



THE TRUTH UNVEILED



THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

ACTS 15 EXPLAINED



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Acts 15, especially verse 10, is one of the go-to chapters for people who argue that the commandments of the Most High God that He commanded Moses to write down are done away with. One of the difficulties I have had to face is pointing out to Christians and Christian leaders that the laws of the Most High God written by Moses are not done away with. Whenever a question that appears to suggest that the law is not done away with is asked, it is often greeted with a frown and resistance. I had faced severe backlash from leaders at local and regional levels for asking questions that indirectly implied the writings of Moses are not done away with. These leaders believe in the tithing law, practice and defend it, but when it comes to the other laws they are done away with—very ironic!

Further, recently, I mentioned to one of my leaders that eating unclean meats goes against the commandments of God in **Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14, Isaiah 66:17, Isaiah 65:4**; anything that goes against the commandment of God is sin (**1 John 3:4**). This led to a heated discussion in which he was very angry with my position. I supported my position with scriptures to illustrate that the dietary and other laws are not done away with except the law of animal sacrifice and all associated rituals. The pastor was very furious with me for mentioning that breaking the dietary law is a sin; his position was, there is no abomination in the New Testament. His stance was that the dietary law is not important and we should focus only on the Gospel. To climax the discussion, he went to **Acts 15** and selectively picked some verses to support his claim that the laws are done away with focusing especially on verse 10. **THE WARNING WAS: DO NOT TROUBLE THE BRETHREN—I should not, in any way, try to mention that again; I should desist from telling people the laws (the dietary law) of the Most High God written by Moses are still in place.** I asked for a further discussion concerning this subject but I was angrily denied.

Further, if the pastor had understood Acts 15, he would have discovered that Acts 15 strengthens the dietary law instead of canceling it. Anyone who is looking for a cover to break the dietary laws would know that Acts 15 is not the place to go. Millions of Christian use Acts 15 as a cover to justify not keeping the Most High God's commandments.

What is the truth concerning Acts 15? Did Acts 15 abolish the law? What is the context of this chapter? Can we now go against the commandments of God in **Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14, Isaiah 66:17, Isaiah 65:4** because of Acts 15? The writings of the apostles are perfect but people have massively misinterpreted the writings of the apostles thinking that they spoke against the law. The writings of the apostles are in harmony with the law; they used the law and the prophets as the bedrock for their writings. Hear what Apostle Peter had to say concerning the writings of Apostle Paul:

2 Peter 3:16

“15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; **in which are some**

things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

Apostle Peter acknowledges that some of the writings of Apostle Paul are hard to be understood, and people who are unlearned and unstable in the Scriptures struggle and misinterpret the Scriptures to their destruction. Do not allow anyone to trick you into thinking that **Acts 15** gives people the ground to break the commandments of the Most High God. We will walk through the entire chapter and in the end, you have a clear understanding of this chapter. Let us begin the study; let us understand what the problem was in the first place; what led to the debate that necessitated Paul and Barnabas to travel to Jerusalem to meet with other believers there.

THE PROBLEM

What was the problem that led to Apostle Paul and Barnabas traveling to Jerusalem to meet other believers there to resolve? Before we can understand this chapter correctly, we must establish what the problem was. Let us begin our walk through this chapter.

Acts 15:1-5

1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. 3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. **5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.** 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

From the above passage, we can what the problem was; there were two positions. Let us look at these two positions.

POSITION ONE

Atcs 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

This group of men was teaching that except people became circumcised after the manner of Moses, people cannot be saved. This was a work-based salvation model. Let us ask a question: in the timeline of things, where can we put this event? This was after the death of Jesus Christ; the sacrificial law and associated rituals were abolished at this time. The law declares/shows the sin(s)/guilt but it is the blood of

Jesus that justifies. Keeping the laws of Moses alone cannot justify anyone; however, once justified, keeping the law and the prophets keep the justification. This group of disciples was teaching things the other way round; they were using keeping the law as the basis of justification—which was wrong. The blood of Jesus justifies one from sin; however, obedience to the commandments keeps the justification. This group of believers got it wrong—they were pedaling works as the basis of justification and neglecting the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

POSITION TWO

Acts 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

The second group of people was the Pharisees. Bear in mind that not all the Pharisees were unrighteous—there were righteous Pharisees like Nicodemus. This group simply pointed out that after the Gentiles have repented, it was needful for them to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. This group of righteous Pharisees agrees that after repentance and justification through the blood of Jesus, it was needful for the new believers (Gentiles) to be obedient to the commandments of the Most High God written by Moses. These Pharisees approached things from an obedience point of view. Let us compare the two positions (see **Table 1**).

