

“Remembering God’s Redemptive Work” Part 3, Sermon Notes: Ephesians 2:11-22

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“For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.” (Ephesians 2:14-16 NAU)

Introduction:

We come now to the 3rd truth Paul wants us to remember. After talking about God’s work in Salvation he is now giving us more to think about to keep our attention on. As Paul states in verse 11 therefore remember . . .

1. We are to remember that we were Gentiles and were by nationality outside of God’s promises.
 2. We are to remember that our present condition with Christ gives us a close relationship to God.
 - a. We saw this last week as Paul gave three contrasts
 - i. Contrast of Time – Formerly vs Now
 - ii. Contrast of Condition – Far off vs Near
 - iii. Contrast of Status – Without Christ vs With Christ
 - b. This present condition is brought about by our close relationship to Jesus Christ
- Paul is now going to give us the third truth we need to remind ourselves of.

WHY?

**** Paul gives us 5 Truths we must remember to enhance our appreciation of God’s work in our salvation which will increase our hopeful expectation of eternal life and which will magnify the riches of God’s glory.**

5 truths to increase our ability to worship God

** As I have said this entire chapter is displaying God’s work in our salvation.

- As we look at these verses there is a doctrine not specifically mentioned, but which is at work through each of these verses. That doctrine is called the **Doctrine of Eternal Security**

- An oft maligned doctrine because it is viewed as a doctrine which allows people to live any way they want to live without any fear of condemnation.
- But this is a poor understanding of what the doctrine really teaches
- This understanding assumes that anyone who says they are a Christian is indeed a Christian.
- **The line of thinking goes like this:** If someone says they are a Christian then they are, if they are a Christian and cannot lose their salvation then they can live anyway they want to live and be saved, therefore Eternal Security allows people to live any way they want to live without losing their salvation.
- Those who hold this view fail to recognize that Jesus said “Not everyone who says unto me Lord, Lord will enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matt 7:21. **i.e. it is possible for people to make false professions.**
- The faulty assumption that everyone who says they are a Christian is indeed a Christian blinds people from seeing what the text actually says.

** This happens all the time in Bible study. We have a view of what the text must mean so we will not acknowledge what the text is actually saying. When this happens we are going to replace the teaching of God’s Word with what we think God means. And like fool’s gold, this teaching may appear to have value until it is tested and shown to be empty

- The idea that the Doctrine of Eternal Security leads to lascivious living and is therefore a doctrine of demons is totally foreign to God’s message.
- How do I know?

Just look at Ephesians 2 and see what God has said about His work in our lives.

1. Eph 2:1-3 –“We were dead in our sins, walking in this world according to the prince of the power of the air, were by nature Children of wrath”
2. But God made us alive, raised us up, and seated us with Christ
 - a. 3 verbs all describing God’s activity
 - b. All the finite verbs in this section have God as the Subject doing the action and we as the direct object receiving the work of God (Eph 2:4-7)
3. We are given grace and faith as well as regeneration and union with Christ as part of God’s gracious work towards us. This is to demonstrate that it is not by our doing but by His doing that we are made Children of God. (Eph 2:8-9)

4. (Eph 2:10) We are made into the creation of God whereby He sets before each of us a marvelous path of sanctification and transformation where we:
 - a. Learn to walk in Jesus Christ
 - b. Learn to appreciate the work of God in our salvation
 - c. Learn to appreciate how utterly sinful we were before God saved us
 - d. Learn to appreciate the greatness of His gift
 - e. Learn to appreciate the signification moments in our life where God is shaping us through trials and difficulties
 - f. Learn to see all things from God's gracious hand which make us His handiwork to perform good deeds which he has prepared for us to walk in.

5. (Eph 2:11-12) We are told by Paul to remember that we were outcasts. We were outside of the nation of Israel. We were without the covenants and the promise. We were without hope in this world. Even if we wanted salvation we did not have the hope of an offer to be saved and those who did kept us at arm's length because they did not want to be corrupted by the Gentile idolatry.

6. (Eph 2:13) But God in spite of our desperation condition has brought us now, near to Him, through Jesus Christ.

** These are incredible truths and Paul does not stop there. He is going to give us three more before we finish this chapter in Ephesians.

