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Philippians Chapter Three

3: 1-21

Circumstances (to see link click [Ai](#) - **Philippians Chapter One**) and **people** (see [Ar](#) - **Philippians Chapter Two**) can rob us of our **joy**, but so can **things**, and it's this "thief" that **Paul** deals with in **Chapter 3**. It is important to see the total message of this **chapter** before we begin studying it in detail, so perhaps the following outline will be helpful:

Paul's past: the accountant, "I have counted" showing new values (3:1-11).

Paul's present: the athlete, "I pursue" showing maximum effort (3:12-16).

Paul's future: the alien, "I look" showing a new vision (3:17-21).



In his commentary on *Philippians: Be Joyful*, Warren Wiersbe relates the four marks of **the enemies of the cross of Messiah**, looking for **earthly things**. You may recall that the city of **Philippi** was actually a Roman colony, a "Rome away from Rome," if you will. In the same sense, the people of **God** are a colony of heaven on earth. Therefore, in **3:20 Paul** describes the believer whose **citizenship is in heaven**, looking for **heavenly things**. It is easy to get wrapped up in **"things,"**

not only the tangible **things** that we can see, but also the intangibles such as reputation, fame, and achievement. **Paul** wrote about **whatever things were gain to him (3:7)**, but **he** also mentioned **things which are behind me** (past), **and things that are straining forward** (present), and **what lies ahead** (future) **(3:13)**. In **Paul's** case, one of those intangible **things** was **his zealous** pursuit of **the Oral Law** (see **The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law**) **handed down by his forefathers (Galatians 1:14)**. Today we can be snared by tangibles and intangibles; and as a result, we can lose our **joy**.¹¹⁷

A fresh Messianic Jewish look at this chapter is important considering that the earlier Christian commentaries used this chapter as an argument against Judaism and Jewish practice. Most notable are the fourth-century C.E. sermons of John Chrysostom, which have been the basis for the anti-Semitic bias so prevalent in many current **Philippian** commentaries. In this chapter **Paul** confronts false teaching from the opponents of the Good News of **Messiah** (see **Bg - Paul's Opponents**) and rebukes false teaching from either heretical **Yeshua** followers or one of the many pagan proponents in **Philippi** who could lead the new **Philippian** believers away from their faith in **Yeshua Messiah**.¹¹⁸