	POSITION 1: LEGAL IN APPROACH (ACTS15:1)	POSITION 2: OBEDIENCE BASED APPROACH (ACTS 15:5)
	Use works of the law as a means of justification instead of the finished work of Jesus on the cross.	The Gentiles, after conversion, should, in obedience, be circumcised and keep the commandments of the Most High God.
	Keep the law in order to receive justification	Justification, then obedience to guard the justification.

Table 1: The two positions in the debate compared. These positions are found in **Acts 15:1** (Position 1) and Acts 15:5 (Position 2).

We can see that in both positions the matter (issue) was not about whether they should **obey the law or not obey the law**, but rather it was about how the obedience should be implemented. The debate, was not, in any way, a debate about whether they should abolish the commandments of the Most High God given to the people through His servant Moses. It would be biblically dishonest to inject this position into this chapter. The question was not about whether they should **abolish the laws of Moses or not abolish it**. The debate was rather about how obedience to the commandments of the Most High God should be carried out/done, especially in the lives of the new Gentile converts, who were not well versed in the matters of the law. It will be biblical dishonesty of high order to inject a third argument point to think that the disciples came together to debate on **abolishing the laws of Moses**. Before we proceed further in the article, the questions we should ask is, who were the Gentiles? Let the Bible give us the answer.

WHO WERE THE GENTILES?

The term Gentile is from the Hebrew word **goyim** meaning nations. It should be realised that the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms—the northern and southern kingdoms. Israel as a nation has repeatedly disobeyed the Lord by not keeping His laws, statutes, and judgments. The northern kingdom was driven into captivity; the Most High God drove them away from His presence and scattered them among the nations. When Christ came, it was only Judah who was in the land; Jesus came to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel

MATTHEW 15:24 “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

MATTHEW 10:6 “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

MATTHEW 18:12 “How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?”

When Christ came, His primary mission was to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel and save them (**Matthew 15:24; Matthew 10:6**). It should be realised that the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom were scattered among the nations and became assimilated into cultures of the heathens/Gentiles. The term Gentiles refer to nations who are strangers to Israel; this term also extends to Israelites that have lost their identity and became assimilated into the cultures of the heathens/Gentile nations. How do we know this? Let us see from the Bible.

JOHN 7:34-35

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.
35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? **will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?**

So from the above passage, we can see that the Israelites that were dispersed among the nations were called Gentiles: **the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?** The term stranger is also used for the dispersed. How do we know this? Let us see:

1 PETER 1:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,”

JAMES 1:1 “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

The Israelites scattered abroad were called strangers/Gentiles; these were largely the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom. James and Peter wrote letters to the Israelites scattered abroad: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia, and beyond. Paul was raised as a minister to reach the Gentiles, the 10 tribes that were lost and became assimilated into the cultures of the Gentiles. The northern kingdom, with the influence of the Greek captivity, was largely assimilated into Greek customs and culture. These Israelites were Hellenised / became Greeks; can we prove this? Sure! Let us see!

JOHN 7:34-35 in another translation:

English Standard Version

The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? **Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?**”

New King James Version

Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? **Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?**”

So we can see that the Israelites of the northern kingdom were referred to as Greeks. Can we further illustrate this from the Scriptures? Absolutely.

ACTS 6:1 “And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.”

The Grecians murmuring in the above passage were the Israelites dispersed among the heathens and became assimilated into the Greek culture. Let us see some writings of Apostle Paul and other apostles.

GALATIANS 3:28: There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

COLOSSIANS 3:11: Where there is **neither Greek nor Jew**, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

ACTS 15:19: Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, **which from among the Gentiles** are turned to God:

1 PETER 2:12: Having your conversation honest **among the Gentiles:** that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

In some of the verses above, Apostle Paul mentions **Jew nor Greek**; the question that we should ask ourselves is, what is he referring to? Is Greek the only Gentile nation? No! If Apostle Paul was referring to some random Gentiles, He would have used all the terms representing the Gentiles Nations. So, why **Jew / Greek**? Paul was referring to the two kingdoms: the southern kingdom (Jews or Judah) and the northern kingdom (Greeks; the Hellenised Israelites); the northern kingdom was scattered a long time before Christ came and became well assimilated into the Greek cultures and customs—they were Hellenised. So, when Apostle Paul says Greeks/Gentiles, he was referring largely to the northern kingdom that went into idolatry. In the other two verses above (Acts 15:19, 1 Peter 2:12), the Hellenised Israelites were referred to as **‘among the Gentiles’**.

