

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO BOARD

There are some airports I am no longer fond of. Not many, but one in particular: Little Rock International. I don't suppose Little Rock is any worse or better of an airport than all the others in terms of on-time flights or customer satisfaction, but one incident in particular left a sour taste in my mouth. I call it the "You Are Too Late" incident. It was shortly after 9-11 and we were not yet accustomed to the increased security lines at the airports. We arrived at the airport roughly an hour prior to our flight, but on this day that was cutting it too close. Standing to check our bags we knew we did not have a lot of time. Thankfully the luggage line moved fairly quickly and we were on our way to the terminal relieved that we did not cut it any closer. Then we caught sight of the security check-point line slothing its way to the gates. Our jaws dropped. The last line I saw that long was at MGM Studios on vacation as a kid.

After standing in line for a time we said to each other, "There's no way we are going to make our flight at this pace". Then came the announcement: "Flight # (the # of our flight) is now in the final boarding process. All passengers must board at this time..." Panic set in. Whatever was typically courteous and tolerant within us let loose. The only way to make our flight at this point was to cut the whole line and announce to everyone we cut that our flight was about to leave. As I recall, everyone was understanding and gladly stepped aside...until we came to the teenage girl with the FSA uniform checking ID's and boarding passes. I don't really know if she was a teenager or not but I do recall thinking, "boy she's young". And what made me think about her age even more was her surprising, dogmatic, adamant demand that "you cannot cut the line. You are not allowed to jump in front of anyone. You should have arrived earlier."

We said, "Maam, we are going to miss our flight if we don't get through here!" "It doesn't matter", she said. "You all need to get back where you were and wait like everyone else." More arguments from us, more shut-downs from her, and within a minute we were back to where we started. By the time we finally did make it through the security check point we had heard one more final boarding call and were sprinting down the hallway with baby Macayla in my arms. My brother Nate, my wife Marci, Macayla and I ran to the jet-way door in time to hear the agent tell us "You are too late. The door of the plane has been shut already. "

So there we were: sweating, sulking and standing at the terminal window watching the pilots do their thing. We probably did not speak to each other for a few minutes as the past 1/2 hour of antsy anticipation filtered through our minds. "We were too late".

If you have ever experienced this you know what a horrible feeling it is. We tried everything we knew to make it to that plane before it left but in the end we were left-behind. Useless thoughts run through your mind in times like these. Thoughts like, "If only we had arrived earlier". "If only that teenage FSA worker were a life-guard somewhere instead of a security guard." "If only 9-11 hadn't happened and security check-points were like they used to be." "If only it wasn't too late". But I think the most productive thought we had, the thought that could possibly have brought us hope in this situation, the thought that was still not far off, was "If only the pilots would have mercy on us and open the door one last time".

Maybe it was the fact that I was holding an infant in my arms or the fact that we were noticeably frustrated and distraught from the perspective of the cockpit, but the very next thing the agent told us was, "The pilot has decided to re-open the door and let you on. You can now board." Hallelujah!!!

That day I learned a valuable lesson about faith which I believe the Bible confirms: Those who desperately seek to board the plane to Heaven in their life-time can count on the Divine Pilot to keep the door open for them. God won't take off without you unless you refuse to go to the airport and search for the gate. Peter said it this way: *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"* **(2 Peter 3:9)**.

David (80) and Evelyn (52) learned that lesson today as well. On October 29th, 2009 at 4:30pm EST David and Evelyn boarded that plane to heaven. They entered through the door of Jesus' blood by the means of the baptism security check point and are now sitting with some who have been on that plane since the first boarding call and some who got on just before them. But the beauty of it all is that no matter when we board in our life-time, the Divine Pilot flies us all to the same destination.

Congratulations David & Evelyn, and welcome to the family!