

Lesson 17 Lecture – Thoughts From Hosea Hosea 7-14

When I first looked at this assignment from Carol, I must confess I was overwhelmed. Today's lesson covers eight chapters, so how does one do justice to so much material in 30 minutes? Well, I can't, so make yourselves comfortable -this ought to take a couple of hours! I wouldn't do that – I'd put myself to sleep if I had to listen to me for two straight hours! Simplistically, this reading is consistent with the primary theme of all of this year's reading, isn't it? What's that theme? – *Turn away from God, and you will suffer the consequences of His wrath and judgment. Turn to God, and He will gladly receive you in grace and mercy.* Beyond this theme, there are some very important things God reveals to us in this section of Scripture. Briefly I want to talk about exposing deception, meaningful sacrifices, meaningful worship, God's character, struggling with God, forgetting God, truth about death, and fear and our choices.

EXPOSING DECEPTION

Hosea 6:11b-7:1: “*Whenever I would restore the fortunes of my people,*” and then He goes on in verse 1 with “*whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed.*”

God is saying in verse 1 that even while He was restoring and healing the people and the Northern Kingdom, which had no good kings, Ephraim & Samaria were flagrantly sinning against Him. One of these sins was they were practicing deceit. Apparently, they felt there were higher levels of deceit, so they had to practice at it. This is the nature of lying. An unconfessed lie typically builds on another one in an effort to lend support to the first lie. It's like fishermen stories. He spends all day fishing, and the truth is all he caught was a tiny fish. However, to avoid being embarrassed by the truth, he stretches out his arms about a foot wide talking about the fish he caught. With each person he meets thereafter, instead of telling the truth, the

length between his hands keeps getting bigger and bigger until he might as well have caught 1,000-pound marlin. Then, when he's asked about where this massive fish is, he tells the crowd a great white shark jumped and ate his catch just as he was reeling it into the boat.

This is the sinister thing of lying – it typically starts from a place of insecurity and embarrassment of what is the truth. But that embarrassment is nothing compared to what you feel when the truth comes out. And, the truth always does come out. Lying is like a house of cards, and truth is the breeze that knocks it down. Now, not only are you humiliated by being revealed a liar, your credibility as an honest person is seriously damaged. You can't be trusted. And guess who is snickering at you in your humiliation? – Satan. The very one who whispered in your ear the truth was too painful; therefore, the better thing is to cover it up with a lie. Then after he is done snickering at you, that rat then starts yelling in your ear what? – *'You're a liar, and you should be ashamed of yourself.'*

Look at what Numbers 32:23b says, “*You may be sure that your sin will find you out.*” Did you catch that? It isn't God who finds you out in your sin, it is your sin itself that finds you out! Think about the evil in that. Satan tempts you to sin, you choose to buy into his temptation, but ultimately it won't be God who will reveal your sin – your sin will reveal itself. This is the twisted nature of sin – it may seem initially pleasurable, but ultimately it is going to hurt you. The pain of the truth is nothing compared to the pain of the revealed lie.

This is all bad enough at the human level, but now you have to deal with the impact of lying in the spiritual realm – how it offends your Creator Who is perfect, holy, and loves you. *How serious you take ownership of your sin is directly proportional to how much you appreciate and value God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness.* I'm not suggesting you wallow around in your sin – that's either playing the victim or a false humility. These are neither useful nor productive behaviors.

What I'm talking about is a deep acknowledgement that you have offended God. *A good sign of the depth of your ownership of your sin will be how serious you stick to your repentance.* If you find yourself repeating a sin over and over, without trying to be judgmental, there is likelihood you have **not** seriously owned your sin before your Maker. *Real repentance brings a conviction of the human heart to not hurt God's heart.* I'm not trying to lay down a condemnation on anyone – we all sin and often repeat our sin from time-to-time. Satan certainly is not going to back off on tempting you. However, if you find yourself continuously committing the same sin, then you need to get on your knees and do some business with God. He's waiting for you do that, so He can reveal His healing forgiveness.

