

## Week 2: Committed to Community

Ephesians 1:20–23; 2:8–10, 19–22

### Hook



**Main Point: When we come to Christ, we are gifted with a new community.**

Charles Addams was a cartoonist who created *The Addams Family* in 1938. Later, a character called Thing was added, and even later, in the 1991 movie, was shown as a disembodied hand.<sup>i</sup> This rather unique character became one of the most noticeable characters associated with *The Addams Family*. The comedic feature is Thing's helpful behavior despite only being a hand. This unique character leaves the audience guessing what Thing could accomplish if only it were attached to the rest of the body!

Human beings are social creatures. We were not designed to live in isolation. The Church is a community, the body of Christ. Being a part of Christ's Church is not an option. God's design is for us to live and serve together as a community of believers. Christ has joined us together. Therefore, Christians should be committed to community.

## **Week 2: Committed to Community**

Ephesians 1:20–23; 2:8–10, 19–22

### **Book**

**Main Point:** When we come to Christ, we are gifted with a new community.

#### **Ephesians 1:20–23 [Read]**

**Talking Point 1:** Christ is the Head of the Church expressed in local communities of believers.

Paul's favorite word picture for the nature of the Church was the body of Christ. He introduced this theme in the context of prayer for the Ephesian Christians (1:16–19). Paul stressed God's power (v. 19) and gave two examples of how God had exercised His power in the story of Jesus (v. 20). First, God had raised Jesus from the dead. The Resurrection of Jesus was central to Paul's preaching and the Christian faith in general (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Second, God placed Jesus at His right hand. Being at God the Father's "right hand" points to Jesus' enthronement. The New Testament authors often referred to Psalm 110:1 as being fulfilled in Jesus (Hebrews 10:12). After His Resurrection, Jesus ascended and reigns in the heavens. The risen Christ was both in the presence of God the Father and with His followers.

Paul stressed the risen Christ's power and supremacy in two ways in this verse. First, Christ is superior to every kind of spiritual being. Paul used several words familiar to his first-century readers. Christ is supreme over every ruler and authority, power and dominion. In Colossians 1:16, Paul noted that Christ was involved in the creation of the world and therefore had supremacy over such beings. Those spiritual beings that opposed God were defeated by Christ (Colossians 2:15). Later in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul would stress that Christians are engaged in a spiritual war with evil forces (Ephesians 6:12). Second, Paul noted that the risen Christ reigns now and in the future. Paul wanted to assure his readers and us that Christ is supreme in this age and in the one to come.

In verse 22, Paul quoted Psalm 8:6. David praised God for creating humans and giving them authority over God's creation. Paul was inspired to apply this truth to Jesus in particular. Paul introduces the concept of the Church in this verse. Most first-century Christians generally thought of the Church as a local congregation, but here Paul pointed to the universal Church or all the Christians in all places. The universal Church is sometimes thought of as the invisible church, but Paul stressed its reality. Participation

in the universal Church requires participation in the local church. He emphasized that Christ is its head. This term can mean “source” or “origin” in some contexts, but a primary meaning is the authority of the “head.” One cannot simply claim to be attached to the head without also being attached to the rest of the body. This necessitates local church involvement.

Paul often described the Church as the body of Christ. His concern was the relation of Christ, the Head of the body, to the rest of the body. Paul was inspired to use this analogy, perhaps in light of his first encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus Road. Christ indicated that when Paul persecuted the Church, he was in effect persecuting Christ Himself (Acts 9:5). Perhaps Paul then started to realize the close connection between Christ and His “body,” the Church. His word picture of the Church body of Christ might be familiar to you. Many Christians, however, routinely think of the Church as an institution or building. If the Church were merely a global institution or a building, our participation might seem insignificant. However, you and I are important parts of Christ’s body; we need to be involved in the local church’s activities.

