

End of Construction



A few years ago, my wife, Cathy, and I were privileged to attend a Soul Care training conference at the Billy Graham Training Center located in North Carolina. We wandered the beautiful grounds and discovered the building that housed mementos and pictures of Dr. Graham's worldwide crusades. It was breathtaking! Dr. Graham and his wife, Ruth, impacted literally millions of people with their faithful work for the Lord.

I was most captivated upon seeing a plaque inscribed with Ruth's personal statement of her life's journey, after she passed away in 2007. Her final words said nothing of her remarkable achievements. Instead, she quoted one of the many cautionary road signs cluttering a long stretch of highway she once endured, through a construction site full of detours and road implements: "End of Construction. Thank you for your patience."

These words touched Ruth so deeply; she requested they be inscribed on her headstone! The simplicity of her message and rich spiritual understanding was staggering! She embraced her life's hardships and detours with a sense of anticipated glory when God completed her earthly "construction". The apostle Paul forewarns that our journeys will sometimes leave us feeling "hard pressed and perplexed" (II Cor. 4:8-9). As life travelers, we will undergo many areas of spiritual construction. Roadblocks of ill health, marital and familial challenges sideswipe us. These unwanted detours often leave us feeling broken down by the side of the road. It is then; we most need the 2nd segment of Ruth's poignant epitaph: "Thank you for your patience".

As I read those words, I wondered if we are truly thankful for others' patience with us. I smiled, knowing how desperately I needed the understanding of those around me. The patience of my wife, our son and so many friends has greatly encouraged me along many challenging roads. Ruth Graham seemed to understand our deep collective need for patience as we slowly grow into people who love God and others well. May each of us be patient and encourage others along life's journey to become spiritually mature. Yes, we all must endure hard places along God's sometimes unpredictable highway. But one day, like Ruth Graham, we will approach that final sign, "End of Construction". We will experience the most glorious exit from this life. And we will see Jesus face to face in the next.

Dave

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