MEANINGFUL SACRIFICES

Hosea 9:4: “*They will not pour out wine offerings to the LORD, nor will their sacrifices please him. Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners; all who eat them will be unclean. This food will be for themselves; it will not come into the temple of the LORD.*”

The word “sacrifice” brings the thought of someone giving up something of his or her own for the benefit of another. In the Old Testament, a sacrifice was offering up one’s animal to the priests, so it could be killed and its blood poured out on the altar to cover that person’s sins. When you think about it, while that animal cost the owner something to get it and the owner invested a portion of its life in caring for it, the real sacrifice was the animal. The animal’s life was being taken to spare the spiritual life of the owner. God’s concept of animal sacrifice was to send a clear message there is life in blood, but sin is a deadly business. To pay the price for that sin, blood must be spilled.

The sins of the person were transferred over to the animal, so for the sinning person, how much sacrifice was truly being made? God was looking for humanity to develop a repentant heart from its sins. To see the cost and suffering of something

valuable to them to prick their hearts and see the price that must be paid with sin. The Nation of Israel had developed hardened hearts – unwilling to acknowledge their sinfulness because of pride, fear, or whatever else. However, they kept sacrificing these poor animals. The concept of a sacrifice had no meaning to the animal owner, and God knew it. God created animals as well, and He takes no joy in the death of anything He creates. At this point in Israel’s history, He is telling the people, in effect, “*Don’t bother making any more sacrifices – I’m not seeing any repentance, which is what I’m looking for with those sacrifices.*”

If you think He is upset with these people who are ritualizing, or worse, mocking animal sacrifices, what do you think His attitude is towards those who do the same over *His only begotten Son’s* sacrifice on a cross? That idea just runs chills up my spine, and I must confess through the evidence of my occasional bad behavior and thoughts, I’m doing just the same. My point is a *sacrifice is really not a sacrifice unless you deeply sense that there is a meaningful cost you are giving up for the benefit of another.*

God is not mocked brothers and sisters. He knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves. What was the purpose of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross? – *Forgiveness*. Shouldn’t that tell you how high God ranks the importance of forgiveness? Can you imagine a greater cost for forgiveness? Where I’m going with this point is this: While you may be sacrificing some of your money in tithing, or sacrificing some of your time and talents in serving, there is a higher sacrifice God is looking from all of us. He is looking for a sacrifice of our hearts to forgive others. He knows how our hearts have been damaged by our own sin and the sin of others. Either our flesh wants to go into a shell and protect our damaged hearts, or it lashes out seeking revenge and retribution for our hurt and wounded hearts. *The sacrifice God will greatly honor is the one who will surrender the motives of the flesh – to hide or avenge our damaged hearts – and yield our hearts’ care to Him.* Under God’s

power, He heals our heart and then gives us the strength to offer forgiveness to those in our lives whom have hurt us. That witness of forgiveness is the greatest example of God's agape love we can show to a hurting world. Don't get me wrong, speaking God's Word and His gospel is extremely powerful. However, there is no greater image of God's love than the cross – the depth of His personal sacrifice He made to make forgiveness possible. Therefore, can you see how being a living example of God's forgiveness – the power of the sacrifice of forgiving others – can be such a force of light in this dark world?

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP

Hosea 9:10: *"When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree. But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved."*

Do you hear the heart of God in this verse? If God found Israel, doesn't that mean He was looking for something? What was He looking for? He was looking for a people whom would respond to Him in a manner that would honor His presence, His power, His mercy, and His love. This was the fruit He was speaking about – the hearts of the people towards Him. Tragically, many of the people were seduced into immoral idol worship. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."* God is an all or nothing God – He either wants all of our worship, or He won't receive any of it. Does that sound selfish? I realize for some of you that may seem like a blasphemous question, but I'm only asking it to make a point. Jesus also said in John 4:24, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* When we worship something or someone, we are pledging our devotion to that thing or person. God is wholly devoted to us and relentlessly proves that to us each and every day in how He

provides not only our basic needs, but also additional blessings out of His sovereign grace and mercy. Is it so unreasonable, then, for Him to ask of us to only worship Him? When we choose to consider all that He has done, is doing, and will do for us – meaning He'll keep every promise He makes, we are choosing to live in the Spirit. *A mindset of gratitude for God's blessings is an essential component of living in the Spirit.* With a heart of gratitude, we are coming into agreement with the truth of God's care and provision, so the natural outpouring of that agreement is praise and worship.

