



Hebrews 4:12-13 Why Would God Cut Me?

Summary: God cuts through our defenses, sees through our disguises, and judges what He finds while calling us to rest in Him.

We're going to start off a little crazy this morning, but trust me, this is going somewhere. So, stay calm when I tell you the truth: God made us naked and there's actually a lot of really, really important theology behind the first sets of clothes.

In Genesis Chapter One you get the story of Creation, it's a quick, high-level overview, and then in Genesis Two, you circle back around and get more details about the same events, especially the creation of man and woman. You discover that, at first, Adam was alone, in need of a companion and partner so God made Eve, brought the two together as one, formed the first marriage, and it was very good. In fact, the last line of Genesis 2 says:

Genesis 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

I want you to think about what a beautiful thing that is. I want you to think of the innocence, the honesty, and the intimacy this represents.

But here's what I bet is happening right now, some of you are struggling with the subject, it feels a little scandalous. Like, are you sure this is OK for us to talk about? I mean, they're naked. Isn't it a bit awkward? And there are two main ways you deal with the tension of it, the first is to avoid it, so you might be willing to acknowledge the fact, but now that I've made my point you'd like to move along, no need to sit and stare.

The second is to snicker and tell jokes, to giggle and think of memes you could post.

Friends, the discomfort you feel about this topic, the awkwardness you feel, the fact that something within you wants to say, "uh-huh, yeah" and move on quickly to the next point, or release the pressure by joking about it, actually helps us see that something has gone very, very wrong in the human experience.

When man and woman lived the way God wanted them to be, in perfect relationship with Him and with each other, they were **naked and not ashamed**. They had no secrets, nothing to hide from God or each other.

But, as I said, this is the last verse of Chapter Two, and those of you who know your Bible know that Chapter Three is all about temptation and the fall.

God's original plan was for Adam and Eve to enjoy the world, to explore it and develop it. I have no doubt they would have come up with clothing eventually for functional purposes because pockets are nice to have. But instead of things playing out that way, they chose to break the one rule God gave them – to eat from the only tree in the Garden that God had placed off limits.

And when they did, suddenly everything changed. I want you to read this with me so you can see how quickly and dramatically it happened.

Turn with me to Genesis 3

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

So, I want you to notice this: where did clothing come from? *They made it for themselves.* And *why* did they do it? Because *after their sin*, after their rebellion against God, they felt exposed and they were trying to cover something up. They made something physical to help them with a spiritual problem. They knew something, felt something, so they did something.

We still do the same thing today. There's something going on *in our hearts and minds and souls* and so we use cotton, nylon, polyester, wool, leather and silk to try to tell a different story about who we are and what we're like. Maybe there's something about your body that you don't like, something you think or feel about yourself, so you try to use clothing to cover it or conceal it, maybe reshape it. Or, maybe you use clothing to draw attention to a part of your body you're proud of because it makes you feel better about yourself. Maybe you want attention and acceptance so you use clothing to show "I'm cool, I'm trendy, I'm fashionable, or I belong, and you should like me." Either way, you're using something on the outside to help cope with, build up, or express something that happening within.

Some people do this more than others, and people do it different ways, but here we are all these years later, still using clothes to cover our bodies and help us with the thoughts inside our hearts and minds.

But watch what happens next:

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

13 And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Look at God's question in verse 11: Who told you that you were naked? In other words, who told you that was wrong? Why did you suddenly feel a need to cover yourself, to hide yourself, to use clothing to defend yourself or tell a different story? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

They wanted to cover themselves because they knew they had done something wrong.

Friends, notice this: the very first reaction, to the very first sin, was a desire to be covered up and, this is super important – to try cover up yourself.

Now, if you keep reading, you'll learn that they get evicted from the Garden, they can no longer remain there with God, He's going to send them out into the world we experience today where we struggle with work that is hard, a world that resists us with famines, storms, earthquakes, droughts, and afflicts us with injuries and illnesses. A world where other people attempt to abuse us, neglect us, mistreat us, overlook us, exploit us, use us for their own purposes. A world full of conflict where we need clothes to survive.

But before all that happens, before they leave the garden, God Himself makes them a new set of clothes. He took the skin of an animal and made tunics for them. So, think about that, an animal was sacrificed to provide them with a covering, blood was shed because they had sinned. In was a foreshadowing of the fact that many years later Jesus would lay down His life for our sins and become a spiritual covering for us.