- **As I work my way through this chapter I see one of the greatest defenses in all of the Scriptures of Eternal Security**
- If God has taken you from your dead and rebellious state
- If He has made you alive and seated you with Christ to reign with Him
- If He has given you faith and grace to become one of His own children
- And if God has made you into His handiwork
- And If God has now given you Gentiles in the flesh the hope of restoration
- And if He has placed you in Christ to receive redemption through His blood
- **THEN friends, who could separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?**

- No man in all this world could perform one of these functions on his own
- **Our appreciation of God's work should lead us to praise Him for what He has done in us**
- It should lead us to gain strength to resist sin. When we think it is impossible and hopeless we should see that He has a plan for us and will not give us more than what we can handle
- Our appreciation for God's work should lead us to worship him with our lips and with our lives. We should praise Him and admire him for what He has done and we should live for him to demonstrate His handiwork in us.

**** Let me also say this, if your doctrine of Eternal Security leads you to live a life of open sin then you do not have the security God offers. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;** (1 John 1:6 NAU) And you have no more security than those who are cast away in Matt 7:23 "depart from me you workers of iniquity."

Our doctrine leads us to believe that God holds us firmly and to see that He is making us do the good works which He has prepared for each of us to walk in.

**** The issue at hand in eternal security is not whether God is able to securely keep His own until the end. Each and every work Paul has described here more than demonstrates the greatness of God's power to redeem and preserve those who belong to Him.**

- The real issue at hand is this: **does the professing believer in Jesus Christ really possess genuine faith**
- All of those who have been born again possess genuine faith and will persevere until the end. This is why we work to make our "Calling and Election" sure 2 Pet 1:10

Now we turn our attention again back to this rich text to see another work we could not perform which God had to do in order to rescue us and bring us into fellowship with Him. This is the third truth we are to remember.

3. **We need to remember that Christ has abolished the law in order to bring peace between the Jew and Gentile and between God and Men**

**** Now as we start to look at this subject you need to know that it is one of the more difficult theological problems in all of the Scripture.** The discussion on the law of God and the NT believer's relationship to the Law is hotly contested and is difficult to understand all of the nuance arguments.

- In this text alone I read one commentator who gave 4 different interpretations. With each interpretation there are even more differences in application and scope of meaning.
- In this text before us we have to answer these questions:

- o What is the enmity?
- o Is the enmity the dividing wall or the conflict between Jew and Gentile?
- o What is abolished?
- o What is the dividing wall?
- o If the Law is abolished how much? All or parts? What is the extent of the Law being abolished?
- o If you see the ability to break up the law into parts, what are the parts? Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial or Apodictic and Casuistic or maybe both categories fit, or maybe “laws which reflect the Character of God” vs “Law as a written code threatening death or imparting life”
- o Maybe it is not the law that is abolished but rather the law covenant? Maybe it is the covenant of the Mosaic law that is done away so now we are under a new covenant? Could that be it?

** as you can see there are a lot of questions, and once you make a decision as to how to view this text more questions are sprung upon you.

(Normally when you come to an interpretation you want to find a position that best answers all of the questions. Here it seems like you want an answer that leaves the least amount of questions)

- This is not going to be easy for you but I will do my best to make it understandable for you even if you have to go back get my notes and then review until you understand.
- I am going to do my best to make this section clear to you. I am not going to show my work I am just going to give you the answer and for the most part I will not answer all the critiques fully.

Now notice what our text says:

“For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace*, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.” (Ephesians 2:14-16 NAU)

Let me start with 3 observations before I give you a running commentary on what this text is teaching

1. Observation Number 1: This section is about peace.

The conflict: we were separated

We were the out casts

“remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:12 NAU)

1. Separated from Christ
2. Excluded from the common wealth of Israel
3. Strangers to the covenants
4. No hope
5. Without God

But Christ brings peace:

1. He brings us near vs 13
2. He makes us into one vs 14
3. He makes us into one new man vs 15
4. Reconcile them both into one body to God through the cross vs 16
5. He preached peace to those who were far off and those who were near vs 17
6. Through him we both have our access in one Spirit to God vs 18
7. We are now fellow Citizens vs 19

This whole section demonstrates the peace that Christ brings when He:

1. Reconciles Jews and Gentiles together (both . . . one)
2. Unity (one new man) (one body)
3. Emphasis on unity “both” 14, 16, 18
4. Gives us direct access to God
5. Brings us together (21-22)

This section here is about unity and how God has unified us together. As we look at this section we are to remember what God has done in order to unify two parties that wanted nothing to do with each other

Jesus alone is our peace. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ that we find peace.

