

“Tattered Blankets”

CHAPTER 3

THE THREAD OF PERFORMANCE

The Image: The Earned Blanket

Religion often tells us the blanket of God’s love must be earned. If you pray the right prayer, join the right church, take the right communion, or get baptized in the right way—then you can be covered. Without those performances, you are left bare.

But performance is not the blanket. It is a single thread, fragile and easily broken. When we clutch performance, we end up exhausted, always measuring, always wondering if we have done enough.

The Story: The Thief on the Cross

Two thieves hung beside Jesus. Both were guilty, both condemned. One mocked: *“If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself and us!”* The other thief looked at Jesus’ suffering and said simply, *“Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*

And what was Jesus’ reply? Did He say, *“Yes, but first you must be baptized?”* No. Did He say, *“Yes, if you join the right church?”* No. Did He say, *“Yes, if you recite the sinner’s prayer with proper theology?”* Of course not.

Jesus said only this: *“Today you will be with me in paradise.”* No prerequisites. No performance. Just the whole blanket of grace wrapped around a dying man who had nothing left to offer but a cry to be embraced, covered, sheltered.

The Scripture: All This Is from God

Paul says it best: *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.”* (2 Corinthians 5:18–19).

Notice again: all of this is from God. Not half, not most, not *“with your cooperation.”* All. The blanket is not woven by us, but for us.

When we cling to performance, we unravel the gospel, but when we rest in grace, we find ourselves already clothed in love.

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The Pastoral Word: Hospice Confessions

I cannot count how many times I’ve sat with patients in their final hours who whispered, *“Chaplain, I hope I did enough.”* Behind those words is a lifetime of clutching the performance thread.

And I always respond: *“Friend, you didn’t do enough. You never could. But that was never the point. All of this is from Him; you are already remembered, already covered, already His, already home.”*

Performance is the thread we let go of when we finally rest.

The Invitation: Drop the Thread

Today, notice where you are still trying to prove yourself. Where are you clutching the thread of performance, whispering, *“I hope I did enough?”*

Release it. Say aloud:

“All this is from You. Not from me. Today, I rest in grace.”

Take a deep breath, as though pulling the blanket over yourself, and let go of the need to earn what has already been given freely. Matthew 10:8 reminds us, *“Freely you have received, freely give.”* We cannot pay for what was freely given; relax in Him, through Him, by Him, for Him.

Journal Prompts

- In what ways have I tried to “earn” love through performance?
- What do I feel when I hear Jesus’ words: *“Today you will be with me in paradise”*?
- What would it mean to release performance and rest in grace today?

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