Don’t lose track of what we are trying to do; we are establishing who the Gentiles were and this would help to understand Acts 15 correctly.

Let us ask a question, who were the people Apostle Paul wrote to? Let us see the writings of Apostle Paul to understand the people he was writing to; the letters speak for themselves.

Just like Peter and James wrote to the Israelites strangers scattered abroad, Apostle Paul was no different from James and Peter. Jesus instructed His disciples to go to the **lost sheep of the house of Israel**. Apostle Paul was commissioned to reach the lost sheep of the house of Israel among the gentiles. Although not explicitly stated in some of his writings, if one read all the letters carefully, one would understand the nature of the people he was writing to. Let us begin in Genesis.

GENESIS 49:1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Jacob knew very well what was to befall his children in the last days; they will be scattered among the nations. Matthew gives an account of some of the captivities that the children of Israel underwent.

MATTHEW 1:17: So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

The children of Israel experienced the cycles of scattering and gathering: the Assyrian captivity; the Medo-Persian captivity; the Greek captivity; the Roman captivity. It should be realised that during the time of Jesus Christ, the northern kingdom consisting of ten tribes had already been scattered away; and that's why Jesus instructed his disciples to **go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**. During the Maccabean period, the Israelites (Jews included) were forced to denounce their identity and embrace the Greek customs and cultures; they were Hellenised. See what Matthew wrote:

MATTHEW 4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

Zebulon and Nephthalim are two tribes of the northern kingdom but at the time of the first coming of Jesus, they had already been scattered among the Gentiles. The northern kingdom was called Gentiles. The term Gentiles refers to people outside the nation of Israel but it also extends to Israelites that were Hellenised and adopted the customs and cultures of the Greeks (**JOHN 7:34-35**). The Lord scattered the children and made good His word in:

DEUTERONOMY 28:37 And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.

ACTS 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

The scattering of the children of Israel is documented throughout the Scriptures. Let us look at the letters of Apostle Paul to see who were the people in Rome he was writing to.

ROMANS 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the above verse, Apostle Paul was writing to **the saints** in Rome. The question that we should ask is, who were the saints? Let us see:

PSALM 148:14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the Lord.

At the time of Apostle Paul, the Israelites were under Roman oppression. Paul was writing to **the elect/the saints** in Rome; the children of Israel are the elect of God.

DEUTERONOMY 33:3 Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.

The letters to the Corinthians and the Colossians were addressed to the saints, similar to the Romans; Pauls was writing to the saints in Corinth and Colosse.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-2 Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's:

COLOSSIANS 1:2 To **the saints and faithful brethren** in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us dig deep in 1 Corinthians to understand the nature of the people he was addressing:

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1: Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

We can see the nature of the people that he was addressing: **how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;**

'Our fathers', who were the people he was referring to? Let us see.

EXODUS 13:8 And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.

The children of Israel came out of Egypt, and passed under the sea and the cloud. It is clear that Apostle Paul was addressing his fellow Israelites in Corinth, and that's why he used the phrase '**our fathers**'. Let us see more examples to understand who Gentiles were that Apostle Paul was writing to. The letter to the Galatians, let us see **Acts 18:23** to have a good understating of the Gentiles in Galatia that he was writing to:

ACTS 18:23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

To understand who were these disciples were see **John 8:31**.

Who were the Gentiles in Ephesus that Apostle was writing to? Let us see:

ACTS 18:19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

Paul was writing to the Israelites scattered abroad, just like Peter and James; although the Gospel is for everyone, Jesus instructed His disciples to prioritise **the lost sheep of the house of Israel**. Those in Phillipi, who were they? Let us see:

ACTS 16:12-13

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. 13 **And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.**

Again, Paul was here addressing the Jews; these were part of the children of Israel scattered among the nations. Those in Thessalonica, who were the Gentiles there? Let us see.

