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The Pagan Lifestyle
4: 17-19

The pagan lifestyle DIG: In what way is life prior to knowing Messiah pointless? How is the knowledge and wisdom of the world actually foolish? What is the natural result of people turning away from God? How does a person become numb to ADONAI?

REFLECT: Why is it important for you to remember what life apart from Yeshua was like? How do you keep from being lured into the pagan actions of the world? What do you do if you find yourself slipping back to that old lifestyle? Who are you accountable to?

Our lives are restless and unfulfilled until we make the connection with God.

This **therefore** refers back to what **Sha'ul** has been saying about our high calling in **Yeshua Messiah**. Because we are called to salvation, unified in **the Body of Messiah**, gifted through **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, and **built up** by godly examples, we should not live as **the pagan Gentiles** do. We cannot accomplish the glorious work of **Messiah** by continuing to live the way **the world** lives.[173] **Do not love the world or the things of the world. If someone loves the world, then love for the Father is not in him; because the things of the world – the desires of the old sin nature, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life – are not from the Father but from the world (First John 2:15-16).**

Therefore, with the Lords' authority, I say this: Live no longer as the pagan Gentiles do (4:17a ESV). Although Jewish believers from the local synagogue had started the Messianic community in **Ephesus**, many new believers from **the Gentile** community soon joined them. In the first century, **Gentiles** practiced rampant paganism. The only way to break free from that lifestyle was to affiliate with **the Jewish people** and **the God of Isra'el**. As a result, a number of former **pagans** became either a **God-fearer** or a **proselyte of the Covenant** (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click Bb – An Ethiopian Asks about**

Isaiah 53). With the arrival of **Yeshua** and the Messianic fulfillment, there was another viable option. **Gentiles** were then invited to participate equally in the B'rit Chadashah faith and thus be directly connected to **YHVH**. Of course, it would have been a poignant reminder to **the** Messianic **Jews** of **Ephesus** as they too could fall to the temptations of **the pagan** world. In fact, all believers **in Messiah** must stay vigilant in their focus on maintaining a godly walk.

For they walk in the futility (Greek: *mataio teti*, meaning *vanity or emptiness*) **of their minds (4:17b ESV).** This is an appropriate description of the **pagan** lifestyle. If a person has no relationship with the living **God**, then what is his purpose? Ultimately, there is no point to all the effort, time, and resources put into seeking the meaning of our lives without being connected to our Creator. Many are aimless and empty today and thus try to fill the void with all sorts of worldly substitutes (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon Cd – The Search for Satisfaction**). Some of them are obviously destructive like bad relationships and addictions, while others may even seem like good things like commitment to career or good relationships. Ironically, some people even use religious observances in their quest to find true meaning. But they are all inadequate substitutes for a real relationship with **ADONAI**. **Messiah** has come to connect us to **the Source** of blessing and peace. Our lives are restless and unfulfilled until we make the connection with **God**.



Their minds are full of darkness (4:18a). The world places great value on academics and information. It all sounds good and convincing to the multitudes, but once again it is a deception. When **Solomon** reflected on this, **he** concluded that **the fear of ADONAI is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7)**. **Wisdom** and **knowledge** of the world is no doubt impressive, but it pales compared to knowing **God**. There is a spiritual deception that can take place when we seek intelligence without the knowledge of our **Father** in Heaven. Ironically, even **Sha'ul**

calls such intelligence foolishness, as **the pagan** values of the world actually resist the will of **YHVH** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians An – The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom**).[174]

They wander far from the life that God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against Him (4:18b NLT). When people continue to sin and turn away from **God**, they become apathetic and insensitive and do not care about the consequences of their unrighteous thoughts and actions. Their conscience even becomes scarred with tissue that is not sensitive to wrong **(First Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15).** Our wicked society is so determined not to be discovered for what it is, that it has become callous both to reality and to the consequences of sin. On the other hand, sins that were hidden or excused are now indulged in, brazenly and blatantly with no semblance of morality. When self-desire rules, indecency runs wild and proceeds to cauterize the conscience, the **God**-given warning light and pain center of the soul. Those who are dying are desensitized to that which is killing them – because they chose it that way. Even when held up shamefully in full view of the world, their sins are not recognized as sinful or as the cause of increasing meaninglessness, hopelessness, and despair (see the commentary on **Romans An – The Depraved Mind of the Gentile Pagan**).[175]

Every time a person fails to respond in faith to the prompting of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** through the truth of the Scriptures, his or her heart becomes a little harder. With every act of disobedience, it becomes a little bit easier to disobey the next time.[176] **They have lost all feeling (4:19a)**. This is the natural result of a mind and heart far from **God**. Once again the context of **Ephesians** is informative (see the commentary on **Revelation Az – The Church at Ephesus**). The city was the headquarters for the Roman Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of antiquity. The Romans had embraced Artemis, the Greek goddess of fertility, and rebranded her for their purposes, which included sexual immorality. This verse implies that there is a progressive inability of the conscience to do its work as a person keeps resisting the truth of **Ha'Shem**. There is a danger in such a case that one's heart and moral values will become calloused, much like Pharaoh's did in ancient Egypt. It is even more difficult at that point to understand and discern the will of **God**.

As the mind and heart turn away from the values of **God**, the bad fruit in the person's life becomes obvious. **The Rabbi** notes a short list of examples including

sexual immorality and **greed**. **So they have abandoned themselves to sensuality, practicing any kind of impurity and always greedy for more (4:19b)**. As a traditional **Jew**, **Sha'ul** had a high view of the Torah, **God's** blueprint for living. There are many aspects to the Torah, but part of it was to keep **Isra'el** on the right track. **Rabbinic tradition teaches that there are two main sections of the Torah: 248 positive commandment and 365 negative commands, which together comprise the 613 mitzvot of the Torah. 248 is said to be the number of bones in the human body and 365 represents every day of the solar year. Hence, Jews are called on to perform the mitzvot every day of their lives with all their being (Tractate Makkot 23b).** In contrast, **the pagans** walk in such a way that breaking the Torah mitzvot becomes a habit. They would by definition be considered **ritually unclean** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Bk – Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals**) and forbidden to come close to **YHVH**.[177]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being such a wise and fantastic **Father**! As I follow **Your** ways, I know with absolute certainty that I am following the best path. I desire to keep my heart soft and tender to hear from **You** and to obey **Your Word**. Sometimes I look around and we see the ungodly flourishing; but their happiness lasts only for a blink and then an eternity of intense pain and suffering. **You hurled them down to destruction. How suddenly they became a ruin – terminated, consumed by terrors (Psalms 73:17c-18).** However, for those who love **You**, there will be an eternity of great peace and joy with no pain. It is so worthwhile to follow **You** now. **Yet I am continually with You. You hold my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me into glory (Psalms 73:23-24)***

*I desire to follow **Your** ways for the joy of pleasing such a wonderful **Father**. **You** not only rescue and deliver those who love **You** from sin's penalty, but you promise to bring us into **Your** eternal **Kingdom**! **He rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son whom He loves. In Him we have redemption – the release of sins (Colossians 1:13-14).***

*How gracious of **You** to promise an additional blessing of rewarding **Your** children **(John 1:12** and **Ephesians 1:5)** for their works done from a loving heart. **For no one can lay any other foundation than what is already laid – which is Yeshua the Messiah. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become***

clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work – what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward (First Corinthians 3:11-14). *Thank* ***You*** *for being the best* ***Father*** *that ever could be.* ***You*** *are so holy, perfect and wonderful. It is a joy to walk in* ***Your*** *ways! In* ***Messiah Yeshua's*** *holy name and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*