



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 20:1-23

Topic

David flees from a place of safety in Naioth only to find himself hiding by the stone Ezel

Title

“Taking the Ezel Way Out”

Introduction

If you’ve ever been interviewed for a job you’ve probably been asked why you are leaving your current employment.

It can be a tricky question depending on your situation. There are some things you don’t want to say. Here are a handful of bad reasons not to give for wanting to leave your current job:

- “My supervisor is an idiot.”
- “The corporate firewall started blocking my personal web searches and now I’ve got nothing to do all day.”
- “I didn’t realize the mute button on my phone was broke while I was trashing my client.”
- “The court said I need to stay at least 200 yards from the premises.”

Not exactly the kind of stuff that will inspire your prospective employer!

In our text, David is going to leave Naioth (pronounced NAY-yoth". In fact it says he "fled from Naioth." By the time we get to verse twenty-three he will be hiding by the stone (called) "Ezel" (pronounced EE-zuhl."

If you remember our study last week, David was safe at Naioth. His hiding by Ezel shows he was no longer safe.

Why leave the safety of Naioth to be cowering at Ezel? That's what I want to explore because I think there are times in our lives when the reasons we have for leaving a particular situation may not be altogether good reasons. We can go from a place of spiritual safety and strength to a place where we are depending more on the natural resources available to us.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Examine Your Reasons For Leaving 'Naioth,' and #2 Examine Your Strategy For Lingering At 'Ezel.'

#1 Examine Your Reasons
For Leaving 'Naioth'
(v1a)

King Saul wanted David dead. David had fled for his life to the prophet, Samuel, in Ramah. Samuel had taken David to Naioth in Ramah which we said was a School of the Prophets he had established.

Saul received intel from his spy network regarding David's whereabouts. Three times he sent armed soldiers to retrieve David. Three times the Spirit of God prevented them by falling upon the men and causing them to worship.

Saul determined to go himself and kill David at Naioth. He, too, was prevented by God the Holy Spirit.

1 Samuel 19:23 ... 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...

The very next thing you read, in verse one of chapter twenty, is that “David fled from Naioth in Ramah...”

It may seem obvious why David fled. Saul wanted him dead; he knew where he was and came gunning for him. **But Saul couldn't touch David at Naioth. He was prevented by the Holy Spirit.**

We might conclude that the Holy Spirit came upon these soldiers and Saul in order to give David a chance to escape. If that was the case, if that was the Holy Spirit's strategy, why did David wait until after three waves of soldiers came and until after Saul himself came? Wouldn't it have made more sense to go right after the first group was prevented from seizing him?

I'm not suggesting that David could have stayed at Naioth indefinitely and avoided becoming a fugitive for the next twenty or so years. But he was safe for the time being and his fleeing does seem to stem from a poor state of mind. We'll see his state of mind in a moment when he pressures Jonathan to help him and asks his friend to participate in a deception.

I submit to you, for your consideration, that David could have stayed at Naioth for a time. Instead, he fled.

I'm calling it a 'Naioth state of mind' because, for us, it's not so much about geography. It's about our attitude in whatever place we find ourselves. Where you are is probably right where God wants you. If you're not living in some obvious sin, then God has gone to great lengths to put you in the place you occupy at home, in the church, at work, in school.

In that place, in those places, you are like David. There are people and forces against you. It's because you are a Christian. The world hated Jesus; it will hate you. You have for an enemy the evil one who is described as going about like a lion seeking to devour you.

Ah, but you also have the supernatural enabling to endure those things, to resist those things. You have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you. You have available to you the entire spiritual armament of a Christian soldier. You

have promises like “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” and “all things work together for the good for those who love the Lord.”

It’s hard to maintain a Naioth state of mind. Like David we assess the tremendous spiritual advantages we have but flee nonetheless and find ourselves acting and reacting as mere natural men and women. Instead of availing ourselves of every spiritual blessing, we seek solutions for our circumstances in the strategies and supplies of the world.