ACTS 17:1-2 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to **Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,**

ACTS 21:19-21

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, **how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.**

In both passages, we can see who the Gentiles were; these were the children of Israel scattered among the Gentiles; they were Hellenised. The Jews of the southern kingdom knew the situation of their brothers of the northern kingdom that were scattered among the gentiles, watch this:

JOHN 7:34-35

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. 35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? **will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?**

Apostle Paul made several missionary journeys teaching believers; in circumstances where he was not able to teach in person, he taught them through letters (epistle). So, now we understand who the Gentiles were; they were people who were once keeping the law (the ten tribes of the northern kingdom) but were scattered due to disobedience.

It is in the plan of God for the two nations to become one again through Christ; so, Paul was simply referring to the northern and southern kingdom becoming one again: **for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.**

Let us see the other references that talk about the plan of the Most High God to bring the two nations together:

ACTS 15:15-18

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 **After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.** 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

The apostles understood very well that the northern kingdom, which was Hellenised, God has a plan to join them to the southern kingdom. **As it is written**, where is it written? Let us see where they are quoting from:

(Ezekiel 37:22; Ezekiel 37:15-28)

Now we understand who the Gentiles were, let us see how the problem was resolved.

THE RESOLUTION OF THE DEBATE

ACTS 15:6-18

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. 7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. **10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. 12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Looking at the above passage, especially verse 10, one may prematurely conclude that the commandments of the Most High God are difficult to keep and therefore the Apostles were taking a decision not to keep the commandments—but is this the case? Here, is Apostle Peter suggesting that the commandments of God are difficult to keep? Is Apostle Peter saying we no longer have to keep the commandments of the Most High God? Before we answer these questions, let us pause and look at the Bible; God will not contradict Himself—He cannot say one thing here and then another in

the other parts of the Bible. Are the commandments of the Most High God difficult to keep? Let us see:

DEUTERONOMY 30:11 “**This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you**, and it is not beyond your reach.” **New Living Translation**

1 JOHN 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and **his commandments are not grievous.**”

MATTHEW 11:29-30 “29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**”

So, is God giving people commandment that is beyond what they can do? Are God's commandments too hard and grievous? We can see from the above passages that the commandments of God are not grievous and not hard; God can not contradict Himself.

LUKE 1:6 **And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.**

So, what is Apostle Peter trying to say in verse 10: **ACTS 15:10** **Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?**

Before we answer the question, let us see what Apostle Peter himself did; let us see his writings to see what he wrote to the Gentiles/strangers scattered abroad (**1 Peter 1:1**).

ACTS 10:13-15

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; **for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.** 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

In the above passage, Apostle Peter was still keeping the dietary instructions in the writings of Moses; this was after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Can we say that Apostle Peter was keeping dietary law but telling others not to? Let us see more of his writings.

1 PETER 1:14-16 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 **Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.**

In the above passage, Peter was charging the dispersed to be holy because God is holy; Peter was quoting from somewhere (**vs 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.**); where is Peter quoting from? Let us see:

LEVITICUS 11:44: For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, **and ye shall be holy; for I am holy:** neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

LEVITICUS 11:45: For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: **ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.**

Leviticus 20:26: And **ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy**, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.

So we can see that when Apostle Peter says it is written, he was quoting from and referring people to the writings of Moses. Can Apostle Peter be telling the dispersed in his letters to be holy by using the writings of Moses as a reference and at the same time telling people in **Acts 15:10** not to keep the commandments? Can this be? Let us reserve this question; we will come back to it. Let us explore more (see **Table 2**)

	APOSTLE PETER'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	QUOTED FROM
1	1 PETER 1:24-25 – 24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.	ISAIAH 40:6
2	1 PETER 2:9 – But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;	EXODUS 19:6
3	1 PETER 2:22 – Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:	ISAIAH 53:9
4	1 PETER 2:24 – Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.	ISAIAH 53:4-5
5	1 PETER 3:10-12 – 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.	PSALMS 34:12-16

Table 2: Apostle Peter's usage of the Old Testament. Peter, like other apostles, used the Old Testament as the bedrock of his writings. Without the writings of the law and the prophets, Peter's writing would be hollow. Peter is not telling people to not keep the laws and the prophets—he is not. The list in the above table is not exhaustive.

