

## SUMMER IS UPON US

The official beginning of summer is still in the future, yet the beginning is all around us. The temperature is getting hotter, the end of the school year is looming closer and plans for summer trips are already being made. We need to make sure we keep God in our summer plans. Just because the seasons change, the weather is conducive to vacations, the children's school takes a break and the days are longer is no reason that God should be shorted in any way.

Many will be traveling throughout the summer months. When traveling, be sure to make preparations to worship with the saints where ever you are going. Not every place you may go has a sound congregation of the Lord's church. It is therefore needful that you do some checking to find out where the closest congregations are and if they are sound in the faith or not. Usually, your preacher can help you with this. It is also important that you schedule your time to accommodate the worship services. Don't fill your day so full, there is no time left for God.

Another important issue with summer traveling (really true in any season) is to remember to give upon the first day of the week. Just because you are traveling doesn't mean that your support of the work of the church is no longer needed. The same bills have to be paid, the same works need to be done and the same contribution is needed for these things whether you are present or not. Therefore, be sure to make arrangements for your contribution to be put in when you are absent. If the trip comes up suddenly and you are unable to make such arrangements, be sure to make it up when you get back home.

Along these same lines, be sure you do not spend the Lord's money on your vacation or travels. If you are serving God scripturally, you have purposed in your heart the amount you will give (II Cor. 9:7). If you cut this amount for your own pleasures, you are spending God's money. Malachi wrote, "Will a man rob God? Yet he have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings" (Malachi 3:8). Thus, when we do not give to God that which belongs to Him, we are robbing Him. Who would willingly rob God?

Brethren, spring, summer, fall or winter, God expects the best of us. Our actions and conduct whether in public or in private should be no less godly in the summer than any other time. Let's not let a season of the year hinder us from an eternity in heaven.

*Tilis*

## PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST

Most of us are familiar with the term, "putting first things first". It is a recognition of the need to prioritize things. Some things just have to come first. If you are out on the water in a boat and discover you have water leaking into the boat you need to first stop the leak and then worry about how to get the water out. There are a number of things we need to put first in our efforts to reach heaven. We wish to notice just a few and though there will be some overlapping, we will try to put first things first.

Jesus said the first and great commandment is to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (Matt. 22:37-38). That will certainly be our starting point, for all obedience will have to come from that love.

Though dealing specifically with the subject of giving, the statement of Paul concerning the churches of Macedonia, "but first gave their own selves to the Lord" applies to our total attitude toward God. It is much the same as when Jesus said that one must "deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Self has to be set aside, making God first priority.

Jesus said that we must seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33). He placed this ahead of even the necessities of life; food, drink and clothing. This goes right back to that denying of self and following of Him.

Paul told the Corinthians, "For if there be first a willing mind...". Again, the specific issue was giving, but it applies to all of our efforts to serve God. God has never expected more than we are able to do, but He has always expected our best.

Jesus also told the Pharisees that they needed to cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter (Matt. 23:26). He then applied it to outward appearance and inner purity (Matt. 23:27-28). Cleanse the heart first for that is where the outward filth will come from (Matt. 12:35).

In order to effectively carry God's message to others, we will have to first cast out the beam that is in our own eye (Matt. 7:5).

And, the Lord tells us that if our relationship with our brethren is not right, we must "first be reconciled to thy brother" (Matt. 5:24).

First, hear God's word, then believe it and then obey the plan of salvation. Then you can live faithfully and enjoy heaven. *Tilis*