

# Dr. Tim Gombis, Galatians, Session 7, Galatians 5:2-26 Resources from NotebookLM

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

## 1. Abstract of Gombis, Galatians, Session 7, Galatians 5:2-26, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Tim Gombis's lecture, Session 7 on Galatians 5:2-26**, explores Paul's arguments against Judaizing, emphasizing that salvation comes through faith in Christ, not adherence to the Mosaic Law, particularly circumcision. **Gombis highlights Paul's concern that Gentile believers adopting Jewish practices would signify a return to an exclusive community, cutting themselves off from the inclusive reality of Christ's multi-ethnic body.** The lecture further examines the **contrast between living by the Spirit, which produces love and unity within the community, and living according to the flesh, which fosters division and destructive behaviors.** Gombis interprets Paul's discussion not merely as individual spiritual guidance, but as a means for the Galatian community to discern the cosmic forces at work within them and to cultivate a life characterized by cruciform love and service. Ultimately, the session underscores that **identity in Christ transcends ethnic distinctions and calls for a community shaped by the Spirit's fruit, fostering resurrection dynamics.**

**2. 25 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Gombis, Galatians, Session 7 – 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\_  
Session07.mp3

### 3. Briefing Document: Gombis, Galatians, Session 7, Galatians 5:2-26

Briefing Document: Galatians 5:2-26 - Resisting Judaizing and Living by the Spirit

**Source:** Excerpts from "Gombis\_Galatians\_EN\_Session07.pdf" by Dr. Tim Gombis

**Date:** October 26, 2023 (based on the © 2024 notation implying a recent recording)

#### Overview:

In this session, Dr. Tim Gombis delves into Galatians 5:2-26, focusing on Paul's urgent exhortation to the Galatian Gentile Christians to resist the influence of "Judaizers" who were advocating for circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic Law as necessary for salvation. Gombis emphasizes that Paul's argument centers on the exclusive nature of this legalistic approach, which undermines the all-inclusive nature of salvation through faith in Christ and the new multi-ethnic community God is building. He further explores the contrast between living according to the "flesh" and living by the "Spirit" as community-level dynamics that reveal the underlying cosmic realities at play.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. Resisting Judaizing and the Implications of Circumcision (5:2-12):

- **Circumcision as a Reversion to Exclusivity:** Gombis argues that for the Galatian Gentiles, undergoing circumcision signified a conversion to Judaism and a return to an exclusive mode of existence, cutting themselves off from Gentile fellowship. Paul states emphatically, "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you" (5:2).
- **Severed from Christ and Fallen from Grace:** Embracing circumcision as a requirement for justification severs believers from Christ and constitutes a "falling from grace" (5:4). Gombis clarifies that grace is found in the inclusive, multi-ethnic community built by Christ, whereas legalism represents a return to a system where grace is absent.
- **Faith Working Through Love as the Defining Factor:** In Christ, ethnic distinctions like circumcision or uncircumcision are irrelevant. What truly matters is "faith working itself out in love" (5:6). Gombis highlights the radical nature of this statement in a Jewish context where being Jewish was considered fundamental to

one's identity. He connects this to Galatians 6:15, where Paul states, "neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation."

- **Hindrance to Obedience to the Truth:** The Judaizing influence is portrayed as hindering the Galatians in their "race" toward the day of Christ (5:7). Gombis notes that Paul views freedom in Christ as obedience to the truth, and the persuasive teaching of the Judaizers is not from God (5:8).
- **The Problem is the Persuasion, Not the Law Itself:** Gombis reiterates that Paul's issue is not with the Mosaic Law in its proper context but with the "persuasion" that Gentiles need to become Jewish to be fully saved. He emphasizes that "the problem is Gentiles adopting Judaism" (5:4).
- **Dealing with False Teachers:** Paul uses the analogy of "a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough" (5:9) to illustrate the danger of allowing the Judaizing teachers to remain in the Galatian congregations. He urges their removal to protect the community.
- **The Scandal of the Cross:** Paul's continued persecution despite his Jewish background demonstrates that his current preaching, which embraces Gentiles, remains a "stumbling block" to those who believe in maintaining a strict separation between Jews and Gentiles (5:11). If he were still preaching the necessity of circumcision, this stumbling block would be removed.
- **Strong Rebuke:** Paul's desire that those troubling the Galatians would "even mutilate themselves" (5:12) underscores his intense opposition to their teachings.