This is in line with what the prophet Isaiah had promised:

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace.**” (Isaiah 9:6 NAU)

** So Paul is making it clear here that there is no peace between the Jew and Gentile apart from Jesus Christ.

“For He Himself is our **peace**, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,” (Ephesians 2:14 NAU)

“by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, **thus establishing peace,**” (Ephesians 2:15 NAU)

“AND HE CAME AND PREACHED **PEACE** TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND **PEACE** TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;” (Ephesians 2:17 NAU)

- Jesus brings peace between man and fellow man
- Jesus brings peace between Man and God

** you need to understand apart from Christ there was real conflict between the Jews and Gentiles.

2. The second observation is that peace comes through subtraction

- Peace comes through removal not addition
- It comes from taking away obstacles not adding more

There are two key words used here:

1. Broke down – *Luw* – means to loose or destroy, or break down vs 14
2. Abolish – *katargew* - Abolish is to nullify, annul, make of no effect, alleviate, or invalidate

Christ has invalidated the enmity or the hostility.

Christ has come to destroy the barrier and nullify the commandments

“Sin is basically selfishness, and selfishness is basically divisive and disruptive. We cannot always have what we want without infringing on what someone else wants or needs. We cannot always have our own way without interfering with someone else’s way.” JFM pg 76 Ephesians Commentary

Peace then comes at the cross when self dies. This is why Paul has said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Galatians 2:20 NAU)

For Christ subtracted the decrees of the law for us, and we subtracted the desires to please self. When these things occurred peace was found.

3. **The third observation is that the work done here can only be accomplished by Christ**

- He is our peace
- By abolishing in His flesh the enmity
- In Himself He might make the two into one new man
- Reconcile them both into one body to God

** if you capture these three ideas I will be happy but of course we cannot stop there. We need to look deeper into this text and answer a few questions.

Verse by verse

“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,” (Ephesians 2:14 NAU)

- Jesus has come to be our peace, the “for” here further explains what we learned in verse 13 which is that we were reconciled and brought near by the Blood of Christ.
- Remember these verses in 14-16 are a further explanation of verse 13
- Paul says in verse 13 one of our problems was that we were far off. We were separated from God and God’s people

>> Now the “for” here acts as an explanation on what has occurred to bring us “near”

- The first subtraction: He has broken down the dividing wall

What is this wall?

- I believe it is anything taught in the law and anything practiced which separated Jew from Gentile
- There are laws of holiness within the OT which were intended to keep the Jews and the Gentiles separated – dietary restrictions on types of animals to eat for example.
- **These laws became tradition and practice so that you had a physical examples of this separation**

For example:

“The barrier of the dividing wall – refers to the separation of the court of the Gentiles from the rest of the temple. Those Gentiles who converted to Judaism were allowed to worship God at the temple but they were not allowed to pass the court of the Gentiles. This Court was an outer court and there was

a sign between the court of the Gentiles and the inner courts of the Jews which read ‘No Gentile may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.’” JFM pg 76

This barrier of the dividing wall symbolized the hostility which existed. **This hostility was so intense that it became the basis for the attempted assassination of the Apostle Paul.**

Look at Acts 21

“When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, *began* to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him,²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."²⁹ For they had previously seen **Trophimus the Ephesian** in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.”

- Trophimus was a Gentile
- And the argument is that Paul brought this Gentile into the temple

³⁰ “Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.”³¹

- This tension and hostility was in the collective people. Luke records in verse 30 “Then all the city was provoked”
- They grabbed Paul and dragged him out of the temple

“While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.³² At once he took along *some* soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.” (Acts 21:27-32 NAU)

- Then the authorities come while the people are beating Paul, and when they see the Roman soldiers they stopped
- You see the people were going to take justice into their own hands and those men who opposed Paul knew how to get the people stirred up against him. They lied about him and said he violated the separation of Jew and Gentiles

** You see the Jews used these laws to keep their distance from the Gentiles.

“While God was bringing Gentiles to salvation it was also God who was keeping the Jewish nation from the Gentiles. So the court of the Gentile was created. ‘It was this court, however, that the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day used as a “robbers’ den” rather than as a place of witness’” JFM pg 77 (Mark 11:17 NAU)

Jesus came to bring peace by destroying the dividing wall which is anything within God's commands which cause a division between the Jews and Gentiles.

"When Jesus Christ died he abolished every barrier between God and man and between man and his fellow man. The greatest barrier between Jew and Gentile was the ceremonial law, the Law of commandments contained in ordinances. The feasts, sacrifices, offerings, laws of cleanliness and purification, and all other such distinctive outward commandments for the unique separation of Israel from the nations were abolished." JFM pg 77

Now Notice verse 15 . . .

