

### 3,5,26 2 Cor. 11:16-33 The Life of a True Servant of Christ

There is something I want to read to remind us of what 2 Corinthians is all about. Before I read it, you remember in the past we've seen that the scriptures tell us that Paul was God's example of what a disciple of Christ is meant to be; not by specific calling, that's different for everyone, but in terms of spiritual life and growth, and also in experience and in our relationship with the Lord.

(Phil. 3:17 & 4:9) Brethren, join in following my example, and recognize others who walk as I do; you have us for a pattern. . . The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

(1 Cor. 4:16-17) I urge you to imitate me. For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

Israel was given Jehovah's thoughts expressed through Moses, for us it is Christ expressed through Paul and the apostles.

Ok, here's the quote I wanted to share:

Paul was a representation of the church in every way, he did not only see the church mentally, doctrinally, the church was himself, in very being, in very life. The truth of the church came into him as well as out from him. It proceeded from his own inner history with God and in that very real sense, he was the embodiment of the church and the truth of the church. And therefore, if the church is the ministering vessel of Christ in this dispensation to the world and in the world, the apostle Paul, in a very full and deep way, embodied the principle of all Christian service.

We know and understand that when we see the Lord Jesus – when we *really* see Him- we see God; we see what God is like, we come to the knowledge and understanding of God in Christ. But when we see Paul, we see what service to God means, we come to understand what the church's ministry really is. 2 Cor. is not a treatise. It is not an argument on doctrine; it is the experience of this life. It was not intended to be a letter, an epistle, or a

document setting forth the doctrine of Christ and of Christianity. It's not the book of Romans, which does that perfectly. It was the outpouring of a man's heart from his experience as a servant of God to the Lord's people, with the intent to show the Lord's people what the service of the Lord really is. That is the nature of this letter.

2 Corinthians brings us face-to-face with the experiential meaning of our being for Christ in this world; what it means that we, being related to the Lord Jesus, are here on this earth. We're challenged all the way through on that question.

From the first half sentence to the end of the letter, speaking out of his own experience as a servant of the Lord, he is showing us the way of service: what we may expect, what service really is. Paul is saying it out from his own heart.

So, what we're saying is that in Paul, especially through letters like 2 Corinthians, we are given the "what to expect" if we determine to pursue God's purpose for us. And I just wanted to make sure we have that understanding of why 2 Corinthians was written as we continue to study its contents. We don't want to miss the forest for the trees. Each verse is crucial, but the impact those verses can have on our lives personally depends on whether we can see God's *purpose* in having them written down for us, as well as the meaning each one adds to *that purpose*. The Holy Spirit is using Paul to give us a very clear and personal picture of what being a disciple of Christ is meant to look like so we can identify the things in our lives and in the places we have fellowship which align with what we see in the lives of Paul and his companions; it also allows us to identify those forms of Christianity that are *not* aligned with what we see in who Paul is and in what he experienced and wrote for us.

Again, as Paul said in Phil. 3, ". . . you have us as a pattern". God has given us Paul and the apostles as a spiritual pattern of God's desire for all of us. And one element of that pattern is the reality that following Christ will involve us in a great deal of conflict with the forces around us that will do everything in their power to destroy, or at least limit, our testimony.

This is what we see in the section of 2 Cor. 11 we'll be looking at tonight. It's divided into two parts: In the first part (vs's 16-21), Paul continues to write to them about another area in which he has to both defend himself and warn them. And in the second part (vs's 22-29) he openly reveals to them the conflict, the suffering, that has come to him because of his faithfulness to Christ.

So, with all that in mind, let's read through the first section (vs's 16-21);

I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold—I speak foolishly—I am bold also.

Most of this is obviously sarcasm, so we have to be careful to interpret it in that light. Even the first statement is a combination of sarcasm and heartfelt appeal; "Let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool." Paul's saying, "I'd prefer you didn't think of me as a fool, but even if you do, at least listen to me."

Paul tells the Corinthians that they had allowed themselves to be put in bondage, devoured, ripped off and slapped. And then Paul adds, "But to our shame, we were too weak for that". Or we could say it this way, "We lacked the courage to do to you what others have done to you; if you want us to be courageous (or "bold"), and the way *you* decide who is courageous is to define it by the actions of those who did all those things to you, then, yes, we are weak and cowardly by comparison.

Now, if we tie all of that into the principle of Paul being God's "pattern" of a true servant, and we want to follow in his footsteps, then other believers might decide that our unwillingness to be like the false apostles Paul was warning the Corinthians about, is something we should be ashamed about. They might see us

as pushing against what they've decided is true spirituality, since we don't act like the popular, successful, men who are currently shaping the church into their image.

