

“Tattered Blankets”

Introduction

The Tattered Blanket

I carry in my mind’s eye an image I cannot shake: a blanket, once whole, now frayed and torn. Threads dangle where they’ve been pulled loose, threads of doctrine, fear, performance, conditions. Each thread clutched tightly by people who believe a single strand will keep them warm.

But a thread cannot cover you, a thread cannot comfort you, a thread cannot hold you through the night.

This book is about those threads. It is about the ways religion has unraveled the blanket of God’s love into thin, fragile pieces. It is about the fear, grief, and anxiety that leave us grasping at what cannot sustain. And it is about the One who reweaves it all, not with our effort but with His own hands.

As a pastor and hospice chaplain I’ve seen too many people die clutching threads, wondering if they did enough, if they believed enough, if they belonged enough. Countless times I have whispered into their final moments: *“You are already loved. You are already covered. All this is from God.”*

So come with me. Let us name the threads we’ve mistaken for the whole. Let us grieve the unraveling. And then, let us rest and celebrate under the blanket of love that was never lost, only forgotten.

From now on, we will regard no one from a worldly point of view. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, not counting our sins against us. And He has given us this same ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:16,18–19)

This is the blanket; this is the gospel, all others are *“no gospel at all.”*

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-7)

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The Threads

CHAPTER 1:

THE THREAD OF CONDITIONS

CHAPTER 2:

THE THREAD OF FEAR

CHAPTER 3:

THE THREAD OF PERFORMANCE

CHAPTER 4:

THE THREAD OF GRIEF

CHAPTER 5:

THE THREAD OF ANXIETY

CHAPTER 6:

THE THREAD OF TRIALS

CHAPTER 7:

THE THREAD OF ENEMIES

CHAPTER 8:

REWEAVING THE BLANKET

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CHAPTER 1

THE THREAD OF CONDITIONS

The Image: A Frayed Thread Called “Unconditional Love”

I once heard someone say with conviction, *“God’s love is unconditional... but of course, there are conditions.”* I remember thinking, what a contradiction. It’s like telling a child, *“I will never stop loving you, but you must meet these requirements to stay loved.”* That isn’t unconditional; that’s bargaining.

This is what happens when we pull one thread out of the whole blanket of God’s love. We hold up the thread called “unconditional” while quietly knotting conditions onto it: If you repent the right way... if you’re baptized in the right denomination... if you follow the right creed... if you get your theology straight. In our hands, that one thread becomes a leash, a harness instead of a covering. It cannot warm us, cannot comfort us, cannot embrace us.

The Story: A Hospice Bedside

I sat once with a woman in her final days. Her voice was thin, but her worry was heavy. *“Chaplain,”* she whispered, *“I don’t know if I did enough. I hope I believed the right things. I hope I was good enough for Him to accept me.”*

In that moment, she wasn’t clutching the whole blanket of God’s love; she was clinging to a thread of conditions. Somewhere along her journey she had been taught that God’s love was fragile, that one misstep, one wrong decision, one incomplete act might leave her outside.

I took her hand and said softly, *“You don’t have to wonder if you’ve done enough. The truth is, He did it all.”* I quoted Romans 5:8: *“God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, a long way off, Christ died for us.”* She exhaled as if she had been carrying a weight for decades. A smile flickered on her lips. She let go of the thread and, for a moment, rested under the whole blanket and passed into eternity.

The Scripture: “All” of This Is from God

Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5 are breathtaking: *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.”*

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Notice what Paul doesn't say. He doesn't say, *“some of this is from God, and the rest is up to you.”* He doesn't say, *“God reconciled you as long as you met the requirements.”* He says, *“All of this is from God.”* The blanket is entirely His weaving. No conditions. No loopholes. No fine print.

When we add conditions, we shrink the gospel, we reduce it to creeds and dogmas, rules. When we strip it back down to grace, we discover that His love has no seams to unravel.

The Pastoral Word: Why Conditions and Fences Are So Attractive

Why do people cling to conditions? Why do we erect fences? Maybe because conditions make us feel in control. Maybe because fences help us feel safe? If I do the right things, then God owes me something. Unconditional love terrifies us, because it means we cannot manipulate God. We can only receive Him.

When I put on God's lenses instead of my own, I see the truth: His love reaches me before I change, before I repent, before I am ready. And that love is what changes me, not conditions, not threats, not fear. It's God's lovingkindness that leads me to a change of mind with a corresponding change of behavior, that's repentance.

The Invitation: Rest Under the Blanket

Take a moment today to set aside your “threads of condition.” Sit quietly. Place your hands in your lap, palms open. Whisper this prayer:

“All this is from You Father. I am loved without condition. I rest under Your covering.”

Let the words settle like a blanket over your soul.

Journal Prompts

- Where have I felt pressured to meet conditions in order to feel loved by God or others?
- What would it look like for me to rest in the truth: *“All this is from God”*?
- Can I recall a time when love reached me before I was ready or “good enough”?

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