At least some of us need to return to Naioth as a state of mind. We are right where we are supposed to be, but we’re not meeting the enemy or the challenges spiritually. We’re seeking more natural, more ‘obvious,’ more worldly, solutions.

Let’s take a stand, a spiritual stand, and watch as the Holy Spirit empowers us through whatever it is we are facing.

How do you know you’ve fled from Naioth? A few answers to that question are revealed as we follow David to Ezel.

#2 Examine Your Strategy
For Lingerin at ‘Ezel’
(v1b-23)

David wanted to talk with his friend Jonathan. Seems OK, until you realize that he was fleeing back to the place he had fled from! His strategy, to seek answers and aid from his friend, actually brought him away from deliverance and into danger.

It’s a reminder that our own strategies, our own methods, our ‘natural’ approach to difficulties, is often a step in the wrong direction.

1 Samuel 20:1 Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?"

1 Samuel 20:2 So Jonathan said to him, "By no means! You shall not die! Indeed, my father will do nothing either great or small without first telling me. And why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!"

1 Samuel 20:3 Then David took an oath again, and said, "Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.' But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death."

I don't want to come across as being unnecessarily critical of David. Still I would point out that David already knew why Saul was seeking to kill him.

- He knew first-hand that Saul was being troubled by an evil spirit sent from God.
- He knew that he, David, had been anointed by God to be the next king.

One characteristic of abandoning Naioth, then, is reassessing a situation as natural when it is supernatural. We abandon Naioth when we forget that our struggle, our wrestling, is not with flesh and blood but with supernatural powers that are against us. They can only be overcome with the supernatural blessing provided us.

1 Samuel 20:4 So Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you yourself desire, I will do it for you."

1 Samuel 20:5 And David said to Jonathan, "Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third day at evening."

1 Samuel 20:6 If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked permission of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.'

1 Samuel 20:7 If he says thus: 'It is well,' your servant will be safe. But if he is very angry, be sure that evil is determined by him.

1 Samuel 20:8 Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. Nevertheless, if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?"

Whether or not you think it's OK for a Christian to lie in order to save a life is not at issue here. David was in no immediate danger. God had miraculously, repeatedly protected him. Besides, he had been promised he would be king.

David asked his friend to participate in a deception. He pressured Jonathan by insinuating that if he didn't help him he might as well kill him.

That's a lot of stress to put on a relationship. Another characteristic, then, of abandoning Naioth is putting stress and strain on earthly relationships. It is demanding help from others when God wants to be your help.

This is a little tricky because we *are* to care for one another, to minister to one another, to come to each other's aid. But not from a sense of guilt or pressure. No, it must be from grace, always recognizing that Jesus is the Person who can help most. Any help asked for and offered must point to Him.

1 Samuel 20:9 But Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! For if I knew certainly that evil was determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you?"

1 Samuel 20:10 Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me, or what if your father answers you roughly?"

1 Samuel 20:11 And Jonathan said to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." So both of them went out into the field.

1 Samuel 20:12 Then Jonathan said to David: "The Lord God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you,

1 Samuel 20:13 may the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the Lord be with you as He has been with my father.

Jonathan agreed to the strategy. He was a good friend put in a tough situation.

What if someone puts you in a tough situation? Puts the pressure on? There's a hint in Jonathan's answer to David that we ought to pick-up on.

Jonathan said, "the Lord be with you as He has been with my father." Jonathan was stating the spiritual fact that David would replace Saul as the next king over Israel. Jonathan, whether knowingly or not, was reminding David of God's sure promises to him.

Your obligation as a friend, as a brother or sister, is to call Christians back to the place of trusting in the Lord to deliver them. It might involve helping them, but if it does, it will be in a way that isn't deceptive or a lie.

Jonathan had more to say along those lines:

1 Samuel 20:14 And you shall not only show me the kindness of the Lord while I still live, that I may not die;

1 Samuel 20:15 but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth."

1 Samuel 20:16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "Let the Lord require it at the hand of David's enemies."

Jonathan was next in line to be king over Israel but God had instead anointed David. When it came to monarchs and monarchy, it was common in Eastern cultures for the king to kill any who might threaten him for the throne. Jonathan was asking David to spare his family once he ascended to the throne.

