

"Don't Shoot The Messengers"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 August 2024

Preacher: Justin Bryant

[0 : 00] Amen. I invite you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 8.

You'll find that on page 1781 in the Pew Bibles. That passage we just read concerns the reception of an angel from God, a messenger of the Lord, and that connects to our current text today.

As Paul speaks about receiving messengers. In light of that, I've chosen the sermon title, Don't Shoot the Messengers. As we all are familiar with that saying, it reminded me of a historical event that I'm familiar with from my various studies into history, because I enjoy it. I enjoy learning about the past.

In the early 1200s, Genghis Khan, the king of the Mongol horde, after destroying the two northern Chinese kingdoms, he made the discovery that he had a new neighbor.

Conquering land, he found a new people on his border. The Khwarezmian Empire. This is a Muslim kingdom, a caliphate, that he had now become neighbors with.

[1 : 33] This Khwarezmian Empire was at the height of their power, just as the Mongols were growing into their fullness as Genghis was conquering across Asia.

Genghis Khan, for whatever reasons that are only known to him, sent a trade caravan to this Khwarezmian Empire with camels laden with silks and gold and spices and wealth, camels stretching far off into the distance, presumably to establish peaceful relations with the Khwarezmian Shah.

But the Shah decided that he didn't much like the Mongols and that he much liked their stuff and would rather not have to pay for it. So he thought it best to kill the merchants, to loot the caravan, to shave the beards off of the Mongolian diplomats, disgracing them, killing some of them, and then sent them back to their king in a great insult.

This ultimately led to the destruction of the Khwarezmian Empire. Despite all of its grandeur, they were no match for the Mongols, especially after having instigated them so thoroughly.

Throughout all history, we have understood this simple principle, you don't shoot the messengers. But if we can understand that it's wrong to kill messengers sent from a terrible and violent people like the Mongols at that time, how then, if we should treat messengers from such horrid people well, how then should we treat messengers who are sent from the Lord for our benefit?

[3 : 28] How else than to treat them wonderfully, to receive them graciously, even as Manoah received the angel of the Lord offering sacrifices to him and worshiping at his feet?

So too, when we are sent messengers from the Lord, we should receive them well, as we'll learn Paul is calling the Corinthians to do.

If you remember, in previous weeks, as we've been studying in chapter 8, Paul has been talking to the Corinthians about a collection, an offering, that they had begun to collect, to love and care for the saints who were suffering in Jerusalem.

Now Paul has been trying to encourage them in this chapter to complete that collection well, adding the final bits to it and sending it on its way graciously and joyfully as they eagerly hope to help the saints.

So now Paul is telling them of how good the people he is sending to them are. He's sending these brothers to them to collect the rest of the offering for the saints in Jerusalem.

[4 : 49] And so Paul commends them, speaking about how great these men are that he's sending to them and how well they love the Corinthians.

And then he finishes out by telling the Corinthians, these great brothers receive them well.

Graciously and wonderfully welcome them into your midst as befits messengers from God.

Follow along with me as I read 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verses 16 through 24. But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the hearts of Titus.

For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. And not only that, but who has also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord and to show your ready mind.

[6 : 03] Avoiding the, this, that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift, which is administered by us. Providing honorable things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have often proved, we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent because of the great confidence which we have in you.

If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or, if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the church, the glory of God.

Therefore, show to them and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. So I have a simple outline for you today. Two points and then four applications.

[7 : 15] Point number one, receiving the faithful. Paul wants to let the Corinthians know that the brothers he's sending their way are faithful brothers, worthy of a good reception.

So he starts by giving thanks to God that God has made these brothers have a heart of earnest care for the church just like Paul does.

He says, thanks, sorry, but thanks be to God who puts into the same, puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.

Paul is trying to show in this section that these brothers are brothers worthy of a good reception. They earnestly care. We see that in verse 16 and then we see in 17 that this brother, this other brother who's being sent is very diligent and that he goes of his own accord.

That Paul didn't have to twist his arm to get them to come to the Corinthians, but he was like, no, I want to work hard and be close to these people.

[8 : 29] it makes me glad to do this. You don't have to push me. I want this. You know, later on, he's talking about how these brothers have proved their goodness.