From the above **Table 2**—few examples, we can see Apostle Peter constantly going to the writings of Moses and the prophets to support his writings. The question that we should ask is: **if the writings of Moses and the prophets are done away with, why did Peter used them in his writings?** The truth is, you cannot refer to something that is done away with or obsolete. If the writings of Moses and the prophets are done away with, then there is a serious issue of referential integrity—one cannot refer to something that is not valid. So, it is clear from the writings of Apostle Peter and how he lived his life, that he is not saying that the commandments of God are done away with. He cannot be speaking from two sides of his mouth. Now, let us revisit the question we asked a while ago: What did Apostle Peter mean in verse 10?

“Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

The answer to this question is given in verse 11:

“But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

So, what did he mean when he says: **which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?**

The law of the Lord is already perfect (**Psalm 19:7**) but the Lord finds fault with the people; most of the children of Israel did not keep the law with a perfect heart. That's why God made the new covenant with the House of Israel and Judah (the same set of commandments but now written on people's hearts; people now have the laws and commandments of God written in their hearts; people obey out of love). Under the old covenant, there are penalties for breaking certain sins, and some people were found wanting; they were put to death. The key problem was, the blood of goats and bulls could not take away sins properly; so their forefathers were limited because of that. However, now we have blood that speaks better things for us, the blood of Jesus.

Let us see the writings of Apostle Paul:

ROMANS 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

ROMANS 2:13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

From the above passage, Apostle is stating two positions that may look somehow contradictory but they are not.

If you look at the two verses above, Paul says BY THE DEEDS OF THE LAW THERE SHALL NO FLESH BE JUSTIFIED and, in another verse says BUT THE DOERS OF THE LAW SHALL BE JUSTIFIED — is he confused? No, he is not! Paul was simply referring to the two categories. DEEDS OF THE LAW are those that kept the law with an unrighteous heart and not through faith in Jesus Christ. DOERS OF THE LAW (Romans 2:13) refers to a person who is keeping the law with a righteous heart and through faith in Jesus Christ.

How best can we explain what Peter is saying in **Acts 15:10-11**? If you drive, wherever in the world, you would know that there are traffic rules in place. In most countries, if you break certain traffic rules you will pay a fine. For illustration, let us assume that there are 100 rules in place and each carries a penalty. A driver was driving and breaks one of the rules and the traffic official says, I will not penalise you but rather give you a chance (Grace) to start afresh. The traffic rule was not canceled but a chance was given to the driver to start afresh.

Similarly, the death of Jesus Christ brought grace for us; Grace does not cancel the law but provides an endless opportunity to draw close to God. We aspire to keep the commandments of God but should we come short of what God expects of us (not willfully), the grace of Jesus is there to cover for us. Apostle Peter in ACTS 15:10 is not saying that we don't have to keep the law—he was not saying that; he is simply saying: we make every effort to keep the commandments of God but should one come short of the precepts of God, the grace of God through Jesus is there cover us.

ACTS 15:11 “But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

The group belonging to **Position One** was looking for angelic perfection in terms of keeping the commandments of the Most High God and were placing this kind of expectation on the new Gentile believers.

THE RESOLUTION CONTINUED

ACTS 15:19-30

19 Wherefore my sentence is, **that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:** 20 **But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.** 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. 22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 **That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.** Fare ye well. 30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

From the above passage, if we look at verse 19, it appears like it is suggesting that the Apostles were giving a charge to the new believers not to bother keeping the commandments, but is this the truth? Let us remind ourselves of what the whole argument was about; it was not about whether they keep it or not keep it; it was about the new Gentiles believers (these were people who were new in the faith and still learning the laws and commandments) and what was expected of them. A certain group of believers (**Position one**) were placing a huge burden on these new believers who knew next to nothing in the law; those new believers needed to grow and become mature in the knowledge of the word of the Most High God. When the apostle says: **that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God**, they are simply saying, these were new believers and do not trouble them by placing huge expectations on them; these new Gentile believers were still new and need to learn the word of God before applying it. Do not trouble them with unrealistic expectations at this stage; they are still new and growing and will become strong in their walk with the Most High God. How do we know this? Let us see verse 20:

ACTS 15:20 “But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.”

The above verse is what the apostles agreed that the young Gentile believers should start keeping. Let us break this verse into bullet points:

But that we write unto them, that they:

1. abstain from pollutions of idols,
2. and from fornication,

3. and from things strangled,
4. and from blood.