"by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace," (Ephesians 2:15 NAU)

- How did Christ destroy the dividing wall?
- By abolishing in His flesh the enmity
- What is the enmity? Paul explains "which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances"
- Now to be here the New American Standard does a lot here to make the translation more understandable. Which means they supply a few words to push us towards and interpretation
- **Actually reads like this:** "The enmity in His flesh, the Law of Commandments in decrees has been abolished"
- That is the word for word translation of this text
- You see the New American Standard takes the verbal idea and moves it to the front when in the text the participle is at the end of this section
- **Here is what is going on: Paul is calling the OT Law the enmity which is causing conflict between the Jew and Gentile.**

**Some have said this is impossible because the law is good and holy and does not create an enmity. (ie Hoener)

BUT . . .

- As I have shown you from Acts 21:27-32 there were some Jews who were using their view of the law as justification to attack Paul. Paul was nearly killed because of it

- Peter said the law kept him from associating with the Gentiles. Acts 10:28 “It is not lawful to associate with a foreigner”
- The law restricted food eaten
- The law required washings for purity
- The law protected against contamination
- The law was given to keep Israel from the rest of the world

** The law then brings separation between Jew and Gentile creating enmity and this is what Christ has taken away.

- Christ has removed all those laws which consisted of ordinances or decrees which separated Jew and Gentile
- Any and every law, wither Apodictic or Casuistic, Civil or Ceremonial
- They are all taken out of the way
- Notice I did not say moral, all moral laws are universally binding as they will be for all eternity because they are a reflection of the perfect character of God
- They are the laws written on our heart
- They are the timeless basis for any other law created
- The moral law is still what is commanded of us (Matt 22:37-40) Love God and Love your Neighbor
- But any command or decree which causes separation between Jew and Gentile has been removed

As MacArthur points out:

“That God’s Moral law was not abolished is clear from the phrase contained in [ordinances]. His moral law reflects His own holy nature and therefore can never change (cf Matt 5:17-19).”
JFM pg 77

** One more note: Moral laws do not separate us from others unless of course we do not follow them. But when we follow them they unite.

- Love your enemies
- Do good to others
- Do not lie, steal, bear false witness or covet

- Love God and worship him alone
- These laws practice unite even enemies
- Paul is teaching here that Jesus has come to unite so I think the most natural meaning of this verse is that the dividing wall are those applications of the Law of God which separated the Jew from the Gentile, ie the Courts of the Gentiles ect and what was abolished was those decrees which divided.
- It is easy to see the context shows us that Paul is talking about peace between Jew and Gentile so when looking at the Law of God as it was revealed in the OT we separate by these questions:
 - Is this law intended to separate the Jews from the Gentiles through a direct law or by an application of the law?
 - Is this law a reflection of the Character of God?
- **At the very minimum we can agree that those commandments contained in decrees which separated the Jew and Gentile have been abolished. No matter what your view you have to agree with this much**

** I want you to see it is not the moral law which divides Jew and Gentile but rather the civil and ceremonial laws. Now I grant that many of the civil or ceremonials laws are built around moral principles and therefore have moral aspects and civil aspects in them. **So the point is that any civil or ceremonial aspect of the law which caused a barrier between the Jew and the Gentile has been abolished in Jesus Christ.**

Paul has stated here in verse 15 that this law then which has kept Israel from associating with the Gentiles has been removed and that they are no longer distinct from the Gentiles.

“In Jesus Christ, a Jew is no longer distinct from a Gentile as far as religion is concerned. In fact, since A.D. 70, when the Temple was destroyed, true religious Judaism ceased to exist. Not only was the place of sacrifice destroyed, but so were all the genealogical records on which priestly decent was based. Likewise, a Gentile in Christ is no longer distinct as far as his spiritual condition is concerned. His paganism is gone, his unbelief is gone, his hopelessness is gone, and his godlessness is gone.”
JFM Ephesians pg 77 Christ came to break down the barrier by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances.

Paul Also says he made us into one New man . . .

The new thing here is something that is completely new and changed. Not a new version of the same old thing, but an entirely new thing. Not a new version of the same man but a whole new man. We are no longer Jew and Gentile, we are now one new person in Jesus Christ.

Jews used to break the world into two Groups: Jew and Gentiles; The Romans broke the world into Jew, Greeks, and Gentiles; Now the Church views the World as Jews, Gentiles, and Christian

Now that Christ has completed this work, there is no longer and two distinct groups. Instead there is one. One new man in Christ Jesus. Nobody who comes to Christ will be excluded. We all come and receive the same access. There is no special access from Jew or Gentile, free or slave, man or woman. Christ brings all in to worship God freely and together.

