

Warning: You Are Entering God's Construction Zone

Make room for the Holy Spirit's bulldozers. He wants to give you an extreme makeover.

Last spring during a visit to Charlotte, N.C. I stopped by the Billy Graham Library to take a tour of the evangelist's boyhood home and to see his ministry's offices. In a shaded grove on the same property I stumbled upon the grave of his wife, Ruth Bell Graham. Her tombstone bore an unusual inscription: "END OF CONSTRUCTION. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE."

Mrs. Graham (who died in 2007) apparently saw these words on a highway sign, and she told friends that she wanted them on her grave marker. Apparently the message from the road construction crew reminded her of God's patient care in preparing her for heaven.

"The Holy Spirit, like Nehemiah, comes into our lives like God's foreman. He clears out the debris, hauls off the rubbish, lays the new foundations, rehanges the doors, reconstructs the gates and rebuilds the broken walls of our lives."

I have similar thoughts whenever I pass orange traffic cones on a highway. In Florida where I live, road crews never seem to finish their work. Once one

section of a road is
widened it is time to widen another. Additional bulldozers are
needed. And more
construction means more traffic delays, which require more
patience from
drivers.

On the journey to
spiritual maturity, all of us must learn the lesson that is
carved in Ruth Bell
Graham's gravestone. We must learn to welcome God's perpetual
construction
crew. If we really want to be conformed to the image of Jesus
Christ, we must
welcome all the heavy equipment He sends into our lives.

Do you hear the
noise? In your life and mine I hear the sound of bulldozers,
jackhammers and
pavers at work. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a
process that
begins when we invite Christ to take residence in our hearts;
it does not end
until we breathe our last.

We tend to think
of the Holy Spirit as being gentle, but sometimes He brings
the refining fire
of holiness to burn out our impurities. Sometimes He
orchestrates uncomfortable
circumstances to squeeze us, shake us, mold us and shape us.
And sometimes we
complain about the interruptions, delays, detours and
upheavals that He brings
into our lives for our good.

We aren't used to
hearing sermons about God's construction zone. Some preachers

believe the
journey of faith is like skipping effortlessly through LaLa
Land. We don't
expect people to conform to the image of Christ; we don't warn
people that
Christlikeness requires brokenness; and we don't teach that
brokenness comes
when we embrace trials and suffering.

Yet the Bible
says: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among
you, which comes
upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were
happening to you;
but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ,
keep on rejoicing,
so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice
with exultation" (1
Peter 4:12-13, NASB).

When God wanted
to rebuild a destroyed city of Jerusalem, he raised up a man
named Nehemiah to
manage the construction project. Interestingly, Nehemiah's
name means "The Lord
Comforts" or "Comforter"—the same name given in the New
Testament for the Holy
Spirit. In the Greek, "Comforter" can mean *Paraklete*, or "one
who is
called alongside to help."

Yet this Holy
Comforter who has been called to live inside us is not just a
cozy security
blanket. The Spirit is also the construction manager of an
amazing but
strenuous project. He bulldozes into our lives to excavate,
overhaul and

transform. He calls in His road crews, unleashes His heavy equipment and begins what we could call Extreme Makeover–Heavenly Edition.

Please don't make the mistake of thinking that the Comforter is just a refreshing wind, or a passive force who gives us goose bumps and ecstatic feelings. The Holy Spirit, like Nehemiah, comes into our lives like God's foreman. He clears out the debris, hauls off the rubbish, lays the new foundations, rehangs the doors, reconstructs the gates and rebuilds the broken walls of our lives.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day did not come without suffering, hardship and warfare. But in the end the process resulted in the restoration of God's glory. It will be the same for us if we welcome the Comforter.

Will you allow Him to inspect your attitudes, your motives, your thoughts, your unsundered will and your addictions—and all other areas where you need transformation? Will you be patient as He sets up His orange cones in your life? Let Him finish the good work He began in you.

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Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale. Follow him on Twitter at leegrady.

