Life's Journey: Worth the Trip

As we enter the mid-summer months, my thoughts invariably return to my childhood when the New York factory where my father was employed would close for two weeks. My father and mother would load my three siblings and me into our Oldsmobile for our annual six hour drive to the Jersey Shore. (For native Memphians, the Jersey Shore is the equivalent of a trip to the Gulf Shores). By today's standards, the car offered very little in the way of commodities, as there was only an AM radio which lost local stations after a few miles. Numerous arguments ensued as whether to listen to rock and roll or Frank Sinatra. The day of the cell phones, iPhones, Androids, and video games had not yet arrived, so the six of us were pretty much bonded together in this vehicle, with only the hope of an occasional stop for refueling so we could stretch and take a break from each other. As the boredom set in, we took turns bombarding my father with the childhood refrain "Are we there yet?" The response was usually the less than satisfying answer of, "almost there."

As we embark daily on the journey that Jesus Christ has set forth for us to take, I wonder how often we ask God "Are we there yet?" In our lives, it is so hard every day to be kind to those who treat us poorly. It is difficult to tell the truth every day when a lie might suffice. It is easy to lose our tempers when others irritate us. We may even wonder, "Can we just take care of ourselves first?" Our journey with Christ often times seems so difficult. Is it possible to stop for refueling so we could stretch and take a break?

Paul tells us in Romans 8:18 that the road of life might be difficult, but the thought of heaven and the rewards that will come because of our faithfulness will be far greater than anything we could imagine. "I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us." So although Christ's journey at times seems so difficult, the joy and peace of the destination of heaven is beyond our imaginations.

As I return my thoughts to those wonderful vacations, I have to work hard to remember the details of those car trips. However, my strongest memories involve the destination _ the vacation itself; the joy of arriving to that modest hotel where we were staying, the smell of the ocean, the feel of the ocean breezes, the sound of the birds, and if we were good, the fun of playing skeeball at the arcade at night. To this day, the peace, joy, and serenity that the ocean provides me is unparalleled by any other natural phenomenon.

If thoughts of the Jersey Shore bring me that amount of joy and peace, I can only imagine the joy and peace of heaven. In the scriptures, we are told to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which lay ahead of him, he endured the cross, disregarding the shame of it, and has taken his seat at the right of God's throne.

We are told that if we walk uprightly Christ will give us strength. In our darkest hour, he gives us the wherewithal to keep going. Isaiah 40:31 says, "Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary." In spite of our daily problems that we face, we can find the peace, joy, and serenity that the beach offers through the Lord. So when we ask "Are we there yet?" we can truly know that we are "almost there" and through his help we will reach our destination of eternal
salvation. He promises that the cramped conditions of the trip of life will be worth it in the end.