Verse, verse 22, Paul's saying, the brothers I'm sending to you, in everything they do, they're hard workers, they care about people well, they're good brothers.

But he says, now that I've told them about you, the Corinthians, they're even more hardworking because they're so excited to see you.

I mean, surely those are people that you want to receive well. Someone who is diligent and dedicated to your good. Yeah, that's someone to be excited that's coming your way.

And they're there for the Corinthians' benefit. Paul says in verse 23, if anyone inquires about Titus, he's my partner and fellow worker concerning you.

[9 : 53] Other translations will render it that he is a fellow worker for your benefit. Just like Paul labors hard for the sake of Corinthians, so too the brothers that he's sending, they're here for the Corinthians' good.

Beyond that, beyond their earnestness, beyond their care, beyond their recommendation, they are gospel workers.

That's what Paul says in verse 23, continuing on, or if our brethren are inquired about, if you're like, who are these guys that's Paul sending? Why should I, you know, like, what are their credentials? Paul says, I'll show you their credentials. They are messengers of the churches of the glory of Christ. Like, not only are they diligent, not only do they care for you, not only are they faithful in everything, but they are gospel workers.

They are messengers of the church of the living God, which is a house that he has established for his glory. You know, the pedigree of a messenger depends on what kingdom they come from.

[11 : 14] You know, a message from a small backwater country isn't taken as seriously as a message from the United States of America.

You know, the ambassador from what country the ambassador comes from depends a lot on how seriously they're taken. You know, well, what more prestigious place could these people come from than from the churches of God as messengers of the kingdom that God is building in the midst of these places?

But why does this matter? Why go through all this work of trying to vouch for these brothers and make the Corinthians excited about it?

Well, they're coming to pick up money. You know, like, do you like the tax collectors? I mean, do you like the people who send bills to you?

Are they your favorite people that you're most excited to hear from? You know, like, naturally, there might be a piece of the Corinthians heart that isn't tempted to receive these brothers well because these brothers are coming to take a bunch of their money.

[12 : 42] And so, Paul is trying to work on the Corinthians hearts. If you're worried that these guys coming to you is just a bad thing, don't be.

The brothers I'm sending, they're good brothers, and you're going to be excited and blessed to have them. I mean, have you ever hosted anyone over your house?

It takes work, it costs money, you pay for food, you know, like, and then they all leave, and what are you left with, dishes? You know, like, you prepared beforehand, you manage things during it, and then you clean up afterwards?

Why on earth would you bother doing that? What do you get out of it? Good company. People are worth more than stuff.

So, Paul's trying to get them excited about these brothers that are coming their way. Yeah, they are taking the collection that you're giving, that I've encouraged you to give graciously, but don't think we're robbing you.

[13 : 53] You're going to be so excited to have these brothers because they work hard, and they love you, and they're sent from God. So be excited to see them.

You know, that makes perfect sense. Yeah, you're giving something up, but you're receiving something far better, the sweet labor of good brothers.

That's what Paul's trying to explain when he says in verses 20 and 21, avoiding this, that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us, providing honorable things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

In case there's some people in your church who are divisive and who would say don't give them your money, they just want to take stuff from you. Like this great collection, let's use it for ourselves. You know, sometimes churches get people like that who still need some work done on their heart. Paul's saying, I'm sending these very best brothers along so that no one can claim that they're here to rob you because these brothers are going to serve you so well.

[15 : 13] I'm not only doing things that are pleasing to the Lord, but I'm doing things that even the hardest of hearts among you will be excited to receive when it happens.

Don't push me away, don't be worried about my ministry, I'm here because I love you, is what Paul's saying. And so for you who aren't the Corinthian church, who don't know Paul personally, who don't have messengers coming to you to collect money for Jerusalem, why does this matter to you?

Well, because the Lord sends to you faithful brothers and sisters, and you are to prize their faithful love better than the things of this world.

one of the ways we do that as a church is by giving money to the offering to support the work of the church, and in particular to support the work of a pastor to be here to love you and care about you.

So I think if we're rightly applying this passage, we should be concerned to give our money to receive something greater the love of a body and of a faithful shepherd.