So, what do we do then? We aren't what they want, but we know that we are what they need. We love a group of people who have been completely taken in by the deception and flesh-driven boldness of these false teachers; and these brothers and sisters we care about can't see that.

Paul's decision was to "boast" in order to remind them that everything they have experienced from Paul, from bringing them to Christ in the first place, to sending Timothy and others to minister to them, are clear demonstrations that it's Paul, not the false apostles, that genuinely cares for them and that he is the one who has obviously been used by the Lord to save and shepherd them.

Paul's hesitation in "boasting" is that he hates to do that. Men who are truly humble don't blow trumpets announcing their spirituality. They don't put on shows to impress people or try to get others to follow anyone but Christ. As the Pulpit Commentary puts it; "Paul evidently feels an almost invincible repugnance to begin to speak of his own works. He has twice swerved away from the task to speak instead of collateral topics."

Now, let's make some general applications of what's happening here, of what's behind this, and then we can see if any of what we're seeing with Paul has happened in our own lives. Since the Corinthians were seeing the bad guys as good guys, and the good guys as bad guys (like calling evil good, and good evil), I wanted to find something that could expand on that and show us more about what that looks like. The following is a commentary on 2 Cor. 2:15-16 where Paul talks about us being a "fragrance" of either life unto life or death unto death depending on how others see us;

You and I, on the broadest basis of the Christian life, are here to represent a check; to draw a line in the sand; and because we are here for that, we shall be called "trouble makers". The trouble will focus itself upon us, and we shall have to suffer for it. The very fact that you are jealous for the Lord will bring you into conflict with the trends that there are in this world, and in the

church.... When there is the purest testimony, the fullest expression of what is of God, the heavenly over against the earthly, the spiritual over against the carnal or the natural, the enemy gives a turn to things, a twist to things, and lays the blame at the door of a spiritual ministry. He says: "You are the cause of all the trouble – you are the troubler!" But the trouble lies deeper than that, and in another realm. The truth is, there is something here that, in its very nature, must create trouble, must be a source of trouble, so long as God's known will, His revealed mind, is being violated; while the full expression of God's purpose is being withstood. To bring in something that stands for that, there is going to be trouble. It is a costly thing to have seen God's full purpose and thought concerning His people. It is always a costly thing. The Lord Jesus set a very vivid example and object lesson of this truth right in the foreground, in the incident of the man born blind (John 9). There is no doubt that the Lord intended that man to represent Israel and Israel's condition at the time. He gave that man sight – and what happened to the man? "They cast him out," they excommunicated him (v. 34). That is an object lesson, an instance of this very thing.

If eyes have been opened; if you are one who sees, it is going to cost you a lot, it will involve you in a lot of trouble. This matter of 'seeing' does that. It was Elijah over against the blindness of Israel. It is a costly thing to be a spiritual man or a spiritual woman in this universe. It is a costly thing to hold to a heavenly and spiritual position. It is a costly thing to hold for Christ's full place; it involves you in trouble. It is a costly thing to have light.

The Corinthians were blaming Paul for the conflict and confusion that the false teachers had caused. 'If only Paul was more like them, everything would be OK'. But Paul can't be anything but what he knows is Life and Light. He won't betray his Lord for the sake of popularity, even if he genuinely loves those who have "cast him out." It's like what Paul wrote in Gal. 4:16; "Have I become your enemy by telling you the Truth?"

Real courage isn't being bold only when you are popular; it's being bold no matter the personal cost you might have to pay. If you love someone; you'll tell them the

truth; it's a simple but timeless exhortation. Your goal is to – “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

So, as we saw earlier, Paul reluctantly decided that his only option under these circumstances was to “boast” – to remind the Corinthians of who he was and of what the Lord has done through him. The fact that Paul was forced into this situation is very helpful for us because now we're allowed an even fuller picture of the disciple God said was to be our “pattern” of genuine discipleship; vs's 22-33;

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? —I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

I'm sure you can see that Paul's need to defend himself to the Corinthians resulted in us having some very personal information about the life of a true follower of Christ that we wouldn't have had if Paul didn't decide to use “boasting” as his means of defense against all the accusations that were made about him.

And I'm not saying that whenever we are in a similar situation and the accusations are flying, we should immediately do what Paul did and start listing our spiritual

credentials to our accusers. There definitely might be a time for that, there was for Paul, but if that is how the Lord leads us to respond, it should be just as “repugnant” to us as it was to Paul.

