What are the two main arguments Dr. Gombis identifies in Paul's discussion of the "curse of the law" in Galatians 3:10-13?** The first argument (related to verse 10 and 13) addresses the incoherence of the Jewish missionaries' position. They, as Jewish Christians, are part of God's multi-ethnic people in Christ, yet they insist that Gentiles must adopt Jewish identity (the "works of the law") to be truly saved. Paul argues that the law curses those who do not remain within it, implying that the missionaries themselves, by being in Christ and among the Gentiles, could be seen as transgressing this boundary under their own logic. However, Christ has already redeemed Jewish Christians from this "curse" by becoming a curse for them. The second argument (related to verses 11 and 12) focuses on the alternative ways of relating to God: adopting Jewish identity ("the law" in this context) versus living by faith. Paul contends that adopting Jewish identity is not the faithful way for the Gentile Galatians, and the true path to God is through faith, consistent with the Old Testament principle that "the righteous shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).
6. **According to Dr. Gombis, how should we understand Paul's statement in Galatians 3:14 regarding the redemption from the "curse of the law" and the blessing of Abraham coming to the Gentiles?** Gombis interprets this to mean that Christ's redemption from the curse of the law was primarily for Jewish Christians, enabling them to join the multi-ethnic people of God without being bound by the exclusive demands of the Mosaic Law. This redemption paved the way for the blessing promised to Abraham (that all nations would be blessed through him) to extend to the Gentiles through faith in Christ. Consequently, both Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ become part of Abraham's spiritual offspring.
7. **What is Paul's main point in Galatians 3:15-18 regarding the relationship between the promise to Abraham and the Mosaic Law?** Paul argues for the priority and distinct nature of the Abrahamic promise compared to the Mosaic Law. He emphasizes that the promise to Abraham (and his "seed," Christ) was established centuries before the law and, as a ratified covenant, cannot be annulled or altered by the later Mosaic Law. The inheritance is based on this prior promise, not on adherence to the law. This aims to diminish the significance of the law as the primary means of inheriting God's blessings, as the Jewish missionaries were suggesting.

8. **How does Paul describe the purpose and temporary nature of the law in Galatians 3:19-29?** Paul states that the law was added "because of transgressions," serving to keep the people distinct until the coming of the "seed" (Christ). He suggests it was mediated through angels and Moses, highlighting a sense of indirectness compared to the direct relationship with God offered through Christ. Paul emphasizes that the law acted as a "tutor" (or guardian) until Christ came. However, with the arrival of faith in Christ, those who are in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, are now children of God through faith, baptized into Christ, and united as one in Him, making ethnic and legalistic distinctions irrelevant for belonging to Abraham's offspring and being heirs according to the promise.