



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 19:18-24

Topic

Saul hunts down David but instead of killing him
he ends up prophesying with no clothes on

Title

"Prophecy Buff"

Introduction

A naked man was arrested this week in Natchez, Mississippi.

At approximately 1am June 24th, Sgt. Gary Nations and Officers Marcus White and Fredrick Lane were dispatched to McNeely Road and Oak Hill Drive where they found Cory Wayne Renfrow walking on the sidewalk nude.

When Nations asked Renfrow to stop, Renfrow continued walking. When White and Lane arrived on the scene, Nations ordered the officers to "take (Renfrow) down."

Nations stated Renfrow was unwilling to cooperate, forcing Nations to spray Renfrow with a half-second burst of pepper spray. When Renfrow attempted to resume walking, White pepper sprayed Renfrow a second time.

As to the reason Renfrow was naked, [quote] "the suspect said, 'I have to keep walking toward the light' and stated **he was God.**"

Our text in First Samuel features a nude subject under the influence of God. Look with me at verses twenty-three and twenty-four.

1 Samuel 19:23 So... [Saul] went there to Naioth in Ramah. Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

1 Samuel 19:24 **And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night.**

Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

My first reaction is that I'm glad this kind of thing doesn't happen today! *Or does it??*

There is a sense in which it does and that it ought to be both *encouraged* and *expected*.

Let's break-down the major elements of the story. A man comes to where believers are worshipping and, coming under the influence of prophecy, is naked in the presence of the Lord.

It sounds a lot like these verses from the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 14:24 ... if all **prophecy**, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

1 Corinthians 14:25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, **falling down on his face, he will worship God** and report that God is truly among you.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are **naked** and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

What happened to Saul is thus a physical illustration in the Old Testament of a timeless spiritual principle in the New Testament.

God wants a person to come to a place where their hearts can be exposed, made "naked" as it were, under the influence of spirit-inspired speech. His desire is to reveal Himself to that person in order to bring them to salvation or to further their sanctification. He wants to help them, to heal them, to give them hope.

In our text that place was Naiioth. Today it is wherever two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus. It is the church on earth. It is us; it is here; it is now.

We must, therefore, be a people and a place where believers are worshipping with spirit-inspired speech so **all** of us can be exposed before the Lord for our own good and for His glory.

Hang with me on this. *It's not as weird as it sounds!* I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Let's Be Those Who Encourage The Spirit Of Prophecy, and #2 Let's Be Those Who Expect The Spirit Of Prophecy.

#1 Let's Be Those Who Encourage The Spirit Of Prophecy (v18)

I'm using the word "prophecy" in its broadest definition. Prophecy includes both *foretelling* and *forth-telling*:

- Foretelling is the revealing of future things.
- Forth-telling is the application of the already completed Word of God.

There is a gift of prophecy that some believers are given. It is exercised in the church by direct utterance, or by receiving waking visions or dreams. Our discussion today is bigger than just those with the gift of prophecy. It includes all believers understanding what we're calling "the spirit of prophecy."

That's not my term, by the way. "The spirit of prophecy" comes to us from the lips of an angel in Revelation 19:10. After receiving the revelation, the apostle John falls down before an angel. The following correction was given.

Revelation 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The “brethren” refers to believers. It refers to the church on the earth as we await the coming of the Lord for us, to resurrect and rapture us. We have “the testimony of Jesus.” We are the ones privileged to go about as witnesses giving testimony to the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming of the God-man, Jesus Christ. We are the ones with the authority to tell sinners their sins are forgiven at the Cross, and that they can be born-again and receive the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

This testimony, which includes everything revealed in the Bible about Jesus, is described as “the spirit of prophecy.” It certainly means that Jesus Christ is the subject of all Bible prophecy through the centuries.

But it also means that our speaking about Jesus ought to be thought of as being spirit-inspired in such a way that both nonbelievers and believers have their hearts exposed before the Lord so that they know God is in our midst.

Most of us have experienced this. It’s not uncommon for someone to say, after a service, “You were talking directly to me.” Well, I wasn’t, but the Lord was. It’s the “spirit of prophecy” - spirit-inspired speech.