We all know that if anything good has ever happened through us, it’s been grace. We don’t have anything personally to boast about. But there may be times when we will at least need to counter lies and point out evidence of God’s grace in our lives. No matter what, though, the most important thing is to follow God’s lead on how to respond. The Lord’s ways of responding to His accusers varied a great deal depending on who the accusers were and what the circumstances were.

Now, let’s look at what Paul described as his “credentials” for ministry. And as we look at these, think about whether these would be the credentials a potential church leader would have (and use) in our generation to show anyone who asked why he is qualified to represent the Lord to His people. I think you’ll discover that the men our contemporary churches choose for leadership have a slightly different list of qualifications.

Actually, verse 30 is the bottom-line of Paul’s own concept of what qualifies someone for leadership in the Church; “If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.”

To paraphrase it would be, “If it’s necessary for me to cite my qualifications or credentials for this ministry, I will present the things which demonstrate my suffering.”

In Paul’s mind, nothing did more to prove his qualifications to lead God’s people than what the Lord took him through to prepare and shape him for that role. Paul knew that suffering brought him into a much deeper knowledge of Christ than *anything* else would have done.

And yet, not only is this *not* what any contemporary church I’m aware of would want to know about a prospective pastor, but we all seem to do what we can to personally avoid the one thing that can make Christianity real life for *us* too.

Many of you may have heard these comments by Ian Thomas before, but for those who are newer, this is definitely something we all need to think about when we are

looking at the subject of 'pastoral qualifications' – which is what this part of 2 Corinthians 11 is about;

Jesus was thought to be the illegitimate child of an unfaithful woman, so socially, how much was He worth? Nothing.

Born of peasant stock, His schooling was negligible, sufficing only to equip Him for the humble duties of a common craftsman. Professionally, how much was he worth? Nothing.

A fanatical street-preacher and rabble rouser, He was totally repudiated by all the ecclesiastical dignitaries of His day, and having had absolutely no theological training whatever, was looked upon with supreme contempt by all that called itself scholarship among those who searched the Scriptures. Ecclesiastically, theologically, and intellectually how much was He worth? Nothing.

His financial standing was such that he even had to borrow a coin for one of His far-fetched illustrations. He was an incorrigible scrounger by all natural standards of value, for He had no home of His own. Born in a borrowed stable, He lived and dined in borrowed homes; He rode upon a borrowed donkey, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. He was bankrupt from the start. Financially, how much was He worth? Nothing.

Now, before I read Thomas' closing remarks, keep the application of this to our generation in mind;

If the Lord Jesus Christ were to appear in the world today under similar circumstances, what church would allow Him to be their pastor? What Bible college or seminary would appoint Him to their faculty? What missionary organization would invite Him on their board or even send Him to the field?

The reality is this: No matter what our current standards of evaluation may be a man is worth only as much as can be seen of Christ in Him?

And Sparks adds this;

If we are to fulfill this true, living ministry, it will only be through the winepress, through pressure and through breaking. Paul said: "We were pressed out of measure, above strength" (2 Corinthians 1:8) – but what Life has come out of that man's pressure! It is like that. We are not talking just about Bible teaching, as important as that is, but about this great ministry of Christ expressing His Life through us. It may be passed on to others through preaching, or through teaching, or through living, but if it is *His* Life it will come out of experiences of suffering. A preacher or a teacher who has never suffered will never minister Life.

Before we move on, let me briefly summarize the specifics of Paul's experiences;

In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in danger from waters, robbers, my own countrymen. . . In weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Here's the meaning of the phrase, "A night and a day I have been in the deep."

The "deep" (Greek: bythos) refers to the open sea or the depths of the ocean, highlighting a profound experience of abandonment and imminent death. It signifies a literal, 24-hour, life-threatening ordeal where Paul was adrift, tossed by waves, and saved only by the grace of God.

You notice that Paul topped off his list with "... my deep concern for all the churches." Later in 2 Tim. 1:15 Paul would have to write; "Everyone who are in Asia turned away from me" (lit. 'abandoned' me).

Paul's suffering was not only physical; he felt deep sorrow and abandonment. He suffered psychologically also. As you know, the Psalms are overflowing with this kind of suffering in the life of David, which in his case, also involved regret and guilt over his sins.

It is unlikely that we will go through what Paul went through, but if we are growing and becoming an increasing threat to the enemy, we will have our own “pressed above measure” experiences. But as we’ve seen, these will be used by the Lord to conform us to Christ; to make us vessels fit for the Master’s use. These things literally become our “qualifications” to be Church Age embodiments of the pattern set by Paul.

