

A Word for the Weary

Here's a trivia question: Which took the longest to complete? (a) Construction of the Pentagon; (b) Carving of Mount Rushmore; (c) Digging of the Panama Canal; (d) Building of the Empire State Building; or (e) Carving and assembling of the Statue of Liberty.*

The answer is C. It took 31 years to dig the Panama Canal, mainly because that superhuman task was started and stopped several times due to floods, mudslides, unexpected costs (the total bill for the United States was \$375 million in 1914) and a horrific death toll (20,000 French workers and 6,000 Americans died on the job site). Moral of that story: Expect delays when you cut a 50-mile-long canal to connect two oceans.

I'm not attempting to move millions of tons of earth to make room for cargo ships. My ministry assignment is different. But I still feel overwhelmed at times by the task. God calls each of us to join Him in His work, but accomplishing anything spiritual (such as building a church, winning the lost or influencing culture for Christ) is impossible in human terms. We can't accomplish anything for God without supernatural faith.

God gives us a promise—that's the easy part. Then He reveals His strategies, works miracles and sends provision. Working with God is exhilarating when these things happen. But faith is also warfare. The devil hurls doubts and obstacles in our direction. There are battles and, sometimes, casualties. These are the times we are tempted to quit.

Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two men commissioned to rebuild Solomon's temple, struggled with discouragement as they looked at the ruins of Jerusalem. The task was overwhelming, the cost was prohibitive, the workers were dismayed and their enemies

were fierce. They started the work in earnest, but they heard a familiar voice that whispered: "You'll never finish this. God is going to abandon you in the middle of this project."

Fortunately, just when Zerubbabel and Joshua were about to throw in the towel, the prophet Haggai showed up with a refreshing announcement. He told them: "'But now take courage ... and work; for I am with you,' declares the Lord" (Hag. 2:4, NASB). The Lord also promised He would see the building project to completion. He said: "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former ... and in this place I will give peace" (v. 9).

Those powerful prophetic promises propelled Zerubbabel and Joshua forward. The words invigorated their weary faith and steeled their determination. Their passion was refueled. They returned to the work, even though it seemed impossible. In the end, God's glorious house arose from an ash heap.

This is God's promise to all who are called to labor with Him. He doesn't tell you to begin something and then leave you halfway through it. God is a wise builder and an expert craftsman. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He finishes what He starts.

The apostle Paul wrote: "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). *The Message* says it this way: "There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears."

Many of God's servants today are weary. Budgets have been tight, resistance is strong and trends are negative. The devil is busy trying to abort God's promises. You may have been tempted even recently to resign from your assignment. But I want to encourage you with the words of Haggai: "Take courage!

The Lord is with you!" Regardless of what you lack, the Lord's mighty presence is all you need to finish the task. Hang on to Him and keep believing.

*In case you're curious about the other projects mentioned in the trivia question, here are the answers: A. The Pentagon was built in 16 months. B. Mount Rushmore was carved in 14 years. D. The Empire State Building was completed in 1 year and 45 days. E. The Statue of Liberty was carved and assembled over a 10-year period.

J. Lee Grady was editor of Charisma for 11 years. He now serves as contributing editor while devoting more time to ministry. You can find him on the Web at . His newest book is 10 Lies Men Believe (Charisma House).