

Experiencing New Identity in the Gospel of Jesus

Summary and Goal

In Colossians 3, the apostle Paul taught believers to remember their identity in Christ. He framed this idea with the imagery of clothing. Every person born into the world, except Jesus, is born wearing a sinful nature, and their words and actions are consistent with that nature. But those who have come to faith in Christ have put off this old self and put on the new self, which increasingly resembles the life of Jesus. In keeping with this new set of clothing, believers are to put to death the sinful desires of this earth and put on the characteristics of Christ by setting our minds on Christ.

Session Outline

1. Set your mind on things above (Col. 3:1-4).
2. Put to death the deeds of the flesh (Col. 3:5-11).
3. Put on the works of the Spirit (Col. 3:12-17).

Background Passage: Colossians 2:1–3:17

Session in a Sentence

God gives those who trust in Christ a new identity and calls on them to put away the behavior of their old selves and put on the behavior of their new selves.

Christ Connection

Those who have trusted in Christ have been given a new identity and new nature in Him. The old self and sinful behavior are put away, replaced by the new self and conduct that pleases God. Everything is to be done in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Missional Application

Because we have been given a new identity as God's children, we fix our minds on Christ and, through the Spirit's power, put away all behavior of the flesh and behave instead in a way that pleases and glorifies Christ.

Group Time

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraph on page 112 in the DDG to raise the illustration of children putting on costumes and playing dress-up, which often involves changes in words and actions.

As children grow up, they can amass quite a collection of costumes. On a whim, they can transform from a firefighter to a superhero, from a ninja to a princess. All a child needs to do to change from one identity to another is take off one set of clothing and put on a different set. A hat or a mask might be involved. Some equipment may also be required to complete the ensemble. But once the look is right, the actions and mannerisms just follow naturally. Even the voice changes tone for the occasion, and the words follow suit.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some reasons children enjoy playing dress-up? (they enjoy modeling people they see; dress-up is a chance to express imagination and creativity; they like to play the role of other people; they like characteristics they see in the people they would dress up as; they may not like certain things about themselves and dress-up is a way to cover those things up; they like to pretend they are older than they are)

SAY: The Bible speaks about life a bit like playing dress-up. But only two outfits are available, and this is no game.

SUMMARIZE: In Colossians 3, the apostle Paul taught the believers in Colossae to remember their new identity in Christ. He framed this idea with the imagery of clothing. Every person born into the world, except Jesus, is born wearing a sinful nature, and their words and actions are consistent with that nature. But those who have come to faith in Christ have put off this old self and put on the new self, which resembles more and more the life of Jesus. In keeping with this new set of clothing, believers are to put to death the sinful desires of this earth and put on the characteristics of Christ by setting our minds on the heavenly things of God.

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Point 1: Set your mind on things above (Col. 3:1-4).

READ Colossians 3:1-4 (DDG p. 113), and ask group members to circle the references to Christ in this passage to see the centrality of Christ for our salvation and sanctification.

¹ So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 113) to establish that those who are dead in their sins—apart from faith in Jesus Christ—set their minds exclusively on earthly things.

As human beings descended from Adam, the first man who chose sin in the garden of Eden, we have inherited a sin nature from birth and even conception (Ps. 51:5). Not only are we predisposed to sin, we are consumed by it. As Paul said elsewhere, “everything that is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23), and not one of us has faith in God by nature. So, our default state as human beings is one focused on sin, or *earthly things*. This includes lust, greed, envy, and hatred, among other sins, but it also includes the whole host of earthly, man-centered ways we try to overcome our sin.

- Paul addressed the issue of false teachers in Colossae in this letter. It seems these men preached that sin in people’s lives must be overcome through strict obedience to rules and laws. Some of their commands related to the Law of Moses, such as observing festivals and Sabbaths; others were borne out of a pagan philosophy that the body and everything physical were evil and to be avoided (Col. 2:8,16-23).¹ But at the heart of these commands was a focus on human traditions. They preached a gospel that focused on what human beings could do to save themselves as opposed to placing their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation from sin. Thus, *earthly things* involved not just overt sins but the covert sin of self-righteousness, which is a different “gospel” that cannot save (Gal. 1:6-7).

