

Signs of Spiritual Rebellion (Part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 July 2019

Preacher: Fred Stone

- [0 : 0 0] Some of you professional football fans know the guy on the screen, and by the way, his name is not misspelled, Teddy Bruschi, former NFL player, current ESPN analyst.
- Today he is recovering from a stroke that he just suffered last week. His family described what happened, as you read there.
- Teddy recognized that he was experiencing the signs of a stroke, arm weakness, face drooping, and speech difficulties.
- Do you know those signs? We all need to know them as well as signs of a heart attack. If we're wise, if we want to avoid the damaging or even fatal consequences, if they appear in our lives.
- Well, today as we return to the book of Jonah, I want us to look at some of the signs that a person is going through, what I'm going to call a spiritual rebellion.
- [1 : 1 1] Signs of spiritual rebellion that Jonah displays throughout chapter 1, and there's even some more later on in this study.
- What I want us to do is read chapter 1. Notice as we go through this, some of them are obvious. We're going to look at this and try to learn from Jonah's example how to avoid being in a state of spiritual rebellion.
- How to wake up from a state of spiritual rebellion, if that's the case today. Also how to avoid in the future drifting or rebelling and getting in that state.
- Let's read Jonah 1. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amtai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.
- But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.
- [2 : 3 3] But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God.
- And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.
- So the captain came and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish.
- And they said to one another, that's the sailors now, Come, let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. So they cast lots.
- And the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from?
- [3 : 3 7] What is your country? And of what people are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew. And I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

Then they said to him, What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.

And he said to them, Pick me up and hurl me into the sea. Then the sea will quiet down for you. For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land. But they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

[4 : 35] Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life and lay not on us innocent blood. For you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.

So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea. And the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly. And they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

There are times in life that we just sort of look around what's going on. And it seems, because everything's positive, that the signs are pointing to we're doing something right.

Some people even think that's a sign God's pleased with them and all is going well. What I want us to do first is to understand sometimes if we look at signs this way, some such signs are deceptive.

They're misleading. There are some deceptive signs that we see in Jonah. Let's look at them. Deceptive signs. Some signs in life give the impression that all is well when it's not.

[5 : 54] The first deceptive sign we see in Jonah, everything seems to be falling into place for you. Is there ever a time when you just think life is good, all is well.

There's no bumps in the road for me. It must be that I'm doing something right. Well, Jonah could have thought that at the very beginning of his rebellion against God.

When he rebelled against God's call to go to Nineveh, he headed in the opposite direction toward Tarshish. That was as far from Nineveh as he could conceive of going.

Nineveh was east and north. Tarshish was as far as people traveled west. It was on the coast of Spain. Well, look at verse 3 again.

It looks like all is going well. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and there was a ship going to Tarshish.

[6 : 58] A ship that was sailing as far as he could get. So he paid the fare. There was a place for him. He went down into it to go with him to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

What I want us to see here at the beginning, Jonah's path of rebellion was smooth. Everything seems to be falling into place. But that did not mean that all was right.

That didn't mean smooth sailing at first, that God was pleased with him. So think of this. If you're in the process of running from something that you know God wants you to do, and we're not necessarily talking about something big.

Sometimes we know that God wants to do something in a relationship with someone like apologize. Sometimes we know God wants us to do something in a situation where we just do the right thing.

It may cost us some money. It may cost us some time. But we know what God wants us to do. But we just don't do it.

[8 : 06] If you're in the process of running from what you know God wants you to do, and everything is going well for you right now, don't mistake that as a sign that God's changed his mind, that he is okay with your disobedience.

As one wise sage said, it ain't over till it's over. Yogi said a lot of crazy things.

That is good. If you're running from God right now, and you think, I've made it, it ain't over till it's over.

Remember that right now. A second deceptive sign is this. Nothing seems to bother you. You can sleep well.

Look at Jonah, verse five. Second part of it. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship, and had lain down, and was fast asleep.

[9 : 15] Isn't that amazing? The storm is such that veteran sailors are at their wit's end. crying out to their gods, throwing away their cargo, what they're getting paid to deliver.

How could Jonah sleep in the midst of that? Well, there's several reasons why we could think of people can sleep in a situation like that.

He could have just been exhausted. I mean, he, no doubt, he's running from God. We're talking about a man who has a relationship with God, who has served God.

He knows what God's calling him to do, but he's running. He has to be emotionally and spiritually worn out, drained. He could have literally run from wherever it was he heard God, where he heard God's call down to this seaport, Joppa.

So he may be physically worn out. And there's just nothing within him that responds because he's exhausted to this storm.