All of that brings us to our passage in Hebrews this morning – so this has been a rather long, but necessary introduction. Because, we have been seeing in Hebrews that just as God spoke to Adam and Eve back in the Garden, He speaks to us today. He speaks to people everywhere and all throughout time, in general and specific ways. He speaks through Creation, through conscience, through the prophets of old and through Scripture, He speaks through the Holy Spirit, and He speaks in Jesus, His words and deeds, and ultimately, His sacrifice – becoming a new covering for us so we no longer have to supply our own.

And we've seen that when God speaks, He's calling us, calling us to come closer to Him, to come back to Him, to enter His rest. You remember, we've seen that rest was offered in the Garden, but Adam and Eve choose to follow their own ideas instead. Rest was offered to the people of Israel in the land of Israel, but they choose their own ideas instead. They eventually entered the Promised Land and yet, even there, in the place where God wanted to bless them if they would follow His ways, they choose to do their own thing.

And such has been the story of human history – God wants to offer us good things, He wants to offer us rest with Him and with each other, but we choose to go our own way instead and it brings conflict and sorrow and suffering.

So, God eventually sent His own Son, Jesus, to make restitution for the wrongs we have done and to lead us into relationship and peace with God and each other. Isn't this what He said, the great commandment is that we should love God and love others as we love ourselves?

When you look at the entire story of human history, these two things are true and you see them over and over again. Number One, God wants to do us good, He offers good things to us – in the Garden, in the nation of Israel, in relationship with Jesus, and yet, Number Two, we choose to go our own way instead. Even if we want some of what God offers, or most of what God offers, time and time again, we choose to also make a grab for something else, to have a little bit more, or to have it our way, and like a spiritual toddler throwing a selfish tantrum we run away from God to get what we want.

So, the author of Hebrews has been warning us, don't do that. Christians, people who know God, who know sin, who know what it means to repent, are told, don't harden your hearts through disobedience, don't drift away from God. Be diligent to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and allow God to direct and shape your life.

Which finally brings us to where we left off last week, read with me back in:

Hebrews 4:11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 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.

If you spend much time in church, or Bible study, verse 12 probably sounds very familiar to you. It's a verse that is often quoted to talk about the role and the power of God's Word, of Scripture, of the Bible, and the things you hear about it are often good and true and helpful. But you almost never hear it quoted in its original context where there's a dangerous tone of warning to the passage.

Notice, the passage says one day we will all stand before God and give an account of our lives, our attitudes, and our actions. Everything you've ever done, thought, or said will be judged by a Holy and righteous God who doesn't just let things slide.

And when that time comes, you will face Him alone, naked, uncovered, unclothed, fully exposed. And you will face the inspection and interrogation of the God whose word is living and powerful, sharp enough to poke, prod, and pierce every part of you, down to the invisible core.

History, movies, and literature contain scenes where the hero takes a blow from a blade, or is shot with a bullet, and we're shocked and saddened because death seems imminent, and then suddenly the shirt is lifted or the jacket is opened, and we see they had some armor or object that deflected the blow or absorbed the round and they're going to be OK.

It makes for fine drama and praise God for the reality that happens on the battlefield and in law enforcement due to advances in Kevlar and ceramic body armor, but the whole point of this passage is that the Word of God is like a weapon that cannot be stopped.

It pierces, it penetrates, it flays us open and allows an inspection of everything inside of us. There is nowhere to hide. Nothing to conceal. No way to defend or disguise or resist, nothing is [hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.](#)

Now, think about that for a moment, because many people think of God judging our *actions*, what we've done. Did you do this, did you avoid doing that? Did you do enough good deeds? Did you avoid enough sin? Many of us think in terms of *actions and behaviors*, we think in terms of performance. But this here says God is actually opening us up like a dissection in high school biology, inspecting everything inside down to the contents of our spiritual stomach and intestines.

Jesus said it wasn't enough just to live a good life and even to *appear religious* on the outside. He criticized religious fundamentalists who seemed to have life together, they wore their clothes in certain ways to show how religious they were, what good people they were. They had the outside all put together – just like Adam and Eve, right? They had made their own coverings, but Jesus saw right through to the things that were still wrong in the hearts of the fundamentalists. They were keeping good religious rules, but on the inside, deep in their hearts and minds, He said they were like empty tombs.

He saw right through them, [piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, He discerned their thoughts and the intents of their hearts.](#) And He judged them based on what He found inside, not what He saw outside. In fact, if you remember, He actually commended them for some of the things were doing in life, but that didn't make up for the fact that there problems deep down inside. And that's where He was looking.