Here is all I’m saying. That experience should not be an isolated, every-now-and-then experience. No, it ought to happen every time Christians gather, every time the Word is emphasized, because the testimony of Jesus is always the spirit of prophecy. God either wants to save you or further your sanctification. Either way your heart needs to be exposed and that requires the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Ok, let’s say we’re on-board with all this. How do we encourage this “spirit of prophecy?” Let’s take a look at our text for the illustration.

1 Samuel 19:18 So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth.

King Saul had tried to enlist the aid of both his son, Jonathan, and his daughter, David’s wife Michal, to help him kill David. Instead they helped him and he fled for his life.

He went to “Samuel at Ramah.” Samuel, the aging prophet, was David’s choice for aid and assistance. Samuel was not a warrior. He had no army, not even a personal bodyguard. There were no defenses at Ramah. It was a purely spiritual move on David’s part.

One way, then, we encourage the spirit of prophecy is to remain convinced that our help is essentially spiritual and will come from the Lord. When we instead look to the world, to its methods, we discourage the supernatural and are left to our own devices.

If you are hurting today, if you need help, it is to be found in your relationship with Jesus. Pray; seek the Lord in His Word; get into, or remain in, fellowship with believers.

David told Samuel “all that Saul had done to him.” Samuel’s counsel, his plan, was to take David to “Naioth.”

Naioth was not the name of a city so much as it was a description of a place. It was a place with lots of small housing units. The best way for us to understand it is to call it a college. It was where Samuel had begun a School of the Prophets. It was where he was overseeing the training and equipping of the next generation of spiritual leaders in Israel.

Another way to encourage the spirit of prophecy is to understand that our gatherings are to train and equip us for the work of the ministry. It is to emphasize that most of the ministry a church does is outside its walls as its members go to their respective ‘missions’ out in the communities.

That suggests at least two things:

1. We should be careful to not become ingrown, cliquish, separatist.
2. But neither should we think that belonging to a local fellowship is somehow optional.

We need to know what went on at Naioth. When we read the remaining verses we’ll see that the prophets were busy “prophesying.” I think the best way for us to understand that is to say that they were worshipping the Lord.

The application for us is to remember that everything we do is to be about Jesus, about giving clear testimony to Him. On a practical level I am to be looking out to see how I can reveal Jesus to those around me. Constantly.

It is a paradox of biblical Christianity that if I am to receive ministry from the Lord I must look to minister to others. In order to find my life I must first lose it.

I thus need a heightened awareness of what is going on around me. Spiderman has 'spidey-senses.' If we want, we can have 'Spirit-senses.' But we need to actively decide that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." We need to believe that something supernatural this way comes whenever we are gathered together with the Lord in our midst.

Let's get back to our story. Saul is going to find David at Naioth.

#2 Let's Be Those Who Expect
The Spirit Of Prophecy
(v19-24)

How could David be saved by hanging-out at a college for prophets? As it turned out, **it was the only place he was safe!**

1 Samuel 19:19 Now it was told Saul, saying, "Take note, David is at Naioth in Ramah!"

1 Samuel 19:20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

1 Samuel 19:21 And when Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. Then Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

These "messengers" weren't just guys from Western Union with an invitation to return to Saul. No, they were armed soldiers sent to take David into custody.

It should have been an easy task. As I mentioned, there was no garrison at Naioth, not even campus security. David seemed totally vulnerable. It's a picture of throwing yourself upon the mercy of the Lord. If the Lord didn't help him, there was no help and no hope.

As to the application, we must expect that anyone who gathers with us can and will be helped by Jesus, and that He is their hope. It may involve you in some way. The Holy Spirit may want to speak to you about helping others.

In fact, **He does want to speak to you!** The only question is, “Am I listening?” If I am, if you are, all kinds of things can be set in motion.

Another lesson we can glean is to do everything in our power to maintain our fellowship as a safe haven. God wants to minister to people. His work can be hindered when we allow strife and division, gossip and backbiting. When we break into factions over some issue it hurts the Gospel. Remember, we want our testimony to be the spirit of prophecy, not the human ‘spirit’ of our own selfishness.