We who are in Christ are now one new man.

“and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.” (Ephesians 2:16 NAU)

The point here is that Christ has removed all those things which divide Jew and Gentile.

Jesus died in order to bring this peace. In His flesh, means in His death on the cross. He paid the penalty of the law to bring the two groups together into one new man.

Like in verse 13, Paul goes back to the work of the cross and shows us that through the death of Christ there was reconciliation. God reconciled them both in one body.

But notice here the end goal is not to bring Jews and Gentiles together. The end goal is to bring the Jew and Gentile to God. God did this work through the cross of Christ.

Christ bearing our wrath on the cross and taking the penalty of our sin has brought the Jew and Gentile to God.

Reconcile is the idea of turning from hostility to friendship.

“For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,²⁰ **and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” (Colossians 1:19-20 NAU)**

John Eadie wrote “The cross which slew Jesus slew also the hostility between man and God. His death was the death of that animosity.”

The death of Christ brought an end to Judaizing, anti-Semitism, bigotry, war, segregation, racism, class struggles, and any other form of human separation. This is why there is no peace unless it is the peace found in Jesus Christ. The world will never experience ultimate peace until Jesus Christ returns and establishes His kingdom.

He came to preach peace to those who were far away and to those who were near. We will look at this more next week

Bonus:

Two main views of this passage:

1. Having loosed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations
2. He broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in decrees

View #1 – The enmity is the conflict between the Jew and Gentile a conflict which is rooted in the law

View #2 – The enmity is the Law of God which is a barrier between Jew and Gentile and is abolished in the flesh of Christ

Similarity between these two views:

- A. Both see the law as the cause of conflict
 - a. View #1 sees the Law as the root of hostility
 - b. View #2 sees the Law creating the barrier between the Jew and Gentile
- B. Both agree the Law is abolished or inoperative in some degree
- C. Both agree there is hostility between Jew and Gentile

Disagreement between these two views:

- A. Disagree on what enmity is
 - a. View 1 - enmity is the conflict between the Jew and Gentile
 - b. View 2 - enmity is the law which creates conflict
- B. Disagree on what divides
 - a. View 1 – Conflict divides
 - b. View 2 – The Law divides
- C. Disagree on extent of the law abolished
 - a. View 1 – everything
 - b. View 2 – those elements which separated Jew and Gentile

D. Disagree on types of Laws

- a. View 1 – Apodictic laws – are permanent injunctions, prohibitions, or commands

Casuistic Laws – case law or specific application of the law

- h. View 2 – Moral, Civil, or Ceremony

When I say the law has been abolished what does that mean?

1. Some say that means all of the law is removed so that we are not under any part of the OT law. Doctrinal Antinomian. Most who hold this view are quick to say while we are not under the OT law per say we are under the Law of Christ which repeats the OT law. All except for the Sabbath laws of course.
 - a. Love the Lord your God with all your heart mind soul and strength
 - b. Love your neighbor as yourself
2. Some say parts of the law are removed. These say that the law can be broken down into Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial aspects and therefore the Civil and Ceremonial aspects of the law are removed. These are Doctrinal Nomians. Those in this camp say the Moral law is not abolished and that the Moral law is now best explained in the Law of Christ.
 - a. Love the Lord your God with all your heart mind soul and strength
 - b. Love your neighbor as yourself

This describes our doctrinal view of the law but there is also the question as to our practice. That is how are we to live today?

1. There is one group which says we cannot live under any form of law or this would be legalism. These we will call Practical Antinomians. In their practice they do not live a life under any of the law of God
2. On the other side there is the group that says we live under the law of God wither it is simply the moral law, ie those morally binding principles of truth. Or under the law of Christ which contains the moral law of God. Practical Nomian

So all views of our views of the law and the necessary practice which comes from our view falls into one of four categories:

1. Doctrinal Antinomian and practical Antinomians (teach no law and live no law)
2. Doctrinal Antinomian and practical Nomian (teach no law and live under the law)
3. Doctrinal Nomian and practical Antinomian (teach law and live no law)

4. Doctrinal Nomian and practical Nomian (teach law and live law)

Nonetheless, what this passage teaches us is about our view of the law and the relationship of the law to our daily conduct.

This of course is the big picture, and by no means does the text here in Ephesians answer all of the questions that have been asked, nor does it intend to be a full treaty on the NT Believer's relationship to the law.

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