We hear of verses that God is a jealous God and how He burns with anger when people reject His provision and choose to worship other things or people that haven't done a fraction of things for them that God has done or promises. I have no problem with this component of God's character. However, for those of you who are in a deep trial – you're health is in peril, your marriage is in trouble, or your finances are a disaster, drumming up a worshipful devotion to God gets more challenging, doesn't it? You're in pain, and you're looking for God to be the Deliverer He promises to be in His Word. Our flesh is looking for rescue, but we're not seeing any signs of it. The devil knows this and starts telling you God doesn't love you any more, or you've done things so bad that He's angry with you. If you're hearing those voices, don't listen to them – they're all lies. But we're still in pain – how are we supposed to respond?

Hebrews 13:15 is your answer, "*Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*" What does a "sacrifice of praise" mean? When our circumstances are painful, we can choose to "own" the pain. By owning the pain, we let it consume us to the point that we can't think of anything else – it's like a relentless darkness. A sacrifice of praise is the sacrifice of surrendering that ownership of the pain and praising God for never forsaking us – even though it may feel like He is. A sacrifice of praise is really

staking a claim to your faith – a flash of faith-light into the darkness of hopelessness and despair. Regardless of your circumstances, you are choosing to believe that God is Who He claims to be in His Word.

This is not easy, my brothers and sisters. Believe me, I've been there, and I have little doubt I'll be there again. While I believe this life is an incredible gift from God, I also believe it is a training ground for the next life to come. Jesus proved on the cross that suffering has a purpose. The purpose of His suffering was to give to the believer in Jesus, eternal life with God. Our suffering has a purpose as well – to allow God to reveal Himself in a more real and personal way and provide an opportunity for an upgrade in our relationship with Him. In our suffering, He will show mercy to those of us who turn to Him and offer a sacrifice of praise and worship Him instead of turning to and dwelling on the pain we are in.

Praising and worshipping God when we feel like we see no evidence of Him being worthy of such praise and worship is advanced faith. This is why I always land my thoughts at the cross. If you have any doubt about God's devotion to you, remember that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God the Father made God the Son – Jesus - who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. These truths deserve our praise and worship regardless of our painful circumstances. This is why Romans 8:18 is such a vital promise to me, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*”

GOD'S CHARACTER

Hosea 9:16: Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring.”

There are some very difficult verses in chapter 9 verses 11-16 where God uses rough language such as God making women barren and miscarrying children; God hating and no longer loving the people; and even slaying cherished children. How are

we supposed to reconcile this truth of Scripture with other Scriptures that says God is love and merciful? The first thing we need to acknowledge is God is infinite, and we are finite. As finite beings, we cannot fully know an infinite God. Isaiah 55:8-9 confirms this, “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,*” says the LORD. “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*”

There are difficult verses throughout the Bible, but for me, few are more difficult to process than when there are children suffering. Psalm 7:11a tells us God is a just judge. That means to me, God is fair in His judgment. Therefore, I don’t see God holding little children accountable to their belief in God until they are old enough to process such a choice. In effect, I believe they get a “pass” from God until they reach a certain age – what that age is I don’t know, but I feel comfortable in believing any child who dies for whatever reason in its earliest years goes to heaven. Full disclosure...I can’t back that up in Scripture – it’s just an extension of my trust that God is fair.

If I’m right, then you may be able to process these difficult verses a little easier. God is omniscient and omnipresent – He is eternally present and knows all things. If He knows the future, and He sees that the future of these children is going to be growing up in a pagan culture, eventually adopting the beliefs and morals of that culture, and, therefore, being held accountable for their behaviors and rejection of God, can you see that He is actually being merciful by ending the lives of these children before they become accountable to Him? Yes, there is suffering in death, but it is momentary in comparison to the complete absence of suffering and eternal peace with God.

