

Ephesians 4:14-16

Everything we have seen here so far written by Paul has been to prepare us for these verses. Tucked in between verses of how to behave and how to act as a believer, Paul gives this incredible warning. We are being challenged not only to create a spirit of unity and one of encouragement, but to beware of letting the things of this world and people's own doctrinal interpretation dilute the truth of the Gospel and the real meaning of what it means to be a believer. This warning is to be vigilant and on your guard against false teachers and those who would preach their own version of religion.

1. *We are not to be as children – vs. 14* – Now Paul is not knocking kids here. He is not saying that kids are wrong, stupid, or crazy. What he is saying is that children are often times very uninformed and therefore they are very susceptible to any and every suggestion that comes along. They do not have the spiritual or experiential maturity to discern that which is truth and that which is not. Paul is telling us not to be gullible, don't be taken in by smooth words and a smile. (Play Osteen clip)
2. *Once you begin to be confused, you will get carried away – vs. 14* – This is what is so dangerous about these types of preachers and this kind of doctrine. All they have to do is to plant doubt into your belief system and get you questioning what and why you believe what you believe and then give you a good dose of certainty. They convince you that they are right and only they hear from God. Remember the Osteen clip? When asked about an atheist getting into heaven, Osteen said, "I don't know, I don't judge, I let God do that". Well I know! The answer is NO, the atheist will not get into heaven. Why would they want to? While part of that is right, the other part is very wrong. We are not to judge others, by our standards; but we are to hold up the mirror of God's Word which does judge! These doctrines mix enough truth with error to make it very easy to believe if you are not careful. (Play Oprah clip) (Romans 1:20 ff)
3. *False doctrines are believable because of trickery, craftiness, and deceit – vs. 14* – We all want to think that we would never be fooled into believing such junk. It can happen to you or me if we are not constantly working on our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The defense of false doctrine is to be so close to the real thing that we will know the truth and see the false immediately. Oprah believes that if everyone ends up at the same place, then what difference does it make if each one takes a different road? Her premise is wrong. Just wrong. She has great influence and power over people's thinking and she needs to be careful. Her problem is, not everyone will end up at the same place. If they all want to get to heaven, then there is only one way. She believes that no matter what you do on earth, your good works will get you to the same end result. Here is the truth. If you are depending on good works to get you to heaven, then you will all end up at the same place. It just won't be heaven. (2 Pet 1:5-9)

4. *We are commanded to speak the truth in Love – vs. 15* – This may be one of the hardest things we as believers are asked to do. It is difficult to speak some truth with a loving and non-condemning spirit. At least that is what we use as an excuse. So often we just spew out the cold hard facts with no thought of how the message will be received. We say, “I’m just telling the truth!” Well, you may be telling the truth, but is it getting through. Is the method we are using the most effective in getting the point across? Are we just being blunt because it is easier and we are being held accountable for what we say anyway? It is dangerous to be that way. Jesus reminds us all that we are no better in His eyes than anyone else; therefore we are to be kind one to another. We should never diminish the truthfulness of God’s word, but we can and we should present it in such a way that we will be heard.
5. *Speaking the truth can cause pain – vs. 15* – I have seldom had someone tell me the “truth” concerning me that was not painful. How many times have we had a friend say, “Look, I’m not trying to hurt you, but . . . , or I am just watching out for you and you need to know this or that. Or did you know you do this all the time and it annoys me”! We hear things like this all the time. (John 12:8)
6. *Pain causes growth – vs. 15* – Growing up my mother and father always told me that my aches and pains were “growing pains”. I really didn’t think too much about it, but it is true. As we grow, the muscles and ligaments stretch and expand causing pain. As we get older, we get “growing old” pains, and while it is for a different reason, it is still pain. The same is true in life. The pain we experience in life causes us to grow. **Oswald Chambers tells us this, “God often does not speak to us in the ear, but through our circumstances.”** That is so true. It is the pain of our everyday living that teaches us so much of what we need to learn. The problem so many of us have is that we just look at the pain and complain, instead of looking at the growth. We have all heard the saying, “No Pain, No Gain.” It is no more true than in the Christian life. Jesus told us that we would be “persecuted for His sake”.
7. *If we are to like Christ, we must be tested and tempted like Christ – vs. 15* – Don’t forget what Jesus said, “the student is no greater than his master”. If Jesus suffered and experienced pain, so will we. In fact Paul says in Romans 5:3-5 “we are to rejoice in our suffering.” Also, in 2 Timothy 2:3; Acts 9:16; Acts 8:16-18. God expects us to be as Christ-like as we can. He knows our faults and our failures, but He also knows our ability through the Holy Spirit.