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some ways people try to find salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ? (other religions; doing good works; trying to atone for offenses and evil deeds; dismissing the belief in an afterlife altogether; assume God saves everyone regardless of their character and deeds)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 113) to show why a **heavenly perspective** focused on Christ should characterize those who are alive in Christ.

Apart from faith in Jesus Christ, we are doomed to set our sights too low to achieve the eternal safety and security we all instinctively want. In this condition, we are like a pilot focused on the ground looking for a place to land while aiming straight for a mountain! But for those who have believed, eternal life has been found in the resurrection of Jesus, which we share in through faith and baptism, being united to Christ (Col. 2:11-12). In Christ, we have died to our sin, been raised to a new way of living, and now anticipate Jesus' return to fulfill the promise of eternal life. Therefore, we should go about our days with a **heavenly perspective**, one that honors and reflects Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

- The false teachers were minimizing the importance of Christ for our salvation by putting it in our own hands to accomplish. Paul confronted this by emphasizing Christ in this passage and his entire letter. Jesus is the fullness of God in flesh, and He secured our forgiveness and reconciliation with God (2:9-15). He is preeminent over all creation as the Creator and over the church because He shed His blood to save her (1:15-20). Our salvation from sin and the hope of eternal life are found only in Him, never in ourselves. So if Jesus is currently in heaven, then our thoughts ought to be occupied with heavenly things, namely, Christ. We should have a **heavenly perspective**—so grateful to and focused on our Savior in heaven that the distractions and temptations of this world ultimately lose their draw upon us.
 - It has been said that some people are “so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.” Such a condition, of course, would conflict with the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and the entirety of the Scriptures (Matt. 5:16; 6:33; John 17:15-18; Col. 3:12–4:6). The inverse statement, however, is accurate: Christians are of earthly good precisely because they are so heavenly minded. People who have their hope for salvation and eternal life secure in Jesus Christ, who is enthroned in heaven and coming again, have no need to fear. They can spend their earthly lives for Jesus' glory and the good of humanity as they proclaim His gospel and serve others as He has served them—sacrificially with perfect love (1 John 4:17-18).
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FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 113).

Union with Christ: At the heart of our **salvation** is our union with Christ. Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through **faith** (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him. This union is indissoluble; it will last for all **eternity**.

Essential Doctrine “Union with Christ”: At the heart of our **salvation** is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through **faith** (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all **eternity**.

Point 2: Put to death the deeds of the flesh (Col. 3:5-11).

READ Colossians 3:5-11 (DDG p. 114).

⁵ Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, God's wrath is coming upon the disobedient, ⁷ and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. ⁸ But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator. ¹¹ In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 114) to highlight the shortcomings of putting up limits and barriers to address external sins without addressing the sinful desires of the heart.

Believers are commanded to kill those parts of us that distract from our faith-filled focus on Jesus. We have a vested interest in removing these sins and evil desires from our lives because God hates them, as shown in His plan to judge the ones doing them one day. But our solution cannot be merely putting up barriers as the false teachers did: "Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch" (2:21-23). These may forestall the sinful deeds of the hands for a time, but they cannot address the sinful desires of the heart.

- The false teachers in Colossae prescribed regulations to keep people from committing certain sins, but their focus was on what is external, what can be seen by human eyes and controlled by human hands. The issue with sin, however, is not merely external; fundamentally, sin is an internal problem, an issue of the heart. In Matthew 5:21-30, Jesus connected the outward sins of murder and adultery with the internal evil desires of anger and lust, which are just as guilt-worthy. Sinful deeds flow from sinful hearts, so both the hands and the hearts must be changed (Matt. 15:18-19).

Commentary: Paul told believers to put away anger and wrath as these are characteristic of our earthly sinful nature. But God's wrath is perfect, right, and consistent with His holiness. Whereas we are prone to sin in our anger (Eph. 4:26), God cannot sin. And since He is holy, good, and just, God must punish sin in those who disobey His commands and violate His image given to them in creation (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:17). But for those who believe in Jesus, that punishment graciously fell on Jesus on the cross (Col. 1:20).