It was where He was looking at the religious fundamentalists of His day and it's where God is looking and judging each of us this morning. Deep down inside, discerning our thoughts

and the intents of our hearts. God gets deep down inside of you, pierces, penetrates, and probes you, He has absolutely no regard for what you call privacy.

And that can either sound invasive and unwelcome or it can be incredibly liberating and freeing. For most of us, it's a little bit of both.

Let's be honest, most of us want a bit of privacy in our lives. We want somewhere to hide, we want somewhere to put the stuff we're not proud of, the pictures we don't post online and hope no one else will, the stories we don't retell or the ones we get furious about when other people do. We know they're not good, we know they're embarrassing, they're not the best us. We all have stuff like that – sides of us that we don't want seen. We need a place to put our failures and our pain. The stuff we're still working on, or working through, or trying to put behind us. We need a way to cover up the things we're not proud of.

And it's hard enough to do that with the stuff on the outside, the things we've done and said, or the things that have been done and said to us. We don't even want to talk or think about all the stuff on the inside.

And yet, that's exactly where God goes, and exactly why He goes there.

When Adam and Eve sinned, what did they do? They tried to cover themselves, disguise and defend themselves, and they made their own coverings to do it.

And what did God do? He went straight to the thing they were embarrassed of, straight to the thing they were ashamed of, and said, "So, let's talk about this." And then, "Let me do something about it for you."

And now you remember, that has been the call all throughout human history – God knows who you are. He knows what you have done. He knows what you're up to. He knows what you're planning and what you're hiding. And He says, Come to Me. Enter My rest. Be with Me.

Do you remember, we said a few weeks ago, He is not ignorant, and yet, He is not ashamed to call you His brother, to call you His sister. He knows everything about you, and still, He calls you in, closer. He says, come be with Me. Let's do this together.

I stand here this morning as your pastor, so may I ask you a pastoral question? May I gently inquire for the sake of your soul, what's wrong with saying to God, "I think I messed this up, can You please take a look and help me?"

I remember being in high school and having some smart friends and some tough classes and I would ask them to take a look at my work and tell where I had gone wrong or what I was supposed to do next. You've probably done the same thing.

And it didn't feel embarrassing, you didn't feel stupid, you felt frustrated. You needed some help solving the problem. But you didn't feel judged because you knew you were already

accepted, these were your friends, you were all working on stuff together and one of you, or some of you, just had it down better than the rest. There was no shame in asking for help.

What's the spiritual equivalent of that? What's the spiritual equivalent of laying everything out in front of God and saying, "This isn't working, can You tell me how to fix it?" Or, "I think I broke this, what do I do now?"

What's wrong with inviting God into every aspect of your life, every issue, every identity, every role you play and allowing Him to inspect, correct, and direct you?

He knows everything about you, and calls you anyway. He's seen you at your worst, totally naked physically, spiritually, emotionally, He knows what you're capable of and what you've been through. He knows what you're facing. And He calls you. He calls *you*. Living right here, right now, in these times, in this place, among these people, to come, and enter His rest.

It won't be easy. You will be tempted to come up with your own way. You will be tempted to make your own clothes, your own fig leaf covering, your own defense, your own disguise. You will be tempted to run away, drift away, or slide away and try things your way. Which is why we're told:

Hebrews 4:11 Let us ... be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 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.

Let Him inspect you. Let Him poke you, prod you, pierce you. Let Him do good for you and through you *because He wants to*. He knows exactly what He's getting and He's still calling *you* to enter His rest today.

My friends, you have nothing to hide from God. There is nothing you *can* hide from God. Despite all your best efforts, you are still naked and open before Him today. He sees all, knows all, discerns and judges all, and He calls you anyway, through Jesus Christ, come, rest in Him today.

Let's pray.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Rom 15:13



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 4:12-13 Why Would God Cut Me?

Summary: God cuts through our defenses, sees through our disguises, and judges what He finds while calling us to rest in Him.

- What kind of things have you tried to hide from God?
- Can you describe a time when God's Word sliced you open and made a profound impact on a decision you were facing or something you had gone through?
- Explore the following verses and note what you discover about the word of God:
 - Deuteronomy 6:5-6
 - Psalm 119:9-11
 - Psalm 119:105
 - Psalm 139
 - Isaiah 40:8
 - Isaiah 55:11
 - Jeremiah 23:29
 - Matthew 5:18
 - John 6:63
 - John 17:17
 - Eph 6:17
 - 2 Timothy 3:16
 - 1 Peter 2:2
 - Revelation 1:16