From the above, we can see that the apostles were not telling the young Gentile believers to stop keeping the laws of God written by Moses. All the above are from the writings of Moses. How can we prove this? To illustrate this, let us see where the four commandments come from:

1. Abstain from pollutions of idols: (**Exodus 20:3; Exodus 32:8; Deuteronomy 6:14; Deuteronomy 5:7; Leviticus 19:1-37**)
2. Abstain from fornication: (**Leviticus 18:20; Deuteronomy 22:22**)
3. Abstain from things strangled: (**Leviticus 17:14; Deuteronomy 14:21; Leviticus 17:10-14; Genesis 9:3-4**)
4. Abstain from blood: (**Leviticus 19:26; Leviticus 17:12; Deuteronomy 12:23**)

Let us see some of these verses:

DEUTERONOMY 12:23 “Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.”

LEVITICUS 19:26 “Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.”

GENESIS 9:4 “But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”

LEVITICUS 17:10-11

“10 And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. 11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

LEVITICUS 17:12 “Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.”

DEUTERONOMY 6:14 “Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;”

So we can see that the apostles were quoting from the writings of Moses. The apostles were not telling these new young Gentile believers not to keep the laws—they were not! They simply reached an agreement, based on the above verse, that the new Gentile believers should start with these basic commandments. If the writings of Moses were done away with, they wouldn’t be quoting from the writings of Moses. If we look closely at the above four, two of the four commandments that the believers should start keeping relate to the dietary law—these commandments are part of the dietary law. So, we can see that the apostles were enforcing the dietary law—something that so many believers regard as **not important**.

In the heated discussion I had with my pastor regarding the dietary law, my pastor ran to **Acts 15** to find a cover for not keeping the dietary law without realising that **Acts 15** is enforcing the dietary law. The problem with many people is that they wait until they see something is stated in the New Testament before they keep it; this

approach is wrong. Not all commandments stated in the Old Testament are mentioned in the New Testament. We need to prove all things (**1 Thessalonians 5:21**); we need to study like the Berean Christians (**Acts 17:11**); we need to test every spirit (**1 John 4:1**). Christian leaders must study the Bible extensively to be able to lead; the blind cannot lead the blind (**Luke 6:39**). We can not lead in the things of the Scriptures if our understanding of the Scriptures is severely diluted.

Further, for argument's sake, even if we assume that the four commandments are the only rules we are required to keep, how many people have kept them perfectly?

- How many people are still doing things related to idols? Christmas, Easter, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter Sunrise services, Sunday worship?
- How are many people are still involved in fornication and adultery of all sorts?
- How many people are keeping the dietary law (including abstaining from blood and strangled meats)? People eat pork and sorts of unclean things (**Isaiah 66:17**).

As we have illustrated above, even the very basic four that were agreed the new believers should start with, not many people today are obeying them. If the dietary instruction is not important, why did the apostles include them in the four? Are we claiming we know better than the apostles? Are we more spiritual than the apostles?

Let us read further to understand how they resolved the problem:

Acts 15:21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

The apostles said that already the writings of Moses were being read in the synagogues; through this, the new Gentile believers would have the opportunity to learn and grow in their walk with the Most High God.

So, how can we summarise the resolution? The apostles simply agreed that the new Gentile believers start keeping the four basic commandments and from there grow in their walk with God. These new young Gentile believers were still new and therefore do not compare them with people strong in the faith by placing a huge expectation on them; do not trouble them with huge expectations at this tender stage of their walk with God. They will grow and become strong in their walk with the Most High God; let them start with the four basics instructions that were of priority. In addition, already, the writings of Moses were being in synagogues so these young believers had the opportunity to learn and grow, (**verse 21**).

This was after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; if the law of Moses is done away with, why was the law still being read in their synagogues? People have misinterpreted the writings of the prophets to think that the commandments of God that He instructed Moses to write them are done away with.

I, the writer of this article, did not know a lot of things when I started my walk with the Most High God; I didn't know how to pray effectively; I didn't know certain commandments; I didn't know how to overcome temptations properly; I didn't know so many things. It would have been crushing for me for any to expect angelic perfection from me at my tender stage. But today I have made significant progress in my walk with the Most High God. Similarly, the new young Gentile believers were no different.

ACTS 15: 24 “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:”

What were the apostles saying in verse 24? Were they saying that the young believers should not keep the commandments of God written by Moses? What is verse 24 saying? From all that we have discussed above, it was clear that the apostles were not teaching people to break God's laws.

