

## Midsummer Madness

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As the sun makes its annual climb up from the south a strange restlessness comes over those of our citizens who live north of the Mason-Dixon Line, and by the time summer has finally arrived this has increased into a pathological condition which turns the country into one vast cage of waltzing mice. A kind of madness grips the populace, and then begins that four-month frenzied effort on everybody's part to get somewhere other than where he is. No one stops to ask what it is all about, but practically everyone who is not in the hospital or jail joins the general stampede from everywhere to anywhere and return.

An irresistible impulse picks most of us up like grains of dust caught by the wind, and spins and churns us about dizzily and dangerously till the first frost comes to ripen the pumpkin and drive home the trailers.

The sturdy old deacon who spent his entire life in the same county where he was born has passed and gone forever. He existed before the days of modern nomad. Changing times have eliminated him as surely as the buggy shed and the hitching post. His chief use now is to decorate a museum along with the three-toed horse and the dinosaur. His basic error was that he failed to take a vacation. He needed a change and a rest, also a bit of recreation; but not having heard of these wonderful aids to health and longevity, he kept his nose to the grindstone, raised ten healthy children, worked his own farm, attended the Baptist church four times a week, and managed also to read one or two good books a month. Though he had failed to relax properly at yearly intervals, he could still shoot a squirrel out of a chestnut tree at a hundred yards without glasses and chin himself a dozen times running when he was eighty-seven. When he finally died he was mourned sincerely by his family and a host of real neighbors who had learned to appreciate his sterling worth by living beside him for a life-time.

How anyone can claim that his grandson, who changes apartments every two years and spends his summers roaring through the landscape in a cloud of fumes, is his equal in manly character is beyond comprehension. Goldsmith's famous lines come back to trouble the serious-minded:

I ll fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay."

Now we believe in liberty as guaranteed by the Constitution and the inalienable right of every man to do as he likes as long as he stays within the law. If most of the population choose to forsake their homes and spend all their spare time scudding between filling stations, there is nothing we can do about it. To protest is to blow against the wind or shout against the tide. However, some of us old-fashioned throwbacks to a saner if slower age may be forgiven if we indulge in a few honest tears for the havoc this midsummer madness works among the churches of this hectic day.

Even though the vacation habit is a craze and a curse, even though millions each season take long and expensive vacations from nothing more strenuous than loafing, we are still willing to concede that there might be some therapeutic value in a vacation trip where and when needed. I would surely not begrudge the hard-working man or woman a rest from the daily grind. But the sad truth is that the vacation habit, plus the habit of making week-end trips throughout the summer season, has worked practically to paralyze the church of God for several months out of the year. Some churches close altogether, some are forced to give up evening services for the duration of the summer and many are compelled to join with several other churches in union services in order to have

an attendance large enough to justify a meeting. Even full-gospel churches and tabernacles are seriously crippled, the finances go into the red, the morale suffers and faith burns down to a gray ash.

It is hard to understand how a follower of Christ can justify himself in laying down his cross so frequently and so shamelessly in this day of the world's judgment. The army of the Lord is the only army on earth where the soldiers expect a four-month furlough in time of war. It is an ironic fact that in the very months of the year when Satan is the busiest the children of God are the laziest. Hell reaps her harvest during the summer season, while the poor overburdened heirs of the age crisscross the continent at eighty miles an hour in a grim effort to relax.

If someone should remind me that it is during the summer that the great conventions and camp meetings are held, I would reply that a ten-day period of fun at a camp meeting is a poor substitute for a summer of faithful service back at the home church.

It is a pitiful thing to see on any summer Sunday morning a discouraged Sunday-school superintendent standing before the tattered remnant of his school, trying to appear cheerful with half of his teachers missing. And it is a tragi-comic sight to see a peripatetic playboy of the church getting down on his knees on a Saturday afternoon to thank God for that prosperity which enables him to desert the house of God more frequently than he was able to do in his leaner years, and pray for "journeying mercies" as he speeds away from his post of duty to commune with nature among sardine cans.

That the church of Christ should so completely succumb to this mid-summer madness is proof enough of our low spiritual condition. It is little wonder that the people of the world smile cynically when we come back and go to work on them after the cool weather sets in. They do not take us seriously, and we have ourselves to thank for their attitude.

We need a revival! We need a revival of consecration to death, a revival of happy abandonment to the will of God that will laugh at sacrifice and count it a privilege to bear the cross through the heat and burden of the day. We are too much influenced by the world and too little controlled by the Spirit. We of the deeper life persuasion are not immune to the temptations of ease and we are in grave danger of becoming a generation of pleasure lovers.

Any who disagree with these conclusions are within their rights, and I would be the last to deny them the privilege. But in the name of a thousand struggling churches and disheartened pastors, may I not plead for a little more loyalty to the local church during this season of difficulty? May God raise up a people who will consult their pleasures less and the great need more. I know of one successful layman who refuses again and again to take perfectly legitimate pleasure trips because he cannot bring himself to leave his class of adolescent Sunday school boys. May God multiply such men and women among us till the reproach of Egypt is rolled away and man's confidence in us restored.

### FAITH

I suppose that if all the time I have prayed for faith were put together, it would amount to months. I used to say, "What we want is faith; if we only have faith, we can turn Chicago upside down," or rather, right side up. I thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come.

One day I read in Romans 10, "Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." I closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since.

—D. L. Moody