For those who don’t believe in an after-life, I can totally understand the resistance to believe in a God that clearly says He slays children. This is why we must study the entire Bible. Enemies of God’s Word hand-pick verses such as these

and use them as marketing campaigns to deny the love of God. God is indeed not fully knowable, but there is more than enough in Scripture for us to grasp the breadth of His character and know that He is **foundationally good**. If faith in God were easy, we would all have it. What makes it hard is there is an enemy constantly seeking to deceive, twist, and manipulate the fullness of God's character to the point we believe the devil's words over God's Word. Again, this is why I always end up back at the cross. *The devil has no response to the cross because He was defeated at the cross.* If you build your foundation of faith on the unshakable truth of God's devotion to humanity through the sacrificing of His only begotten Son as payment for humanity's sins, you will be in a better place to withstand the attacks of the enemy – especially on verses like these.

STRUGGLING WITH GOD

Hosea 12:4a: He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor.

Hosea wasn't just speaking against the Northern Kingdom – he had things to say to the Southern Kingdom – Judah. He interestingly connects Judah to the story of one of its forefathers – Jacob. Hosea reminds us of Jacob's nature and the basis for his name. In Rebecca's womb, she had her twins, Esau and Jacob, wrestling with each other. In birth Esau came first, but they found Jacob holding on to Esau's heel. Jacob means, "heel catcher". Chuck Smith theorized that by doing this, Jacob was seeking to become the first born, so he could have all the privileges of being the firstborn. Jacob would later trick Esau into giving away his firstborn birthrights for a pot of stew.

Hosea references Jacob's encounter with an angel at Bethel. Let's pick up the story in Genesis 32:25-28, "*Now when He [the angel] saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out*

of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks.” But he said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” So He said to him, “What is your name?” He said, “Jacob.” And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.” As you listen to this story it sounds as if Jacob is telling the angel in victory he will not let go of him until the angel blessed him.

In Chapter 12, verse 4a, Hosea, though, adjusts our thinking of Jacob’s alleged “victory”, *“He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor.”* Yes, he overcame the angel, but in his victory over God’s messenger, he realized he had actually lost. We can say this because why would a man after gaining a victory weep and beg for favor? His supposed promise to not let the angel go until he blesses him isn’t coming from a place of strength but from a place of repentance. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 lays out the paradox that human strength really means human weakness, *“And He [Jesus] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

When we are operating in our own strength, we are depending on our own abilities to accomplish what we want. When we do this, not only are we potentially doing something that is not in God’s will, but also we are denying and rejecting God to step in with His infinitely greater strength and wisdom. This is the story of every human before we come to Christ – we are seeking to live life on our own. Until we arrive at the point of realization of the futility of our self-imposed struggles from our self-will, we will never surrender as Jacob finally did - weep in regret and repentance, and beg God to bless us with His forgiveness and salvation. There is no shame whatsoever in coming to the realization of our weaknesses. Pastor Rod Schorr calls

this time in one's life of surrender to God the most glorious moment in a person's lifetime because of all the promises God will fulfill in *His* strength as a result of such a confession. In God's economy, when I am weak, I am strong because I allow God to step in and be God. He tells us to be still and know that *He* is God. Interestingly, the new name given to Jacob, Israel, means governed by God.

FORGETTING GOD

Hosea 13:6: When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.

The sixth verse of Chapter 13 is, in my opinion, a portrayal of our nation today. Actually, I believe we are worse. God gave our nation's forefathers the wisdom and the courage to give us the victory in the American Revolution. To deny God's hand in that war or to deny the Christian influence on our country's formation documentation is nothing short of willful, revisionist evil. We have become a powerful nation not because we are so smart, so strong, or so wealthy, but because God has allowed us to become this. Why I say our condition is worse is we have not forgotten about God, as the Jews did. We have rejected Him, kicked Him out of our schools, our government, and our consciousness. Barrack Obama denied that this country was a Christian nation. We haven't forgotten about God – we have denied God even exists. You may not like the fact that I'm using the word "we" in these judgments, but the church has utterly failed to stand up for what is true. Please know I include myself in the "we".