[10 : 26] Some people could sleep like this because they have peace with God. Jesus was able to sleep in the midst of such a storm. A small boat, the Gospels tell us, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he was asleep, had his head on a cushion.

How could Jesus sleep in such a storm that his disciples thought they were going to die, those passages tell us?

Because Jesus always did his Heavenly Father's will. He always maintained a close, peaceful relationship with his Heavenly Father so he knew that no matter what, all was right.

He was doing what he was supposed to do, where he was supposed to do it. He was doing God's will. He knew he was in control of everything, even the storm. So he could rest.

He could sleep in the midst of a storm. That's not Jonah. We don't know why he's asleep, but we know definitely because it's not because he had peace with God.

[11 : 31] There's another reason to explain why some people can be at peace in the midst of some of life's storms. they've developed a hard heart or they've just sort of tuned God out.

That may be why Jonah can sleep through this storm. It may be that he's just become a little bit hard-hearted, developed, developed a calloused conscience.

Maybe he's just a little bit spiritually and emotionally numb at this point in time. If you know that you're not right with God, if you know you're disobedient right now in the state that you're now living, but you can remain cool and calm no matter what's going on around you, you need to be concerned.

That's a problem. It may be a sign that you have just zoned out when it comes to your relationship with God.

It may be that you have lost your tender conscience. It is a reason to be concerned. We can see from what's happening in Jonah's life, he can sleep in the midst of a storm.

[13 : 05] At first, everything just sort of fell into place for him to go in the opposite direction of where God was calling him. Sometimes, when it seems like all the signs are positive in our life, we need to be careful that we're not being deceived, that we're not deceiving ourselves.

You know, it's a terrible thing to deceive yourself into thinking that all is right with God, all is right with life, when the truth is you're a rebel like Jonah.

You may be not running from something big, but you are running from what you know God has called you to be, as a man or woman of God in your home, as a faithful Christian out in this community.

It's a warning to us. Let's move on now, look at some definite signs of rebellion, and we're going to focus on one this morning. Jonah was a true believer.

Don't, don't, don't, if you're not familiar with this story, you've not been here before, understand we're not talking about an unbelieving person here. Jonah was a true believer in God.

[14 : 25] Jonah had been used by God to speak his word that's recorded in the book of 2 Kings. He is God's prophet. But now, he is running from God, and as he does so, he is acting worse than the unbelievers around him.

Here's a serious sign of someone rebelling against God. You have less spiritual awareness than unbelievers around you. Look at verse 5, the first part. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God.

Now, these sailors were pagans. They were not believers in God, who had revealed himself to the people of Israel, whose word for them was parts of the Old Testament that they had.

They were pagans. They did not believe in the true God. And as it says, the plural here, and the little g, they worshipped multiple false gods.

And at this point in time, they're crying out. They have a faith. Hey, put it this way. They're sincere.

[15 : 45] One of the stupidest things that we can think about somebody's spiritual life is, well, they're sincere. As long as a person is sincere, they must be okay.

That's crazy. That's foolish. These men, who have no clue about God, they are crying out to multiple gods.

The gods they've heard of, they're wanting help. Now, this is a great illustration of what Paul described in Romans chapter one, when he was talking about how God has revealed himself to all people, but people reject God as he is, and replace him with their own gods.

I want you to look at what he says here. In verse 19, for what can be known about God is plain to them. He's talking about how God has revealed himself, people have rejected that. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

He's talking about people, universality of sin and rejection in people's lives. For his, God's invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made so that they are without excuse.

[17 : 06] God reveals enough of himself to every person in the world to cause them to be aware of the fact that God is, that he's real, that he's the creator, that he's the sovereign.

They don't know everything that we know by a long shot. They don't have the scripture, but they have enough of God's revealing of himself to know, but they don't believe.

Look at it. Go on. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

The idea is God reveals himself in nature through his creation. And instead of people acknowledging, accepting this God who is above and beyond them, people try to make a God in their image or in the image of part of the creation like birds and animals and creeping things.

- [18 : 25] What Paul is describing there is what theologians refer to as general revelation. God makes himself known in a general way. Miller and Erickson, the theologian, he explains this very well. Look at it.

General revelation serves to explain the worldwide phenomenon of religion and religions. All persons are religious because all have a type of knowledge of God.

from this revelation religions have been constructed which unfortunately are distortions of the true biblical religion. What Paul says in Romans, what Erickson is saying about the general revelation of God, this is why everybody is spiritual.

Everybody to some extent at some times is spiritually minded. With rare exception, everyone has an awareness that God exists.

Think about it this way. When tragedy strikes in this country, and it happens so often, and even in countries around the world, at some point there will be a news conference.

- [19 : 45] And there will be some national leader, or in some local situations, a local leader. They will explain what has happened.

