

Message #112 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"God's Covering"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to take a look at the concept of, 'God's Covering'. A covering is a more important concept than just putting on some clothes or pulling a blanket over yourself. A covering, in scripture, is meant to take away a person's shame. Shame comes when we become uncovered. That's a pretty basic concept for humans. Everyone, whether they are Christians or heathens are plainly knowledgeable of the concept of being naked.

Adam and Eve experienced the first feelings of being naked. They recognized this suddenly, as soon as they had sinned against God. Now, of course, we think of nakedness as being sinful, at least we consider public nakedness to be sinful. But then, we don't consider nakedness as sinful if we are naked in the privacy of our own homes. Actually, nakedness isn't a problem unless someone else sees you. It is when your nakedness is seen that you become ashamed. I know that this may seem like overkill of the subject, but unless we look at scripture from all angles, how will we understand it well? To look at scripture just from a surface view would be like buying a house without ever looking at the inside of it. You wouldn't shop for a house by just driving by on the street. And, in the same way, we can't expect to understand much of the word of God by just a drive by attitude. We need to fervently seek for deep understanding of God's word in order to thwart the deception of Satan. If you only have a shallow understanding of God's word, it will be easy for Satan to trip you up. Remember, when you know the word, you can confront the devil with it. If you don't know the word, then Satan can defeat you with it. It is the truth that sets you free. As Christians we should fervently seek all the word of God that we can.

Anyway, let's go on. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve's eyes were opened when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they could then see what they couldn't see before. And what they saw was that when they became knowledgeable of the concept of sin, they

also became aware of their own nakedness. Now, when you read the book of Genesis, and you read how Eve was tempted and then how Adam also ate the fruit of the tree, your first impression is to see a picture of Adam and Eve with no clothes. But there's more to it than just physical nakedness. The real problem for Adam and Eve was not that they had physical bodies which could be seen completely, but that they had actually disobeyed God. The sin they had committed was not just eating the fruit, but being disobedient to God's command. Yes, I know, they ate the fruit and this was their sin. But actually their sin wasn't eating fruit itself, but their sin was that they disobeyed God.

Now, the Bible doesn't tell us that the fruit of the tree was an apple, even though most people use the term apple to describe it. The Bible calls the fruit, knowledge of good and evil. But, you might say, "yes, we know it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but what was the name of the fruit?" Actually, what the Bible says is that the fruit was the knowledge of good and evil. Just as an apple tree bears apples, and a peach tree bears peaches, a tree of the knowledge of good and evil bears knowledge of good and evil. That's what the fruit was. They ate knowledge. They took in the knowledge that the tree produced.

Now, Adam and Eve took of this knowledge against the command of God, and therefore they entered into a state of awareness of what it meant to be outside of God's word. They had not obeyed God's commandment to stay away from the tree, and therefore they had disobeyed his word. Notice what I said. They had disobeyed God's word. Most importantly, this concept of disobeying the word of God is at the core of understanding the concept of a covering of God.

It is God's word which we must obey. When we do disobey God's word, we might place that sin into a particular category in order to explain what type of sin we have committed, but whatever we've done, we have gone against God's word. Going against God's word is stepping outside of the boundaries that God has set for us. Sin is the stepping outside of God's word. God's word sets up parameters for us. It sets up a fence around the property of God. When we step outside of that fence, we have just left the property of God and ventured onto another's property. And of course, any property other than God's property is land that belongs to Satan. When we leave the property of God and cross over the boundaries that he has set for us with his word, we leave his protection. God's protection extends as far as his fence line, and once we cross the fence, his protection, his covering, stops. Once we leave his land and step onto Satan's land, we are on our own. We, of course, are then, in big, big trouble.

Is it any wonder that the whole battle between good and evil centers around truth and lies? We know God's word is the truth, and that Satan's word is lies. Therefore, when we follow truth, we are living within the parameters of God's realm. If we follow the path of Satan's lies, we are then venturing outside of God's dwelling places and into the dwelling places of Satan. It is at the very time of when we cross over the fence of God's boundaries that our covering for our nakedness disappears. When we leave the protection of God by going against his will, we automatically take ourselves out from under his covering. His covering is that which covers over our nakedness by removing the shame that sin brought about.

When sin entered into the world it not only brought nakedness, but it also brought shame. Notice that God didn't have a problem with Adam and Eve's nakedness prior to their disobedience. Actually, the problem humans have is not nakedness. The problem humans have is that they are overcome with shame at their own nakedness. It is the shame, not the nakedness which keeps us out of the presence of God. Quite frankly, if you can praise God in the shower, then your problem isn't physical nakedness. Believe me, God can see you in the shower. The problem we have is the shame that lowers our self-esteem so much that we no longer have boldness to enter into the presence of God. And this is why shame hinders us so much.