Out of fear of persecution from those seeking to deny God exists or at least to kick Him out of our consciousness, we have allowed a progressively evil agenda to overwhelm this country. If you don't think God is going to respond to our inaction, you haven't been reading this year's Scriptures. I'm not a huge fan of John MacArthur, but he has made a very powerful case that God has already forsaken the United States as a nation. This doesn't mean people in the United States are beyond salvation – until Jesus returns, salvation is available to every human. However, on

this recent atrocity of a law enacted in New York allowing full-term abortion, how can we not expect God's judgment on this nation? More importantly, how can we not expect judgment on God's church for not standing up for these slain children?

If we think the persecution of the church is bad now, our sitting on our hands and muffling our voices of outrage will only allow the enemy to come in to take more territory. James 2:17 warns, "*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*" Works of faith, brothers and sisters, sometimes means getting into a fight. We may get bloodied, bruised, and wounded, but at least we tried to stand up for what we believe. *The pain of a fight well fought wears off much faster than the pain of the shame of a fight that should have been fought but didn't have the courage to do so.* There's also a well-known quote, "*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.*"

TRUTH ABOUT DEATH

Again, we see the heart of God revealed in Chapter 13. He is recalling all that He did for the nation of Israel, and He points out how they rejected Him. He lays out judgments and condemnation on these people. However, He again takes a pause in verse Hosea 13:14, "*I will deliver this people from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? I will have no compassion.*" Despite all of His anger and frustration with these stiff-necked people, He still loves them, and we get reminded about the truth of death to the believer. The "*in your face*" words regarding the alleged power of death are directed at Satan. God is basically saying, "*Yes, these people are a mess, but they are My mess. Your deathly powers are no match for My life-giving and redeeming powers.*"

His greatest "*in your face*" statement to Satan regarding the power of life over death was His only begotten Son's resurrection from His death on a cross. Until Jesus came along, humanity looked at death as the end of life. His resurrection was the

blasting of the trumpets that the end of human life is not the end of life. There is an eternal life, and it is led in the spirit world where **God** rules. Jesus' resurrection turned human death into merely a stepping-stone into eternity. For those during their human lives who choose to believe in Jesus's sacrifice and victory won at that cross, they can hold fast to the words in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, which quote from verse Hosea 13:14, "*So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Human death is not the end, brothers and sisters. There is another life ahead of each and every one of us, but it is our choice as to what that life is going to look like. *God does not send people to hell. People send themselves to hell by choosing to deny the One Who can deliver them from that destination.* If you are getting tired of me pounding you over the head with words like "choice" and "choose", good! Maybe I'm getting through? Too much of our lives we spend saying we "can't" do this or we "can't" do that. In most cases, when we say we "can't", we should be saying we "won't". When we say we *can't* do something, it absolves us of the option to choose, therefore, we can't be held accountable. When we say we *won't*, it is an indictment of our will to refuse to do something. If we say we "won't", we then become accountable. Here's the lie behind the "can't" statements – God knows the truth. He knows our "can't" statements are really "won't" statements, and we will still be accountable. We might as well own up to our choices now and deal with them. God will honor this change of heart to take responsibility for our choices.

My final thought and conclusion is about fear and choices. It comes from Hosea 12:1: Ephraim feeds on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and

multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt.

When we are faced with choices – situations that demand a response, we would be wise to consider our states of mind before making a choice. If we are in a calm and collected state, then there is an improved chance that we will be in a better place to process the pros and cons of the respective choices we need to make and, hopefully, come up with the best choice. Does that make sense? If that is true, then the opposite is likely true. If we’re in a place of fear and panic, we are likely not in a position of to make such a calm and collected assessment of our choices. In desperate response to eliminate, or at least reduce our fear, we look for the quick fix. In beginning of chapter 12, we read about how Ephraim – the Northern Kingdom or Israel, made a treaty with Assyria and sent olive oil to Egypt. Assyria and Egypt were not friends of Ephraim – they were enemies. If this is true, why did they make these extensions of peace? They were afraid – they were making what would become life-altering choices out of fear.