## 2. The Law of Freedom and Serving One Another in Love (5:13-15):

- **Freedom Not License:** Christians are called to freedom, but this freedom should not be used as "an opportunity for the flesh" (5:13). Gombis interprets "flesh" here not just as individual desires but as a cosmic anti-God impulse that seeks to destroy the new creation community.
- **Resolving Conflict with Gospel Priorities:** Even in addressing the conflict caused by the Judaizers, the Galatians must be careful not to employ worldly methods that could further damage the community. Christian vision should be guided by "gospel priorities and gospel aims and the gospel logic."
- **Love and Service as the Essence:** True Christian freedom is expressed through love and service to one another: "...through love serve one another" (5:13). This

reflects the character of Jesus and is the "heart and soul" of the Christian community.

- **Fulfillment of the Law in Love:** Paul states that "the whole law is fulfilled in this one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (5:14), referencing Leviticus 19.
- **Danger of Internal Conflict:** Failure to love and serve will lead to internal destruction: "But if you bite and devour one another, watch out lest you be consumed by one another" (5:15). Scripture rightly read fosters love and faithfulness, while wrongly read creates divisions.

### 3. The Conflict Between the Flesh and the Spirit as Community Dynamics (5:16-26):

- **Two Competing Cosmic Realms:** Paul depicts a conflict between the realm of the "flesh" and the realm of the "Spirit," not merely as individual struggles but as cosmic dynamics that animate communities.
- **Discerning Community Dynamics:** Paul provides the Galatians with "lenses of discernment" to recognize which cosmic force is at work in their community by observing the resulting behaviors.
- **"Walk by the Spirit" as a Community Imperative:** The exhortation to "walk by the Spirit" (5:16) is interpreted by Gombis as a communal call to live in the realm of the Spirit, which will counteract the destructive desires of the flesh.
- **Opposition Between Flesh and Spirit:** The flesh and the Spirit are in constant opposition (5:17), influencing community life. Gombis suggests this means the Galatians, caught in this cosmic conflict, cannot simply do whatever they want and require careful discernment. Alternatively, it implies that they cannot achieve a healthy community through coercion but through living in the Spirit.
- **Led by the Spirit, Not Under the Law (in the Judaizing Sense):** A community "led by the Spirit" is not obligated to adopt Jewish identity or the legalistic interpretations being promoted by the Judaizers (5:18). However, Gentiles should still engage with the Mosaic Law to know the God of Israel, without adopting its Israel-specific aspects.
- **Works of the Flesh (Community-Level Behaviors):** Gombis emphasizes that the list of the "deeds of the flesh" (5:19-21) often manifests as corporate behaviors that are destructive to community life. He cautions against ranking sins, as

anything that breaks up the community is serious. These behaviors prevent inheritance of the kingdom of God.

- **Fruit of the Spirit (Corporate Expressions of God's Presence):** Conversely, the "fruit of the Spirit" (5:22-23) are corporate behaviors that indicate God's Spirit is actively at work in the community, producing love, joy, peace, etc. The law is not against such things.
- **Crucifying the Flesh and Living by the Spirit:** Those who belong to Christ have "crucified the flesh" (5:24) and should actively "live by the Spirit" (5:25), avoiding behaviors that lead to divisiveness and envy.
- **Cultivating Cruciform Attitudes:** Gombis encourages believers to adopt "cruciform attitudes, behaviors, and speech patterns" as a way to inhabit the new creation realm and stir up resurrection dynamics. Approaching conflict with humility and surrendering leverage are examples of this.