Our gatherings are to be understood as a spiritual stronghold. A place where everyone is safe and, therefore, able to experience the transparency of God exposing their hearts for their own good and His glory. This idea of a safe haven requires that we maintain physical priorities, e.g., literally making sure we are safe and secure. It requires we be organized, almost deliberate, so as to promote proper, biblical spiritual boundaries within which God works.

That’s right, “within which God works.” Too often Christians think God can only work ‘outside the box,’ as it were, when all boundaries are supposedly eliminated. Somehow they think that a free-for-all is the best atmosphere for worship, that anything organized will quench the Holy Spirit.

I’d believe that if it weren’t for what I read in the Bible! When we went through First Corinthians, especially chapter fourteen, we saw God’s prescription for the healthy, normal worship of the church in which the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy. The apostle Paul argued that there must be order in order for anything truly spiritual to occur.

Three groups of soldiers failed to arrest David, but were themselves ‘arrested’ by God. Saul figured if you want to do something right, do it yourself; so he went to Ramah, then Naioth.

1 Samuel 19:22 Then he also went to Ramah, and came to the great well that is at Sechu. So he asked, and said, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "Indeed they are at Naioth in Ramah."

1 Samuel 19:23 So he went there to Naioth in Ramah. Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

1 Samuel 19:24 And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Yes, this was weird. Even by Old Testament standards! But remember: "The New is in the Old contained, while the Old is in the New explained." What happened to Saul is an illustration of what God wants to happen to us all - spiritually - whenever we worship.

It's nothing more, but nothing less, than the Spirit of God applying the Word of God to effect heart-surgery, to discern between the soul and the spirit of a person, in order to save that person or to further their walk with Jesus.

It bothers some that Saul "prophesied." My thinking all along has been that he was a believer, but severely backslidden. The fact he was able to prophesy, then, shouldn't upset us.

At the same time, the appearance of things supernatural by themselves are no guarantee of lasting spirituality. Saul went on to get even worse in his disobedience and rebellion. Even after God so mightily came upon him, he will later go to a witch to participate in a seance.

We're not talking about having an exercise of spiritual gifts for the sake of reveling in the supernatural. Just because people seem to be 'moving' in the Holy Spirit, it is no measure of their spirituality. After all, even Judas cast out demons and worked miracles.

No, we're talking about a balanced, a biblical, atmosphere within which God can and will 'move' upon our hearts as He so desires. It will involve certain manifestations, because He says it will! But the real impact will be deep in our hearts and we'll know it if there is on-going, lasting transformation of character and conduct.

There are a lot of things we might expect when we gather together as believers:

- A great children's ministry.
- Inspirational, quality worship.
- Insightful study of God's Word.
- Reports of things God is doing or wants to do.
- Time to catch-up with friends.

Beyond those, or perhaps I should say within those, we are to expect the spirit of prophecy. We are to expect that God is speaking directly to us - all the time, every time.

I don't know what to compare it to since it is so unique, but let me try to give an example. We've all been to the doctor. We go to have a well-check up or when something is definitely troubling us.

Perhaps most of the time we look at church as a well-check up. We're doing OK, keeping our lives in balance, and are looking for ways to further our spiritual health. That's good, as far as it goes. But I think sometimes we don't really hear from God when that is our attitude. Hey, I've blown-off physical exams. My last 'annual' physical was four years ago! It's a luxury, even though it could potentially be life saving. We can look at worship that way. It's good; I probably should go; but it's not an absolute necessity.

We should instead think of our gatherings as important appointments we must keep. It's not that we come always morbidly thinking there is something wrong with us, but certainly it's more than a well-visit to the doctor's office. It's a visit to surgery, to heart surgery, where the Spirit of God wants to use the Word of God to discern between the soul and the Spirit. Once inside He can show you what is there.

- Maybe something does need to be removed, cut-out.
- But maybe, too, something needs to be inserted, added.

Some of us are like the Grinch and, even though we are believers, our hearts need to "grow three sizes" as we worship the Lord.

I told you it was a poor illustration, but I think you get the point. Expectation is important. If you're not expecting God to do anything, He probably won't.

Let's expect!