As we have gone through this year’s reading, at least for me, it is easy to wonder what the Northern and Southern Kingdoms must have been thinking – why would they so deliberately deny God’s provision? But any time I put myself in a place of judgment of people making bad choices, I hear the Holy Spirit ask me, “*Really Dan, how many times have you made decisions from a place of fear? How many compromises with the enemy have you made to alleviate your fear? How did those decisions work out?*” I’m going to share a foundational truth for me in my faith in God. *Fear is the denial of the truth of God’s all encompassing provision. Fear is a rejection of God’s willingness and ability to deliver us from the circumstances that our flesh interprets as fearful.* I’ve concluded this to be true based on three verses:

Psalm 18:30: As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

1 John 4:8b: God is love

1 John 4:18: There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

What these verses tell me is if God is perfect and God is love, His perfect love has the ability and the power to cast out fear. I have come to the conclusion that this statement of God's provision to deliver us from our fear is the greatest foundational character presentation of God. The reason I say this is in our first introduction to Satan in the Garden of Eden, his **first** attack is on the truth of God's Word. "*You will surely not die.*" he hissed in response to Eve's reciting God's warning of eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan then puts on another lie about the motivation behind God's commandment not to eat the fruit, "*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.*" That wasn't the truth behind God's warning was it? What was the truth? - They **would** surely die. Well, we know they bought the lie and ate the fruit, and what was the "first fruits" of their sin? In response to God asking Adam where he was, Adam said, "*I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.*"

"*I was afraid*" - fear is the first fruits of sin. I cannot overemphasize the importance of what I'm about to say my brothers and sisters – if you don't take anything else from what I say in this message, please, please remember this. *God is greater than every one of your fears.* When Jesus, who was our sin on the cross, was resurrected, He proved that God's love was more powerful than: 1) the wages of sin, which is death, and, 2) the first fruits of sin – fear.

This is why we must cling to 1 John 4:4b, “*because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*” As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are given the Holy Spirit as a seal of your redemption – a promise from God that you are His adopted child as result of your confession of faith. The Holy Spirit is a co-equal member of the triune Godhead, and He is dwelling in you. Satan is currently ruling the world – how can anyone question that? – Just read the news. Through his lies that are targeted at our flesh, we are relentlessly barraged with circumstances that are meant for one thing – to instill fear. Satan knows if we come into agreement with his lies and, therefore, go to the natural end of his lies – become fearful, we will be more likely to make bad decisions in response to those fears. However, if we choose, and **it is a choice**, to believe God’s promise of His all-encompassing provisional love for us, then our choice of faith in God will be rewarded with victory over our fear. God cannot lie, brothers and sisters – this promise of His protective love **is the truth**.

I am not speaking some gospel according to Dan – I am standing on the undeniable truth of God’s Word. I say this with authority because God’s Word is authoritative. Now, to be fully transparent, I would be lying to you if I told you that because of what I’ve covered in this conclusion that I live my life without fear. I have made more than my share of bad decisions from a place of fear, and it has cost me, and those whom I love the most, dearly. This is why I try not to come from a place of judgment for anyone who is awash in their fears – letting their fears overwhelm the truth of God’s provisional love. Therefore, if you are willing to come into agreement with this foundational promise of God’s character, I beseech you to give God a chance to prove it. Just take one fear that is gripping you, bring it before God, confess it, and ask for Him to deliver you from it. I started this conclusion that the Northern Kingdom, out of their place of fear, chose to partner with the enemy rather than go to God for help. Assyria would soon take them into captivity. This is the eventuality of living in fear – we become captives of that fear. I get the fear, brothers and sisters, but

God is greater than every one of your fears. He loves you, and He wants you to turn to Him and give Him the opportunity to prove His perfect love for you and cast out your fear. Will you? Let's pray.