

Ln 4 ... Are You a “Chameleon” Christian?

Galatians 2:11-21

Are you a “chameleon” Christian? A chameleon is a lizard that can change the color of its skin to fit its environment. Because of fear of what others might think, many believers become “chameleon” Christians, or hypocrites. Honestly answering the **three** questions in this lesson will reveal whether or not you are a “chameleon” Christian.

First, Am I Consistent? (2:11-14)

The scene switches from Jerusalem to Antioch as Paul explains another incident confirming his authority as an apostle. He writes: *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed* (2:11). Antioch, in Syria, was the headquarters of the Gentile church, from which Paul began his missionary journeys. It’s important to note Paul opposed him to his *face*, not behind his back. The confrontation arose because *before that certain came from James, he [Peter] did eat with the Gentiles* (2:12a). However, when the Jewish believers who were associates of James (the leader of the church in Jerusalem) came, Peter *withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision* (2:12b-c). During biblical times in the Holy Land, the eating of a meal symbolized fellowship, love, and acceptance.

That’s why Jesus gives what invitation to those who hear Him knocking at the door of their hearts in [Revelation 3:20c-d](#)?

Fearing what some influential Jewish believers might think, Peter stops eating with Gentile believers. To make matters worse, *the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation*, or hypocrisy (2:13). Peter’s actions are not a matter of conviction but of hypocrisy. Paul mentions Barnabas by name because he is especially surprised at Barnabas, since together they established the churches in Galatia. Peter and Barnabas had become hypocrites. Any of us can become hypocritical when we begin to fear what others might think. We call it “**peer pressure**.”

That’s why [Proverbs 29:25a](#) gives what warning?

Knowing Peter’s immense influence, Paul cannot let this hypocrisy go unchecked because it will divide the church. Therefore, he writes, *But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel* (2:14a). The truth of the gospel is Jews and Gentiles are equally accepted by God.

This is a vital issue, so Paul confronts Peter *before them all* ([2:14b](#)). Since Peter's actions are public, Paul's rebuke of Peter needs to be public. Paul has no malice in his heart because he is defending the Gospel, not himself.

Paul points out Peter's obvious hypocrisy by telling him that though he is a Jew, he has been living *after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews* ([2:14c](#)). Peter has previously been eating like a Gentile. Therefore, Paul asks him why he is trying to force Gentiles to live like Jews ([2:14d](#)).

Peter knows better because he has already had the vision in which the Lord tells him to eat food forbidden by Jewish law ([Acts 10:9-13](#)). Peter objects, saying, *Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean* ([10:14](#)).

What does the Lord then tell Peter ([10:15b](#))?

Paul knows something must be done quickly or the great missionary church at Antioch will be crippled, if not destroyed, by Peter's actions. Paul relates this incident to the Galatians to reveal he has equal authority with Peter and the other apostles. However, Paul has superior authority concerning Gentiles, since Paul was called specifically to be the apostle *toward the Gentiles* ([Gal. 2:8](#)), which Peter has already confirmed.

To discover if you are a "chameleon" Christian, first answer the question, **am I consistent.**

Second, Am I Committed? (2:15-17)

Paul continues speaking to Peter and other Jewish Christians: *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles* ([2:15](#)). The phrase *sinners of the Gentiles* is a derogatory name Jews used to describe Gentiles. However, Paul writes, *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law* ([2:16a-d](#)).

Then, what does Paul write in the last phrase of that verse?

The word translated **justified** (ΔΙΚΑΙΟΨ, de-ki-ah'-o-) means "the act of pronouncing righteous." Justification for sinners is what Jesus accomplished on the cross ([Rom. 4:25](#)). Paul's point is that both law-keeping Jews and *sinners of the Gentiles* are justified by faith in Christ. The word "**justified**" has been defined as "**just as if I'd never sinned.**" We are not justified by works but by Christ's death on the cross. Having already been justified by grace through faith in Christ, how can these Gentiles be told it is necessary for them to obey Jewish law? The real issue is, exactly how are we saved?

How does Paul unequivocally answer this question in [Ephesians 2:8](#)?

To defend the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith, Paul writes: *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid (2:17).*

If disregarding Jewish dietary law makes us sinners, then Christ is *the minister of sin*.

This is because of what declaration of Jesus in [Matthew 15:11](#)?

Peter's actions imply Christ promotes sin. The reason Peter, Barnabas and other Jewish believers were being "chameleon" Christians was lack of commitment to salvation exclusively by grace through faith in Christ. To discover if you are a "chameleon" Christian, answer the questions: **am I consistent, am I committed**, and...

Third, Am I Being Crucified? (2:18-21)

Now, Paul shares his own personal experience in Christ: *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor (2:18)*. In other words, if Paul tries to *build again* the very Jewish legal system of salvation he *destroyed* through preaching the Gospel, he himself is a *transgressor* for destroying the Law.

Paul knows the Law is incapable of producing salvation. Therefore, he writes: *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God (2:19)*. Paul could never go back to *the law* and be enslaved to rituals because he would not be free to *live for God*.

Therefore, what does Paul write in [Galatians 2:20a](#)?

Paul's **old** self (which depended on the Law for salvation) died. As a result, Paul adds: *nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (2:20b-c)*. Like Paul, we can only let Christ live in us when the old self is crucified. Only then can Christ's character fill our lives.

In ancient times, one of the few ways a slave gained freedom was through death. Likewise, that's the only way we who are slaves to sin can be free to live for Christ ([Rom. 6:6](#)). To avoid being "chameleon" Christians, we must daily crucify the old self—the sin nature that causes us to fear what others think.

That's why Jesus gives us what command in [Luke 9:23b-c](#)?

When we take up our cross (crucify the old self) daily, we can say with Paul: *and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (2:20d)*.

To avoid being “chameleons,” we must be motivated by love for Jesus Christ, who loves us and gave himself for us. We must not be motivated by fear of what others think.

Paul ends this passage: *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain* ([2:21](#)). By refusing to eat with the Gentile believers, Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jewish Christians would *frustrate the grace of God* by their actions. The word translated **frustrate** means “to make meaningless” or “to neutralize.” If we could be saved by observing the Law rather than by *grace* through faith, *Christ died in vain*.

Like the Judaizers, some people today teach we must add something to God’s grace. If that is the case, Jesus died for nothing. Salvation is exclusively a grace **gift** from God. Grace means God gives us something we do not work for—not even in part.

How does Paul express this fact in [Romans 4:4](#)?

An employer cannot call an employee’s paycheck a gift because it has been earned. If we can earn our salvation, even in part, it’s not a gift, but a payment God is obligated to give. To avoid neutralizing *the grace of God*, we must crucify our sinful nature that wants to earn salvation.

To discover if you are a “chameleon” Christian, answer these questions:

AM I CONSISTENT,

AM I COMMITTED,

AM I BEING CRUCIFIED.