[16 : 41] One thing that we may not be able to reach quite yet, but long term we should aspire to and for our good, is considering what it would take to have a full-time pastor here who could love us more, instead of just one who can only do, has to fit it around another job.

that would be for our benefit just like for the Corinthians benefit, there is a group of men coming to them who are taking money from them, but are going to encourage them spiritually by the preaching of the word.

So that's point number one, receiving the faithful. Point number two, faithfully receiving. So the first point was all about how the people they're receiving are faithful people.

Now this point number two is all about how they are to be faithful in the way that they receive these brothers. Look at what Paul says in verse 24.

This is where this point comes from. Therefore, whenever you see therefore, ask what the therefore is therefore. It connects the previous idea to what Paul's about to say.

[18:03] He's saying because the brothers I'm sending to you are these great wonderful brothers, do this. And what does he say to do? Therefore, show to them and before the church the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

He says because these brothers are faithful, ministers of the gospel, because they work hard for you, because they care about you. Love them back. Receive them well.

And prove that you love them and the other churches. They are messengers of the churches. They are representatives of the other believers.

So give the offering generously joyfully. I mean, imagine if Tony had to come around collecting the offering and pry the money out of your fingers every time.

Would that show that you love the church? So too Paul is saying here, when these guys come, don't give them a hard time.

[19:17] Don't, don't, you know, be standoffish to them. Don't be like begrudgingly giving the money away because you agreed to do it before.

Give cheerfully. Give joyfully. Be like the Macedonians that we learned about, that Paul gave the example of earlier in chapter 8, verse 1, you know, that the churches of Macedonia, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality or generosity.

For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of ministering to the saints.

Paul's saying like, you know, give in such a way that we're blessed by your joy to give. Like, have you ever met someone who does nice things for you with a smile?

Like, it makes them happy to do good things for you? You know, we all know the people who, like, they're faithful and we appreciate it, but they're not usually joyful when they're working for you.

[20:38] You know, like, okay, yeah, I need his help, but he's going to make me pay a little bit in a bad attitude. Paul's saying don't do that to these brothers.

They're faithful. Receive them well. Like, be so excited and happy to help that you make them rejoice. You know? Be like, we're so glad you're here because we really want to help these saints. saints. So consider this. A faithful reception involves supporting the work that the people are doing. When God puts in your midst ministers of God, workers who are serving you, loving you, caring about you, you also ought to do things to support the work that they're doing.

One of the big ways you can do that is by prayer. whenever you see someone serving in this church, I want you to make sure that there's someone you pray for.

That's one of the ways you give back for the love that they show you. So when you see someone do a scripture reading, or collect the offering, or up in the booth, or maybe they come to you and they say an encouraging word, which is work in the church, pray for them.

[22:02] love them. Of course, this also means financial support, but I've belabored that point enough. Understand this, too, that a good gift requires real gratitude, not just superficial gratitude, not just like, oh, thank you, but a gratitude that flows out into work.

Notice Paul says in verse 24, the proof of your love. The proof. If you say thank you, but you never care for the people in return, there is no proof to your love.

There is no real gratitude there. love. When you receive a good gift of care and service by believers, give real working gratitude in return.

have you ever gotten a ride with someone to a far place and even though they didn't ask for gas money, you gave it to them anyway?

That's an expression of gratitude because a good gift requires gratitude in return. That's the right way for us to do things.

[23:25] you know, just as Paul, as we had talked about when we were studying earlier in the chapter, giving is a Christian thing.

Being generous, not just with money, but with your time and your attention and your thoughts and your prayers and your hands and your car and your phone.

Be generous with these things to love other people. So give proof that you are a Christian by being someone who is eager to receive other brothers and sisters in Christ.

In Galatians it teaches us, let us do good to all, especially those who are of the household of God. But know this too.

Some people call themselves Christians, but they do not give proof of it. Some people claim to be generous or think that generosity or charity or kindness are good things, and then you send faithful brothers and sisters who are in need, and they don't care, and they never give proof of that love.

[24 : 45] Know that if you do not give proof of your love, you are not Jesus's. Love for the saints, if there is never any real working expression of your love for the saints, if you're just as friendly with them as you are to anyone, that the love of Jesus is not in you.