**Q: What does the Resurrection of Christ have to do with His authority?**

**Q: Why do you suppose Christ is analogous to the head of the body?**

**Q: What is the importance of the local church?**

**Q: Is it appropriate for a Christian to claim participation in the global Church without participating in a local church?**

**Ephesians 2:8–10 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** Salvation is required to be a member of Christian community.

**Q: In the analogy of the Church as the body, what does the body have in common?**

**Q: Why is it necessary to have salvation to be a member of the Church body?**

Paul introduced the topic of the Church in chapter 1. The basis for the Church, both universal and local, is our salvation (1:7–8). In chapter 2, Paul clarified the nature of our salvation (2:1–10) and the relation of our salvation to our experience in the Church. For many readers, this would have been familiar. Paul was writing to fellow believers. He wanted them to recall the radical transformation they experienced when they received Jesus as Lord and Savior. In the opening verses of chapter 2, Paul contrasted the before and after of the Christian’s salvation experience. Unsaved people were spiritually “dead” because of their sins (2:1). The salvation offered “made us alive” (v. 5). Paul highlighted

that our salvation is based on God's grace. A traditional description or definition of "grace" is God's unmerited favor. Grace cannot be earned; grace is God's gift. New Testament authors described God in many ways, but "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16) is a favorite of many readers. Paul often underscored God's displeasure with human sin, but he pointed to God's love and grace as the basis for our salvation. God provides that salvation to sinners by the sacrificial death and Resurrection of Jesus.

Paul noted both the divine initiative in salvation, God's grace, and the necessary human response, faith. Like "grace," the word "faith" is sometimes difficult for people today to understand. Paul did not primarily mean an intellectual comprehension of truths about Jesus, although our "faith" is essential, Paul emphasized that ultimately salvation is not accomplished by man.

If you and I could contribute to our salvation, we might be tempted to boast about what we accomplished. Since we live in a culture that promotes self-confidence and self-expression, we need to resist the urge to consider salvation a personal do-it-yourself project. God is the author and source of salvation. Paul often criticized human works as a way to gain salvation. Often, he had in mind Jewish people who insisted that works of the law brought merit. For example, he reminded the Galatians that their salvation was based on faith in Christ, not works of the Jewish law (Galatians 2:15–16). A self-entered culture will have trouble acknowledging that salvation is God's work, not ours. Paul warned against boasting about human achievement. He noted that our boasting should be God centered (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Many Christians recognize they are saved by grace through faith, highlighted by Paul in verses 8–9. Verse 10, however, is sometimes neglected. A summary of verses 8–10 would be that we are saved by grace through faith for good works. In verse 9, Paul was emphatic that our good deeds, or works, could not save us. We do not earn divine favor by trying to impress God with our deeds. But Paul was equally clear that good deeds should be the natural and normal result of salvation. Paul described believers as God’s workmanship. Bible scholars often note that the Greek word Paul used is the basis for our English word *poem*. Paul used the same word in Romans 1:20 to describe the world created by God (“what He has made”). We do not create ourselves through our efforts. God created us for a purpose, and we honor God through our good deeds.

**Q: How would you explain grace to someone who is trying to earn his/her salvation?**

**Q: What role do humans play in salvation?**

#### **Ephesians 2:19-22 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** Christian community refers to being a member of the household of God, which is built on Christ.

**Q: What are the benefits of being a member of the local church?**

**Q: What is the purpose of membership and the house of God being built on Christ?**

Paul accentuated that Christians are united in the Church because of our common faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Many Christians today would heartily agree with that sentiment, but some people might be puzzled. Most of the friendships we enjoy are based on some common interest, such as a sports team, a political party, or other common interests. In these cases, our commitment to the friendship might be temporary or shallow. Our salvation in Christ brings Christians together. Our common salvation by grace through faith in Christ should impact our social relations. Humans are social beings, and we generally do not live in isolation from other people. In Paul’s era and today, however, humans often created barriers to separate themselves from people they do not like. Faith in Jesus overcame the traditional hostility between Jews and Gentiles. These two groups, who typically did not like each other, were “brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 2:13). Jewish and Gentile Christians were expected to work together for the cause of Christ in His body, the Church.

