

DIFFERING PATHS

Often, when traveling through the Appalachians, I have noted the markers indicating the Eastern Continental Divide. This line denotes the watershed between streams that feed into the Atlantic Ocean and those that feed into the Gulf of Mexico. Two drops of rain, falling only inches apart on the ground, will end up separated by hundreds of miles before they reach the end of their journeys.

As we consider the choices we make day by day, we should recall the words of our Lord, *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much”* (Luke 16:10). The small things in our lives can well lead to big changes, either for good or for evil. This principle extends to congregations, as well.

Frequently, an emphasis on doctrinal exactness is greeted with a roll of the eyes. Why should we, after all, be concerned over small departures here and there? Isn't it just nit-picking to question everything that doesn't measure up to the truths we understand from Scripture?

We should be concerned about apostasy, even in the smallest measure, because it is a step down a path which will end in destruction. Every heresy that has divided the

church began with a small departure from the truth, which lead to greater and greater departures over time.

Our fellowship must stand firm on the inerrancy of Scripture — the total truth and authority of God's word. We must stand firm in attempting to understand and follow the pattern of faith and practice outlined in the Bible. Most centrally, we must stand firm in teaching the exclusive truth of God's way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Even the slightest deviation in our commitment to these basic truths will plunge the church quickly into all manner of false teaching.

When Christian teachers and preachers depart from a complete confidence in Scripture, they stand in danger of losing their faith altogether. When congregations begin introducing unauthorized elements into the worship and work of the church, there is no end to the changes which will occur. When the church begins fellowshipping outsiders as if they were members of the Lord's church, soon the very heart of the Gospel is laid aside.

Constant vigilance is needed to keep the Lord's church true to the Lord's way.

—Gregory Alan Tidwell