

Woonsocket City Day of Prayer: Why I Chose not to Participate

By James Moriello

On October 26th, 2013, the Woonsocket City Day of Prayer took place. At least 17 churches took part. The makeup of these churches range from those who deny the Trinity (Oneness Pentecostals), to those who add tongues to the gospel (Assemblies of God), to those who pray to Mary and the saints (Roman Catholic).

The argument given for Christian ecumenism is based on John 17:20-23. This encourages unity of true Christians, not professors of all stripes of false doctrine. It assumes Trinitarianism and orthodox doctrine in accordance with 2 Timothy 3:16, as many Scriptures teach separation from unbelievers and professed Christians who are apostates.

Biblical separation may be unpleasant and unpopular, but it is loving as it esteems people enough to tell the truth and stand for God's truth. Today the ecumenical movement is towards the 'least common denominator'. The result is groups like Rhode Island Council of Churches, who no longer even affirm the exclusivity of Christ. Bible believing Christians have separated from all of these. The doctrine of Biblical Separation is grounded in the holiness of God (Lev. 19:2). Believers are commanded to avoid unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-17) and also to avoid fellowship with apostate Christian professors (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes 3:6, 14; 2 John 10-11). We are to keep ourselves pure in conscience and in appearance for testimony's sake before the world (1 Tim 5:22). The Christian is to exercise discernment (Phil 1:9-10), knowing that one is known by the company they keep. "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Cor 15:33). To illustrate, as if we hang out with the troublemakers in the school yard, we become known as a troublemaker. Applied, if we hang out with the Pentecostal crowd at public events, we become associated with them and their doctrine. From my standpoint, this is an incompatible union. "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). It would be hypocritical to do so and weaken our ability to expose the truth.

Ecumenism of any brand leads to compromise through entangling alliances. A biblical example of compromise is Jehoshaphat and his entangling alliance with the Northern Kingdom, which weakened his spiritual effectiveness (1 Kings 22:41-44. Cf. 2 Chron 19:2).

Part of my pastoral charge is helping the congregation discern truth from error, and teaching them to walk in that truth (Acts 20:28-31). I am also personally responsible to a great degree not to compromise but to contend for the truths of the Christian faith (Jude 3). Firm Foundation is known as a place where these truths are firmly held, and this will not change. The first step to compromise is never the last. What we accept and participate in, we promote. For all of these reasons, I will neither participate in nor endorse participation in this event or similar events such as interfaith services.