Paul's readers were no longer foreigners and strangers. The racial or ethnic discrimination that separated Jews and Gentiles in the past should be eliminated in the body of Christ. Now, Christians are all citizens with the saints. For us, citizenship might not seem like a big deal, unless you were naturalized to become an American citizen. Paul used this political term to spotlight the common bond among believers. Saints referred to all Christians, who were expected to live holy, pure lives. The "saints" were not necessarily super-Christians. Paul addressed this letter to "the faithful saints in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1). Paul also used the analogy of the Church as God's household. Today we often refer to our church as our family. Some call fellow Christians brothers and sisters.

Paul developed the analogy of the Church as a building in this verse. Although today we often think of our church as a building, Paul's readers likely met in house churches. Still, they would understand this figure of speech (v. 20). A building typically has a foundation. Paul identified the foundation of the Church as the apostles and prophets. By "prophets," Paul might mean Old Testament prophets or Christian prophets in the first century. The word "apostles" refers to people appointed for a task, sent with a particular assignment. Continuing with his building analogy for the Church, Paul noted the significance of Jesus as the Church's cornerstone. Paul liked the organic analogy for the Church – the Church as a body – but he wanted to stress here that the Church is built on faith in Jesus.

Just as Christians can be symbolized as parts of a body, so we are components of a building constructed by God. Paul noted believers resemble a holy temple in the Lord. Jewish Christians, in particular, would have been destroyed by the Babylonians. The temple in Paul's day was the one built by Herod the Great. Although Jewish Christians visited the temple early in church history, that temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. In 2 Corinthians 6:16, the Church is the "temple of the living God." In other contexts, the individual Christian could be considered a temple.

Paul concluded this presentation of the Church as a building by stressing that God unified His people. Since he noted the traditional tension between Jews and Gentiles earlier in this chapter, here he seemed to accent the new unity in Christ. Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians should be unified by their faith in Christ. Their bodies are alike by being the temple of God. This unity makes membership at the house of God special. Without the attachment to the local church, this special unity of common belief goes without celebration.

**Q: How does seeing yourself as one portion of the house of God, give emphasis to your involvement in the local church?**

**Q: Discuss a time in your life when your church community ministered to you.**

## **Week 2: Committed to Community**

Ephesians 1:20–23; 2:8–10, 19–22

### **Took**

**Main Point:** When we come to Christ, we are gifted with a new community.

One of the most difficult parts of coming into a new community is all the unknowns. These unknowns can be the source of anxiety, insecurities and doubt. Many times, these emotions can hinder commitment. Because Christ is the Head of the Christian community, and salvation is required to join, and membership in a local community is the expectation of believers, we should be carefully considering how hospitable we are as church members and LifeGroup members. By remembering Christ as our Head, our common salvation, and the expectation for believers to be involved in church, our unity in Christ should lead us to look past gender, wealth, health and race in welcoming other believers to our community. This is how we foster a community of commitment!

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK:** How is my commitment to community helping me grow in my faith? Is my lack of commitment hindering the growth in my faith?

**PRAY** for God to give you clarity in how you can deepen your commitment to your community this year, that His love for His body would be a refresher for your love for your church community.

**ACT:** Think of the need for volunteers all over your church community at Prestonwood. Communities that serve together grow together. One of the best ways to deepen the bond with your community is to find a place to volunteer in the church. E-mail your divisional ministry with questions on how you can serve!



*Hook, Took & Editing by Jacob Browning*

Facts on “Thing” pulled from Wikipedia at  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thing\\_\(The\\_Addams\\_Family\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thing_(The_Addams_Family))

Book section was influenced by *Bible Studies for Life*, “Why Do I Need the Church?” Summer edition 2020 published by LifeWay.

---

<sup>i</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thing\\_\(The\\_Addams\\_Family\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thing_(The_Addams_Family))