So, what about the other side of all this? What about rejoicing, Paul singing in prison shackled to the wall, entering into rest, knowing the peace of God that passes understanding, etc. This list is just as long. One thing we can say for sure is that these things are *in spite of* a person’s circumstances. Paul had both, but the joy didn’t remove the beatings - and the beatings didn’t remove the joy.

We don’t have time to look at all the miracles of what Christians can experience even in their suffering, but just to give you an example, I found something interesting on the meaning of the word “Joy” in the New Testament;

Joy is often depicted as a profound and enduring sense of gladness that transcends mere happiness. It is not solely dependent on external circumstances but is deeply rooted in one's relationship with God. The Hebrew word for joy, conveys a sense of celebration and rejoicing, often associated with worship and community gatherings (Psalm 118:24). But in the New Testament, the Greek word "chara" signifies a joy that is grounded in the Holy Spirit, reflecting a deep-seated assurance and peace *that comes from faith in Christ* (Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22). Biblically, joy is frequently linked to salvation and the hope found in God's promises. For instance, Nehemiah 8:10 states, "The joy of the Lord is your strength," highlighting that true joy is derived from knowing that God is present. Jesus also emphasized joy in the context of discipleship, as seen in John 15:11, where He speaks of His desire for His joy to be in His followers. Joy in the biblical sense as part of the believer's experience, is characterized by a deep sense of gratitude, hope, and connection to God, regardless of life's challenges.

Yes, regardless of life's challenges. In other words, faith in who we are in Christ; in God's eternal love for us; in the destiny He has planned for us and a thousand other realities of our union with Christ and our relationship with God, can create a place in our soul of gratitude and assurance that is deeper than the sufferings of the body.

A contemporary of St. Francis of Assisi (St. Anthony), in addressing that which steals our peace wrote; "There are three clear traps of the enemy that steal our peace: Regret for the past, fear of the future and ingratitude in the present."

It won't be the storms that surround us and pound against us that bring us any kind of inward calm; it will be faith in the spiritual realities we see in the scriptures that give us a solid foundation; a house built on the rock of faith in God's Word instead of on the sand of unbelief.

We don't have time to move into the next chapter, so what I'd like to do in closing chapter 11 is to spend a few minutes talking about how the Lord plans to resolve this conflict and division between those, like Paul, who go on with the Lord no matter what the cost and those who step off the path of spiritual growth and end up opposing the remnant of God's people who are staying faithful to Him.

At some point, I believe in the near future, God is going to sort out the carnal from the spiritual, just as He did with Israel in 70 A.D. And just like then, everything was brought to a climax. The Lord moved in Rome and judged the imitators while protecting and drawing into the Body of Christ those whose hearts were still His.

Whenever it's possible, I want to bring what we study into our generation, because it's not only the signs of the Tribulation that are becoming more evident, it's also what one author called "the whisperings of preparation" of the Body of Christ to meet her Lord in the air.

Our family has, for many years, had a very close relationship with a woman who lives in Romania. There are very few people I've know whose heart is as open to the Lord as hers is. There is an innocence and purity in her soul that is both refreshing and rare in our time. In our latest "face-time" conversation with her, she told us that the Lord had told her recently (three times) that His coming was very

soon. Letting us know that His 'whisperings of preparation' to those with ears to hear are underway.

And just before that happens, we know from Heb. 12:25-27 that there will be a fulfillment of the promise our Lord made in that passage;

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth (which was in 70 A.D.); but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

God will once again shake the "earth" during Jacob's 70<sup>th</sup> week, but first He has to shake "heaven" (the place of *our* citizenship); Phil. 3:20; "For *our* citizenship is in heaven".

1 Pet. 4:17 tells us that ". . . judgment first begins at the house of God. . ." Following the judgment of the citizens of heaven, the Church, God's judgment will spread to all nations and be finalized in the return of Christ and birth of the Millennial Kingdom of Israel.

I believe we are nearing the pre-Tribulation judgement of God from Heaven. The result will be the separating of spiritual and carnal. This time is also called "The Day of Visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12); a time of blessing and empowerment for the remnant and of judgment for the carnal believers. Here's an excellent overview of that time;

Everything is going to be shaken in earth and in heaven, with a view to finding out just how much there is of Christ living in it. The Jewish believers addressed in the letter to the Hebrews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were going to see the temple and the whole temple system wrecked, and then they would discover just how much they had got of Christ, or how much of their life was bound up with earthly things. They would see what was left when that was all gone. God is not only going to shake Judaism, but this heavenly thing also.