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 114) to emphasize that believers put to death the deeds of the flesh by living out the reality that they have already put on the new self through faith in Christ—an *inside-out approach* that reflects the truth that we are not sinners but saints in Christ Jesus.

If we are to “put to death” and “put away” the sins that are both external and internal, how do we do this? The answer is based on a life in Jesus. Believers live out what is already true of us because of our faith in Jesus—we have died to sin with Christ (3:3), so we stop living in, walking in, and entertaining the lifestyle and choices that lead to temptation and sin. We also have been raised with Christ as new people—we have a new identity through faith in Jesus: not sinners but saints in Christ Jesus (1:2).

- The false teachers wrongly based the power of transformation on human traditions—*an outside-in approach*—but Paul based it on Christ, who is the all-powerful God in flesh (2:8-10). He emphasized that both salvation and sanctification—the Spirit-empowered process of increasingly putting away sinful desires and becoming more like Christ—are accomplished through the power of God in Christ. We are commanded to put to death evil deeds and desires, but we can only do so because God has raised us from being dead in our sins through faith in Jesus and He continues to work in us (Phil 2:12-13). *True sanctification works from the inside out* and is grounded on and sustained by Christ.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 114).

New Identity of the Believer: When a person places faith in Christ, no longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. Anyone who is in Christ is a “**new creation**” in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is **alive** and progressing, becoming more and more like **Christ**.

Essential Doctrine “New Identity of the Believer”: When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental change of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God’s wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to being welcomed into God’s family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ’s perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a “**new creation**” in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is **alive** and progressing, becoming more and more like **Christ** (2 Cor. 5:17).

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



Why is faith in Jesus necessary for putting to death the deeds of the flesh? (the power and strength for resisting temptation and sin comes from the Holy Spirit, who is received through faith in Jesus; we can only put on the new self and fight sin when we have died to ourselves with Christ through faith; our sinful hearts can only be transformed through the work of God in Christ Jesus on our behalf; we can only know Jesus and be renewed in our knowledge of Him through faith in Him)

Point 3: Put on the works of the Spirit (Col. 3:12-17).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Colossians 3:12-17 (DDG p. 115).

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 115) to explain that putting on the new self will mean putting on the characteristics of Jesus.

From birth, we are dressed in our sin nature with its corresponding sinful deeds. But when we come to faith in Christ, we exchange that outfit for the righteousness of Christ (Gal. 3:27). We also begin the faith-filled work of putting away the deeds of the flesh. Yet we must dispense with our evil deeds by replacing them with compassion, humility, patience, and more. We must "put on" and cultivate these characteristics of Jesus, yet the growth comes from the work of the Holy Spirit.



Voices from Church History

"When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found; Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne."²

—Edward Mote (1797-1874)

- Being renewed according to the image of our Creator (Col. 3:10) means we will look more like Christ as we grow in the faith. After all, "all things have been created through him and for him" (1:16). Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, and peace—who is the perfect example of these characteristics but Jesus? So, if we are to follow His example, then we must get to know Jesus, and we do so through His Word, through faith, and through His body, the church.
- Furthermore, we must trust that God will help us to put on these characteristics. Notice that kindness, gentleness, patience, love, and peace are all "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). God works these things into our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit, yet we have a responsibility to put them on and live them out. This exemplifies what it means to work out our salvation as God works within us to make our work possible (Phil. 2:12-13).

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 Can a believer put on the characteristics of Christ without first putting away the characteristics of our sin nature? Why or why not? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 115) to emphasize that the characteristics of Jesus impact and grow through the ministry of the church.

One practical outworking of putting on the characteristics of Christ is that His body, the church, would be unified in love. Why should unity matter? Because our triune God is one, and we should reflect His unified glory to the world (John 17:20-23). This unity comes through steps backward and steps forward because we still struggle with sin and also are putting on what pleases God (Col. 1:10). So while we may sin against one another, in Christ we can and should forgive and love one another. This unity also comes through dwelling together on the word of Christ, building one another up with our songs of worship to God, and doing everything in Jesus' name.

