

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ [aorist passive indicative of καταργέω (*katargéō*): **culminative indicating existing results**], you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (NASB)

1. A believer cannot be severed from Christ neither can he fall from grace. At salvation, the believer is placed into union with Christ, a circumstance described as positional sanctification or being inside the Top Circle. Severance from that status quo is impossible.
2. Secondly, the entire plan of God for the believer is His matchless grace. Regardless of the spiritual status quo of the believer, he is always supervised by the components of the love of God or the integrity of God:
(1) Righteousness which refers to the standards of divine integrity, (2) Justice which is the function of divine integrity, (3) Grace which is the system or policy of divine integrity, and (4) Omniscience which refers to the divine decree. Believers are never dealt with by God outside of this system or policy of grace.
3. Therefore, those being evaluated by Paul are believers whose spiritual lives are directed toward the Mosaic Law, not the grace of God. They have chosen to be severed from Christ temporally by reversionism and fallen from grace volitionally by engaging in human good and evil.
4. Some of the members of the Galatian church are involved in works, specifically the ritual of circumcision which they assume results in salvation or is an essential part of the salvation formula.
5. Salvation is the result of an unbeliever placing his personal faith in Christ, believing this volitional decision results in deliverance from the lake of fire and reception of eternal life.
6. Circumcision is a ritual associated with the Mosaic Law. It was commanded of Abraham at age 99 to commemorate his restored sexual ability and designed to introduce a forth category of Homo sapiens, namely the Hebrew or the Jew or the Israelite.

7. Circumcision was then applied to all of Abraham's progeny as a reminder that they were the race that would produce the Messiah and the Savior of all who believe in Him.
8. In the Church Age, circumcision is a source of legalism, a means of distorting the gospel of salvation and preventing believers from growing spiritually.
9. The Judaizers went into Galatia following Paul's ministry there and propagandized them to engage in circumcision as a means of salvation.
10. In Galatians 5:4, we are noting Paul's response to the requirements imposed by that church to include circumcision as a necessary part of the gospel:
Galatians 5:2 Behold, I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.
v. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole law. (NASB)
11. James certifies this principle in:
James 2:10 Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (NASB)
12. In Galatians 5:4, Paul identifies those "who are seeking to be justified by law" as having "fallen from grace." Their error is buying the lie since their loyalty to the Law comes at the expense of grace.
13. Jews and Gentiles presently suffer from such distractions and do so in many ways but with the end result of opting for works over grace.
14. The New Testament uses three proper nouns to categorize those who are in the genetic line of Abraham and they need to be distinguished.
15. These three nouns are Hebrew, Jew, and Israelite. Each descends from Abraham but is distinguished by certain characteristics.

16. The first of the three to note is **Ἑβραῖός (Hebraíos)**: “Hebrew”:

Applied to Abraham in Genesis 14:13 and his descendants, the Israelites generally. In the New Testament, the Hebrews are the Jews of Palestine who use the Hebrew or Aramaic language, to whom the language and country of their fathers peculiarly belong; the true seed of Abraham in opposition to the Hellenists or Greek-speaking Jews who were born out of Palestine. In Acts 6:1, they are Hebrew Christians, in distinction from Hellenistic Christians.⁵

Acts 6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews.

16. The next term is **Ἰουδαῖος (Ioudaíos)**: “Jew”:

Jew, signified subjects of the kingdom of Judah. After the Babylonian captivity, the name “Jews” was extended to all the descendants of Israel who retained the Jewish religion, whether they belonged to the two or the ten tribes and whether or not they returned to Judah as no doubt some of them did. It is this extensive sense that the word is applied in the New Testament:

James 1:1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of Israel among the Diaspora outside Judea. (EXT)

The Apostle Paul distinguishes between the one who is a Jew outwardly and the one who is a Jew inwardly. By the former he means a person descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob according to the flesh and observing the outward ordinances of the Mosaic Law, but destitute of the faith of Abraham, not believing in the seed which is Christ. By one who is a Jew inwardly Paul means one who, whether Jew or Gentile by natural descent, is a child of Abraham through faith in Christ, the promised seed, and consequently a true confessor of Jehovah.⁶

17. The final term is **Ἰσραηλίτης (Israēlītēs)**: “Israelites”:

(End JAS1-49. See JAS1-50 for continuation of study at p. 491.)

⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “Ἑβραῖός,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 495.

⁶ Ibid., “Ἰουδαῖος,” 779.

