

Bible Studies for Life: July 26

by Clay Anthony

Why are we joined together? • Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:8-10, 19-22



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What is your earliest memory? Chances are you cannot recall your first memory. Your first moments of life simply cannot be brought to mind. What is the earliest memory of your Christian life? That may be easier to bring to mind. The when and where of becoming a Christian is a beautiful memory for all. We can think of many times that being a believer has brought comfort and strength. Those are two of the many benefits of belonging to a faith family. Nothing compares to a local church and the membership that loves us. Reading through Ephesians, we see clearly that Paul understood what brings us together as believers and the benefits such relationships provide us.

Christ reigns 1:20-23. If Jesus can come back from the dead, then there is something unique about Him. There is no doubt about the power surrounding Him (v. 21), but many people do not understand. A benefit that I have come to appreciate in being in a local church is the support I feel when trials come. Prayer is a great gift that others have given my family. We have experienced job loss, a sick child, and untimely deaths. No doubt we all can name several trials we have faced in our walk with Christ, yet we are called to remember that there is a name that is above all names (v. 21). In a family

of faith, we realize that we are not alone in our walks nor are we left to face them without a King reigning over them all.

Christ saves 2:8-10. Prior to his conversion, Martin Luther would take a homemade whip and beat his bare back to the point of passing out from bruising and blood loss. His misunderstanding was that he had to somehow atone for his sins and appease God. It was not until he read and understood the concept of grace (v. 8) that he saw Jesus had indeed paid it all. No works are required when we are ushered into God's family. (v. 9) We as Southern Baptists are quick to tell the world that we do not profess a "works-based" faith. That is true to a point. There is, however, a great deal of work to be done in order for our souls to be saved – it's just that every ounce of the work was done by Jesus on the cross (v. 10.) His church is saved by pure grace.

Christ connects 2:19-22. The most mysterious benefit we enjoy as members of a church is the fact that this membership includes people who will never meet on earth. Today, believers who use other languages and are members of other cultures are meeting across the globe. Our passports note we are from different nations, but the blood Jesus shed for all of us means we are citizens of the same kingdom. Christ's church is made up of people so unlike us in every way, yet they are our family. Strangers and aliens (v. 19) are political terms straight out of modern headlines. These are people inside a community who are either with or without proper paperwork and hold little-to-no rights in that community. Paul is crystal clear: Jesus binds us together as family. Many think of a cornerstone as being a foundational element to a building, but cornerstones are just that – used in a corner – but you have seen ancient archways that are still standing today because the *capstone* is the very last stone placed between two joining pieces to hold the entire structure together. Without the capstone, the entire building collapses. Jesus is that to His

church (vv. 20-21).

Live It Out. We are not saved by good works, but to *do* good works. (v. 10) What memories are you making in Christ?

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