- Unity in the church should be the natural progression of people who have a new identity in Christ. One believer focusing on Christ joins with other believers who do the same. With their eyes on Jesus in heaven and their words and actions on earth done in His name and consistent with His image, this body of believers comprising people from every tribe, tongue, and nation cannot help but be one together in Christ and bring glory to God through their Savior. But sin still rears its ugly head in this body, causing disunity and division. Thus, we need to put on the characteristics of Christ to return to unity once again.
 - The characteristics of Christ grow in believers as they come together in unity in Christ to do the things Christ expects of His body, the church:
 - If the “word of Christ”—the gospel of Jesus and the Scriptures, which testify about Jesus—is central to the church’s ministry, then believers, and unbelievers too, will be hearing from the Lord and changed to become more like Him (John 17:17).
 - If the worship of God for His gracious salvation in Christ comes from the heart and is grounded in truth, then believers will be teaching, correcting, and encouraging other believers as they sing to the Lord.
 - If believers do everything in the name of Jesus, then, of course, they will be putting on the characteristics of Christ and blessing both the church and the world to the glory of God.
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 How has the singing of the church convicted or encouraged you in the faith? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

My Mission

EXPLAIN: Human beings were created in the image of God, but sin has messed us up. Now we are born with a nature bent toward sin. As such, we are dead in our trespasses and without hope of salvation, except that Jesus died, rose again, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. Because Jesus—the image of God—took upon Himself the wrath of God that we deserved, through faith in Him we are saved, transformed, and given a new identity in Christ. From this new identity centered on Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, we can put to death our old sinful ways and put on the characteristics of Christ. This transformation then becomes a testimony, along with our words, that the gospel of Jesus can and does save all who believe in Jesus.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 116), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have been given a new identity as God’s children, we fix our minds on Christ and, through the Spirit’s power, put away all behavior of the flesh and behave instead in a way that pleases and glorifies Christ.

- **What sinful desires will you work to put to death because Jesus has saved you through faith in Him?**
- **What are some ways your group/ church can grow in keeping the word of Christ at the center of your life and ministry?**
- **Who in your circle of influence is living in sin, and how will you share with them the compassion of Jesus found in the gospel?**



Voices from Church History

“Put off the graveclothes of sin and the old life and ... put on the ‘grace-clothes’ of holiness and the new life in Christ.”³

–Warren Wiersbe (1929-2019)

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, we praise You for Your great grace that would lead You to send Your Son for our salvation when all we deserve is Your wrath against our sin. Help us through Your Holy Spirit to put to death our sinful nature and to put on the characteristics of Christ so we may walk worthy of our Savior and honor Him with our lives. Amen.

PACK ITEM 13: HYMN HANDOUT: Pass out copies of this hymn and sing it together.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 117-119), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 120) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 117-119) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 120) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 117-119) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 3** as a part of point 1 in the session: **We should set our sights on things above rather than earthly things because the things on earth will pass away but the things in heaven, such as life in Christ, are forever.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 1:** "Here is why thanksgiving to God plays such a prominent role in Paul's letter to the Colossians: God is in control and we owe every blessing to Him."
- **Day 5:** "Recognizing Christ's authority over all as our Creator and Savior, we must live for Him in the midst of every relationship and circumstance."



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 120) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to explain to one another the aspects about their identity in Christ that resonate with them the most presently.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: Set your mind on things above (Col. 3:1-4).