17. The final term is **Ἰσραηλίτης (*Israēlītēs*)**: “Israelites”:

An Israelite is one descended from Israel or Jacob, “an Israelite indeed” (John 1:47); one who is not only a natural descendant from Israel but is also a believer. “Israelite” is a name of honor. It is to be distinguished from “Hebrew [Ἑβραῖος (*Hebraíos*)]” being, at least in New Testament times, a Jew with purely national sympathies who spoke the native Hebrew or Aramaic dialect of Palestine, and “Jew [Ἰουδαῖος (*Ioudaíos*)],” one who belonged to the ancient race wherever he might be settled and whatever his views. However, every Jew regarded himself as a true Israelite and prided himself on the privileges which he as a member of the favored nation had received when other nations had been passed by. Paul refers to these privileges when he describes his “kinsmen according to the flesh” as Israelites to whom “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises” apply (Romans 9:4). He knows the way in which the Jew boasts of them and claims that he can share in that boasting as well as any of his detractors. “Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I” (2 Corinthians 11:22). This feeling of exclusive national privilege led, in many cases, to the rejection of the gospel by the Jews who did not wish their privileges to be extended to the heathen world. Those who were Israelites by birth and rejected his message caused the apostle to realize that a believer in Jesus Christ is equivalent to a true or spiritual Israelite—one after the type of Nathanael in John 1:47, “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” Paul applies the term in its natural sense to himself in Romans 11:1, “I also am an Israelite,” in order to show that not all the members of the race have been rejected by God. There is a remnant according to the election of grace [Romans 11:5 (κῆν)]—Israelites who are Israelites indeed, not merely by outward physical connection, but also by moral and spiritual characteristics.¹

18. Although these designations do not strictly define each of these three categories of those in the Chart Pedigree of Jacob, they may be generally applied in the following manner in the New Testament:

- (1) Hebrews are those who are citizens of Palestine and who use the Hebrew or Aramaic language.

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “Ἰσραηλίτης,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 785.

- (2) Jews are those who survived the two Diaspora in Chaldea and Babylon and who retained the Jewish religion whether or not they returned to Judah. This is the case in the New Testament. Paul distinguishes between Jews that continue to practice Judaism outwardly against those who have placed their personal faith in Christ for salvation. This group is considered to be the “spiritual seed” of Abraham and may be Jews or Gentiles, the former group we refer to as Messianic Jews.
- Some are called Hebrews but not Jews because they are not spiritually in the line of Jacob. Gentile believers are Jews inwardly because they understand the rituals associated with the Mosaic Law were fulfilled in Christ.
- (3) Israelites are not only those descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but who are also believes in Jesus as the Messiah. We refer to them as Messianic Jews. Unbelieving Jews who claim relationship with Jacob are not Israelites in the theological sense of the word. Paul makes this point in:

Romans 11:6 For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel [referring to **Jacob**].

19. This brings us back to Paul in:

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ [aorist passive indicative of **καταργέω** (*katargéō*): **culminative indicating existing results**], you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (NASB)

1. Paul tells the Galatians that their legalistic foray into works by having their foreskins severed from their bodies has resulted in them becoming severed from Christ.
2. The word “severed” is *katargéō* and indicates they have no personal relationship with Christ and therefore any fellowship with Him is rendered null and void.

3. This term is an idiom indicating that there is no relationship between these Galatians and Christ since legalism has no force, binding power, or validity.
4. The verb's passive voice indicates their negative volition toward grace means their assumed relationship with Christ is rendered "null and void."
5. The reason their efforts failed is because of a false assumption: "you who are seeking to be justified by law." Circumcision was instituted with Abraham and then extended to the Jewish people in the Mosaic Law.

In the account of the institution of the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham, circumcision is looked upon as the ratification of the agreement. Yahweh undertook to be the God of Abraham and of his descendants. He and his descendants were to inherit Canaan. The agreement thus formed was permanent; Abraham's posterity should come within the scope of it. But it was necessary to inclusion in the covenant that every male child should be circumcised on the 8th day.²

6. The identity of who exactly the Galatians were is a bit sticky. There seems to be no question that the name Galatia, located in Asia Minor, was derived from the fact it was occupied by "Gauls." These people were Celts, one of several wandering Indo-European tribes.³
7. These Celts and others were legalistic and thus drawn into the worship of idols. This mind-set made them vulnerable to works-oriented relationship with false gods and the introduction of Christianity caused some to distort grace with the law.
8. This trend caused many to be convinced that Christianity was associated with Old Testament rituals associated with the Jewish culture. False teachers convinced some that circumcision was a part of the gospel of salvation.
9. Paul refutes this heresy with the accusation they were "seeking to be justified by the law."
10. The word "justified" is the present passive indicative of the verb, **δικαίωω (dikaiōō)**.

² T. Lewis, "Circumcision," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 1:656.

³ "Members of the people speaking an unrecorded prehistoric language from which the Indo-European languages are descended" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. "Indo-European.")