#### Quote Highlights:

- "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you." (5:2)
- "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace." (5:4)
- "...neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything but faith working itself out in love." (5:6)
- "...neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation." (Galatians 6:15, referenced in the discussion)
- "...would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves." (5:12)
- "...for you were called to freedom, brothers, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (5:13)
- "For the whole law is fulfilled in this one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (5:14)
- "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (5:16)

- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (5:22-23)
- "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (5:24)
- "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another." (5:25-26)

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Gombis's analysis of Galatians 5:2-26 underscores the critical importance of resisting legalistic approaches to faith that create division and undermine the inclusive nature of the gospel. He highlights that true Christian living is characterized by faith expressed through love and service within the community. Furthermore, he frames the conflict between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" as a dynamic at the community level, urging believers to discern the prevailing cosmic influences by observing their relational behaviors and to actively cultivate the fruit of the Spirit through cruciform living. This passage serves as a powerful reminder that the essence of the new creation in Christ is a unified, loving community shaped by the Spirit, not by adherence to ethnic or legalistic boundaries.

## 4. Study Guide: Gombis, Galatians, Session 7, Galatians 5:2-26

### Galatians 5:2-26 Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. According to Paul in Galatians 5:2-4, what is the consequence for the Galatian Gentiles if they receive circumcision? Why does Paul argue this?
2. In Galatians 5:6, what does Paul state is the only thing that truly matters in Christ Jesus? What does he mean by this statement regarding ethnic distinctions?
3. According to Gombis, what is the "persuasion" Paul speaks against in Galatians 5:7-8? What is Paul's fundamental issue with this persuasion?
4. Explain Paul's use of the "little leaven" analogy in Galatians 5:9-10. Who or what does the leaven represent in the context of the Galatian churches?
5. What does Paul mean when he says in Galatians 5:11 that if he still preached circumcision, the stumbling block of the cross would be abolished?
6. How does Gombis interpret Paul's statement about using freedom as an "opportunity for the flesh" in Galatians 5:13? Is Paul primarily addressing individual desires or something broader?
7. In Galatians 5:14, Paul states that the whole law is fulfilled in one word. What is that word, and what does this imply about the purpose of the Mosaic Law?
8. According to Gombis, is Paul's depiction of the "flesh" and the "Spirit" in Galatians 5:16-26 primarily focused on individual spirituality or the dynamics of a community? Explain your reasoning.
9. List three examples of the "deeds of the flesh" and three examples of the "fruit of the Spirit" as presented in Galatians 5:19-23. Why does Gombis caution against ranking these behaviors?
10. According to Gombis, how can believers in Christ, having "crucified the flesh," actively live by the Spirit in their communities (Galatians 5:24-26)? What does he suggest as a practical approach?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Paul states that if they receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to them, and they will be severed from Christ, having fallen from grace. He argues this because circumcision, in this context, symbolizes a conversion to Judaism and the full observance of the Mosaic Law, a return to an exclusive mode of existence that cuts them off from Gentile fellowship and thus from where Christ is building his multi-ethnic family.
2. Paul states that in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working itself out in love is what matters. He means that ethnic distinctions are no longer the defining characteristic of God's people; fundamental identity in Christ transcends these differences.
3. The "persuasion" Paul speaks against is the teaching that the Gentile Christians in Galatia need to convert and become Jewish to fully enjoy God's salvation. Paul's fundamental issue is that this view necessitates a change in ethnicity to be accepted by God, contradicting the gospel of justification by faith in Christ alone.
4. Paul uses the "little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough" analogy to illustrate that even a small amount of the false teaching from the Jewish missionaries can infect and negatively impact the entire Galatian church community, putting their spiritual well-being at risk. The leaven represents this erroneous teaching and its proponents.
5. Paul means that his continued preaching of the necessity of circumcision would eliminate the offense of the cross. The cross is a stumbling block to those who believe in maintaining a separation between Jews and Gentiles for purity because it requires fellowship with those historically considered sinners for salvation.
6. Gombis interprets Paul's statement as primarily addressing the cosmic power of the flesh, an anti-God impulse that can infect community life and destroy new creation communities. While individual desires are part of this, Paul's focus is on how this power manifests in destructive community dynamics and conflicts.
7. The word is "love," specifically to "love your neighbor as yourself." This implies that the entire Mosaic Law, rightly understood, ultimately points towards and is fulfilled in this principle of self-giving love and concern for others within the community.
8. According to Gombis, Paul's depiction is primarily focused on the dynamics of a community. He argues that Paul is granting the Galatians "lenses of discernment"



to recognize the cosmic forces of the flesh and the Spirit at work in their shared life through observable behaviors and relational patterns.