He will shake heaven and earth, and we shall find out by that shaking what we have left when the earthly system passes, when even the representation of heavenly things in Christianity is tested (for Christianity has developed a false representation of heavenly things, just as Judaism did). Men have made an earthly representation of the New Testament revelation of the church, and ministry, and priesthood. It is all going to be tested. For many it is now in the melting pot. The issue is the shaking of heaven and earth. What will be left that truly represents Christ?

Whether you like all that we have said, or agree with it or not, does not worry me; but I *am* concerned that we show that Christ in heaven is our Life, Christ in heaven is our All, and appointed to be so by God, and nothing here can take the place of Christ. God will bring everything to an end that has usurped the place of Christ. He has determined from eternity that in all things Christ should have the preeminence, and that nothing shall glory before Him or take His place. May the Lord bring us into a larger measure of Christ, and a larger measure of Christ into us.

It's difficult sometimes (actually, without spiritual discernment, it's impossible) to tell the difference between a Christianity that is man-made and the Christianity that is Christ Himself in corporate expression. You might remember Vance Hafner's comments on this;

The devil is not fighting religion. He's too smart for that. He is producing a counterfeit Christianity, so much like the real one that good Christians are afraid to speak out against it. We are plainly told in the Scriptures that in the last days men will not endure sound doctrine and will . . . heap to themselves teachers to tickle their ears. We live in an epidemic of this itch, and popular preachers have developed ear-tickling into a fine art.

So, to peel back the outward show and fully expose reality, the Lord will initiate a spiritual process of separating that which has been produced by Man from that which is produced by God. The Lord is shaking the Church to determine what is of Man and what is of Christ.

Earthly vs. Heavenly  
Carnal vs. Spiritual  
Soul vs. Spirit  
Sinai vs. Zion

That shaking; that separating, in the 1<sup>st</sup>. century was more intense than anyone could have imagined. Something similar will soon happen to not only purify the remnant but to separate and expose those who are relying on their own resources to survive.

By faith, the remnant will draw from the resources of heaven; from the indwelling Christ. The non-remnant will desperately attempt to draw from the same flesh-based resources that empowered them to build the counterfeit Christianity they were a part of. God's shaking will be more than anyone can cope with, without the spiritual resources we have in Christ.

This is only one of many reasons it's so important for us to go forward, every day, and not give in to the temptation of a lesser calling. We are now at a crossroads in history when major decisions are going to be made – when decisions of “for or against” will be forced on us by our circumstances and by the siren call of the apostate Church.

We need to be able to see clearly what is real and what isn't; what is of Christ and what is not. So, our prayer and study have to be as desperate as the situation requires. As things heat up, so must our determination to understand, to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

For now, I'm just sharing information about these times based on the what the Bible says will happen. But soon, maybe even *now* for many of us, we are going to need that information to become real – to become something we understand and take hold of in order to overcome what we'd never be able to overcome without it.

The remnant has to be fully separated from the world; that's what the sanctification or purification at the end is meant to accomplish. Enoch walked with God. God was his life; no more work needed to be done in him – so, God took him.

Like our Lord said in John 14:30, “The ruler of this world. . . has nothing in Me.” There was nothing in this world, nothing that Satan could offer, that held any appeal to Christ. For a fully set-apart disciple of the Lord, this is where *his* heart is also. Christ is his all, and when that’s real, God will have completed what He began, and we can go home.

This is the battle for spiritual life that every believer is engaged in whether they realize it or not.

At the end of this Age the Lord will have a remnant which can’t be carried away by compromise or deception or anything earthly; a remnant that can’t be shaken and moved off its foundation of Christ alone.

This is the reason for the intensity of the battles we face. The enemy must prevent this overcoming Church from being established because it will be *that* Church that casts him from heaven.

I can’t be dogmatic about this, at least not yet, but I feel it’s very possible that 2026 into 2027 is going to bring us to some degree into this final act of the Lord before we’re raptured. The Lord is finalizing the numerical and spiritual completion of the Church to bring about the end of this Age and take us to the place He promised to prepare for us.

If there was ever a time in the history of the Church when the “things of this world” need to “grow strangely dim” and our focus become increasingly directed at God’s purpose for us, this is that time.

(Lk. 12:37) Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching.

(1 Thess. 5:4-6) You, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day would overtake you as a thief in the night. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be (lit.) “paying close, thoughtful attention, being observant, attentive and self-controlled.”

(2 Pet. 3:3-4) Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own desires, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

I'll close with a few comments by Watchman Nee;

Whether we be wounded or suffering or seemingly defeated, it is still best for us to rise up and run. Let us remember that only at the end of the course will judgment be rendered. Therefore, let us not forfeit the race for any reason.