

“Tattered Blankets”

CHAPTER 2

THE THREAD OF FEAR

The Image: A Blanket of Fire

For many, the first blanket they were ever handed in the box church was woven not with comfort but with fire. They were convinced that church is where you go, not who you are. The language was urgent and terrifying: *“Turn or burn.”* Faith was presented not as a home to dwell in but as a fire escape to flee toward. Fear became the fabric of belief.

But fear is not a blanket, it is a thread. It doesn’t cover you; it strangles you. It unravels trust. It leaves people huddled in shame, afraid of making one wrong move that might push them outside of God’s reach.

The Story: A Child’s First Gospel

I remember a boy I met in hospice who, even as a grown man, still carried the echoes of his childhood sermons. His body was failing, but it was his soul that trembled. *“Chaplain,”* he said, *“I’m afraid I’ll get there and He’ll say I’m not good enough. I’m afraid of the fire.”*

As he spoke, I realized his entire faith had been stitched together with fear. The blanket of God’s love had been torn away, and all he had left was one thread of terror. He had been told God was quick to anger, slow to forgive, and ready to strike.

I leaned in close and read to him from 1 John 4:18: *“There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear.”* He wept, not from fear this time, but from the possibility that God might not be the monster he had been taught to imagine.

The Scripture: Perfect Love

John writes with breathtaking clarity: *“God is love... There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.”*

Fear and love cannot share the same blanket. Where love is present, fear is pushed out. Where fear dominates, love has been covered over.

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God’s way is not to control us through terror but to draw us with kindness. Romans 2:4 reminds us, *“It is His kindness that leads us to repentance,”* not His threats, not His anger, His kindness.

The Pastoral Word: Fear Keeps Us Small

Fear-based religion might keep people in line, but it never makes them free. Fear can modify behavior for a season, but it cannot transform the heart. Only love can do that.

The gospel is not a scare tactic; it is a love story. And when we rediscover that, our faith changes shape, it stops being a cage, and starts becoming a home.

The Invitation: Step Out of Fear

Today, pause and notice: where is fear shaping my view of God? Where do I imagine Him disappointed, angry, or waiting to punish me?

Take one of those fears and hold it up to the light of love. Whisper this prayer:

“Perfect Love, cast out my fear. Let Your kindness, not my terror, lead me home.”

Rest for a few moments in silence, allowing love to replace fear, until peace begins to stir.

Journal Prompts

- What fears have shaped my image of God?
- When I imagine God, do I picture a face of anger or of kindness?
- How might I practice letting Perfect Love drive out fear in one area of my life this week?

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