9. Examples of the "deeds of the flesh" include idolatry, strife, and jealousy. Examples of the "fruit of the Spirit" include love, joy, and peace. Gombis cautions against ranking these behaviors because all of them, regardless of perceived severity, can be destructive to the unity and life of the Christian community, which is what Christ died to establish.
10. Believers can actively live by the Spirit by cultivating behaviors, attitudes, and relational dynamics characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, such as love and service. Gombis suggests a practical approach of discerning and resisting "works of the flesh" in community life and creatively imagining and adopting "cruciform" attitudes and speech patterns that reflect the self-sacrificial love of Christ.

## **Essay Format Questions**

1. Analyze Paul's argument in Galatians 5:2-12 against the necessity of circumcision for Gentile believers. How does Gombis interpret the theological implications of Paul's strong language in this section regarding Christ and grace?
2. Discuss the significance of Paul's emphasis on "faith working itself out in love" (Galatians 5:6) as the defining characteristic of the new creation in Christ. How does this principle challenge ethnic and other forms of division within the Christian community, according to Gombis' interpretation?
3. Explain Gombis' interpretation of the conflict between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" in Galatians 5:16-26. How does he frame this conflict not just as an individual struggle but as a dynamic that shapes the life and character of Christian communities?
4. Examine the lists of the "deeds of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:19-23. According to Gombis, what is the purpose of these lists, and how should contemporary Christian communities utilize them for self-reflection and growth?
5. Discuss the concept of "cruciformity" as presented by Gombis in relation to Galatians 5:24-26. How does the cross of Christ provide a model for how believers should live in the new creation, and what practical implications does this have for their interactions and community life?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Judaizing:** The act of non-Jews adopting Jewish customs, practices, laws, and beliefs, often with the implication that these are necessary for salvation or full inclusion in God's people.
- **Justification:** The act by which God declares a person righteous in his sight, not based on their works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. Often used interchangeably with "righteousness" in this context.
- **Grace:** God's unmerited favor, love, and gift freely given to humanity, particularly in the salvation offered through Jesus Christ.
- **Mosaic Law:** The body of commandments and instructions given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, recorded in the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah).
- **New Creation:** The reality brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, signifying a new cosmic order and a new way of relating to God and one another, transcending old divisions and categories.
- **Flesh (in Galatians 5 context):** Not merely the physical body, but a cosmic power or realm characterized by self-centeredness, opposition to God, and the production of behaviors that destroy community.
- **Spirit (in Galatians 5 context):** The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who empowers believers and produces life-giving and community-building virtues in them. Also refers to the cosmic realm animated by the Spirit.
- **Works of the Flesh:** Behaviors and attitudes stemming from the cosmic power of the flesh that are destructive to relationships and community, listed in Galatians 5:19-21.
- **Fruit of the Spirit:** Virtues and characteristics produced by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and their communities, listed in Galatians 5:22-23.
- **Cruciformity:** The idea of being shaped by the cross of Christ, reflecting his self-sacrificial love, humility, and other characteristics in one's attitudes, behaviors, and relationships.

## 5. FAQs on Gombis, Galatians, Session 7, Galatians 5:2-26, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Galatians 5:2-26 (Based on Dr. Gombis' Teaching)

### **1. According to Paul in Galatians 5:2-4, why would receiving circumcision negate the benefit of Christ for the Galatian believers?**

Dr. Gombis explains that Paul views circumcision for these Gentile believers as a conversion to Judaism and full adherence to the Mosaic Law. This represents a reversion to an "exclusive mode of existence" where fellowship is primarily with fellow Jews, cutting them off from the multi-ethnic family of God being built in Christ. Because Christ is found within this new, inclusive reality, embracing circumcision signifies a rejection of the grace offered through faith in Christ and an attempt to achieve righteousness through legalistic striving, effectively severing their connection with Christ and falling from grace (understood as leaving the sphere where grace is active).

