

Galations 5:1-6

From the book "Take Hold" by Ariel, and D'vorah Berkowitz

This will be the final text from Galations that we will study. It appears to be a devastating blow to our whole argument, stating that if anyone practices circumcision (or any part of the Torah, for that matter,) he will be severed from Messiah.

The key to the proper interpretation of this passage is the following italicized phrase in 5:4 where Sha'ul (Paul) states, "You have been severed from Messiah, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." (italics ours) This phrase indicates the motive behind the circumcisions being performed among the Galations, which were the focus of Sha'ul's criticisms. It tells us that some people were being circumcised in order to be justified by God. In other words, legalism was the problem, not cirsumcision.

We need to remember that Sha'ul of Tarsus lived according to the Torah (Acts 21). He would never have taugt against the Torah. Since circumcision was one of the many teachings of the Torah, we can safely conclude, therefore, that Sha'ul was not arguing against circumcision per se. In fact, we might recall that he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3).

Sha'ul's problem with circumcision in Galations was that some were doing it I order to earn or keep their salvation; they were seeking to be justified by it. Herein was the core of the problem. He had no problems with practicing circumcision provided it was done with the proper biblical motive (i.e., as the sign of the covenant between God and Israel).

Verse 4 presents the stark contrast between law and grace. One either attempts to earn or keep his salvation by what he does or he relies solely on the grace of God for salvation. Sha'ul (Paul) said that whenever a person begins to trust in what he does to gain (or keep) his salvation, he has ceased practicing the principle of grace and has gone over to law. In fact, some people even attempt to make a law out of the Torah (by practicing circumcision, in this context). The plain truth is that whenever someone relies on his works to gain righteousness from God, he has ceased to function according to grace. No one can be saved in this manner. Salvation is solely by grace through faith in the person and work of Yeshua.