First John teaches us that we should love one another because love is from God. And if anyone does not love his brother, he is not Christ's, because anyone who does not love the brother whom he has seen cannot love the brother whom he hasn't love God whom he hasn't seen.

So give good proof. Be so full of the gospel and of the charity of Jesus that you're excited to give more. Consider this too, Paul says give proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

Paul says I've been telling these brothers that you're great. I've been saying you're going to be so happy when you meet them because they're wonderful.

Sometimes like we'll say that about each other. Maybe we're talking about church trying to get someone in here and we're like oh you're going to love this congregation. They welcome people so well.

[26 : 20] But imagine if I said that to someone and then they came in and none of you talked to them. I would have boasted about you and then you would have given no proof to back it up.

Paul's saying the same thing to the Corinthians. Give proof of your love and our boasting on your behalf. I'm telling people how great you are. Like of course you should want to answer that truthfully and to prove to them that I was right to say that.

I mean which of us want someone to say something good about us and then people to be disappointed when they find that out and find out that it's not true. If I was to boast about you would people be disappointed after they met you?

Give proof of your love and of your boasting? For specific applications that come from this idea of gospel bonding.

Because ultimately what Paul is trying to do is like squish these churches hearts together. Like you've got a heart over here up in Corinth and a heart down here in Jerusalem and he's trying to like send messengers back and forth and make them love each other well and be knit together so that they beat as one even though they're miles apart.

[27 : 58] We should want that too. And so these points help us to work that out. Point number one, be worthy of a good reception.

Live your life with a faithfulness that makes it so that you are someone worth receiving well, worth people being excited to see.

Paul wants the Corinthians to be excited to receive these brothers. So too, you should be the type of person that I could say, I'm sending him or her to you.

Be excited to receive them because they are faithful and hard workers and great lovers and whatever it costs you to host them will be well worth what you receive in return.

Point number one, be worthy of a good reception. Application point number two, speak well of believers. Boast in your brothers and sisters.

[29 : 10] Work hard to see the best in each other and tell other people about that. Church is not made to look beautiful when we gossip about each other.

The church is not made to look glorious when we talk about how annoying different people are. The church is made to look glorious when we have so much love for each other that we are always trying to find the best in those that we're with.

When instead of talking about something that someone does that gets on my nerves, I'm quick to say, whenever I call him, he's there.

Or this person is always praying. Boast about each other. Application point number three, receive brothers and sisters well.

people, whether they're in this church or from other churches, if you see the marks of faith in them, you should be excited.

[30 : 21] Like, this is a blood bought believer. This is a member of the body of Christ. It's like a reunion with your family. Like, oh man, I get to be with another Christian.

Brothers and sisters, I want to say, you guys do this well. So many members of Sovereign Grace have come here to visit, and you guys have received them very well.

Keep doing that. Keep doing it. Application number four, receive Jesus Christ. Who is more faithful? Who has loved you more? name a better messenger. Name someone who brings better news. Name someone who's more diligent for you than Jesus Christ is.

If the brothers and sisters are worthy of reception because of their diligence, because of their care, because they are sent from God, how much more so the only son who is at the father's right hand, who came down, dwelt in flesh, lived a perfect life for your sake, preached the best news that there's ever been, and then died to see you become rich from his poverty, and then conquered the grave with great power, so that anyone who believes in him might go free, how much more so should you receive him well than anyone else?

[32 : 06] How much more so should you be excited to see your Savior and to spend time with him more than anyone else? How much more should you give proof before him of your love?

Do you? read the word, love his word, be with his people, love his people, love him, love his gospel, boast about him, receive him, say, if I get nothing else, if it costs me the whole world, and I gain Jesus Christ, it's well worth it.

Whatever the collection is, whatever the offering I give in return, it's nothing, nothing compared to Jesus. Paul in Philippians says, indeed, I count all things as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

He is worth it. Receive him well. Glorify his name. Let's close in prayer. Lord God, we thank you for your great gospel of Jesus.

We thank you that you loved us so much that you sent your only son. We are sorry for the ways that we have not received him well, and we rejoice at the ways you have taught us to love good and hate evil.

[33 : 42] Help us to show such wonderful love for each other that the world will wonder at how we can give so freely and still rejoice.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. At this time, we will now collect the deacon's offering.

■ Thank you.