When we become physically uncovered, our physical nakedness brings shame. At least, it brings shame to those who have a conscience which is exercised by a desire for righteousness. Shame can be defined as a feeling. It's a feeling which humans experience. It is a feeling which we get from a loss of self-esteem. When we become ashamed of ourselves, we experience a feeling of being of less value than those we come into contact with. Shame is produced within us by many causes, but in each and every case shame makes us feel worthless. We humans feel worthless when we measure our self-worth and find ourselves lacking. Until we see ourselves as lacking in one way or another, we do not feel ashamed of ourselves. But just as soon as we are presented with something in which to compare ourselves, and arrive at the conclusion that we do not sufficiently measure up, shame appears.

We can see this quite clearly by taking a look at the concept of peer pressure. Peer pressure is a common everyday experience. We are always evaluating our personal worth by comparing ourselves with others. When children go to school, they are presented with the lifestyles of other children. If a child sees other children dressed in certain ways, they equate this with a standard of measurement for themselves. By comparing their own clothing with the style of dress of the other children, they determine for themselves how they measure up. Peer pressure is the greatest producer of revenue that the clothing industry has working for it. If it wasn't for peer pressure, Nike and Old Navy wouldn't even be in business. Peer pressure is the pressure that comes from trying to measure up to a supposed level of value. When a child, or an adult, for that matter, compares themselves with others, and determines that they themselves do not measure up to the same standard that they perceive the others do, then the direct result is the emotion of shame. Shame is nothing more or less than determining that your own value is less than who you have compared yourself to. When you compare yourselves with others and determine that you are not as good as they are, this brings the emotion of shame.

When the Bible says that Adam and Eve knew that they were naked, this actually just means that they knew that they themselves were not equal with God. They knew that they had no right to come into the presence of God as they were because they would be offensive to God. The shame of nakedness which humans feel is an outward physical demonstration of a person's low self-esteem. Self-esteem is our estimation of self value. When our self-esteem is low, we feel we are not good enough to interact with others on an equal basis. Adam and Eve knew that they were not longer good enough to interact with God on an equal basis. Until then they had been able to walk

and talk with God. But now, they were ashamed of themselves. They could not expect to be accepted by God. Instead of feeling as if they would be accepted in God's presence, they felt that they would be rejected. When sin entered into them, their eyes could then see that they certainly were not equal with God. The shame they felt would keep them from the presence of God. Because of their shame, because they recognized their nakedness, their lack of value in comparison with God, they sewed fig leaves together in order to cover their nakedness. This of course was insufficient, for the covering which raises our self-esteem is not acquired by our own hands. It is only by the gift of God himself that we can enter into his presence. It is only by the shedding of blood that we can measure up to being sons of God. Our value will never be good enough by covering ourselves. It is only God's covering which will suffice.

The covering which God gave to Adam and Eve was animal skins. Of course we know that the animals didn't volunteer these skins. They had to be killed. The killing of the animals caused the shedding of blood. It was the loss of life that brought life once again to Adam and Eve. This of course gives us the symbolic understanding of why Jesus Christ had to die for us. He shed his blood for us in order to give us life. And, of course, it is fairly simple to comprehend that you can't give someone something that you don't have. And you can't give someone something that you still hang onto. Jesus gave us life because he gave us his life. If Jesus had kept his life, then he could not have given it to us.

Now, we know that with the sin of Adam and Eve, death entered into the human race. Therefore, the shame of Adam and Eve and the death of the human body are very closely aligned. The Bible tells us in James 1:15 that evil desire brings about sin, and that sin brings death. This was the very word of God that Eve quoted in the Garden of Eden. She told Satan that God had said that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. This was the truth. Death comes as a result of sin. However, just as sin causes death, the death of Jesus brought life. We have life through the death of Jesus Christ. However, we have something more than just life. Because the gift that Jesus gave was his own life, we now have that life in us which was in Jesus. Because Jesus was the word of God, and therefore is God, we now have the eternal life of God given to us. We are alive forevermore through the shedding of Jesus' blood.

Now, here is the essence of the covering of God. With the shedding of the blood of Jesus, our sins are covered. We then are not seen as naked human beings, but as born-again spirit beings who are clothed with a covering of righteousness. Righteousness means that we have no sin. Because we no longer have sin, we are no longer considered to be disobedient. And remember, it was disobedience that caused mankind's nakedness. We have suffered a loss of self-esteem because we could not be good enough for God. But now, through Jesus Christ, we are looked at as having no sin of disobedience and we can have the confidence to boldly enter into God's presence once again. We are now covered by God with the covering of the blood of Jesus.