And at some point in their news conference, and at some point in their explanation, discussion of the evil tragedy that's happened, they will say something like this.

let's keep the victims, and maybe sometimes the first responders, in our thoughts and prayers. Now, a lot of people say that because it's just the right thing to say.

They don't believe a thing. They don't pray. But it's just something that there's something within all of us. In some situations, when we just don't know, we can't do anything, as the saying goes, all we can do is pray.

And people will say that. Now, there are some officials, national and local, they mean it because they know God through faith in Jesus.

- [20 : 59] They are as sincere as they can possibly be. You have heard some officials. I hope I don't get in, I don't care. I'm going to say, Chuck Wright is the sheriff of Spartanburg County.

I don't know him personally, but I've read a bunch of things he said. I've watched him on TV, and I really believe he has a heartfelt faith. And I believe when Chuck Wright holds those news conferences, and a lot of times talks about Jesus and faith in him, I think he really does care.

He's really sincere. He's really encouraging Christians to pray. But so many people aren't like that.

And they just say it because there's this universal awareness of a God and the need for him. That's what these sailors are doing.

They, in the book of Jonah here, they believe that believe in God. But they don't believe in the one true God who has revealed himself in his word, and ultimately and finally in his son, Jesus.

- [22 : 17] They believe in God's. Take your pick. Here's what I want us to think about, make this more personal. Almost everyone you know will tell you that they believe in God and they believe in prayer.

Most of us in this room, we don't know many atheists. Some of us do. But most of us, wherever we go, whatever occurs, in some settings, everybody will in some way refer to God.

And maybe even talk about prayer. But what I want you to understand is, that does not mean that a person is a Christian. God has so created people that we have an innate awareness of, belief in a supreme being.

A God we will say. Some of your family members and friends are quick to tell you, discuss with you, their belief in God.

But they do not believe in our heavenly Father that they know through faith in Jesus. They just talk about God in really a general way.

[23 : 47] There's no evidence in their life that they are followers of Jesus. Their life bears no fruit. We need to be aware of that. Everybody dies.

People that you know and love will die. It will not give you one bit of comfort when one, somebody you love dies.

And all you know about their spiritual life is, is they had some vague, general belief in God. That means nothing.

Because most people throughout the world believe in a general God because God's revealed himself in nature.

People in our life that we know and love, and we're concerned about their eternal destiny, we're concerned about their relationship with God. Just because they have this general spirituality, don't let that keep you from sharing the gospel with them if you really are concerned that they don't know Christ.

[24 : 59] We need to understand that. Now let's go one step closer to ourselves. This is extremely personal. What do you believe?

What does your life clearly reveal about the God you say you believe in?

If people just watched you and listened to you, would they get this idea that you believe in just the general idea of God? And you just pray these general mouthing words, prayers, especially in a time of panic?

Or do you have such a real relationship with God as your heavenly Father? You really are a follower of Jesus, and it's obvious to people by the way that you live.

Let's go back to Jonah. There's a storm raging that God has hurled on this ship, and it's Jonah's fault. Jonah is on board trying to get away from God, and God is not going to let him get away.

[26 : 20] This is not the message this morning, this will be later on. But I want us to understand, if you're a child of God, God is sovereign, and if He has determined that you are going to do something, you will do it.

You may go through hell on earth. You may go through a terrible storm. But God will prevail in the life of His children, because He is sovereign God, and His will is done.

So, don't think. I can just do what I want to do. If you can think that way and sleep good at night, you probably are not a Christian.

You may claim to be. You may have been baptized. But you can't be a child of God, and God has no place in your life.

Look at these sailors. They just got a general knowledge of God, and they've turned it into idolatry.

[27 : 31] But I want you to see the sincerity. That doesn't make them right, but it does make them sincere. They are sincerely calling out to false gods that they don't even know with all their heart.

And look at Jonah. Jonah is a man of God. He is a prophet, but he's doing his best to ignore God and this storm.

Here's what we see. Sometimes we, you and me, sometimes we as God's children act more like atheists than unbelievers. That's right.

Practically speaking, sometimes we live like an atheist in the way we relate to God, talk about Him, serve Him. Think about that.

How do you respond to a crisis? How do you respond to a crisis? You get the phone call. Somebody close to you has been rushed to the hospital, had an accident. You get the bad news from the doctor about yourself.

[28 : 39] How do you respond when it seems like your family is disintegrating? How do you respond to a crisis situation? Do you automatically, first thing, draw close to your heavenly Father because you trust Him?

You don't know what to do, but you know He does? Do you seek His wisdom in prayer? His wisdom and guidance in His Word?