“On the basis of their co-resurrection with Christ, the Colossians are to seek to participate in new-creation life by directing their faith and lordship toward the Christ, who rules all of creation. That rule is not yet visible to all but someday will be (3:4). To seek the things above, then, means to live a life on earth under the resurrected King Jesus as the Lord of all creation, with the implication that Caesar is not their true lord ... For Paul it is a theo-moral term: how one thinks, shapes how one lives. Thus, flesh mindedness leads to flesh living, while Spirit mindedness leads to Spirit-drenched living (Rom. 8:5; cf. Gal. 5:10). This second group becomes Spirit-ually wise in their relations of humility and love and harmony (e.g., 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 1:7; 2:2,5; 3:15; 4:2; Rom. 12:3,16). The opposite is the way of discord, violence, and fractured relationships: that is, ‘their minds are set on earthly things’ (e.g., Phil. 3:19).”⁴

“The new status that believers possess includes being raised and seated with Christ at the right hand of God in heaven (v. 1), having certainty of their future state of glory (v. 4), becoming equal heirs of God’s kingdom with all other Christian believers (v. 11), and being forgiven by Christ (v. 13). Believers already possess many benefits tied to Christ’s resurrection, ascension, intercession, and glorification. Some of these blessings, however, will not be fully realized until Christ’s return. Thus, believers live in an already/not yet (or ‘eschatological’) tension. The blessings of the final age have dawned right now, in the middle of history, becoming ours through union with Christ. We are therefore pilgrims who, though our destiny is secure, are called to journey through life with faith and obedience.”⁵

Point 2: Put to death the deeds of the flesh (Col. 3:5-11).

“In Colossians 3:5-17 we do not find a single list of vices followed by a single list of virtues. Rather, we find first those things that must be put to death. Gentiles walked in these things, so to live now in Christ they must be eliminated altogether. In 3:8 we begin a new fivefold series. Its true counterpart is found in 3:12. The first series comprises things to be ‘put away’ and the second things to ‘put on.’ Both have brief extensions attached to them (3:9-11 and 3:13-17). The second extension, following the positive virtues to put on, is longer because it elaborates on what is good and worthy of Christ and the new man. It speaks of love, harmony, peace, fellowship, and thankfulness. The series represented by 3:5 [sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed] speaks of threshold conduct and bearing. These five realities, known in the Gentile world, are toxic and must be put to death altogether. They cannot exist with Christ. They represent a Gentile way of life that must die if Christ is to live and the new man in him.”⁶

“The second list of five sins focuses on those that damage human relationships: *anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language* (3:8). These sins all involve the tongue. Intemperate words can destroy what is precious. Verbal assaults on human dignity treat individuals and their neighbors as if they were animals. Paul stresses that all these sins, and lying, which gets a separate mention, are associated with the *old self* (3:9). That self should be eliminated as part of their spiritual circumcision (2:11) and they should put on the *new self*, which is shaped by their knowledge of the one who created it (3:10). As they work to rid themselves of their earthly nature, the Colossians will recover the image of the Creator in themselves, as it was when humans were first created (Gen. 1:26). That image was stained and distorted by sin, but now it is being restored in Christ.”⁷

Point 3: Put on the works of the Spirit (Col. 3:12-17).

“**The word of Christ** probably refers to the teaching about Christ as well as the words of Christ himself, which were part of the oral traditions passed on to believers in the early years after Christ ascended to heaven, before the Gospels had been written. **Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs** ... is one means of **teaching and admonishing**. Corporate worship has a teaching function through the lyrics of its songs. This was particularly important in the oral culture of Paul’s day.”⁸

“The ‘name of the Lord Jesus’ provides the proper atmosphere for life. The Colossian believers were not only to come to God through Jesus and to worship Jesus but also to live their lives conscious of his authority and reputation. To invoke his name at this point no doubt called to mind their baptism, which was done in the name of Jesus (Matt. 28:16ff.) ... This section ends with a return to the idea of thanksgiving. ‘Giving thanks to the Father’ occurs in 1:12, which introduced the many reasons thanksgiving is appropriate. They relate to salvation. Now, after the lengthy theological and practical discussion since that passage, Paul characterized a Christian’s thanksgiving as going *through Jesus* to the Father. Thus God is to be thanked for delivering believers from darkness and placing them in the kingdom of his Son through the work of the Son. Paul made explicit in this epistle the fact that God comes to the world through Jesus and the world comes to God through him as well. The believers had access to God because of the work of the Son of God. Their thanks was to rise to the ears of God through his Son.”⁹

References

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9. Richard R. Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003) [Wordsearch].