Now, in scripture, there are many instances of people experiencing shame. One of the significant references in the Bible that suggests shame is of a woman who demonstrates childlessness. Whether the childlessness is demonstrated from the aspect of a monthly cycle of blood, or from

the aspect of having no children at all, there was a recurring Biblical reference to the shame of a woman who does not produce life. It is the life that is so important to us. We only exist temporarily in the flesh, and even then we find the life to be a precious thing. Eternal life is even abundantly more precious, but sin destroys life. When sin comes, the body dies. But life is what God wants. He doesn't want us to be destroyed. He doesn't want us to die. It is life that this world is pointing toward, and therefore God has given us the ability to reproduce in order that we might understand the desire of God to also produce life, but to produce more than just physical life. God's plan is to produce eternal life.

Now, is it a sin for a woman to be childless? No, not in the strictly physical sense. However, in the spiritual sense, as we begin to apply the symbolic principle of physical life, we see that the motive of God is for life and not for death. In fact, death, in the eyes of God, is an enemy. God is eternal. If death were to reign, then it would be a threat against the eternal life of God. In the Bible we read that death will be the final enemy to be destroyed. God will destroy death, and then the only thing that will be left will be life, and because there will be no more death, the life we live will be eternal. In this way, God reproduces, and we enter into the eternal realm of God.

However, sin is disobedience to God's word. And, it is sin which, according to the apostle Paul, is the sting of death. And, it is death which is the enemy of life, and therefore it is the death of God and the death of his children that Satan wants to see. As long as we remain disobedient to God we cannot come under his covering. Can you imagine a woman being completely at odds with her husband and still expect her husband to be her cover? Can a woman bring life without a husband? Even the virgin birth of Jesus required the intervention of God. In the same sense, can we expect to have life without being the bride of Christ? We can't remain single and bear children. We can only bear children if we come under the covering of our husband. Jesus Christ is our covering. He is our husband. It is Jesus who gives us life and causes us to be life givers to others. Without him there is no life. Sometimes people think there are other ways to God besides Jesus. That's stupid. You've got to be extremely unintelligent to think you can have life without the covering of a husband. Isn't it interesting how the wicked can't seem to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, but they seem to have no trouble believing in the possibility that they can have eternal life without Jesus. Jesus is the bridegroom. He is our covering. There is no other covering because Jesus is the only one who has shed his blood for us, and he is the only one who has the gift of eternal life to give.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they sinned because they did not believe God's word. They were deceived, and for a brief moment of time they believed the word of Satan. Satan has been at it for a long time now. He has deceived every person on the face of this earth. All he wants to do is to convince humanity that God's word is not true. But Adam and Eve sinned, and you and I have sinned. Our neighbors have sinned. Our ancestors have sinned, and our children will sin just like we have. And because we have all sinned in the flesh, our flesh will be destroyed. However, because we have believed in the spirit, we shall be saved by being born-again in spirit.

What I desire for you is for you to let your spirit enter into a marriage with Jesus. No, your flesh can't do it. It has already failed miserably and been condemned. But now, let your spirit man rejoice in an eternal union with Jesus, for by your union with Christ, you will live forever.

Nakedness brings shame. And, because we humans are aware of the shame that comes because of sin, we must cover our bodies. But the physical covering of our bodies only demonstrates outwardly that we do have the knowledge of goodness, otherwise we wouldn't cover our fleshly nakedness. In order to believe in God you must believe that his word is true. His word tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. You acknowledge the sinfulness of your fleshly body by covering its nakedness with cloth.

But, isn't it interesting that humans, whether Christians or non-Christians, automatically accept the fact that the human body must be covered, but yet, as soon as that is accomplished, they give into the temptation to decorate it. The nakedness of the flesh must be covered because of the shame it presents. And we also know that when Jesus comes back for us that we will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and our bodies will become glorified bodies. We instinctively know that our bodies are not glorified now. We know that they, in their present form, are not pleasing to God. God doesn't delight in our outward form.

So then, as Christians, why do we put so much emphasis on decorating the body? If the body is not yet glorified, why is it that we try so hard to glorify it in this present age and in this present time? No, I'm not talking about revealing attire, I'm talking about dressing it up in fancy attire. I'm talking about dressing in such a way that attention is drawn to your fleshly form. Don't you think that God would like you to draw the attention of others to your spiritual form? Don't you think he would like to have people see Christ in you instead of seeing you? Dressing up the outside of your flesh does not help people to see Jesus in you. It helps people to see you. Do you suppose Satan has anything to do with the desire to be covered gloriously? Do you suppose the emphasis on the outer physical person instead of the inner spiritual person has anything to do with the plan of Satan to draw attention away from Christ? Is it possible that the church has come a long way from the central concept of God's covering, and have fallen for the covering that Satan wants us to have? After all, man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart. I guess for myself, I'd want to decorate my heart, and just be satisfied with a simple covering for the outside of me. Otherwise, it might not be God's covering at all.