How do you normally respond in a crisis? Do you do things like that or do you just fall to pieces? Or do you just call somebody you know?

Or do you just cuss and fuss? Or find somebody to blame? How do you normally live your life when there's not a crisis going on in relationship with God?

Think about it. Think about it. Do I seek to live in close fellowship with God just as a way of life? Here's the answer.

[29 : 52] How much do you use God's means of grace to develop a relationship with Him? God's means of grace at the top of the list are prayer and Bible reading.

This may sound overly simple, but this is a fact. You and me, the closeness, the maturity of our relationship with God, it can be measured right now, yours and mine, by those who walk with us 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and see how much time we actually spend with God talking to Him in prayer, listening to Him as He speaks through His Word.

I cannot overstate that. I am a Christian, have been a long time, been a pastor for a long time. My personal fellowship, closeness with the Lord is dependent on my regular spending time with Him.

And if I don't, I'm going to be distant from God. I'm going to have a harder heart. I'm not going to be in tune with Him.

I'm going to misread signs like Jonah has. We looked at it at the beginning. How do you normally live your life in a relationship with God when there's no crisis going on?

[31 : 25] That helps us see. If you really want to know God, and if we're Christians, no one is satisfied where they are in terms of their closeness to God, their knowledge of Him, His ways, and their ability to do it.

No one's where they ought to be, where they want to be. But if we want to grow, we just have to spend time with God and want to and put forth the effort to listen, to talk, to live life with Him and before Him.

How do you normally live your life in a relationship with God? Are you quick to confess your sins that God convicts you of? Or are you like Jonah and you like to run away? It takes you forever to get honest with God and get right with Him.

If you are less spiritually aware or concerned than the people that you know who only have a general awareness of God, then I want you to look at Jonah as he sleeps.

That's you. Think about it. Let it sink in. If you are less spiritually aware, concerned, expressive than people who have, who are not Christians, they have only a general awareness of God, then you're Jonah as he sleeps on this ship as he runs from God.

[32 : 54] And that's a dangerous place to be. It's a sign of spiritual rebellion or even worse, it could be a sign of being spiritually dead, which means you're not a Christian.

We're going to continue looking at signs of spiritual rebellion next time, but I want to conclude this message by looking at how we can experience the right kind of peace in the midst of life storms.

See, Jonah had the wrong kind of peace. He could sleep and he shouldn't have been able to. But we can have peace, the right kind in the midst of storms. The gospel tells us of Jesus in the boat with His disciples, as I referred to a moment ago.

They were crossing the Sea of Galilee when a storm suddenly struck. The disciples were terrified and they woke Jesus, who was experiencing peaceful sleep.

They said, Lord, we're perishing. Well, Jesus awoke and He calmed the storm. Scripture says, He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace be still.

[34 : 01] And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. Jesus calmed the storm because of His sovereign power as the Son of God.

He is still the sovereign Lord who can calm the storms in our lives today. Jesus can calm the storm of God's wrath on our sin.

You see, Jonah's storm came up because of Jonah's rebellion. Jonah's sin caused Jonah's storm. Not always, but sometimes our sin caused our storms.

Well, Jesus died on the cross to take God's wrath against our sins. And when we truly admit it, repent of our sin and trust Jesus, we experience not only forgiveness, but we experience peace with God and the peace of God.

And if you're not a Christian and you want to experience that peace, I want to encourage you right this moment to turn from your sin, trust Christ, call upon Him to save you, commit your life to Him right now.

[35 : 22] But could it be that you're going through a storm right now and you are definitely a Christian? Like Jonah, you know God, but you know you're disobeying Him right now about something.

Well, you can stop running from God if you want to. You can come back to Him in confession, in repentance, in a renewed commitment to Him.

And I want you to know if you'll stop running and come back to Him, God will receive you with open arms. He'll forgive you. He'll cleanse you. He will restore you to close fellowship with Him and give you a fresh start.

Scripture tells us if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If you're away from God, if you're not enjoying close fellowship with Him, that can change now.

Look at the Word. Listen to the Word. Obey the Word. And experience God's forgiveness and restoration and peace now. He offers it, but you've got to take it.

[36 : 37] Let's pray together. Father, show us now what we need to do, everyone individually, personally, in light of what you have said through your Word and your Spirit in this message.

Father, help us to see ourselves as we are, and then help us to be honest and obey you now. And then an attitude of prayer, let's just do that.

All of us. You pray. You listen to the Lord. You do what He's telling you to do. I would be happy to pray with you at this very moment. I'll be here at the front.

But the next few minutes, it's just designed for everybody to be still and quiet and listen to the Lord and do what He's telling you to do. Let's do that. Let's do that. Thank you.