A certain group of believers was placing a huge burden on young Gentile believers by **troubling them to be proficient in obeying the instructions of God given by Moses at the very tender stage of their walk with God**. The apostles said, this group of believers (**Position 1, Acts 15:1**), we did not instruct/command them to place such a huge burden on young believers.

ACTS 15:29 “That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.”

The apostles are simply saying, although these are not the only commandments, start with these priority commandments and from there you would grow and flourish in your walk with the Most High God.

Can we summarise the stages the young believers should follow? Absolutely:

- **Repentance and faith in God (Acts 15:7).**
- **Stop the worship of false gods and idols (Acts 15:20).**
- **Learn the law and the prophets (Acts 15:21).**
- **Be obedient to the law and the prophets (Acts 15:5).**

The apostles demonstrated great wisdom in dealing with the young Gentile believers. Nowhere did we find the apostle teaching people that they should not obey the commandments of God written by Moses—nowhere. The apostles simply applied wisdom in outlining the path the young believers should follow and progress in their walk with God, and become proficient in the things of the law as they mature.

Let us see the rest of the chapter:

ACTS 15:30-40

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. 33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. **36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.** 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas,

and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

We can see that the apostles did as was agreed; they delivered the epistle and it was read to their hearing; they rejoiced greatly. They rejoiced because the Most High God, through the Holy Spirit, gave wisdom to the apostles to resolve the dispute, and came up with a growth plan through which the young believers should follow and grow.

If you enroll in a university for a degree in Chemistry, how are you expected to progress to your graduation? Chemistry 101, then Chemistry 201, then Chemistry 301, then Chemistry 401. If you think in terms of Christianity, we would say: Christianity 101, then Christianity 201, then Christianity 301, then Christianity 401.

It would be unwise for anyone to expect someone to master Chemistry 401 even when they are yet to get a good handle on Chemistry 101. Christianity is no different. People need to learn and grow; it takes time for young Gentile believers to learn the laws and prophets and grow.

So many people use the writings of Apostle Paul as an excuse for not keeping the commandments of God. People think that Apostle Paul wrote against the law. Apostle Paul cannot be talking from both sides of his mouth—condemning the writings of Moses in one hand and the other quoting from the writings of Moses. Without the writings of Moses and the prophets, the writings of Apostle Paul would be very hollow. Let us see the writings of Apostle Paul (**Tables 3, 4, and 5**):

	APOSTLE PAUL'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	QUOTED FROM
1	ROMANS 1:17 – For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.	HABAKKUK 2:4
2	ROMANS 2:24 – For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.	ISAIAH 52:5; EZEKIEL 36:20
3	ROMANS 4:3 – For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.	GENESIS 15:6
4	ROMANS 4:18 – Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.	GENESIS 15:5
5	ROMANS 7:7 – What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.	EXODUS 20:17; DEUTERONOMY 5:21
6	ROMANS 9:9 – For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.	GENESIS 18:10
7	ROMANS 9:13 – As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.	MALACHI 1:2-3
8	ROMANS 9:17 – For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.	EXODUS 9:16
9	ROMANS 9:27-28 – 27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.	ISAIAH 10:22-23

Table 3: Apostle Paul's usage of the Old Testament (**Romans**). Paul used the law and the prophets extensively in his writings. Without the writings of the law and the prophets, Paul's writings would be hollow. As erroneously interpreted by many people, Paul's writings are not against the law and the prophets. The law and the prophets form the bedrock of his writings.

	APOSTLE PAUL'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	QUOTED FROM
1	ROMANS 10:5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.	LEVITICUS 18:5; EZEKIEL 20:11
2	ROMANS 10:8 – But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;	DEUTERONOMY 30:14
3	ROMANS 10:11 – For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.	ISAIAH 28:16
4	ROMANS 13:9 – For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.	EXODUS 20:13-17; DEUTERONOMY 5:16-21; LEVITICUS 19:18
5	1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 – But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.	ISAIAH 64:4
6	1 CORINTHIANS 10:7 – Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.	EXODUS 32:6
7	1 CORINTHIANS 10:26 – For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.	PSALMS 24:1; EXODUS 9:29; EXODUS 19:5 DEUTERONOMY 10:14; JOB 41:11; PSALMS 50:12
8	1 CORINTHIANS 15:45 – And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.	GENESIS 2:7

Table 4: Apostle Paul's usage of the Old Testament (**Romans and 1 Corinthians**). Paul used the law and the prophets extensively in his writings. Without the writings of the law and the prophets, Paul's writings would be hollow. As erroneously interpreted by many people, Paul's writings are not against the law and the prophets. The law and the prophets form the bedrock of his writings.

