

## Letters from our readers

The following is a portion of a letter we received. We are only using one paragraph of the letter, since that is the portion we want to address in this reply.

It is just as preposterous to say that E.M. Bounds, by being a chaplain in the Confederate Army, was encouraging men to blast out the brains of fellow Methodists as to say that ministering to criminals in prison is encouraging them in their crimes. Take off those Anabaptist glasses. He should have no regrets for his attempts to turn the hearts of men to God, wherever that was. Thank God for those brethren who have felt the call of God to minister among those with whom they disagree, including criminals in prison. God grant that I write this with the same burden and spirit.

God be with you, F. M.

Dear F.:

First, we will address very briefly the “Anabaptist glasses.” It is precisely this reason why we use Anabaptism as an example (among many) to look to: Anabaptism had a “kingdom gospel.” We don’t uphold a kingdom gospel because the Anabaptists did, rather we uphold the Anabaptists as an example of a kingdom gospel.

Next, again very briefly: being a military chaplain is not the same as a prison chaplain, in that one is allowed to preach against war in a prison setting (at least some of them), but we do not know of a military in the history of the world that has allowed its chaplains to teach against war. To be a military chaplain and not teach loving and forgiving enemies as Christ taught would be the same as being a chaplain in a whorehouse and not teach against fornication and adultery.

And finally, the most important point: Our point is—and has been over the last couple of years—that Evangelicalism has a different gospel than Anabaptism and other “kingdom Christians.” Unfortunately, we are forced to use terms like “kingdom Christians” when we should just be able to say Christians. Also be aware that we use the terms “Anabaptism/kingdom Christian” and “Evangelicalism” to denote belief systems, not as an all-exclusive nor all-inclusive statement of condemnation or approbation of everyone who may use those terms to describe themselves.

What is a “kingdom Christian”? A “kingdom Christian” is one who looks upon *the gospel as being the coming of the kingdom of God*. This happened with the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. A lot could be said

about this gospel, but to keep it short we will say that the Protestant/Evangelical definition of *the gospel is basically the blood atonement of Jesus*. So it becomes a comparison of “the gospel of the kingdom” vs. the “gospel of the blood atonement.”

OK, first of all, we do not deny the blood atonement. It is a *part*, a very important *part*, of the gospel of the kingdom. But that is the problem: some people have made the blood atonement to be the whole gospel, apart from the kingdom message.

It is like a starter on an engine. A starter is a very important part of an engine. Without a starter, engines don’t perform. But what if you take the starter by itself and call it the engine? Well, take the engine out of your car, but leave the starter in, and see how well your car goes!

The blood atonement and the new birth are a means to an end. We are reunited (at-oned) with Christ by the birth of His Spirit within us, *for a purpose*. Catch that phrase, “for a purpose.” Being born again is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end. And that end is the kingdom of God—His will being done on earth right here and right now. The kingdom of God began with Pentecost, will grow exponentially greater with the second coming of Christ, and will continue forever and ever.

This message of the kingdom is what is missing in Evangelicalism/Protestantism. They have pushed the kingdom off into the future somewhere and generally state that only then (in the future sometime) will the Sermon on the Mount be lived out. A “blood atonement gospel” is presented without the kingdom of God on earth as the end result. Think about how little you hear about the kingdom of God in today’s modern American corner church. The four gospels talk about the kingdom of God around 120 times. In contrast, Jesus’ blood is mentioned in about five places in the four Gospels.

A lot more could be said, but we will state clearly and briefly—as we have done before—that we see Evangelicalism (kingdomless gospel) as the biggest hindrance to God’s remnant in these days of ours. We carry a special burden for people of Anabaptist heritage. It saddens us to see Evangelical theology replacing the former kingdom theology among Anabaptist people. It comes sneaking in through reading books, singing songs, and using teaching methods from Protestant sources. One example that comes to mind is the popular “Creation to Christ” materials that are being used by missionaries and evangelists.

As far as I can remember, I do not remember one mention made of the kingdom of God when that material was presented in one of “our” churches. Not one time! Imagine! The four Gospels talking about the kingdom of God

120 times, and then a supposedly “gospel” presentation doesn’t even mention it at all! Instead, the blood atonement—apart from the kingdom message—is presented as “the gospel.” At best, that is a distortion; at worst a total perversion and “another gospel.” (Think of supposedly selling someone a whole engine, but they only get the starter! Most courts of law would call that “false advertisement”!)

That is why we make warning statements about men like E. M. Bounds, who missed the kingdom message of nonresistance. (And yes, he did have some good things to say. But what he *didn't* say is more important.) Worse yet are men like Billy Sunday, one of America’s foremost Evangelical preachers. He went so far as to say that he would shoot conscientious objectors if he had his way. As well, he said, “The man who breaks all the rules but at last dies fighting in the trenches is better than you God-forsaken mutts who won’t enlist.” This was from the man who had over 1 million Americans respond to his altar calls.

Billy Sunday did not preach the gospel of the kingdom. One cannot claim to preach the gospel of the kingdom when he wishes he could shoot the people who practice it and gives more hope to those who disobey it! And if Billy Sunday did not preach the gospel of the kingdom, he preached *another gospel*.

It’s that serious!

God help us all to preach the gospel of the kingdom: both with our lips and with our lives. ~