By way of application to us, I see in these further comments by Jonathan an encouragement for us to lift the eyes of our brothers and sisters above the earthly horizon and into the heavenlies. Look to the future King, Jesus, and His forever kingdom - first on earth, then in Heaven. Let's encourage one another to live as if we really understood that one day we will stand before our Lord and Savior to be rewarded and to receive our inheritance.

It's not in our nature to want to sacrifice now in order to gain later. This is even more of a problem when it comes to sacrificing now in order to gain unseen spiritual rewards later. Let's encourage each other there is an eternity coming and that only what's done for Jesus will last.

1 Samuel 20:17 Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

1 Samuel 20:18 Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty.

1 Samuel 20:19 And when you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel.

1 Samuel 20:20 Then I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target;

1 Samuel 20:21 and there I will send a lad, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I expressly say to the lad, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them and come' - then, as the Lord lives, there is safety for you and no harm.

1 Samuel 20:22 But if I say thus to the young man, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you' - go your way, for the Lord has sent you away.

1 Samuel 20:23 And as for the matter which you and I have spoken of, indeed the Lord be between you and me forever."

We'll see how this plan played-out in the remaining verses. For now we're stopping at verse twenty-three. We're leaving David in hiding, crouching by the "stone Ezel." It was apparently a natural feature along the road that directed travelers on their way.

Ezel is a powerful, insightful contrast from where he was just a few verses ago. There he was at Naioth, with Samuel, at the School of the Prophets. He was worshipping with them. Their worship was so powerful that physical armies were overcome by it. The murderous king was himself overcome by it, left naked before God.

Now he was at the stone Ezel. David was lying, inviting his friend to lie, and living in fear. He wasn't worshipping, at least not openly. He was worrying.

Some of us need to come out from our hiding places. We need to come back to the place of worship, of the total incline of our hearts to the Lord.

If any of this rings true to you, then just return to Naioth. You probably don't need to go anywhere so much as it is a state of mind. All spiritual blessings are yours in abundance. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. All things are working together for the good.

Your situation may not change. *It may get worse!* But you will be delivered through it by God's great power.

Maybe you are here today and this all seems a little odd to you. We are talking as if Jesus were alive and as if you could meet Him.

We are! You can! In the Bible you read,

1 Corinthians 15:3 ... [Jesus] Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
1 Corinthians 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

"Christ died for our sins." "Christ" connects the historical person, Jesus, with all the many prophecies and promises in the Old Testament that God would send Israel a Messiah and the world a Savior.

The fact “Christ died for our sins” presupposes a separation between God and man whose penalty was death. It lets us know that the problem with the world is sin.

“For our sins” tells you that Jesus Christ died as a Substitute, taking your place, to satisfy the penalty for your sins. It’s personal.

“According to the Scriptures” reminds you that everything God has said in His Word was leading up to the death of Jesus Christ to save you from your sins. Beginning in Genesis and continuing all through the Old Testament you have the story of the Messiah and Savior being sent into the world while, in the mean time, lambs were offered as a temporary substitute for your sins. Then, one glorious moment in human history, Jesus stepped forward, the prophesied and promised Christ, and was declared by John the Baptist “the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.”

“He was buried” verifies that Jesus Christ was a real man in a real physical body. He died on the Cross and was “buried” as a dead corpse in the tomb.

“He rose again” in a real, physical body - a glorified body fit for eternity. “Rose” is in a verb tense that means He has been raised **and still lives forever.**

“The third day” establishes that we are talking about the historic events that occurred in Jerusalem in the first century.

Once more we’re told it was “according to the Scriptures.” The phrase modifies the fact that Jesus Christ was “raised.” It reminds us of the passages in the Old Testament, like Psalm twenty-two and Psalm sixteen and Psalm one hundred and ten, where the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah and Savior were prophesied and promised.

So, yes, Jesus is alive and He can be known. You can have a relationship with Him, starting now and lasting forever. But you must admit you are a sinner and receive His saving you by grace, through faith.