	APOSTLE PAUL'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	QUOTED FROM
1	2 CORINTHIANS 8:15 – As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.	EXODUS 16:18
2	2 CORINTHIANS 13:1 – This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.	DEUTERONOMY 19:15; NUMBERS 35:30
3	GALATIANS 3:10 – For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.	DEUTERONOMY 27:26
4	GALATIANS 5:14 – For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.	LEVITICUS 19:18
5	EPHESIANS 6:2-3 – Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.	EXODUS 20:12; DEUTERONOMY 5:16
6	1 TIMOTHY 5:18 – For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.	DEUTERONOMY 25:4
7	2 CORINTHIANS 10:17 – But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.	JEREMIAH 9:23-24

Table 5: Apostle Paul's usage of the Old Testament (**2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; 1 Timothy**). Paul used the law and the prophets extensively in his writings. Without the writings of the law and the prophets, Paul's writings would be hollow. As erroneously interpreted by many people, Paul's writings are not against the law and the prophets. The law and the prophets form the bedrock of his writings.

APOSTLE PAUL'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND REFERENTIAL INTEGRITY

We can see that Apostle Paul used the writings of Moses and the prophets extensively for his writings (**Tables 3-5**). These are just a few to illustrate that the writings of Moses and the prophets form the bedrock of Paul's writings. Let us pause and ask a question: how can Paul quotes from something that is supposedly done away with? Remember you cannot refer to what is done away with. Is Apostle Paul using the writings of Moses and the prophets for his writings and at the same time telling them that the law is done away with? We can see that Apostle Paul is not telling people that the law is done away—he is not. Without the writings of Moses and the prophets, the writings of Apostle Paul will lack strength.

From the tables above (**Tables 3-5**), we can see that Apostle Paul used the writings of the law and the prophets as the bedrock of his writings. Do you think that Apostle Paul was cherry-picking the scriptures—supporting some and condemning some? Telling people to keep some and not to keep some? Is Apostle Paul speaking from both sides of his mouth? No! Paul is not telling people to disobey certain commandments—he is not! In fact, without the writings of the prophets and the law, the writings of Apostle Paul would be deficient.

THE THINKING ROOM

So many Christians are quick to run to **Acts 15** to find cover for not keeping the commandments of God. To those running to Acts 15 thinking that this chapter abolishes the law, ponder about these questions:

1. Jesus stated specifically that no jot or tittle will pass away from the prophets and the law until all be fulfilled (**Matthew 5:15-19**). **2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21.**
2. **AMOS 3:7: Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.** Before the law is abolished, the Lord would reveal this to his prophets. If there will be a major change in the Law, the Most High God would have made it clear to all people. God wouldn't do it in a coded manner—everything will be plain and clear.
3. The Lord does not change (**Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8**). What was sin in the time past, is still sin today; the Lord does not flip flop; he does not create a double standard.
4. If the law and the propjets are done away with, what Scriptures and commandments was Jesus instructing them to use and teach all nations? **Matthew 28:19-20.**
5. The four commandments agreed by apostles that the young Gentile believers should start keeping are directly from the law of Moses, how can people claim that Acts 15 abolishes the law?
6. The debate was not abolishing the law of Moses; anyone who falsely injects this into Acts 15 is being biblically dishonest.
7. The writings of the apostles are garnished with the writings of the law and the prophets. What is this telling us?

SUMMARY

The debate was not about whether they should keep the commandments of God or Not—it was not about this. The debate was about expectations placed upon young Gentile believers by a certain group of believers—which was unrealistic, realising that they were still new in the faith. The apostles simply agreed that new Gentile Christians should begin by observing four basic commandments and grow in their relationship with God from there. These new young Gentile Christians were still new and should not be compared to those who were strong in the faith, by setting large expectations on them; do not bother them by expecting angelic perfection from them at this tender stage of their walk with God. The apostles did not tell these believers to stop keeping the commandments of the Most High God but rather demonstrated wisdom in terms of how these commandments should be applied.