### **2. How does Paul contrast the approach of seeking justification through the law with the Christian hope of righteousness in Galatians 5:5-6?**

Paul states that "we by faith, through the Spirit, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (or justification). This "we" refers to all who are in Christ by faith, both Jewish and Gentile believers. This hope of future justification is attained through faith and the work of the Spirit, not through adherence to the Mosaic Law. In Christ Jesus, Paul emphasizes that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any ultimate significance; what truly matters is "faith working itself out in love." This highlights that the new marker of God's people is not ethnicity or legal observance, but a transformed life characterized by love emanating from faith in Christ.

### **3. What is the "persuasion" that Paul warns against in Galatians 5:7-10, and why does he say it is not from God?**

The "persuasion" Paul refers to is the teaching being promoted in Galatia that Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and adopt Jewish customs to be fully accepted by God. Dr. Gombis clarifies that Paul's issue is not with the Mosaic Law itself or with Jewish identity, but with the insistence that Gentiles must *change* their ethnicity and adopt Jewish practices to be part of God's people. This teaching creates division and contradicts the gospel's inclusive nature. Paul argues that this "persuasion" does not come from God because God is currently calling people into a multi-ethnic community through faith in Christ, and this teaching undermines that work.

**4. How does Dr. Gombis interpret Paul's statement in Galatians 5:11 about no longer being persecuted if he still preached circumcision, and what is the "stumbling block of the cross"?**

Dr. Gombis suggests that Paul's former life involved being part of the "Judaism" that sought to maintain the purity of God's people by excluding foreign influences. Now, he is persecuted precisely because he preaches the opposite: that Jewish Christians must embrace Gentile believers as equals in Christ. If Paul were still advocating for circumcision, it would remove the "stumbling block of the cross" for those who believed that separation from Gentiles was necessary for maintaining God's covenant. The cross is a stumbling block because it necessitates fellowship with those historically considered "sinners" for both Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled to God.

**5. What does Paul mean by "freedom" in Galatians 5:13, and how should this freedom be used by believers?**

Paul states that believers were called to freedom but warns them not to turn this freedom into an "opportunity for the flesh." Dr. Gombis explains that this freedom is not a license to indulge in selfish desires but rather a liberation from the enslaving power of the "present evil age" and its emphasis on ethnic and legalistic divisions. Instead of using this freedom for self-indulgence or to create new forms of division or condemnation within the community, believers are called to "through love serve one another." Love and service are the defining characteristics of a Spirit-filled community.

**6. How does Dr. Gombis explain Paul's contrast between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" in Galatians 5:16-26? Is this primarily about individual behavior, or something broader?**

Dr. Gombis emphasizes that Paul's discussion of the "flesh" and the "Spirit" is not primarily about individual spirituality but about the "cosmic dynamics that animate communities." The "flesh" represents a cosmic power that fosters division, strife, and behaviors destructive to community, while the "Spirit" represents the life-giving power of God that produces love, joy, peace, and other virtues within the community. Paul is giving the Galatians "lenses of discernment" to recognize which cosmic force is at work in their midst by observing the relational dynamics and behaviors within their congregations.

**7. What are some examples of the "deeds of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" mentioned in Galatians 5:19-23, and how should believers understand these lists in the context of community life?**

The "deeds of the flesh" include things like idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, dissensions, and factions. The "fruit of the Spirit" includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Dr. Gombis stresses that both lists highlight behaviors and relational dynamics that impact the entire community. The "deeds of the flesh" are not just individual sins but patterns that break down community, while the "fruit of the Spirit" are corporate characteristics that signify God's presence and life within the community. He cautions against ranking sins, as anything that destroys community is contrary to God's purposes.

**8. According to Dr. Gombis, how can believers cultivate the life of the Spirit in their communities, and what is the significance of "cruciformity" in this context?**

Cultivating the life of the Spirit in communities involves actively pursuing behaviors characterized by the "fruit of the Spirit," such as mutual service and love. This requires a conscious effort to counter the divisive tendencies of the "flesh." Dr. Gombis introduces the concept of "cruciformity," suggesting that adopting attitudes, behaviors, and speech patterns "in the shape of the cross" – characterized by humility, self-sacrifice, and a willingness to relinquish power and leverage – is the means by which believers can tap into the "resurrection dynamics" inherent in the new creation brought about by Christ's death and resurrection. By embodying the self-giving love of Christ, believers can foster communities where the Spirit thrives.