

Keep Short Accounts

Scripture

"Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?" —for the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest [is] because of me." Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows. Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:11-17 NKJV)

Commentary

Men are often very courageous when they have good health, and no reason to fear immediate death. They will make grand statements of rebellion against God as they flaunt their supposed intelligence. The Gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Cor. 1:18).

However, these same men, while they may sake their fists at God as they take their dying breath, know God is real. It seems apparent that these men were idol worshipers from the context. "Every man cried out to his god" (Jon. 1:5). However, even these sailors feared Jonah's God.

They feared him because of His sovereign display, and because that display threatened their lives. While they did not worship Jonah's God, they feared Him enough not to do anything to harm Jonah. Jonah told them to throw him from the ship, but they ignored his advice and rowed against the storm. Only when that failed and after making a sincere plea for mercy did they cast Jonah from the ship.

We are somehow wired to think that there will always be a tomorrow. This optimism allows the lost man to live his life without much thought of God. He practices his sin until he is faced with his own mortality.

The Christian must deal with the same hard-wiring. We too tend to think, "I'll have time to repent of that." However, to have this mindset is to tempt the Lord. As it is written, ". . . put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to [fulfill its] lusts" (Rom. 13:14 NKJV).

This we must do if we wish to say as Paul did, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8 NKJV) Keeping short accounts is the only way to guarantee you will love, and not fear, His appearing.