

## GETTING OFF THE ROLLER COASTER

*Only let us live up to what we  
have already attained.*  
(Philippians 3:16)

One of the few advantages of being in a wheelchair is enjoyed when visiting an amusement park. Most places allow entrance without paying which is a nice benefit. However, the greatest advantage comes when getting on the rides.

In order to make it easier to get around the park, wheelchair visitors are allowed to go directly to the head of the line. There is no waiting, even on the busiest days of summer. Not only does it allow handicapped people to enjoy more of the rides, it also makes them the most popular people in the park. Everyone wants to be your friend when there is no waiting in line.

While living in Louisville, Kentucky, one of our excursions took us to King's Island, an amusement park in Cincinnati, Ohio. We went with a small group of people from our church and it promised to be a great trip.

Our pastor and his wife were also our best friends so we spent the day together at the park. Fred was extremely helpful in getting me on and off the various rides. Many times he lifted me in and out of the wheelchair. The remainder of the group was jealous as they watched us repeatedly go to the front of the line.

Whenever the ride was complete, the attendant always asked if we wanted to ride again. It was great. If the ride was boring we simply got off. If it was exciting we stayed put and took another turn.

I have never been very daring when it comes to roller coasters. After some coaxing I agreed to get on "The Racer," a ride with two roller coasters running side by side. It was suppose to simulate a race.

As I rolled up to the side of the car located in the middle of the roller coaster, Fred reached down to pick me up. At that very moment, the attendant cried out for us to hurry. The intention was to start both coasters simultaneously. We panicked. Fred hurriedly tossed me on the seat and then climbed aboard in the seat behind Sharon and I.

By the time I got situated and balanced, the roller coaster had already made the climb up the initial incline. It was only a matter of seconds until we were making the rapid descent. The pull of the free fall was so great that I literally rose from the seat.

I do not remember ever touching the seat again through the entire ride. I was floating in the air, being tossed back and forth like a pillow in a dormitory fight.

Finally, The Racer coasted into the loading dock and slowed to a stop. The attendant dutifully asked if we wanted to ride once again. In unison, all four of us said no thanks! Fred unbuckled himself and quickly lifted me from the seat and into the wheelchair.

At that moment we were not at all concerned about the winner of the race - we were content with survival. We were all wise enough to know when to get off the ride.

As I look back on the experience, I am aware that we were never in any real danger. It is likely that no one has ever been injured while riding The Racer at King's Island. The ride always comes to a safe end, even when it feels like we might not make it.

Life is more like a roller coaster than a streetcar. There are a lot of ups and downs, some of them come at a rapid pace. However, if we just hang on to the Lord, we will soon pull safely into the loading dock.